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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 29 August 2012

Mercredi 29 août 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 29 August 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 août 2012

The House recessed from 1756 to 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 DONNANT
LA PRIORITÉ AUX ÉLÈVES

Resuming the debate adjourned on August 28, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to implement restraint measures in the education sector / Projet de loi 115, Loi mettant en oeuvre des mesures de restriction dans le secteur de l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate. The member from Scarborough East-Pickering.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Pickering–Scarborough East. Thank you, Speaker. It's getting better all the time. There's a song called It's Getting Better All the Time.

I would like to start off this part of the debate talking a bit about the progress we made in the last eight or nine years and why this is important to Bill 115, the Putting Students First Act. I want to speak about the importance of teachers and the work they've done in partnership with us to create safe and vibrant places for our children to learn. I want to talk about classrooms, places where our teachers guide and develop our students to help them reach their absolute full potential. These students are our future leaders, teachers, and drivers of business and the economy. They are our future—our future grandchildren and so forth.

It is so important to reflect a bit on the progress that has been made and why we're here today and how we're going to move forward together. Ontario public schools are now ranked in the top 10 in the world. We restored peace and stability to classrooms in the past eight years, and we want to continue that.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A little order, please.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Smaller class sizes in the early grades: It's very important, Speaker, and 97% of primary classes have 23 or fewer students. We want to continue with that. We want to preserve that.

High test scores: They are up 14%, with more students meeting or beating the provincial standard. The number of students meeting the provincial standard has gone from a low 54% to 68% in just eight years. It's fantastic.

More students are also staying in school and graduating. The dropout rate is down, with 81% of students graduating from high school. That's up 13% from the prior government.

Full-day kindergarten: It's the first of its kind, Speaker, giving Ontario's four- and five-year-olds the best possible start. The program will be available to all students in all schools in 2014, helping kids learn. It can also help families manage their day and save money in child care costs. But more importantly, full-day kindergarten contributes to better learning. We all know that education is the key to jobs in our future in the province, and full-day kindergarten is going to help with that.

We have more and better schools, Speaker, with 550 new schools being built since 2003 and 23,000 schools repaired or upgraded. That's fantastic. I see that in my riding all the time; I see it in other people's ridings. You go around and you see the sign that says, "We are repairing and investing in this school." I see it everywhere in Ontario; it's fantastic.

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We've also, Speaker, focused on making schools safe. That is always job one of the schools. Of course, it's education, but as a former chair of a school community council for eight years, as someone who still sits on the special ed advisory committee at the school board where I live, safety is always job one. It is important to keep schools safe, and we addressed and helped implement the new legislation to address bullying, to keep it safe in schools and make reporting of violent incidents mandatory.

We also need to acknowledge the strong schools in rural parts of Ontario, Speaker. Our schools are indeed the heart of communities, and that can't be more important than it is in rural Ontario. So we've increased funding for rural schools by over 37%.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That's fantastic.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It is. It is fantastic. Looking to the future of our students, we've made accessibility to and affordability of university more of a reality, by capping tuition, tripling the number of student grants and helping out with easier rules for student loans. We have our 30% tuition reduction grant, and we've created 200,000 new spaces in colleges, universities and apprenticeships to make sure there's an affordable spot for everyone.

Speaker, those are just a few of the highlights I wanted to mention that speak to the progress we've made with our teachers. They're key to the learning, they've been instrumental to this progress that we've made, and we

want to continue to make further progress. We want to keep the low class sizes. We want to keep the prep time for teachers. We want to keep the current holidays for teachers. Nothing in this bill that we're talking about, Bill 115, takes away from any of that.

What all this means, this progress we've made and where we're going, is that more students are indeed graduating, improving job opportunities and self-esteem. We want Ontario students to compete with the best and the brightest from around the world, and we feel that we can continue on this path in partnership with our teachers, with parents and with our students to make sure that progress continues.

I want to speak to a couple of provisions in Bill 115 that I think there's some misunderstanding about or perhaps some controversy about. Some members opposite have talked to this in a negative way, but I'm grateful to have the opportunity to bring some clarity to those. One of them is around the proposed sick leave provisions and what has been incorporated into some of the agreements to date.

It's hard to accept change, and when elements of one's total compensation package are introduced, it can be a bit unsettling. I think we understand that shifting to a new kind of sick plan is a significant change for some of the teachers, and it requires, I think, some education and good communication on the part of everybody: the school boards, the unions and the government, of course, itself. I think, unfortunately, that there's a lot of misunderstanding about what this new sick plan is about, that somehow there won't be any kind of safety net for teachers who get ill and injured. We know, Speaker, that it's really important that teachers have a good sick plan. Let's face it, we've all sent our kids to school sometimes less than 100% well. Teachers tend to pick up more bugs and germs, so it's very important that we have a robust sick plan, short-term and long-term, for teachers.

So within Bill 115 the restructured short-term sick plan would include up to 10 sick days at 100%. That exceeds the six days that we see in other sectors, and I think that's in recognition for the great work that teachers do, for the need for them to be on performance every day, for the reality that they can pick up bugs. I think most people are getting the 10-day part. But the other part is that the plan will also include partial pay for up to 120 days for more serious illness. So what this means, Speaker, is that this sick plan would be more in line with progressive short-term and long-term disability plans, and it's there—it's absolutely there—for teachers who are ill and injured. Some people said, "I don't take my sick days because I'm going to bank them." That is a behaviour; that is a pattern. I think there's lots of work to do to communicate what this plan is all about. The sick plan is there for teachers to use when they need it, and that's very important because we want our teachers to stay healthy. We want our teachers to enjoy a long and prosperous career in the profession they have chosen.

Previously, also, teachers had to use their sick days for maternity leave or serious illness. Again, that's not in

keeping with modern and progressive sick plans. Younger teachers who didn't have banked sick days were not supported and had to use sick days to go on maternity leave, so that created a particular problem or barrier for young people. The new sick plan will benefit younger teachers by providing income protection for serious illness and provide improved maternity leave provisions. That's important. We don't want younger teachers to feel disadvantaged. If the unfortunate situation happens where they become ill or injured, we want them to have a plan that's going to be there for them when they need it most.

I think it's important that we look at the whole thing—the sick plan—in the context of the total compensation plan. That's a really important thing to do when we're looking at provisions for employees, whether it's teachers or any other sector. As I mentioned earlier, of course it's preferable that we negotiate these provisions. And there's still a very small window of time to do so—a very small window of time.

I hope I've shed some light on that provision.

I also want to talk a bit more about younger teachers and what this bill means to them. I'm proud of the steps we've taken to help get young teachers into the schools and to stay in school. The McGuinty government's support for Ontario's young teachers has been shown and demonstrated clearly in the labour discussions, the OECTA MOU and this legislation we're talking about here this evening. We are introducing fair hiring practices to the education sector. There are teachers who have concluded teachers' college who have been supply teaching and on occasional teaching lists for some time and are not sure what the process is to be hired on a permanent basis. There's certainly a sense that you have to be in the know or you have to know someone to get on on a permanent basis.

The MOU sets out fair hiring rules that will bring transparency and accountability for teacher hiring processes and make them consistent across the province. I have a sister and I have friends who are teachers, and it is frustrating for them when they want to move from one school board to another and, guess what? The rules are different. Too many of the rules are different. So this is a good example where we're making it consistent and transparent from one board to the other.

It is also important to mention that management will still make the ultimate decision about who they hire. The administration at a school: They are the people in charge—the principal, vice-principal and so forth. But under this legislation, of course, the role comes with the responsibility to create a process that can be equally accessed and understood by all.

We also recognize the impact on young teachers of retired teachers who return as substitutes. We've worked tirelessly with the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan. As of this September, retired teachers will be limited to a maximum of 50 teaching days per year—down from 95. This opens up supply days and classrooms for young professionals. After all, if you get your undergrad degree and you go on to teachers' college, you want to pursue

your chosen trade. We don't want to create barriers for teachers in this regard. We want them to be able to pursue their chosen professions. We absolutely respect and value the relationship with teachers; absolutely.

Mr. Mario Sergio: We love the teachers. It's the right thing to do.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It's the right thing to do.

As the start of school year approaches, we do have an obligation, Speaker. We have an obligation to assure Ontario parents that school will not only start in September but that it will be uninterrupted by labour disputes.

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That is why we're introducing this legislation, and that's why we're asking all MPPs to stand up, protect our students and our education system and put it on a sustainable financial footing for the future. Nothing is more important than protecting the gains we've made in education and health care, and if we don't manage the deficit, if we don't manage our costs closely, those things are in jeopardy.

This legislation focuses on having as many agreements as possible being negotiated before any other steps are taken. That's what everybody wants, Speaker. That's what everyone has been working hard towards. However, if they don't sign collective agreements that are consistent with OECTA's MOU or have such an agreement by December 31—not next week but by December 31—the proposed legislation would allow the imposition of agreements. But again, we've created some space, some time to make those agreements happen. We recognize that bargaining often happens in September. So there's a runway there, Speaker, for those agreements to come into place by December 31.

Like agreements for the last eight years, strikes or lockouts would not be permitted during the term of an agreement. So that's not different. Although we expect that classes will start as scheduled in September and we're all very encouraged to hear signs that that indeed will happen, without the passage of the Putting Students First Act there's no guarantee that school will continue uninterrupted.

I hope this has been helpful in terms of highlighting some of the background and context about the last eight or nine years and how it is so important that we preserve the gains we've made.

Speaker, may I share the balance of my time with another member, or should I declare that earlier?

Interjections.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I apologize to my wonderful colleague from Mississauga East–Cooksville, who has kindly agreed to share the time with me, so I'll turn it over to her. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Tracy. You did an admirable job, and I'll try to finish off.

Speaker, I rise today to defend, along with my caucus, the Putting Students First bill. I think in any debate, facts are important, so I'm going to get to the facts.

The fact is, we are here because after six months of trying to negotiate and of consultations, we have no agreement with some of the teachers' federations. What this means is that, come August 31, in the absence of a negotiated settlement, teachers will get a pay raise. What this is really about is fairness. This is not about a by-election. This is not about politics. Any politicization of this is being done by the opposition. This is essentially about fairness because we don't want a situation where some federations run the clock just in order to get a raise while other federations and unions have negotiated with us in good faith. It's also about the fact that we can't afford for automatic pay increases to take place. That's what this bill is about. This bill is about putting students first so that the money that we have—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I know it's late and we're a little rambunctious, but I can't even hear her. So I would appreciate it if we cut it down to a dull roar. If not, the poor Deputy Speaker will have to do something.

Continue.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, this is about being able to afford and make sure that our students continue to get a world-class education. By the way, I just want to share that we've just had some breaking news that says that our graduation rates have gone up, as well as our EQAO test results, which have gone up by 16%. So this just goes to show that we are on the right track. This is about putting students first.

I also want to very briefly talk about the fact that some members have brought up the issue that schools are going to begin on time. Well, what we want to make sure is that they continue, because it's not just about September 5. What about in October? What about in November? What about December? Because we know that some federations have strike dates set; they have been scheduled. So this is about making sure not just about schools starting on time but also making sure that they continue so that nobody loses an academic year.

I also want to address the whole issue of constitutionality that has been raised at times. The comparison has been made to British Columbia. I believe the Minister of Education has very, very eloquently addressed why you cannot make this comparison. That's because in BC the government gave 20 minutes' notice to the unions that they were changing the collective agreements. As a consequence, they were subject to a Supreme Court ruling which found that they did not respect the constitutionally protected right to a process of consultation and consideration in good faith.

Contrast this with six months of this government tirelessly trying to negotiate. The fact that we have been able to negotiate in good faith with some federations is proof that it can be done. There is still time to negotiate. We don't have to legislate; there is still time to negotiate.

I ask the federations in question to come forward, and we can still negotiate. If not, failing that, I ask all members of the House to do the honourable thing: Put students first. It's not just about school starting on time; it's about making sure that in October and November and December and February, schools continue.

Thank you so much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before I get into questions and comments, I have a small announcement.

I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Bisson assumes ballot item number 52 and Mr. Schein assumes ballot item number 79.

Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakubuski: It's always a pleasure to comment on the member from Mississauga—I'm not sure which one in Mississauga it is; I don't have my glasses on. She's a lovely, lovely new member here, and she's such a sweetheart. She speaks very quietly in this House, which is something that I'm maybe not quite used to.

While I listened intently to what she had to say, I was concerned about whether or not she was just reading the notes that she has been given in that office across the hall here.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I speak my mind.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I know she says she speaks her mind, and I trust her on that. But perhaps you have to take another look at some of the reading material that they're giving you, because those folks in that office over there are not above twisting the situation and maybe even bending the facts, maybe even manufacturing an issue. I'm being very careful how I say this, Speaker.

Anyway, we are debating this, of course, in the evening time. Sometimes in the evening time people become less attentive to what is being said. But I was listening very, very closely. I want to say to the member from Mississauga, just remember this: fairness, equality. Think about that when you're talking about a wage freeze. How about this: a wage freeze treating everyone the same all across the public sector, giving each and every employee the same order, that wages are frozen until we can get the mess that Dalton McGuinty made in order?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

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Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the members from Pickering–Scarborough East and Mississauga East–Cooksville for their speech or their comments on Bill 115. We heard a lot of statistics and we heard a lot of boasting about the gains we've made in education. That's all good to hear. We certainly want to make sure that we're moving in a positive direction when it comes to students, when it comes to education. But they didn't fill in the gaps, so maybe what they don't want people to understand or know, and what they forgot, was that there have been some things that they conveniently didn't portray.

Just last week, I was reading about the performance bonuses.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, the gains that we've made in education—the government has made some gains, but they've also made mistakes: the eHealth scandal; and 98% of public sector CEOs received a performance bonus. I just want to give the amount of that bonus, because when we're talking about saving money and putting things in the right places so that everyone benefits, this one particular eHealth manager got a bonus of \$81,000 last year. I have to say, he did the right thing: He paid it back.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order. The member from Guelph. The member from Renfrew.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The other thing that this government forgets to tell us is that they're not quite being 100% upfront on why we're here today. I think we're here today because they have a political topic in mind that they want to accomplish. What they want to accomplish is to win the K-W seat, and they're creating this crisis so that voters will think they are coming in to save the day. I hope voters don't buy it and they see through what this government is doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Speaker, I'm delighted to point out the two members who have spoken on the bill, particularly the members from Pickering–Scarborough East and Mississauga East–Cooksville. They have punctualized in detail the core importance of Bill 115.

Imagine you are a parent and it's Sunday evening and you have two kids sitting in the back of the car and you're stuck on Highway 69 or 11 or 400 and the radio goes on, and, "My goodness. Six months into this situation and we still don't have a deal, and we've got to go home and make plans to get the kids into school? What is going on here?" So this is a real situation; it's not a fabricated case, Speaker.

I think it's important that we deal with the matters, with the content, of Bill 115. I think both members have very eloquently expressed the fact that the minister has been, since February, negotiating this deal. In September, the kids have got to go to school. The parents have to know that they can go to work with peace of mind that the kids will go into school and there is no strike.

There is no fabrication of any sort. This is one of the most important pieces of legislation that we have spoken to in this House. If we cannot pay importance to this, if we cannot pay the importance required to this piece of legislation, it means we do not have the respect that we should for our teachers, the parents and the kids.

I think it's important that we realize that we are at the 11th hour, and parents want to know what this government is doing and what this House is doing. I think we have to commend both members for alluding to the core of the bill, and I hope that the members of the House will understand that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: I find it pretty interesting to listen to the comments from the member for York West just there. I have to say that the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville was also talking about how this had nothing to do with the by-election. I find that pretty humorous, Mr. Speaker. She used the excuse that they've been negotiating for six months, and this has to be the reason why this has nothing to do with the by-election.

Who calls the by-elections in the province of Ontario? It's the Premier. To suggest that this was only coincidental is absolutely false. The Premier said that he would not call a by-election in the summer. September 6, to me, is the summer. He starts a by-election by breaking a promise to the people of Kitchener–Waterloo, and at the 11th hour he calls us all back to discuss this bill, a bill to put kids first.

I know that this side of the House wants to put kids first. I know that that side of the House wants to put themselves first. That's their only interest here. They want to put themselves first because all they care about—every decision that they've made has to be made because they want to keep the power that they have. They have no other interest but to acquire power, to keep power.

So what we're going to do in this House, Mr. Speaker, is to bail that party out—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, well, well, it appears we're quite feisty. Some members aren't in their seats and are commenting. Other members are standing up out of their seats and commenting. We seem to be getting into a position where we might lose control, but we won't, because the Deputy Speaker will bring down the hammer soon. So let's try to get along and let's move it smoothly. I want to get through this two hours, too, and get out of here. So let's have a little co-operation. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

All I want to say is that given the events that have happened here, we have nothing but to conclude that the only reason we're here today is because of the by-elections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough East–Pickering has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you. Pickering–Scarborough East, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It says Scarborough East–Pickering on here, so you might want to talk to the people who make this.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you. I will. I will.

Interjection.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Perhaps it's the French version, as my colleague says. Thank you, Speaker.

First of all, I want to thank and acknowledge all the members who have contributed to this debate. My colleague from Mississauga East–Cooksville, thank you for

your very important comments on the importance of the timelines that we're facing. And the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the member from London–Fanshawe—I really appreciate her comments about how important it is that we recognize the gains we've made and that we do need to move forward. We are in a minority government and we do need to move forward. And, of course, my learned colleague to my left, the member from York West, and his pearls of wisdom, and finally the member from Cambridge.

I just want to say, though, Speaker, reflecting on the comments today, throughout the day, that not all but many members opposite seem very focused on talking about by-elections and gas plants and other issues, which makes me wonder, why aren't they talking and working with us on the bill to keep kids in school? Why are they not putting students first? The reality, Speaker, is that by-elections happen. They have to be called. The government has to do that when members resign. If you're in the position of being government, you'll experience that as well.

We are here to talk about students and putting them first and continuing to work co-operatively with all the partners: the teachers, the school boards, the unions, the parents, the students themselves. That's what this is about. That's what these debates should be focusing on, Speaker. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to welcome everybody back, even though it's a couple of weeks early and a couple of hours late.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: You have a nice tan.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you.

I think we could agree we're all here today for one reason, really: nine years of reckless overspending by the current government. It's put Ontario into an epic, record-breaking financial hole. Today I want to discuss what happens when you hand the keys for our system over to Liberals and the unions, the importance of students and teachers returning to the classroom on time, and the implication of the Putting Students First legislation.

Speaker, I will interrupt myself and just mention that I'm sharing my time with my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Which one?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Huron–Bruce.

If this Premier had more money, he'd spend more money. But now even he realizes that the public sector contracts are totally out of control and can no longer be sustainable. It was this government that let it get out of control—this very government. Now we've to get them out of it.

So here we are, debating legislation that will result in a partial public sector wage freeze. A partial public sector wage freeze isn't nearly enough to remedy almost a decade of careless overspending, but it's a start; as our leader says, half a loaf. The reality that the money has totally run out is slowly setting in, and our caucus and our leader will continue to push for a public sector wage

freeze right across the board. Indeed, I don't think only teachers need to be singled out here. Last week, the Canadian Press discovered that a pay-for-performance scheme had handed out \$36 million in bonuses to public sector managers. This means that nearly every public sector manager has been receiving bonuses of up to 12% of their salaries—and here's the kicker—just for showing up. Not for merit; just for showing up. This only leads to one inference: the Premier thinks public sector managers' bonuses are more important than education, and that's why we're here today only discussing teacher contracts, not the broader spectrum, because somewhere along the line, the Liberals have decided that managers and others in the public service deserve more compensation than our teachers.

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But at least we're starting somewhere. Thousands of Ontarians not in a lucky public sector family are doing much, much worse. I can point to my own riding, in Barrie, where our unemployment rate for a city our size is among the highest in the country. Worse looks like this: 600,000 Ontarians out of work; or an unemployment rate that has been below the national average for years; or two credit rating downgrades under the Liberals, most notably right after the finance minister's last budget plan; or worse may look like receiving handouts from the rest of Canada to supplement poor financial performance, such as \$3 billion in equalization payments; or the deficit that is three times the size of the rest of our provinces in Canada combined. So, worse than a partial salary freeze is the reality that is faced by everyone who is not insulated by the cozy public sector.

One such person is a constituent in my own riding. She came out to help on my campaign, and over a few weeks, she opened up about what it was like for her to live under this government that increases spending and taxes like there's no tomorrow. This lady told me the story of what financial management looks like to her. She said in her own words that she's got three jars. One is for her rent; one is for her electricity; and another is for her food. When one runs out, she's got to go into the next one, and do without. She's got to do without paying her rent or without food for a day, just so that she can survive. This woman has a job but she can barely afford to keep herself in her own house. And you know what? She can't tax anybody to get more. She can't even borrow money to get more. She only takes what she needs to live. You cannot squeeze blood from a stone. You cannot squeeze blood from Monica. She will not give you any more; she has no more to give.

Essentially this Premier is notorious for taxes and overspending. His spending is the worst in Canada. As a result, Ontario will balance its budget—if the planets align and the best we can hope for—in three years. Three years after every other province. The same provinces that suffered under the same recession, the same provinces we led into the recession, we are going to follow out of the recession. The same provinces we led in Confederation, we're now following.

Threatened by classroom chaos, the government has finally agreed to at least a partial freeze for teachers. After months of pushing by our caucus and by our leader, almost every single day in this House, it's a crack in your armour and the light is finally shining through, and we're going to press for more—a public sector wage freeze across the board.

In the meantime, we want our kids back in school. We want them back for the very first day of school. They shouldn't have to pay the price for this government's inability to negotiate an agreement. The work our teachers do and the effect they have on the lives of our students is incredible and lasting. I'm personally grateful for the quality of our teachers.

I had many teachers who impacted my life in elementary school and high school, and although it was some time ago now, a couple of them just by name: Maurice Cooke, Richard B. Wright—who turned out to be a Governor General's Award-winning author—and Colin Brezicki.

I'm now proud to say that my children, going into grade 4 and grade 6, have great teachers too. Those who have helped them with their science, when they realize that they need a little bit more—on their own time—helping my daughter to be challenged. My son had a kindergarten teacher who realized his love for music and took his own time to teach him how to enjoy music more and how to get more involved in music. For that reason, my son, who is now 11, loves music.

I'm no stranger to how important teachers have been in my life personally and the lives of my children. I'm also grateful for all the other employees who keep the system running year in and year out.

We're not here today in any way to devalue or suggest that the work done by our education system is insufficient or unsatisfactory. I have a great example right off to my left, my colleague from Northumberland-Quinte West. We're here today because our government has landed us in an epic financial mess. There's no choice but to act. Our caucus wants to see a wage freeze that treats every public sector profession equally and in accordance with the realities we are facing economically. We're pushing for the public sector as a whole to join us MPPs and do their part to restore Ontario's economy.

On September 1, 2012, there was supposed to be a 5.5% wage increase scheduled. Simply put, there's no more money. Again, you can't squeeze blood from a stone. This act imposes a restraint period that will commence in September and be extended via regulation, with a clause that allows it to be retroactive, I might add. This partial wage freeze is a step in the right direction after months of our caucus pushing for bringing public sector wages into line with economic realities. It's not quite a true wage freeze; 40% of teachers—45,000 of them to be exact—who have not yet topped out with their salaries will continue to move up their pay grid at a potential cumulative cost of \$450 million, which is why we want an auditor's report on it. Essentially, the act may be perceived as a partial pay freeze in two ways: because

45,000 teachers are still receiving a pay increase and, in the grand scheme of things, because only teachers are being targeted for this wage freeze.

We have also requested changes to the legislation to give teachers' unions control over supply teachers, hiring and student testing. Instead, this should be changed to restore our school boards' and principals' ability to hire the best possible staff and ensure proper assessments are done. Our party is committed to bringing forward amendments to make this legislation better, and we will continue to fight for a fair, reasonable, across-the-board approach—a legislated wage freeze. In the end, this legislation is only really a small part of fixing the financial mess this government has gotten our province into.

Finally, I concur with my colleague, the education critic, that our caucus views this legislation as recognition by this Liberal government that they are in a deep financial hole and that they will not be able to continue investing in education if they continue on the trajectory of a \$30-billion deficit. There is no more money. For the first time, we are thrilled that the Premier is taking the notion of a legislated wage freeze seriously and taking up our ideas.

Our caucus has been clear that we want students and teachers back in the classroom at the start of the scheduled school year. They shouldn't be the ones who pay for the mess this government has gotten us into over the past decade with reckless, runaway spending.

Thank you, Speaker, and I will now pass my time over to my colleague from Huron–Bruce.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to stand here this evening and join my esteemed colleague from Barrie and our education critic from Nepean–Carleton on this very important issue, especially when this is a time when enrolment is decreasing literally by the hundreds of thousands yet, all the while, spending continues to climb. It's interesting; when we have a Minister of Education who has seemingly wrestled union friends to the ceiling of their salary grids, we need to take a look at how this is being conducted. We can't afford this reckless spending any longer.

I've been paying close attention to this issue both here in Toronto and back home in my riding of Huron–Bruce. In today's climate, it takes a special, dedicated person to be a teacher. I first want to thank the administrators and support staff who work in our education system. They do a great job, regardless of whether it's in junior kindergarten or in classes right through to grade 12.

But the bottom line to all of this is that we're only here tonight because this Dalton McGuinty government, for the past nine years, has mismanaged Ontario's fiscal situation. He has given handouts, allowed scandals like Ornge and eHealth to prevail, and he's opened up his seat-saver program and cancelled the Mississauga power plant, costing taxpayers \$190 million. He's cancelled the Oakville power plant for a cost unknown to taxpayers as

the Minister of Energy won't reveal it, even though he's been called to do it.

Mr. Michael Harris: Contemptly.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Contemptly; yes, that's correct. They've cancelled offshore wind programs, and are now being sued for \$2.25 billion.

This reckless spending is impacting what we value most: education and health care and quality of life for all Ontarians.

If the Premier had done a better job of managing the economy from the get-go, stopped appeasing special interest groups and had an actual plan to keep public sector wages and spending under control, we wouldn't be here. Five thousand teachers would not have felt it necessary to take to the lawns of Queen's Park yesterday. The only one to blame here is the Premier, for his poor management and inability to make the tough decisions.

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My leader, Tim Hudak, is willing to make the tough decisions, just like he has agreed to bail your government out of your spending disaster. PC leader Tim Hudak has been very clear that he does not want to derail a school year. In fact, the Ontario PC caucus would appreciate no disturbances whatsoever, so that kids can be in the classroom and we can begin to implement somewhat of a wage freeze to get Ontario back on track.

The bottom line is, we had two choices: allow a 5.5% increase when the province can't afford it; or stop the nonsense, stop the pay increase for a portion of the public sector, get kids in the classroom and keep working towards a broader public sector wage freeze. It's the right thing to do.

This bill is the first recognition that we've seen by the Ontario Liberal Party that their spending is out of control and that PC leader Tim Hudak's call for a legislated, province-wide, mandatory broader public sector wage freeze is the right thing to do. It's the only thing to do so we can get this province back on track. We value our publicly funded education system, but in order for that public education system to be sustainable, we have to be able to afford it.

In Ontario, we have over 114,000 teachers. In the 2012 Ontario budget, the Liberals actually said that freezing teachers' wages, including their salary grid, is necessary if the government is going to meet its commitment to balance the budget. What happened? Instead of supporting my colleague Jeff Yurek's legislation in May to enact an immediate, across-the-board wage freeze for two years, your Liberal government has failed to negotiate a zero net compensation increase.

There's a problem here. This legislation is based on the OECTA MOU that allows teachers to move up the grid. As I said before, the Minister of Education has done a great job wrestling union friends to the ceiling so that 40% of teachers can move up the salary grid. It means that close to 18,000 unionized teachers in OECTA will receive salary increases of about \$7,000 over two years—totally unacceptable when the province is broke. When this deal is replicated across all unions and all boards,

45,000 teachers in total will continue to move up the grid, representing a cumulative cost of close to \$450 million in salary increases over two years. What kind of salary freeze is that? It's not a true wage freeze, and the costs won't be fully offset by giving teachers three unpaid days—Dalton days. They say it will save \$150 million, but given the \$450-million cost for moving up the grid, there is a \$300-million gap, a fiscal gap that the Liberals said, in their own budget, they wouldn't stand for. Who's making the calls here?

You know what? There are some 3,900-odd outstanding collective agreements that still need to be negotiated elsewhere in the government, and we're going to be in dire straits. The boat is taking on water, and the PCs have to continue to help bail this government out. That is why we have called on the Minister of Education to request that the Auditor General review her first fiscal plan and the OECTA MOU. Our education critic, from Nepean–Carleton, is spot-on when she has put that motion forward.

The effort we've seen from the Liberal government is a half-loaf, as my colleague from Barrie had mentioned before. We will continue to press for more wage freezes across the broader public service. Outside of the fiscal parameters, we are also concerned with the weakening of our school boards and the principals' ability to hire the best possible staff and ensure that proper assessment and reporting is continued. We are disappointed that a commitment by the Minister of Education to ensure that subclauses 19(1)(e)(i) and 19(1)(e)(ii) be removed from the bill to restore and empower the authority of school boards was not kept, proving again that this is the fine-print government and that Dalton is the fine-print Premier.

The Minister of Education is also suggesting that she would only make those changes via regulation and would force French and Catholic school boards to follow the original MOU. Talk about bullying. This is unacceptable to us, and that is why our education critic will use the process to make amendments to the bill. We support her wholeheartedly, and we encourage everyone in this House to do so as well. We want kids in the classroom come September. We want to get Ontario's fiscal house back in order, and we want to get this bill into committee to get the job done. We will lead the way.

This government has put some great ideas on the table, and we have countered with even better ideas, but the McGuinty Liberals have refused to sit down and listen to the leader of our party. Our party has ideas and they will not take them under consideration because the Liberal ideas that they think are so great are being underscored and forced upon them by whom? Is it the Minister of Education? Is it the party faithful? We have to ask those questions. Who is pulling the strings here?

As I said before, our leader has come to the table with even better ideas, but the Liberal government refuses to take his ideas under consideration. Needless to say, we're all here tonight bailing the Liberals out of yet another mess.

This is a systemic problem that has been created in Ontario, and in order for the public education system to be sustainable, we have to be able to afford it. We have to be able to afford our government in Ontario so that it's not breaking the backs of the moms and the dads who are paying the taxes. For too long, this government has not paid attention to the dire financial situation that has evolved over the last nine years. You've totally ignored it, and you don't keep up with the times.

When other nations, other provinces and our own country were hit by recession, the Liberal government in Ontario continued to spend at enormous rates that we couldn't afford. The Minister of Finance said that the third-largest spending priority outside of health care and education in our province is on the debt and the deficit. Servicing the debt and deficit in Ontario is larger than every other single government department combined outside of education and health care. It's just a travesty, and you know what? This is not the Ontario that we once knew. We need some leadership to get it back on track. It's unfortunate that we're not seeing that demonstrated by the Liberal government of today.

We are here because we are going to have to bring a legislated wage freeze. No one really wants to do that, but we know that people have to be put back to work so our students come first. The core difference between the PCs and the Ontario Liberal government is that we believe it needs to be applied across the board in a broader public service sector wage freeze. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Make this his 20 minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no, I've got to respond for two minutes first.

Through you, Speaker, to the members for Barrie and Huron–Bruce, I appreciated listening to the speeches, of course, and I was reminded by the remarks made by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke who said we've got to whack everybody fairly. The two words he used were “fairness” and “equality.” So if we're going to whack teachers in this manner, we should whack the others in the same way. I appreciate that.

I didn't hear whether that principle applies to the private sector in the same way, that in the same way they love to go after public sector workers, do you think you should whack the private sector workers in the same way? Given that Stats Canada has declared that the wages in the private sectors have been at an average 3%, much higher than the public sector—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Oh, Rosie, you've got that backwards. You've got that backwards. You've got to get back to the right stats.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no, no. I'm talking about Stats Canada. Speaker, through you, to all of them—because they're blah blah blah, all of them—this is Stats Canada; that's why I cited Stats Canada. That's one.

Secondly, does the same principle of fairness and equality apply to the corporate sectors, particularly the

individuals in those corporations who earn lots and lots of zeros in front of the ones or twos or threes or fours? Because, for me, it's a matter of equality as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said. I just don't see how your system of justice applies just to some and not the others.

I would love to hear the member from Barrie or the member from Huron–Bruce speak to that notion of fairness and equality as it relates to the other sectors in society, if you don't mind.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's always interesting listening to some of my friends in the NDP. I was in the private sector, owning and operating a business in Toronto during that 2008 recession, and if you don't think people got whacked globally, from Paris to Singapore, when you've actually run a business and had to meet the payroll and lost sleep and gone without a paycheque for two or three months, you'll understand it. The NDP doesn't understand it, and that's their problem. The Tories, I don't know—for a Conservative Party, you would think that math comes as second nature. My friend from Huron–Bruce, I don't know what the school system is like in your constituency, but obviously it needs some more investment.

By us being here early, \$473 million is being avoided; that's what's avoided. The Minister of Education has pointed out \$1.4 billion in one-time savings; \$250 million in savings in year one from the 1.5%; \$500 million in the second year—and that offsets way more than the grid. So there's more than a net zero there.

The college sector just settled across the board at zero voluntarily, because some of us over here, having been trade unionists and members of CUPE, have a problem with you. You don't seem to understand that when you work in the public sector, it's about public service, and the few little things you get when you work the hours that teachers do or, you know, I come from a family who worked as cleaning people—very marginal labour—a little more respect for them. These aren't people who are riding high or gouging that, and we are trying to bargain collectively. You know, I've been mayor of a city. I expect the Leader of the Opposition to have a little bit more experience to understand. I've led a public sector negotiation of 17 different agreements. He hasn't got an understanding of the constitutionality or of labour law. What he is proposing would cost us hundreds of millions of dollars in lawsuits. Until he understands that, he shouldn't be trying to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you, Minister.

Questions and comments? The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

From time to time, I get a little confused on whether or not they actually want our support for this legislation, because from time to time I've heard this massive

criticism. But they do need this assembly to pass the budget, and they've forgotten that after October 6, 2011, they were reduced to a minority government—a lot of their colleagues were defeated—and they're going to need our support to pass this, which we said we would do.

Now, I want to say thank you very much to my colleague from Barrie, who I think gave a great presentation about why teachers are important to his family; I congratulate him. I want to say thank you to our member from Huron–Bruce. She has been a tireless advocate in our caucus for rural schools, and I know her community of Blythe has been hard hit because this government decided they would rather spend money on the cancellation of a \$190-million power plant than to keep that school viable.

Now, I know there are some challenges in the Liberal caucus right now. There's a little bit of a split; we've been told that. I'm just going to encourage you to pass this legislation and work with us. We'll continue to bail you out.

But to my colleague from Winnipeg, or Toronto Centre, I understand his math might be a bit shaky, but you know what? We can't all build million-dollar toilets. The reality is, Speaker, when we're facing a \$30-billion deficit because of his government, we have to take some measures. We might not like taking those measures, but we've got to take the measures. And the reality is that we know that in the OECTA road map they have a \$300-million hole because it's going to cost us \$450 million as the teachers go up the grid and they only have \$150 million in offsets. That's why we want the Auditor General to review their numbers, because my goodness, we all know that's the fine-print government, and they've got the fine-print Premier. People in Ontario want to read the fine print on this group.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a bit daunting for me to follow these great oratory statements from the member for Barrie, the member for Huron–Bruce, the member for Trinity–Spadina, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and, finally, the member for Nepean–Carleton. All these speakers have put good points, some of which I agree with and some of which we disagree with.

The tragic thing is that while we're speaking here—and these points could be done in a method of non-crisis management—what we're doing here, what the government's doing here is creating crisis, insinuating that there won't be schools open and that the teachers aren't going to work, which is—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Silly.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. It's imitation crisis management.

We should have been dealing with these—and we have financial problems in Ontario, there's no doubt. I

think everyone in this House is aware of that, and everyone in this House wants to help fix it.

We're talking about kids. We say we're talking about kids but actually—and I was never this cynical until I watched this—we are talking about a by-election. That's what we're talking about, folks. We're talking about a majority or a minority. Let's make it clear. That's what we're talking about, folks, and that is a travesty because if we really wanted to talk about kids, if we really were serious about talking about this bill, we could have talked about it this morning; we could have talked about it yesterday.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Barrie has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to thank all those who have spoken to this: the member from Trinity–Spadina, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and my own colleague from Ottawa–Nepean—I'm glad I got all those right.

I think it's clear what we're dealing with here is a failure to negotiate. When you come to a point where you've had so much time to come to a solution and when you hear that the solution really is very similar to one that the teachers are willing to accept anyway—insomuch as we heard time and time again, they're willing to accept a wage freeze; they don't have an issue with the wage freeze—you have to negotiate with them to get there.

Having come from a background of labour relations myself, I know the value of negotiating and what you can get out of that. It's always a win-win-win, and that third win is for the people of Ontario. That's what we're not getting here. I think this is being a little bit exploitative of them—this legislation—at this time. It truly is an attempt to get attention for a by-election that's backfiring on you. Clearly, this is backfiring on you.

When only four of 72 boards have reached agreements, you've frantically recalled this Legislature. We're sitting weeks early and nights late to force through legislation at the 11th hour. It is half a loaf. It's too little, too late because our economy is circling the bowl right now.

We are the worst-performing province in Ontario for our economy. There's no getting away from that. You can say whatever you want. The fact remains that you need to do more than take on one of 4,000 collective bargaining agreements. You need to do it all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Trinity–Spadina who, I'm sure, is going to go through the Chair when he speaks.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Always, always through you from now on.

Speaker, I'm happy to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 115. I'm happy to remind the Minister of Innovation that we're still number 10 in this country. Funding on a per capita basis is the lowest in the country for our students in the post-secondary education system. Numero dieci. Numéro dix. Last. Nothing to be proud of.

To the Minister of Innovation and post-secondary ed, I've got to tell you that when half of the college teachers

work on contract, you can't be proud of that. Something is wrong. When half of the college system is working on a part-time basis, meaning that they don't get the same wages as the full-time professors, and they don't have the same benefits, why do they do that? Because when the provincial government doesn't flow the money to the universities and college system, they have to hire part-time workers who work harder than the full-time workers. And he pretends he's not listening to me, as I speak.

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Number 10: Just yesterday there was a report by some economists and social agencies that said, as it relates to social services, we used to be number seven; we are now number 10. Numéro dix. Numero dieci. Last. It's getting worse. Yet, under this government, we hear from them how great they are. How great can you be when you're last? I just don't understand that kind of mathematics. But in Liberal politics, number 10 is good, if not the best.

I have to tell you, the minister—the Premier; not the minister for the moment—the Premier, he used to walk on water. I say biblically, he used to walk on water with teachers. Not no more; Speaker, not no more. I wonder to myself why he did that, because there was lots of love with teachers and the Premier. In fact, for the last three elections, they've been voting for the Premier of education, and all of a sudden, he just gives it away, literally gives it away, 5,000 people out there.

I would have let Lisa MacLeod speak, just so that they could hear her side of things. She was there. Kim Craitor was there; I would have let him speak, just to see what he had to say.

Mr. Robert Bailey: What about the minister?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The minister wasn't there. So 5,000 teachers unhappy with the education Premier. What happened along the way? He cannot walk on water no more. It's done. It's gone. It's over. But he thought, "I've got other people. Don't worry. I can afford to lose the teachers." Well, all the backbenchers say how much they love teachers. I heard them yesterday. I heard them today. Each and every one of them, whether they were trustees or otherwise, they all love them still. My fear is that it's not interchangeable any longer, that it's no longer mutual, because you can't love if they don't love you back. I suppose you could, because I hear you say how much you love them. It's possible.

But why would the Premier give up so much love? Why would he give it all away? You see, it's money we're talking about. They have a few bucks—through you, Speaker, they have a few bucks to give. They also have workers—and at the end of the day, they go "hmp" to a Liberal member—and most of them voted for you, and you're giving that up. Oh, you have; oh, yes. Yes, I guarantee it 101%—not 99%; 101%. Add the one on top of the 100. You see, you could have had it all. You know why you could have had it all? Because teachers were so happy to give; they were. The Tories don't think so; I understand that. But they were happy to give it all away, literally. They were happy to give the freeze, if you can believe it; they were, because they understood the eco-

conomic situation, the economic problems we are in—not caused by them. They were quite happy to collaborate. But no, at the end of the day, the Liberals decided, “No, this collaboration stuff doesn’t really work. We’ve got to do something. We’ve got to shake things up because we are in trouble electorally. The polls show that we are in trouble, and we’ve got to beat somebody up.” So what does the Minister of Education do? She calls John Snobelen up and says, “John, how did you do it?” And John told her how to do it.

Interjection: He knows.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: John knew. He was good; he was good. I thought to myself, “Okay, I understand how it works. They need to create a crisis.” The Minister of Education decided, “I’m going to get tough.” Now, hear me: The Minister of Education doesn’t get tough unless the Premier says to her, “Go ahead and do it. It’s okay.” It didn’t happen on its own. No minister goes out on his or her own without the approval of the Premier and/or his staff—and sometimes they’re one and the same. Trust me: That’s how the system works. For the backbenchers who haven’t been there, that’s how it works. Some of you know, because in your caucus meetings you talk about it. I know how that works too. And I know that you are bold soldiers and you pretend that you’re on the same team. But some of you are saying, “Damn. Why don’t they listen to me? I’m telling them this is going to hurt, right?” Mike Coteau, from Scarborough—

Interjection: Don Valley East.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Don Valley East—I’m sure he was one of them who said, “This is going to hurt us, Premier,” or to the minister, “This is going to hurt us. It’s going to be painful.” I’m sure he said that. My friend from Scarborough—Agincourt as well would have said, “This is going to hurt us.” The member from Guelph, who has good experience, being the former chair of the trustees’ association across Ontario, would have said, “This is not good.” I suspect that she is a progressive on this matter and would have said, “We’re in trouble on this.” But no. Do you think the Minister of Education was listening? You think the Premier was listening to that advice?

Other members, like Kim Craiton, to name one, who obviously has spoken out on this, because he’s got the courage to do so—but all the others say, “We can’t do that. We can’t do what Kim is doing.” He’s allowed to do it because he has done it, but the others are saying, “We have to stay mum.” The true soldiers who stand up to say how much they love teachers, which always gives me a little laughter when I see it—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But you’re good soldiers; I admire you. I admire you, because I wouldn’t have the courage to speak. I would not get up and say how much I love the teachers after we beat them up. I couldn’t do that. But that’s right: I admire you all when you stand up and say, “No, no. We’ve got to do it.” This is an act of puerile politics, and you guys stand up and do no differently than some of the other governments that I shall not

name because they will be upset. But the public knows who I’m talking about.

When you call a bill—what do we call this bill?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Putting children first.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Putting children first. There we go. Does it remind you of any particular government I shall not name that for years used to come up with these titles that belied the very content of the bill?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Smallitics.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You know what I’m talking about, Mario. You were here. When you have titles like that, my point is that it’s puerile. You look silly. You become silly politically, particularly with those members—and we have many in our caucus, but I dare say some Conservative members—who just don’t get it and really do believe that it should be done right. They don’t like this kind of politics. I have to admit that if we should ever get in power—and I suspect it will happen—I would have—

Interjections: What?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know you’re incredulous; I understand. Things come around. Things come around—

Mr. Michael Prue: Wait till next Monday night, when the Liberals lose Quebec.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —and you, in the end, will say, “Behold, God does exist.” It will come around. But for me to get into government and do what so many others have done—I just couldn’t do it. I couldn’t be a faithful soldier. I couldn’t do it.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: But you were.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I could not do it, Minister of Housing. I could not any more. I might have been able to do it a long time ago, but no more; I can tell you that. I can tell you.

See, the problem we have is that the educational system is in trouble. In spite of all the things you say, the educational system is in trouble and now, in relation to many, many years ago, incredibly underfunded. In spite of all that stuff about how much you love them and how much you’re pouring money into it, more boards, Catholic and public, are in a crisis situation each and every year, and the member from Don Valley East knows this.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But you can. No one prevents you from doing that.

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Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It appears we have some cross-talking going on. Let’s try and go through the Chair and keep it down to a dull roar. It was nice there, and then a few members came back in and it seems to have started all over again. So I think we’re going to pull the plug in a few minutes on a couple of people. So I would suggest we settle down a little bit. Thanks.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: These changes that the government has made with this law, these changes are permanent, and that’s why teachers are incredibly upset. You’re making changes without their consent. The

government in the past, both the Premier and the finance minister, talked about how we need to do this together—we have to do it together. This government has broken this rule, and they have unilaterally decided to change those rules. That's why I say that the Premier cannot walk on water no more, because you've changed the rules, and these are permanent changes that will affect your relationship with them for a long, long time. And all of you know that those teachers are going to go to another political party and many of you are profoundly worried, and you know that I suspect where it will go. I dare not say where, but I think you have a clue.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: You remember Rae days.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, yes, indeed, I remember them; I was there. I remember it so well that I want to tell you that some of us have learned from it. And those of you who remain behind will learn from this bill. You will, 10 years hence, say, "Why did we allow it?" You will. I guarantee it. That's the way the system works. While you're in it, you can't help yourselves, and you say, "Well, the Premier has decided this. What are we going to do?"

Mr. Robert Bailey: Stand up. Stand up to him.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No. I know another party that did the same. It happened with the pensions, and most of those party members decided that they liked what their Premier was doing at the time, and when he was gone, things were a little different. You will see it in 10 years, I guarantee it.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The pension?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no; their mistake.

This is about attacking the middle class, and you are attacking them deliberately. There's a purpose to your attacks. You're attacking teachers because you believe, as Mike Harris did, that in doing so you will get the broader public sector to support you. And in my view you've made a profound mistake, because you will never get the right-wing votes—the Conservative votes. Sorry about right-wing; it's just so harsh—the Conservative votes. You will never get the Conservatives because the Conservatives know they do it better than you.

Mr. Michael Coteau: That's true.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They will whack people and they will whack them decisively and clearly. You guys are not as good, you guys are not as clear on those things. You whack them, but not as good as them. They are like Whac-A-Moles; the Whac-A-Mole kind of stuff, and it's ongoing—bang, bang, bang. You guys can't do it. You don't see the whole picture. You don't; they do. So the Conservative votes you hope to get, you're not getting. It is my view; I could be wrong. But you never know. You are very, very determined to get those other votes, hoping, as you did this, that you will hold on to teacher votes—you won't. Now, you will hold on to some OECTA members but you will lose many of them as well. You will lose many of them as well.

It's a choice that you have made and it's very deliberate: You are attacking middle-class folks because you believe out there that in dividing workers you will

accomplish some political ends, and the political end is Kitchener–Waterloo. It is. And for me, to do so just to win one seat, it is below you. It is below the education Premier. It is below him. You could have done it differently, and you would have probably won this election. You've given it away. God bless. I'm okay with that.

And in creating this crisis, you're saying to those middle-class workers that you don't really care about them. What you're saying to them is that the cause of these economic woes, these economic problems, is the teachers. They're saying it's the teachers and the other public servants. You're saying, for the moment, that it's the teachers.

You don't get at the real problems, and there are three. One, corporate taxes that this fine Conservative Party has been giving away forever, like la piñata that they could strike at every day. You know those piñatas? And those billions of dollars just come flowing down to the corporations as they put it into their fine, deep pockets—\$500 billion socked away that the fine Tories are happy to give—and the Liberals doing just as well, just as good, until we have a minority government and we force them to put a freeze on corporate taxes.

They will never say it out loud. They don't even talk about it, for God's sake. They don't even speak a word about that. They're going to save up to \$850 million because of that move. Save, I say. Why? Because that money would not create one single job, except take it away and reduce our public services, reduce our inability to pay our college system well so that we could hire full-time college professors, so we could make certain that funds go to our public education system as well, so we could make sure that tuition fees stay low and not continue to rise through the roof. But between the Tories and the Liberals, we just keep giving it away.

Boy, was there resistance to the surtax on the \$500,000 income earners. Was there resistance in that caucus, except for the soldiers who said, "What's wrong with that? What's wrong with it?" They kept saying that to McGuinty, "What's wrong with that?" and to Dwight, the Finance Minister, "What's wrong with that?" until finally they said, "Okay." They gave in, right? But they gave in reluctantly—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, I do.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: No, you don't.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, yes, I do.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: No, you don't.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You can say what you want, but we know.

Now, the Tories on the surtax—boy, they hate those taxes. They hate any form of tax. Their federal counterparts even hate the GST, and they've given up 10 million bucks every year. They would have eliminated the deficit if that GST had stayed on. But no, not Tories. They like to cut taxes to the bone, God bless. You guys are good.

Boy, would we be creating jobs if we tied our support to corporations that create long-term, good-paying jobs. We don't talk about that. What do we do? We've got the education Premier attacking teachers, "They're over-paid." Even some of the soldiers say, "Oh, but we've got to look. Some people are really hurting out there, so teachers have got to take their cuts." That's the language that some of the soldiers are using here today.

You're mistaken in your politics. You're doing it all wrong. You are. I can't help you any more. I've been trying for years to help you. I don't know how to help you.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's not working. Speaker, through you, it's not working. I'm trying real hard. What you're doing is not working. Attacking teachers, the middle-class folks, is not working. You've got to find a better way, because you're going down. You know that, right? Yes.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My friend from Trinity–Spadina is really confused. If you want to understand what attacking unions and attacking teachers is about, and compare us to a reasonable standard, look at the labour legislation that they proposed. The Conservatives proposed something that is the most extreme full-frontal attack on organized labour. It basically is something equivalent to the southern Republicans' right-to-work state or, as I call it, the right to a job that pays bubkes approach.

Do you want to understand who the enemy is on that? All you have to do is look to your immediate right and compare. If you can't figure out the difference, you've got a problem.

What has the federal NDP done, now that it has 100 seats? It has abandoned every social democratic program and looks more like the federal Liberal Party than the federal Liberal Party looks like the federal Liberal Party. So don't talk to me about moral principle, because you have politics of convenience that would make Jean Chrétien blush in the moment of his greatest popularity.

The other thing that really kills me is you've just exposed yourself, my dear friend from Trinity–Spadina, because do you know what you just did?

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Oh, please. Don't—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Just remember who is talking right now. What did you say? Our Premier is not the Premier of teachers' unions; our Premier is the Premier of education. It's always interesting to me that you disown your own government and party, and now you tell us the lessons are that we should have buckled to the unions and been intimidated by them and collapsed at the bargaining table and given them everything they wanted, which in this case would mean taking away early child-

hood education and all the advances. We're standing up, not to teachers and not to most teachers unions, but to a couple of extremists who would actually put 20,000 teachers and support workers out of work and take away and reduce the quality of childhood education. That's the difference between the Liberal Party and your party. Your party's lesson is, buckle and cave in to unions; don't protect early childhood education, because you are the party of extreme labour and our Premier is standing up for all—

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Time has expired. Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to offer a response to the member from Trinity–Spadina. Perhaps he'll listen if I say it in his own language: Come stai stasera?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Bene, bene.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Grazie. Bello discorso. Grande discorso. However, I might not agree with all of it. I'll translate it later. "Bello discorso": Good speech. I don't really agree with all of it. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has been very clear that he doesn't want to derail a school year. In fact, the Ontario PC caucus would appreciate no disturbances whatsoever, so that kids can be in the classroom and we can begin to implement somewhat of a wage freeze to get Ontario back on track.

This bill is the first recognition by the Ontario Liberal government that their spending is out of control and that PC leader Tim Hudak's call for a legislated province-wide mandatory broader public wage freeze is the right thing to do to get the province back on track.

We do have other ideas as well, as our leaders spoke with the Premier back in November about cutting corporate taxes back to 10%; reviewing all of the agencies, boards and commissions; cutting red tape; and revamping the arbitration system. Perhaps the Premier said it best in the National Post. I don't have a copy of it here, but I'll try to paraphrase: "We can't continue to do what we've done for the last nine years." I have to say, I'm fairly certain everybody in our caucus agrees with the Premier on that point. We simply cannot continue to do what we've done over the last nine years. Ciao bello.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Any further questions and comments?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I'm very pleased to speak to this. The member from Trinity–Spadina is usually such a happy, optimistic guy. But tonight he is just as negative as can be. I thought that I would like to take this opportunity to give you eight facts about our students, about our school system, that will cheer you up again—eight facts:

(1) Ontario schools are the best in the English-speaking world. The Economist describes Ontario's school system as one of the best-performing school systems in the world.

(2) Our 15-year-old students are among the top 10 in the world for literacy.

(3) Our grade 8 students are leading the country in math, reading and science, and Ontario kids are the only ones who scored above the national average in reading.

(4) Grad rates: High school graduation rates have gone from 68% when we took office to 82% in 2011. That's almost 100,000 more students with their high school diploma than would have had, had we not taken the action we did.

(5) The Pan-Canadian Assessment Program shows that Ontario students are the only students in the country who are achieving above the national average in math, reading and science, and lead the country in reading.

(6) PISA, an OECD organization, confirmed this: Ontario students are among the best in the world.

(7) The OECD recognized Ontario in an education report called Strong Performers and Successful Reformers as a world leader—a world leader—in professional—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): I'm sorry, the time has expired.

Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to say that it's always entertaining to listen to the member from Trinity–Spadina. Please allow me, since we do have an Italian flavour.

Remarks in Italian.

Thank you for that.

You mentioned many things, but one of the things you didn't really talk about is the children, the students. We spoke about politics, we spoke about by-elections, we spoke about unions, but we didn't talk a lot about the kids and about the students. I want to say that the reason we're here is because of our kids, our families, because of our students. That's the main reason.

Now, we are here also because these contracts expire on August 31. This was said months ago; negotiations began back in February. We have some partners that have come on board. We have a deadline; that's the deadline. The contracts roll over, and the truth is that we cannot afford, in the challenging financial times we are living in, these contracts.

There's another point I want to make. We spoke about the teachers. I think teachers are crucial to our society. We can't really plan and build a strong economy without them and we can't build the leaders of the future. But the respect for teachers doesn't belong to one particular party. It doesn't belong to the NDP or to the Conservatives or to the Liberals. Everyone can have respect for teachers, even though at this point in time we cannot afford to treat them as in the past. Thank you, Rosario. Grazie.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): The member for Trinity–Spadina has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you to the members who spoke.

It's not about affordability, affording or not being able to afford. It isn't. It's not about the kiddies. It's not. It's about politics. This is about politics. I know you don't want to say it is. I know what you all have to say—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, I guarantee it's about politics, because when you don't like the teachers you call them unions and when you like them you call them federations. There are two distinctions: "federation" is a better-sounding name whereas "union" is just so nasty. The Tories used to call them "union bosses." You guys don't do that, although I heard the minister of post-secondary ed use "unions" tonight in a very negative way, which I thought was interesting.

My point is that it's not about kids, because if the teacher federations were interested in working out a deal, which they say—maybe you don't believe them; from what I've gathered from their public announcements, including from private discussions I've had with them, they were quite happy to basically give you much of what you are forcing them to take. If that is true, and I believe it to be true, then I say to myself, what's the motivation behind this? If they are doing this voluntarily, why do you force them to accept a deal that will sever your relationship with them for the next 15 to 20 years? Worse, I dare say, than the social contract. I say that because these changes will be much more permanent than the social contract. The social contract was a very limited issue for a limited time. What you guys are doing is going to last. The changes will hurt many teachers, and they will not forgive you. They will not forgive you because you could have done it peacefully in a collaborative manner but you decided to beat them up, and for that you will pay. You will pay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Further debate?

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Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise tonight to speak about Bill 115, the Putting Students First Act, to provide an overview as well as some context, some history, about this bill and talk about younger teachers.

Teacher and support staff contracts will expire on August 31, just about two days from now. That's why we have been working with many of our partners for almost six months to establish a new, sustainable education funding framework. In July, the government signed an agreement—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Excuse me. I can hardly hear you for the discussion that's taking place immediately to my right. I would ask the House leaders, if they have a discussion, to take it elsewhere, because I think I would like to hear the member from Scarborough–Agincourt. Thank you.

Please continue.

Ms. Soo Wong: In July, the government signed an agreement with OECTA, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. This agreement represents a road map that balances the need for us to reach fiscal targets while protecting investments in the full-day kindergarten program, smaller class sizes and the classroom experience.

This agreement is reflected in the proposed Putting Students First Act. It is a fair and balanced approach that

will benefit Ontario's youngest teachers and will help preserve 20,000 teacher and support staff jobs. Teachers at more than half of Ontario school boards have now signed agreements with the province, and now we need the rest of the teachers' unions and boards to do their part.

The proposed legislation would take effect on September 1 and will provide, until December 31, 2012, for all school boards, teachers and support staff to engage in local bargaining. This would allow boards and unions to reach local agreements while also including the parameters set out in the legislation. Where any agreement does not meet the standards of the legislation, the Minister of Education will have the power to withhold approval of the agreement.

Mr. Speaker, before introducing this legislation in the House, we took a number of steps to release the legislation publicly and to the opposition parties. We did receive constructive feedback from Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition—I want to acknowledge that piece. That's why the bill has changed to reflect their advice. Without amending the memorandum of understanding we signed with OECTA after over 300 hours of discussions, we incorporated these changes in the bill before introduction to help speed passage of the bill.

The diagnostics and fair hiring provisions will only be entrenched for our partners who have signed or will sign an agreement by August 31. Those partners who have not signed an agreement will not have those provisions entrenched in local agreements. Mr. Speaker, this was a tough decision for us to make. Our strong preference always was to have these provisions in each and every local collective agreement and in law. But minority calls for reasonable compromise. We will instead move forward non-legislative tools that will allow us to enact these policies.

I want to have this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to talk about younger teachers. As a former school board trustee, I recognize the concerns of thousands of younger teachers in our system, and I'm proud our government is taking steps to address younger teachers in our schools. The McGuinty government supports Ontario's young teachers, as shown in our OECTA MOU and the proposed Putting Students First Act.

We are introducing fair hiring practices to the education sector. There are teachers who have completed college who have been supply teaching and been on occasional teachers' lists for some time—in many cases, many years—not sure what the process is to be hired on a permanent basis.

The MOU sets out fair hiring practices that will bring transparency and accountability to teacher hiring practices and make them consistent across the province. The OECTA MOU also ensures that every school board understands the rules and hiring practices, Mr. Speaker. While management will still make the ultimate decision about whom to hire, their role comes with the responsibility to create a process that can be equally accessed and understood by all.

We also recognize the impact on young teachers of retired teachers who have returned as substitutes. We are working with the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan. As of September 1, retired teachers will be limited to a maximum of 50 teaching days per year, down from 95. This opens supply days and classroom teaching for young professionals.

During my term as a trustee for the school board, I heard many concerns about not supporting our young teachers, and I want to remind my colleagues opposite that previous governments, both PC and NDP governments, never had the leadership or the courage to address the concerns and needs of our younger teachers. Now we're finally addressing their concerns, and it is the right thing to do.

Let me also remind my colleagues in the House: This legislation also ensures that younger teachers who do not have banked sick days, which was not previously supported, can use sick days and can go on maternity leave. The new sick leave plan allows younger teachers by providing some income protection for serious illnesses and improves the maternity leave provision, and that is the right thing to do—again, supporting young teachers.

Many of us have communicated with our constituents. Some of them are younger teachers; some of them are about to be retired teachers. We all recognize that younger teachers have contributed to the system. They've been properly trained. They are keen, they're enthusiastic, and most important, they want opportunity. This proposed legislation is providing that opportunity.

I cannot stress enough why this legislation is so clear in terms of hiring practices, now supporting younger teachers having opportunity in the classroom. Each one of us in this House has met or has spoken on the phone or in email with a younger teacher, and they're pleading with us: "Give us opportunity." When are they going to get the opportunity, if not through legislation, if not through this House? Who is going to give these young teachers an opportunity, Mr. Speaker? With regard to this legislation, it is the right thing to do.

I also want to remind my colleagues opposite that this legislation is not just about protecting one part of the teaching profession but ensuring fair hiring practices, because there has been inconsistency of hiring practices across Ontario. For the first time, we now have transparency, and we're making sure school boards know what are fair hiring practices and the guidelines they must undertake.

Most importantly, now you have transparency. One thing is accountability; another is making sure everybody knows what the hiring practices are all about, and that's what this proposed legislation is about. I have been a trustee with the previous Rae government. The Rae days affected the classroom. I've been a trustee when it was the PC government, closing down schools, firing the teachers. I've been there. At the end of the day, we're looking at a fair, transparent and accountable process. We're not laying off teachers; we're not. We're making sure the system is continuing the success we have gained.

We heard today from the Premier that EQAO results show our students are doing better than before, and more students are graduating from our system.

More importantly, this new legislation that we're proposing is ensuring hiring practices across Ontario. We have all heard that younger teachers have been disadvantaged. Younger teachers have been disadvantaged in terms of the retired teachers coming back in for X number of days now. Through this legislation, it's a maximum of 50 days, allowing younger teachers an opportunity in the classroom experiences to apply what they learned in teachers' college and from experiential learning into the classroom.

This legislation also ensures that every single school board knows about the fair hiring practices. Without this transparency and accountability, different school boards would have different kinds of hiring practices. We cannot allow publicly funded school boards to have inconsistency in hiring practices. And this is the right thing to do.

At the end of the day, we might argue that we are wanting the wage salary freeze across the board—we want to make sure younger teachers, who are the future of this province, are given an opportunity to be in the classroom, to apply what they have learned in teachers' college and to go into the classroom. This is the right thing to do.

It also provides employment opportunities, because we know younger teachers haven't been given an opportunity to be in the classroom. It is a concern all of us recognize. Now, for the first time, our government is addressing the younger teachers' needs and concerns, because previous governments have never addressed their concerns. They have talked about it; well, the talking stops right here. We are going to make sure that for younger teachers, their credentials, their learning skills, are being recognized, and they will be given an opportunity, Mr. Speaker. That's the right thing to do.

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The other piece—I know the legislation talks about the diagnostic tests. The concern in the past had been, what is the role of a teacher in terms of these diagnostic assessments? I know that our teachers know our students best, because they know little Johnny in his classroom well. So they will be a part of the assessment testing. Our commitment in terms of student achievement is part of this discussion, because at the end of the day, who knows the students best? The teachers. So at the end of the day, they will be a part of this diagnostics assessment and they will be consulted. We have heard loud and clear from parents who are concerned about their child with special needs that they haven't been involved or the teacher hasn't been consulted. They will be given an opportunity to be part of this diagnostic test assessment, and also as a part of this assessment piece they will have a clear voice, so they will ensure that the learning needs of the young students in the classroom are being protected.

The other piece about the diagnostic assessment is the fact that it must be fair, it must be current and it must reflect the learner's needs. Many of us in this room have

a teaching background. We know that we have the experience. We know that teachers know the students best and they know how to advocate for their students. So with regard to there having been a lot of concerns about what the diagnostic assessments are all about and who will be doing them, we recognize that piece. We also recognize that teachers need to lead these assessments, because they know their students best.

The OECTA MOU requires that teachers conduct these assessments, instead of testing for the sake of testing. We don't want the testing because someone recommended it or the principal drives it. No, this is driven but also done by the teacher. We wanted to make sure that the assessment reflects the needs of the students and that it will help the students' learning needs. Because this, at the end of the day, will help the learners. If we don't, somebody else is going to be asking for that piece, and how are we going to ensure that piece?

We are very proud of the achievements we have gained in terms of education, not just about the EQAO rating. Internationally, we've been recognized by the OECD. We've also been recognized about full-day kindergarten. I have a significant diverse student population in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt. I know that full-day kindergarten helps the young students in the schools in my riding, because at the end of the day, it not only provides early learning; it also provides the social interactions. Many of my young students are only children. That interaction, early learning, but also learning English as a second language, ensures our students' success. Many of the students in my riding are raised by their grandparents, as opposed to their parents, because culturally, grandparents take the lead in the parenting of our young people. I know for a fact that full-day kindergarten provides that early learning and supporting of literacy skills and numeracy skills, but also supporting full-day kindergarten is the family literacy centre. All of this is critical for learning. It's not just about in-classroom stuff. The young child's grandmother can bring him or her into the parenting and literacy centre to provide the literacy support, because many of the students in my riding have English as a second language. This support is critical for learning. I have visited many parenting and literacy centres in my riding, and they have been consistently telling me that these learning centres help support what they do at home as well as in the classroom.

So at the end of the day, what are we here for? I know my colleagues have expressed concerns returning to the Legislature two weeks early. But we are here for our constituents, especially the youngest members of our society, our students. At the end of the day, we are here to support their learning needs, protect their learning needs, but most importantly to ensure they will have a successful school year.

Next Tuesday, all the school boards will be opening their schools. I know many of the teachers in my riding are going back into the classrooms already, making sure the classrooms are clean and to prepare and get ready for

class. I'm thrilled they are doing a great job, making sure they're ready for the young students in the classroom.

Equally, we also want to make sure the younger teachers who are now waiting to find out if they are going to be hired in September—they now have hope, they now have opportunity to think they'll maybe be hired back or that they will be given an opportunity. At the end of the day, what future do these young teachers have—they graduated from a faculty of education with a bachelor of education at a minimum, many with a master's degree, and have no opportunities. What future are these young teachers going to have if we don't, through this proposed legislation, provide the support they need? They have asked us many, many times, not just our government but previous governments, for help. This is the first time we are recognizing that piece, and we are going to acknowledge it and put it in writing. That is the right thing to do. We need to make sure that not just the youngest students in the classroom, the four-year-olds, are supported, but the youngest teachers in our system are being supported as well.

What can I say? I know there have been some comments made that this proposed legislation is about the by-elections. Well, I beg to differ. At the end of the day, we're here for the young people, the youngest people in our classrooms, the youngest citizens of this province. We also need to support the younger teachers. Nobody in this House can say the younger teachers in this province do not need the support. Every one of us has heard about the concerns and the needs of the younger teachers. Which other party, except for our current government, has reduced the maximum number of days for retired teachers to come back? Which other government has addressed the needs of younger teachers? None. I've been there, serving under both the previous PC and the previous Rae governments. I know.

Our proposed legislation is not laying off teachers. We are not laying off teachers. We are building new schools. In Scarborough we are putting up a new elementary school.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: A school in Peterborough just closed down.

Ms. Soo Wong: That's because there are no students; it's student enrolment. We all know what drives the opening of a school.

We are all here for the youngest citizens, the future of this province, but also to support another education sector: the youngest teachers. If we don't support these younger teachers—everyone is talking about them, but no one is really supporting them in writing. Our government is. We have taken the position to ensure younger teachers will be successful, and we are doing the right thing. I challenge any one of you to say younger teachers don't need to be supported. The previous Harris government, the previous Rae government, none of you ever addressed the needs and concerns of younger teachers. We know they need to be supported, and they will be supported through this proposed legislation.

Before I end my remarks, I also want to recognize and applaud the minister. Once again the minister is taking the leadership role to address the concerns of the entire province. It is not just about one or two school boards; it's about the entire province, making sure we have equity, making sure we address the financial challenges. And it's not just about the fiscal challenge piece. We also recognize that our values, our principles, are to protect education. That's why my family came to Canada. That's why my family came to the province of Ontario. As a first-generation Chinese Canadian, I can tell you that many new Canadians come to this province because of the public education. I kid you not. Many of the international students coming to Toronto, coming to our province, come for the public education.

Don't get to thinking this is not about education. It is about education. I challenge any one of you to do better than we are. You have no record to say that your EQAO ratings were better. You have no record to say you are supporting young people. At the end of the day, it is about kids. Remember that.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: I listened with interest to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt and her commentary. I have to suggest that she is probably not very accurate that we've done nothing. I know when I was teaching at Wilfrid Laurier's Brantford campus, I taught a course in which the students at Nipissing University who were at teachers' college took a course with me. To say we've done nothing for teachers would be a falsehood because I, in fact, taught them.

The reality of it is, that government, that party, cannot do anything for young teachers unless the PC party and the PC caucus here bail them out. That's the reality of it. Without our support, you can't help young teachers. To think you have a monopoly on young teachers, I think, is an erroneous statement, frankly.

We're here today to debate a bill, Bill 115—what do they call it? The Putting Students First Act. It's a great title. I'm going to talk about the title at length when I get a chance to speak in this debate. But that's what we are here to do. We got recalled here at the 11th hour to debate a bill that's called Putting Students First which really should be titled Bailing out the Liberal Party Now, because without our help, they would be nowhere.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Quit politicking.

Mr. Rob Leone: The Minister of Agriculture says I am politicking? I am politicking? I can't believe such a statement when you have created a crisis at the 11th hour. Your government called—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Cambridge?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, folks, I know it's late, and we are all getting tired. The Minister of Agriculture is not in his seat, and he's yelling across

the floor. The member from Cambridge is yelling back at him and not going through the Chair. We know the decorum; we know the rules. Let's stick to the program, folks. I know it's late, but it's going to be later if we don't get on with it. So thank you.

The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much. I listened intently, both the short time I was in the chair and here in this seat, to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt. I'm reminded of the great saying by Socrates. The most famous thing he was ever quoted as saying is, "Sir, I would gladly be persuaded by you, but not against my better judgment." Having listened, I don't think that in any judgmental way one could consider what the member from Scarborough–Agincourt had to say as being relevant.

Quite frankly, I listened to the Minister of Health rhyme off eight reasons why the schools in Ontario were the best in the world, and the eight reasons why they were the best all pre-dated this legislation. It all happened because we have the best teachers in the world. We have the best support staff in the world. We have an opportunity in the schools that look after children, especially disadvantaged children and especially children who don't speak English as a first language.

So we have a member who stands up here and says all of this has to be protected by some kind of draconian legislation against teachers who haven't even taken a strike vote, against teachers who have already promised they don't want a raise in money, against school boards who weren't even consulted that their rights to bargain collectively—and I'm talking here about management—have been taken away. Here, even the management and the school trustees—and this member was a school trustee. What would she be saying today at the Toronto board when she found out that the province of Ontario wanted to take away the rights that she had? She would have been a democratically elected person. And all of those school trustees across Ontario, all of them, who are democratically elected to negotiate with teachers unions and others, have been told they are no longer relevant. All of this is part of that legislation, and I don't understand how she can stand here and say those things and draw those conclusions, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and through you, I want to say the speech delivered tonight by the member from Scarborough–Agincourt was outstanding. Let me tell you why. You know what? She inherited the mantle of one of the finest members who ever served here, the Honourable Gerry Phillips, and I can tell you that Gerry would be proud tonight of that speech that you just delivered in this Legislature.

Let's put this in context. From 1990 to 1995, the NDP government social contract: 12 unpaid days and 5% of the teaching complement of the province of Ontario gone.

Then, in 1995 to 2003, we had a billion dollars taken out of the education budget of the province of Ontario. Teachers were on the picket line month in and month out. I remember that my poor wife was pregnant with our second child and had to be on the picket line at St. Teresa school in Peterborough. That's what they were all about.

We have put over \$6.6 billion into the education budget to make this the very best education system, with two families, in the province of Ontario, and people day in and day out are proud of our accomplishments here. If I had three hours, Mr. Speaker, I could go through the eight points by the Minister of Health, but you're not going to give me three hours tonight so I could go through them on a point-by-point basis. Maybe tomorrow I'll get the opportunity to make that speech.

We have excellent teachers. As I said, Arne Duncan, President Barack Obama's education secretary, has been to Ontario on at least five occasions to look at the successful things we have implemented in the province of Ontario. We've been able to do that because we have one of the most outstanding partnerships with our education professionals in the province of Ontario.

We will continue to move on to deliver excellence in education with the kind of leaders, like the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, who make this happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I have three sons, and I'm really glad they're out of the education system right now—they have trades—so they don't have to watch the performance by this government here.

This is nothing but a manufactured crisis. The teachers were going to co-operate with us, with your government. Instead, you manufactured a crisis in order to win votes in the upcoming by-elections.

Our leader has been very clear that he doesn't want to derail the school year. In fact, the Ontario PC caucus would appreciate no disturbances whatsoever, so that kids can be in the classroom and we can begin to implement somewhat of a wage freeze to get Ontario back on track.

We had two choices: Allow a 5.5% wage increase when the province couldn't afford it, or stop the pay increase for a portion of the public sector, get kids in the classrooms and keep working toward a broader public wage freeze. This is why we will bail Dalton McGuinty out this time.

Your government is out of gas; it's out of wind. This bill is the first recognition by the Ontario Liberal government that their spending is out of control and that the call of our leader, Tim Hudak, for a legislated, province-wide, mandatory broader public sector wage freeze is the right thing to do to get this province back on track.

We value our publicly funded education system, but in order for that public education system to be sustainable, we have to be able to afford it. In Ontario, we have over 114,000 teachers, and in the 2012 budget, the Liberals said that freezing teachers' wages included their salary

grid. It is necessary if government is to meet its commitment to balance the budget. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough–Agincourt has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the members from Cambridge, Beaches–East York, Peterborough and Perth–Wellington for your remarks tonight.

I remind the members opposite that the opposition keeps using the word “crisis,” and the other party keeps talking about by-elections. Our party, our government, is consistently using the words “students,” “learners’ needs” and “supporting our classrooms.” I recall, when I was a young school trustee back in the 1990s, the crisis that the PC government did.

I also want to remind everybody here tonight of the fact that at the end of the day, every school board in Ontario knew since February, when the GSN was released, that they needed to renegotiate their contracts by August 31. So unless they do not know and don’t have a calendar, they still have two more days. We still have two more days to get this done. But our priority has always been the students in the classroom, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that when we have successful students, we all recognize there are also great teachers in the classroom, but teachers alone are not the only support. We also ensure the capital, the infrastructure of schools, that we put enough resources into building and preserving our schools outside of infrastructure. We also worked with the various community partners. I know that, because I was there. We work with the parents; we created a parent council. We fund many of these initiatives. We do the family literacy centres we talked about. We support the after-school programs. We ensure the community is being supported in terms of community use of schools. So classrooms are one aspect, supporting through the teachers, through the learners. But there is a whole gamut of other resources we support as a government towards student success. I just want to remind everybody.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I would like to indicate that I’m sharing my time with the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

I read with interest—when I first saw the name of Bill 115, the Putting Students First Act, I thought if my email could play the violin it would be very, very sweet and poetic. It reminded me of when I took a gondola ride in Venice and there was a nice serenade that was going on. It was a very sweet moment, because who in their right mind wouldn’t want to be putting students first? I actually think they named the title to get the support of the NDP. I thought it was in the last election they wanted change that put people first: Put people first; put students first. Unfortunately, they didn’t get your support. So I think that’s a hashtag fail, as Jack Layton would say, on the title of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I’m a parent. I have two kids. The reason I’m here is because I want to put my kids first. As an educator, I had thousands of students when I was a professor in university. My colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West is also a teacher. Each and every day we worked, before we came to this place—and even now that we are in this place—and have been putting students first each and every day. Do you know what? When we saw this bill—and unfortunately my email was muted and I didn’t have that serenade—I knew right then and there that my caucus, the Ontario PC caucus, would stand shoulder to shoulder to put our students first. That’s exactly what we’ve been doing.

Unfortunately, the government ceases to remember this gentleman, their Liberal economist by the name of Don Drummond. Don Drummond is a guy who wrote this big report that’s collecting dust in government offices. I know members of the opposition still read it on occasion. Don Drummond said that if we don’t change course, we’re going to run ourselves into a \$30-billion deficit and a \$411-billion debt. That’s what Don Drummond said—your economist—he said that you’re going on that path.

You know, it’s been said over and over again that if we continue on that path, if our debt-to-GDP ratio increases beyond 50% that we are on course to becoming the Greece of Canada. Fifteen years ago, Greece was facing a similar path, a similar crossroads that we’re facing here in Ontario today. There are two choices: We continue down that path, raise our deficit and shatter our economy; or we can rein in our government spending, encourage private sector job growth and get our province back on track. Much like Greece, that government needs a bailout. They need a bailout from the catastrophe that they’ve made of our province’s finances. That’s the reason we’re here today. This is an education bill, they say, but it’s also a finance bill. They know that they’re going down the wrong track and they need to change course and they need a bailout, much like Greece.

We have long been advocating, since the last election and before, for a mandatory across-the-board public sector wage freeze: a mandatory across-the-board public sector wage freeze. I think folks in the broader public sector understand that we are in a financial mess. We’re not in a financial mess of our doing; we’re in a financial mess of their doing. They’re the ones who got us here. They’re the ones who spent us over a cliff. Again, it’s worth saying: They need a bailout. They need us to help them. They need to see a different path.

Even though this bill is not what we would have wanted, at least it gets them changing their minds, hopefully, about what they actually need, which is an across-the-board public sector wage freeze. This is ultimately a mess of their own making. Every time we look, every time we open the newspaper, it seems another money bomb has been dropped. We look at the \$2.4-billion eHealth fiasco, where four million Ontarians still don’t have electronic medical records. Diabetics in the province of Ontario don’t have their system up and

running. We have the Mississauga gas plant: \$190 million for political expediency. That's why we spent that money, for no other reason than to save Liberal seats. We call it the seat-saver program. It is what it is: another money bomb. Merit pay: 98% of managers get merit pay. We say an across-the-board public sector wage freeze that applies to the managers, just like it applies to the workers, just like it should apply to MPPs and cabinet ministers and parliamentary assistants and so on, right across the board.

They failed to listen to us. They had a bill presented to them by the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London. They don't believe in that; they voted against it. So we are here to bail them out.

I was at the debate in K-W on Monday.

Interjection.

Mr. Rob Leone: Of course she did.

You know what? The question of an across-the-board public sector wage freeze came forward, and what did they say? We had the NDP saying that they support a conversation on a public sector wage freeze. What does that mean? They want to talk about it. Well, they can talk about it. We see talk not leading to action often. The Liberal candidate, remarkably, said he is for a public sector wage freeze, but his party doesn't vote for it, so I don't know where they stand really. Only one candidate in that debate, the PC candidate, stood up for a mandatory across-the-board public sector wage freeze that will save \$2 billion from the financial mess that government has put us in.

On my website I have a debt clock. That debt clock stands today at \$263.8 billion: \$263.8 billion. What is that per capita? Over \$20,528. This is about putting students first, as the Liberals like to say. What could students buy with the money and the debt that party added? They could buy 10,498 pencils. They could buy 133 pairs of shoes. They could buy 270 video games. They could buy 348 soccer balls. They could pay for piano lessons, from start to finish. If we were putting kids first, they would balance the budget so they won't put their debt, their mismanagement and their overspending on the backs of our kids.

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This is the crossroads we're at, Mr. Speaker. We believe we have to get to a point where we rein in government spending. It's on that basis, and that basis alone, that we support this bill. We want to see our kids back in class, yes. There is great question whether that was ever in danger. But, more importantly, we want to see the government finally understand that they have to accept the fiscal realities that they put us in, the fiscal realities that have seen debt escalate to epic proportions, a position that no other province is in—only this one—where we have seen more than five years where our unemployment rate is higher than the national average, a jobs crisis—600,000 people out of work; 300,000 manufacturing jobs gone.

If we don't fix our fiscal broken record, we are well on our way to fiscal catastrophe, and it will hurt our kids, it

will hurt our education system and it will hurt our health care system, because we're spending too much money paying for their mistakes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: To my colleague from Cambridge: Thank you very much.

Speaker, I am eager to rise tonight to speak about this particular piece of legislation, the one that has brought us all back from our ridings and our constituents so that we may deal with a particularly pressing issue facing both Ontario and my constituents back in Chatham–Kent–Essex.

I don't think I'm alone in the opinion that the Premier's mess has brought us to this point; I think all of us wanted to get back to our communities and tackle the challenges that confront our constituents, the folks who sent us here. I think each of us was elected because we want to be the ones to solve those challenges face to face. But the summer didn't go as planned. We were called back, as I said, because this government found itself in yet another crisis. First it was a looming fiscal crisis, then it was a jobs crisis, and now it's a labour crisis that threatens the school year for children across the province.

I wonder if this was the strong action that we've heard so much about, because to me it seems like the wrong action, time and time again—action that sent Ontario spiralling into a \$15-billion deficit; action that has kept our unemployment levels higher than the national average; action that saw eight years of bowing to union bosses across the province, of allowing this government to be bullied, yet refusing to anticipate a problem when that approach became unsustainable. The summer didn't go as planned because, quite frankly, this government has only ever had one plan for its problems. I call it plan A, "spend"; there is no plan B.

We've got to be very clear about who is at fault for bringing us to the brink of losing the school year. It's the party opposite. Bill 115 seeks to remedy the situation they have created with a piece of legislation that is two years too late. We have to conduct debate on this legislation with little forward notice. All the while, there was at least one party that was willing to offer a solution that would not only strike a blow against the fiscal downward spiral but would also be an equitable solution for more than simply a crisis in the education sector. That party was the one that I stand with today, the Ontario PC Party, the one that called for an across-the-board public sector wage freeze that would have saved us billions of dollars over the next few years. This, unlike Bill 115, was not a new idea. Bringing public sector salaries in line with private sector realities was something that I talked about personally as I went door to door in my riding last year as part of the Progressive Conservative platform, and I remain proud to stand with that. The members opposite reject the idea out of hand. They rejected it when our leader, Tim Hudak, went before the Premier to help steer the latest budget back into the realm of fiscal sanity, and it was rejected in the leadup to the summer

break, the government understanding all the while what the cost would be of not taking the action we recommended.

The cost would have been two different options, only one slightly more preferable than the other: The teacher unions would have allowed the existing contracts to roll over, thus implementing an unaffordable 5.5% hike, or this government's current plan could be adopted. This is where we find ourselves today: in a position to allow Bill 115 to pass, to allow cost increases for teachers to rocket upward to \$450 million over the next couple of years, despite the economic crisis the party opposite has created, despite all the good ideas that have been proposed and batted away.

I relish none of this. My colleagues and I are here to see that students get an education. They're entitled to that education. The party opposite, particularly the Premier's cabinet, are here for one reason: to save face. I believe that there are members opposite who do not support Bill 115, members who recognize the runaway train in Ontario's finances, and I hope that they will find it within themselves to speak up in the future, urge sanity upon their leaders and not toe the party line.

This is not a perfect bill; far from it. In OECTA alone, nearly 18,000 unionized teachers will continue to move up the salary grid. When this deal is replicated across all school boards, that number will jump to 45,000. In order to see this as anything resembling a wage freeze, you'd have to squint your eyes and tilt your head sideways.

The Liberal government has messed up. Still, they won't fess up after they've messed up and admit that they desperately need help to bail them out of this ugly, unnecessary conflict. But we don't have time for admissions of guilt. Look, the school year is just days away. Ontario creeps closer to a fiscal cliff with every passing moment. Sadly, this bill may bring us even closer to that. But we're going to have to bite down hard, pass this bill and then come back for more. That's what our party intends to do.

There is much more work to be done. It doesn't end today. This is not the finish line; this is just a hurdle in the opening stretch—a hurdle that didn't need to be here, but it is, and we have to deal with it. There are 4,000 outstanding collective agreements yet to be resolved. The Auditor General should perhaps review the minister's fiscal plan and the OECTA memorandum of understanding.

There are yet changes we want to see made to this bill. Our education critic has been working hard to make sure that this bill is accomplishing something in the way of accountability to the parents who send their children to school every day. We want to see principals have the power to hire the best substitute teachers, not just the ones with the most impressive seniority. It's a sad day when the members opposite must push the school year to the very brink of disaster before they will even consider bringing some accountability to our classrooms and to this government, but here we are.

After this is settled, it will be time to press on, to continue to confront the challenges that face us all. I hope that this government will take away some very important lessons from this debacle and will understand that their plan A will no longer be good enough for Ontario.

But wait: Is that a bell I hear? Yes, it is, and this Liberal government has just been schooled. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my two colleagues from the Conservative Party, but in two minutes I only have time to comment on one. I wish to draw my conclusions or my comments to the member from Cambridge, because he's quite an erudite fellow, a professor, a smart man. But he brought in the whole thing that's happening in Greece, and I do have to correct him on behalf of all of my Greek-speaking constituents. They are the second-largest group, after the Chinese-speaking, in my own riding.

I'm very familiar with Greece. Perhaps he should do some research not only on Greece, but on Italy and Spain and Portugal and those countries that are facing the problems. Greece is in the circumstances it is in now because of successive right-wing governments. What they did was they cut taxes and refused to get taxes paid to them. They continued to spend, but they did not collect taxes from the most wealthy people.

At the same time, because Greece had entered into the EU, there was lots of money floating around, money that was coming in from other places for roads and bridges and sewers and the Olympic games and everything else. Things were good and people were spending money. They were spending money they did not have. The government was doing it, which was a right-wing government by the name of New Democracy, and the people of Greece themselves were. But the thing is that Greece is in the situation it is today because it has the least tax revenue of any of the countries that belong to the common market.

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If you look at what is happening in Italy, it's the second-worst case, and you have to look at Berlusconi, who is also a right-wing guy who did the same thing: He cut taxes and made sure that people didn't have to pay them.

If you want to draw those conclusions, you have to get a mirror and look at yourself. Why is it you want to cut taxes to put Canada in the same kind of position that Greece and Italy find themselves in today? Right-wing governments did it and you'll do it too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to respond to the remarks by the members from Cambridge and Chatham-Kent-Essex. Where I started actually follows right along from the member from Beaches-East York, because both members talked about the provincial deficit. To hear the speeches, you would think this is because the

global recession was somehow the fault of the Ontario government spending on public servants. I beg to differ. What started the global recession was a bunch of private sector bankers in the United States, not the Ontario government spending on public services. So let's get our economic analysis straight to start with.

When we look at that provincial deficit, we recognize we need to have the budget balanced. We did in fact ask the retired chief economist of the Toronto-Dominion Bank for some advice. When it came to the education sector, the advice he gave us was to cancel full-day kindergarten, to lay off 20,000 young, junior teachers, to lay off 10,000 education support workers. And, yes, that chapter of the report is collecting dust, because we said we're not going to do that. We are going to protect full-day kindergarten; we are going to protect those young teachers' jobs; we are going to protect those education support workers' jobs. But in return for that, we do need to hit the pause button on education sector compensation.

We have successfully negotiated with the English Catholic teachers, with the French teachers. We have not concluded agreements—which the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex accurately said would roll over. We have not completed those agreements, so we need this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: As a former educator myself, I find this debate quite interesting. The Liberals want to come across as the only ones who care about students. What my esteemed colleague from Cambridge alluded to earlier is that he and I both come from those institutions that nurture the most important resource this province has. So don't give us the flowery title of Putting Students First, right? We put students first as well.

Mr. Leone alluded to his children. I have two young daughters. We want to make sure that they receive the best education they can get.

This Liberal government has failed the education system in this province, and that's why I'm here tonight. They've lowered the bar so far. They haven't done the right things when it comes to ensuring that the young generation of this province has the right tools to meet the requirements for the global economy of the 21st century.

We need to stand up and make it clear that we do care about students. The NDP cares about students. The NDP have made it very clear that they care about students. The Liberals here are playing games. The by-election is coming up. This is just a tactic so that they can look good for those people who support them: their former union bosses that they love so much. It's not about the students; it's about the by-election. So I take offence, as do Mr. Leone and my colleagues here, when they think they're the only ones fighting for the students here in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have to say that we're probably going to vote differently on this bill in regard to the outcome, but we do agree on one point, and that is:

Really, this is about the politics of the by-elections. Let's call it what it is. I've spoken to all of the school boards in my area, plus some. Not one of the school boards has told me that they were going to lock teachers out. I spoke to the teachers' affiliate associations across my riding provincially. None of them have said that they're prepared to go out. In fact, they said that they're prepared to do a wage freeze. So it seems to me that there are the makings of getting a deal here between the school boards and the ones representing the teachers, and the only one who seems to be getting in the way is the government. This is really about the government trying to ratchet up a crisis so they can say, "Oh, everybody be afraid. There's going to be a lockout. There's going to be something, and we have to be really tough and fix the problem." The reality is that you're the ones who are the problem; you're the ones who are creating the crisis. I think this is rather regrettable. Here we are doing this. Why? Not because we want to put kids first; it's because, quite frankly, the government wants to put seats in the Legislature first. I think that particular line used earlier in question period by Andrea Horwath was exactly right.

I just say to my friends across the way: I think we all have the same objective. We want to make sure that our kids are in the classroom; we want to make sure that we manage the expenses of this province responsibly, that we live within our means. If we look at the platforms of the last provincial election, Andrea Horwath, along with others, said the same thing: We recognize that there's a deficit and that we have to manage that. But this, my friends, has little to do with managing the deficit; it has little to do with making sure that kids are in the classroom; it has a whole bunch to do with having to make sure that they can try to get more seats through a by-election so they can contrive a win where one, I think, will be fairly difficult for them to get.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Cambridge has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rob Leone: I would like to thank the member for Beaches-East York, the member for Guelph, the member for Northumberland-Quinte West and the member for Timmins-James Bay.

I took the comments from the member for Beaches-East York seriously. I think it actually reveals the differences between the PCs and the NDP quite well. I'm not going to defend the governments of Greece or Italy. I think, by your comments, if I can make an inference—I don't mean to make an inference on your behalf—that you believe that there is a revenue crisis in those countries. I happen to believe there's a spending crisis in those countries. That is the reason; that's the comparative that we're talking about here. We are talking about too much money being spent and not enough money being taken in.

The province of Ontario has a spending crisis. We're spending billions upon billions of dollars more in the province of Ontario than we did even at the depths of this recession. I think it's \$20 billion more than in 2008. This one-time stimulus was never one-time. We've had it and

we've added to it. That's the reality in the province of Ontario.

All the while, Mr. Speaker, we're now collecting \$3 billion in equalization payments that we didn't have before. The reality of it is that we are now a have-not province. The only party that's responsible for that is the party that likes to take all the credit for whatever thing they can find but never any of the blame—all of the credit; none of the blame. They should get all of the blame and all of the shame for the position they put this province in, which is so bad that we need drastic change to get our province back to become the leader it should be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there have been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader indicates otherwise.

Hon. John Milloy: No further debate, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The debate is deemed adjourned.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll call for orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Agreed?

All those in favour? All those opposed?

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Am I to conclude that this is the end of the second reading debate on Bill 115?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): No, you're not. That's the end of that point of order.

This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2120.

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| 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 Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse |
| Hudak, Tim (PC) | 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 |
| Jackson, Rod (PC) | Barrie | |
| Jaczek, Helena (LIB) | Oak Ridges–Markham | |
| Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB) | Brampton–Springdale | Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées |
| Jones, Sylvia (PC) | Dufferin–Caledon | |
| Klees, Frank (PC) | Newmarket–Aurora | |
| Kwinter, Monte (LIB) | York Centre / York-Centre | |
| Leal, Jeff (LIB) | Peterborough | |
| Leone, Rob (PC) | Cambridge | |
| Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB) | Brant | Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative |
| MacCharles, Tracy (LIB) | Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est | |
| MacLaren, Jack (PC) | Carleton–Mississippi Mills | |
| MacLeod, Lisa (PC) | Nepean–Carleton | |
| Mangat, Amrit (LIB) | Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud | |
| Mantha, Michael (NDP) | Algoma–Manitoulin | |
| Marchese, Rosario (NDP) | Trinity–Spadina | |
| Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB) | 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) | Thunder Bay–Atikokan | |
| McDonell, Jim (PC) | Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry | |
| McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB) | Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario |
| McKenna, Jane (PC) | Burlington | |
| McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB) | Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale | Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| McNaughton, Monte (PC) | Lambton–Kent–Middlesex | |
| McNeely, Phil (LIB) | Ottawa–Orléans | |
| Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB) | Ottawa–Vanier | Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones |
| Miller, Norm (PC) | Parry Sound–Muskoka | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|---|--|
| Miller, Paul (NDP) | Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek | Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Milligan, Rob E. (PC) | Northumberland–Quinte West | |
| Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Moridi, Reza (LIB) | Richmond Hill | |
| Munro, Julia (PC) | York–Simcoe | Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB) | Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités |
| Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) | Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre | |
| Natyshak, Taras (NDP) | Essex | |
| Nicholls, Rick (PC) | Chatham–Kent–Essex | |
| O'Toole, John (PC) | Durham | |
| Oraziotti, David (LIB) | Sault Ste. Marie | |
| Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) | Oshawa | |
| Pettapiece, Randy (PC) | Perth–Wellington | |
| Piruzza, Teresa (LIB) | Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | |
| Prue, Michael (NDP) | Beaches–East York | |
| Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord | |
| Sandals, Liz (LIB) | Guelph | |
| Schein, Jonah (NDP) | Davenport | |
| Scott, Laurie (PC) | Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock | |
| Sergio, Mario (LIB) | York West / York-Ouest | |
| Shurman, Peter (PC) | Thornhill | |
| Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) | Bramalea–Gore–Malton | |
| Smith, Todd (PC) | Prince Edward–Hastings | |
| Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) | Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud | Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015 |
| Tabuns, Peter (NDP) | Toronto–Danforth | |
| Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB) | Mississauga–Erindale | Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux |
| Taylor, Monique (NDP) | Hamilton Mountain | |
| Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) | Huron–Bruce | |
| Vanthof, John (NDP) | Timiskaming–Cochrane | |
| Walker, Bill (PC) | Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound | |
| Wilson, Jim (PC) | Simcoe–Grey | Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle |
| Wong, Soo (LIB) | Scarborough–Agincourt | |
| Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) | Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest | Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Yakabuski, John (PC) | Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke | |
| Yurek, Jeff (PC) | Elgin–Middlesex–London | |
| Zimmer, David (LIB) | Willowdale | |
| Vacant | Kitchener–Waterloo | |
| Vacant | Vaughan | |

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Cindy Forster, Monte McNaughton
Yasir Naqvi, Teresa Piruzza
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
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David Zimmer
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Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

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Steve Clark, Garfield Dunlop
Jeff Leal, Lisa MacLeod
Jonah Schein
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Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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Vic Dhillon, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
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Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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