



Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario  
Second Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario  
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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 29 May 2001**

**Mardi 29 mai 2001**

Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 29 May 2001

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO**

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*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

**VISITORS**

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to acknowledge today a visit by a very special group of people from my alma mater, Pauline Johnson high school. Teacher Jeff Goodall and the class have come to learn all about democracy and see our Legislature at work.

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**FORT HENRY**

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** On May 23 Fort Henry won the Oscar of Canadian tourism by being chosen the number one Canadian attraction of national and international interest at the gala awards ceremony in Halifax by Attractions Canada, an organization that's a national partnership program between government, private enterprise and the national media. Its mission is to recognize our country's many beautiful attractions and make them better known to the Canadian public.

It's a fitting testimony to the importance of Old Fort Henry, built in 1832 to protect Canada from potential American invaders, as the national historic site and its proud place in the development of Canada. It's a tribute to all the people, including the hundreds of students who have served since 1938 in the fort's guard, and all others who have worked and who continue to work there and all those who have supported their efforts.

The fort has been managed and operated by the province for more than 60 years. The opportunities that lie ahead in terms of global promotions through Attractions Canada are enormous. But as I've mentioned in this House previously, on numerous occasions, the fort needs at least \$25 million in repairs to make it structurally sound. The damage caused by water seeping into the ramparts, freezing and expanding, is so severe that a large section of the parade square has been roped off.

LCBO employees, under a program called "I Support Fort Henry," hope to raise \$100,000 in repair money over the next year.

I once again plead with the government to let the re-construction program begin and to match the federal funding of \$5 million in order to make an effective start on the much-needed emergency repairs. Match this federal money today.

**EVENTS IN DURHAM**

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** As the member for Durham, I'm always pleased to tell Ontario about the many positive things taking place in my riding.

Today I want to talk about township of Scugog Councillor Larry Corrigan, who is participating in the 12-hour Relay for Life walk, an event sponsored by the Canadian Cancer Society, taking place in 25 track and field locations across Ontario this weekend. The Relay for Life starts at 8 pm Friday, June 1, and ends at 8 am June 2.

Councillor Corrigan has said he is participating in the walk in memory of his late wife, Sandra, who, sadly passed away in 1988, and for all the township of Scugog residents who have been the victims of cancer. The statistics are staggering when you think that 134,100 people this year alone are estimated to find out that they have one form of cancer or another.

I want to thank all my constituents from Oshawa, Port Perry, Blackstock, Bowmanville, Orono and Newcastle, who will also participate in the Relay for Life this Friday night in Oshawa. Your actions are bringing us closer to finding a cure.

I'd also like to mention that plans are already in the works for the 2001 Terry Fox Run in the municipality of Clarington this coming September 1. Event organizer Walter Gibson is assembling his team to make this year's run more successful than ever.

Last Thursday morning in Bowmanville I was honoured to attend a special breakfast honouring corporate sponsors. We were fortunate to have had Darrell Fox as our guest speaker. He eloquently spoke of the tremendous impact that Terry Fox has made on all cancer victims and their families.

I would like to thank them for their ongoing support.

**PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES**

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** Today I would like to tell you about a young man from my riding who was involved in a serious swimming

accident and is now a quadriplegic. Marc Pilon, a young, 20-year-old college student from Plantagenet was actively involved in many sports but today his dreams of participating are on hold.

What a remarkable man he is. Marc's positive attitude and determination are evident when you meet him. He has a goal, and that goal is to be able to walk again. Marc has fallen through the cracks of our health care system. Marc was part of a pilot project and receiving physiotherapy at the Ottawa Hospital. This clinic provided him with a successful program that kept his hopes up that one day he would walk again.

Due to the cuts under OHIP his time on this program is over. Marc cannot afford \$480 a week for a physiotherapy program at a NeuroGym. When we consider Marc's youth, his positive attitude and his potential to contribute to society, we must find a way to help Marc. This is a worthwhile investment and I ask the Minister of Health to find a way to help Marc.

Minister, you must meet him. Ron MacLean of Hockey Night in Canada met him and was impressed with his progress. I beg you, Minister, find a way to help Marc walk again. He has the will and determination. OHIP must come up with financial assistance to help Marc. We must find a way to help him.

#### VOLUNTEERS

**Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls):** I'm very pleased today to announce to the House the work and dedication of some outstanding volunteers in my constituency. I would like to acknowledge the dedication of several individuals who have volunteered their time to the Upper Canada Lodge in Niagara-on-the-Lake. These individuals have volunteered their time to the Upper Canada Lodge for the past 10 years and continue to do so. I would like to thank Doris Laverick, Joyce Dineley, Carole Smithe, John Chabot, Florence Bennett and Liz Walker-Neuhof.

I recently toured Upper Canada Lodge and the folks who gave me the tour were actually four family members of residents or past residents of Upper Canada Lodge. They too volunteer their time at the lodge. I want to thank them for the tour and letting me know first-hand of their concerns at Upper Canada Lodge.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge the dedication of Helen Orr. Helen has been a volunteer at Dorchester Manor for over 25 years. Helen is in her late 80s and is a talented piano player who brings joy to the residents of Dorchester Manor with her music.

It is the dedication and compassion of these people and others like them that make my community a better and friendlier place to live and raise a family. On behalf of the government and my constituency I say thank you to all of them.

#### WALKERTON TRAGEDY

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** I rise today to recognize the

people of Erinsville, a village in my riding, for an extraordinary initiative. This community was so moved by the tragedy in Walkerton that they created the Walkerton Comforter, a quilt that expressed their condolences and sympathies to the people of Walkerton on the anniversary of their loss.

What was started by a small group from Erinsville grew into a project with national scope, and the comforter was recently presented to the people of Walkerton. One project participant explained, "We sadly witnessed your community's saga of dismay, distress and death ... the trauma of the events as they unfolded made us want to do something, anything to help, but we felt powerless, as we are sure you did too. This comforter is as much about tending to our grief as it is about speaking to your own grief."

#### 1340

This quilt depicts ways that our air, land and water are threatened. It shows ways to keep our environment clean and safe, not only for us but also for our children. People from across Canada sent in signed cloth teardrops to be included in the quilt, expressing their love and sympathy. This quilt is a reminder to all Canadians, not just the people of Walkerton, that our environment is fragile and must be respected.

The people of Erinsville have dedicated the quilt to the memory of those from Walkerton who lost their lives. It is a tangible symbol of the love and sympathy of an entire nation for a community that has endured a great tragedy.

#### EDIBLE PACKAGING

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** I am very pleased to rise today in recognition of some students at the University of Guelph who have developed a product of edible packaging.

We must look for innovative ways to reduce our hazardous waste, and this product is a great one, made with soy products. A trio of biological engineering students at Guelph university developed the substitute packaging made from soy flour and glycerine. In one form, this packaging product could be a biodegradable replacement for the Styrofoam meat tray. In another form, and by changing the recipe slightly, the packaging becomes edible. Think about eating a plate of delicious cookies and the plate tastes good as well.

In a recent news article, students stated that the soy makes the packaging nutritious, the glycerine makes it flexible and the sugar makes it delicious.

Cost becomes a factor in any new product, but the students have indicated that with mass production the edible soy packaging would be within a few cents of the cost of producing Styrofoam. I don't think many of us would object to spending a few more cents to help our environment.

I would like to commend these students for their innovative work on this product. As we often say, our young people have wonderful ideas. We just have to learn to listen to them.

## HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** Daily, we hear rhetoric in this House and in this province on how much better health care is now, compared to 1995. I challenge each Ontario resident to consider that and review what their hospital was like six years ago.

We had occasion last week to take our three-year-old son to an emergency ward. The service provided by the staff and by the doctors was superb, but nine of the emergency room beds are lined up in a hallway with numbers painted on the wall beside them. Patients are being examined and treated in a hallway. Our senior citizens are lying in hallways waiting for beds to be freed up. This is appalling.

Yet, in my riding, we know that Quinte Healthcare Corp continues to face a \$5-million deficit in the coming year. Ironically, the only way they could get additional funding from this government is by cutting essential services. Hospitals are being rewarded for cutting services rather than for providing good service. That, I also find appalling.

I call upon this government to consider not just spending the money on ads, not doing rhetoric, but to genuinely fund the one publicly funded, one-tier health care system that the people of this province value and demand and were promised in the 1999 election. It has not been delivered. The people of Ontario demand that we have one-tier, quality health care.

## IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE SERVICES

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West):** I rise today to bring to the attention of the House an important and historical event happening in my riding of Hamilton West. Today, SISO, the Settlement and Integration Services Organization, is opening up their new offices at Liuna Station.

I would remind members of this House that Hamilton is the third-largest receiving centre for new Canadians arriving as immigrants or refugees, the second-largest in Ontario, and that SISO provides services to these new Canadians.

I'd like to take just a moment to read their mission statement:

"Settlement and Integration Services Organization is a community-based agency which exists to serve immigrant and refugee communities in the Hamilton-Wentworth area and advocates/asserts/supports the right of all people to fully participate in the social, economic, political and cultural life of society."

I would bring to the attention of members that SISO services, on a yearly basis, 5,000 first-time clients and up to 20,000 returning clients.

I know the members of the House would want to know that it's opening in a historic building, the old CN station, where literally tens of thousands of new Canadians first came to Hamilton. LIUNA has refurbished this building, and that is indeed the new home. I would ask all

members of the House to join me in welcoming SISO into their new offices.

## PEEL REGIONAL POLICE FORCE

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** I would like to honour the work of Peel Regional Police, one of Canada's largest police agencies, which employs 508 civilians and almost 1,400 sworn officers. It was the first police service in Ontario and the fifth in Canada to be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

The number of programs that this police force is involved in is unique. That's why I'd like to further endorse their work by saying they are in fact the best police force in Canada. They are involved in community policing; community stations; airport policing; Peel Crime Stoppers; RAID—which is Reduce Abuse in Drugs—activities to heighten self-esteem; and Peel Children's Safety Village.

Their "pure patrol" is something that I think is really working for our communities. That is where the police are actually getting out of their vehicles and getting to know the people who live in the community.

They also have a cyberproofing program for children who are taught how to protect themselves from being exploited and becoming victims of abuse on the Internet.

The community policing aspect of Peel Regional Police is working. I stand here today feeling extremely proud and grateful to all our officers, men and women, who are exemplary and dedicated to the well-being of the people of Peel.

## ROYAL ASSENT

## SANCTION ROYALE

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Administrator of Ontario has been pleased to assent to a certain bill.

**Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman):** The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 55, An Act to protect the Oak Ridges Moraine / Projet de loi 55, Loi visant à protéger la moraine d'Oak Ridges.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Yesterday I tabled a resolution requiring that the Premier agree to meet with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee. I would ask for unanimous consent to debate and pass the resolution today.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek the unanimous consent of this House to have an emergency debate today at 6:45 pm

regarding the need for a public inquiry into obstruction of justice around the prosecution of pedophiles in Cornwall.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### TENANT PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

#### LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DES LOCATAIRES

Mr Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:  
Bill 63, An Act to amend the Tenant Protection Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection des locataires.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** The bill amends the Tenant Protection Act, 1997, to provide that when a tenant is evicted or leaves on receiving a notice of termination and leaves property behind, the landlord is required to keep the property available for retrieval for 30 days and to compensate the tenant for any loss or damage to it.

1350

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I ask that leave be granted to have unanimous consent to allow for the singing of our national anthem, O Canada, once a week in this Legislature, as was just adopted by the Nova Scotia Legislature? I would like to follow that lead and I seek unanimous consent.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I seek unanimous consent for a motion in which this House declares that full, province-wide public hearings on the government's plans to fund private schools are absolutely essential. Brief hearings limited to Toronto on Bill 45 are not enough.

This enormous tax bill contains 256 sections. Only three of them deal with the government's proposal to fund private schools. So, for each six-hour day of public hearings on Bill 45, logically only four minutes and 12 seconds would be given to public funding for private schools. That's clearly not enough and that's why we need province-wide hearings on something that is so dramatic and so draconian.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

## PREMIER'S ATTENDANCE

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: We in the official opposition were informed that the Premier would be present for

question period today. Perhaps it's been so long since he's been here that he forgets what time it starts.

**The Speaker:** As you know, the Speaker isn't aware of what arrangements would be made. What will be helpful, of course, as is a tradition here, is to let the opposition parties know so they can schedule their questions. I'm sure that's being done.

If on an ongoing basis that isn't being done, then hopefully the two sides can work it out. There is nothing in the standing orders that allows the Speaker to interfere in that process.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** In the absence of the Premier, I'll go to the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Finance. I must say at the outset that I am delighted and honoured that he's putting in a cameo appearance here today. It's very meaningful to us.

Minister, during the leaders' debate your Premier looked directly into the TV camera and said the following: "I've been asked, would I support private schools? I want to tell you, I went to the Jewish Congress and I said no. My priority is public education." Everybody knows that the Premier said something at that time and he's saying something completely different today. He made a specific commitment back then to voters, and today he's saying something entirely different. He gave working families his word of honour and he has now dishonoured them by breaking his word.

Will you have the decency here and now, Minister, to admit that your government, through your Premier, has broken its promise?

**Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** I thank the member opposite for raising the question of where I've been. I'm proud to tell the member that I've travelled to London, Ontario, to Ottawa, to New York and also to Tokyo and Hong Kong—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Order. Sorry for the interruption, Deputy Premier.

**Hon Mr Flaherty:** —as Minister of Finance, as is the tradition following delivery of the budget, to help explain to investors and other officials around the world the good news in Ontario about our vibrant economy, about our balanced budget for the third year in a row, about the largest payment in history reducing the public debt of the province of Ontario, about low, competitive taxes, all the good news about creating this vibrant economy, unlike the bad news from 1985 to 1990 under the Liberals opposite.

**Mr McGuinty:** I can see that the government's seals of approval are in fine form, but I wonder, Minister, if you might focus on the question at hand. There's a very serious issue before Ontario's working families. They're

very concerned about your plans, which are going to cause serious damage to public education for their children.

If you want, I would be quite prepared to have you refer this question to the Premier. I'll return to the Premier. Premier, why don't you admit to the Ontario public that you have broken a very specific promise made during the course of the campaign, that you have renounced an undertaking you gave in a letter to me, in letters directed to the federal Liberal government when you said that funding of private schools would both weaken and undermine public education, when you said it was going to cost taxpayers somewhere between \$300 million and \$700 million? Will you now admit that you have broken your specific promise made to Ontario's working families?

**Hon Mr Flaherty:** On the question of approval, and I think the member opposite for raising the question of approval, there is substantial disapproval with respect to the tax increases that were brought in by the Liberal government from 1985 to 1990. They raised the sales tax from 7% to 8%, raised the fuel tax twice and established the employer health tax in 1989. Although taking in record revenues, they kept increasing the public debt. What they appreciate across Canada, across Ontario and across the world now is the fact that we have a vibrant economy, low competitive taxes and a brilliant future for this province.

**Mr McGuinty:** We are very much concerned about the future of our province. We are very much concerned about the quality of public education available to all our children. If you don't understand this, you should understand that a highly skilled and educated workforce is instrumental in giving us a competitive edge and that it all begins with a government that supports public education.

Why not have the decency now to inject a bit of honesty into this debate? Why not admit that your government took a very specific position? They said that this policy, which you now warmly embrace, would cause grievous harm to public education. You said that it would weaken it, that it would undermine it. You said it would cost somewhere between \$300 million and \$700 million. Why not now admit that this policy you've embarked our province on will be harmful to our children and harmful to our future?

**Hon Mr Flaherty:** Our commitment to public education is firm and fully financed, with additional spending of \$360 million in this budget for public education in this province, which includes francophone education, separate schools and public schools. There is a difference, though, when it comes to choice. We believe parents should have a choice in the education of their children. What we hear from the other side, from Dalton McGuinty, is that Dalton McGuinty thinks his opinion should substitute for the opinion of parents with respect to the education of their own children in Ontario.

**The Speaker:** New question, leader of the official opposition.

**Mr McGuinty:** Premier, I'm sure that—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Come to order, please, so that we can ask the question. Leader of the official opposition, sorry for the interruption.

1400

**Mr McGuinty:** Premier, this question is to you. I am sure you will understand that the Ontario public and especially our working families are looking forward to hearing from you on this very important issue. During the course of the leaders' debate, you said, "I've been asked, would I support private schools? I went to the Jewish Congress and I said no, my priority is public education." You then summed up that portion of the debate with the following words, and these are your words: "Colin's question was, 'Mike Harris, will you categorically guarantee that you are not going to support private schools?' I said, 'Yes.'"

You made a specific commitment to Ontario's working families. They relied on that promise. You gave them your word of honour, and you have now clearly dishonoured them by breaking your word. Will you now stand up in your place and admit that you have broken your promise and apologize to Ontario's working families?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I think I have been very clear when I was asked in the leaders' debate, did I support charter schools or vouchers or would I bring them in in this session? I made it very clear that, no, our first priority is the public education system, and our first priority still is the public education system and full funding of that system. However, the program we brought in, of tax credit, is for parents, not for private schools. It is for parents. It is for parents and as a matter of fairness and for choice for those parents who opt for an alternative form of education.

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex):** Weasel words.

**The Speaker:** Order. Sorry to interrupt. Member for Essex, you've got to withdraw. You cannot yell that across. We're not going to start with any unparliamentary language. I would ask you to withdraw, member for Essex; withdraw the "weasel words" you said, please.

**Mr Crozier:** I withdraw.

**Hon Mr Harris:** Thank you very much—

**The Speaker:** I've asked the member for Essex to withdraw what he yelled out. I'm asking him to withdraw it now or I am going to name him.

**Mr Crozier:** I did.

**The Speaker:** Sorry, I was looking at the Premier; the Premier was up. I did not hear it, and I have to hear it. I apologize; there were two talking at once. I would ask you to withdraw it, please.

**Mr Crozier:** I withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Sorry for the interruption, Premier.

**Hon Mr Harris:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

The only inconsistency is with the leader of the Liberal Party, and the only ongoing inconsistency is, are you in favour or are you opposed? Which members of your caucus are in favour? Which members of your

caucus are opposed? I've seen your position explained as "We're in favour of the public education system and that has to be our first priority." Well, that's been our position. That's been my position for 21 years.

**Mr McGuinty:** Premier, you can't fool all the people all the time. You've been found out on this particular matter. You said you weren't going to send money from public schools over to private schools. You were clear and unequivocal about that. Now the fact is that you're doing that, and you're telling us now that really you're not doing that, because you're not sending it to the schools, you're sending it to the parents.

Maybe I'll draw your attention to a letter dated January 13, 2000, from your Minister of Education to Minister Axworthy, where she says the following: "While the government of Ontario recognizes the right of parents to choose alternative forms of education for their children, it continues to have no plans to provide funding to private religious schools or to parents of children that attend such schools." So if you want to talk about inconsistency, Premier, I suggest that you take a long, hard look in the mirror.

I'll ask you again, on behalf of Ontario's working families, why have you changed your mind? Why have you broken your promise? Why have you dishonoured Ontario's working families?

**Hon Mr Harris:** I think you heard in the budget that was brought down this year that the feeling of the Minister of Finance was that we were in a financial position now to begin retiring debt, to fully fund the public schools, to put over 5% more into health care and to be able to address new issues.

I want to make it very clear and the Minister of Finance has made it very clear that the extension of tax credits to parents, particularly for low- and middle-income families, to improve their choice on education, and particularly those low- and middle-income families that are paying twice for education, takes not one cent away from public education in this province.

**Mr McGuinty:** Premier, you sang a different tune a little while back, and Ontario's working families are trying to figure out whether they believe yesterday's Mike Harris or today's Mike Harris. What you said before, Premier, in your letter to me of January 18, 2000, was, "Complying with the UN's demand would remove from our existing public education system at least \$300 million per year, with some estimates as high as \$700 million. Obviously such an action would run directly counter to Ontario's long-standing commitment to public education."

It seems to me you are making this stuff up as you go. You're embarrassed. You're ashamed. You made a specific commitment. People now understand that you don't follow through on everything you committed to. The jig is up. Why not do the decent and honourable thing? Stand up, apologize to Ontario's working families and withdraw this policy.

**Hon Mr Harris:** First of all, when referring to the United Nations, here are the alternatives the United

Nations gave us—and I rejected all three—(1) to provide direct funding to private religious schools equivalent to our Catholic and public schools; I rejected that; (2) to eliminate funding separate schools; I rejected that; (3) to provide religious instruction in the public schools. We rejected that as well, as we reject the right of the United Nations to tell us how we're going to fund our public education system.

Second, I make no apologies for this government correcting the finances of this province, for getting us into a surplus position, for getting us now to the lowest tax rates for our small and medium-sized businesses, for getting our entrepreneurs into a tax-competitive position, for lowering taxes for hard-working taxpayers and families of this province and for now being able to be in a financial position to give double-digit increases to health care and—

**The Speaker:** New question.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier. Premier, your two weeks of limited public hearings on Bill 45 are a sham. Given the fact you've totally reversed your position on public funds for private schools, and given the fact that this is going to have a dramatic effect on public schools, to limit hearings to two weeks in Toronto just won't do. Tell us why you think the rest of the people of Ontario should be shut out of public hearings when it's their schools that are going to be affected too. Why should they be shut down, and how do you justify that?

**Hon Mr Harris:** On the whole question of hearings, we'd actually like to get public input and advice on implementation of the bill. These tax credits, as you know, are very small, particularly the beginning years, and they don't kick in for another year. We are interested in getting advice. We'd like to provide as much time as is required, both in hearings and any other outside advice we can get, and any advice you have on how we can implement this in as fair, proper and correct a manner as possible. I don't think there's been a suggestion the hearings ought to be limited. This is something the House leaders and the committee members can talk about.

**Mr Hampton:** Our advice is: don't do this. Stop it in its tracks right now. It's the wrong thing to do. When we talked with Ministry of Finance staff, this is what they told us: in effect now private school parents are now going to get five—count them—tax breaks. They'll get federal and provincial child care tax breaks. They'll get federal and provincial religious charitable donation tax breaks, and now they'll get your \$3,500-a-year private school tax credit. What it amounts to is this: you're loading the deck in favour of private education. My question is, before you load the deck in favour of private schools, don't you think the people of Ontario deserve a say via public hearings on what's going to happen?

1410

**Hon Mr Harris:** This is really the same question that we took to the people in 1995 and 1999. In essence, here was the question: do you want individuals to pay more taxes, as the Liberals and NDP campaigned for, or do

you want individuals to pay less taxes, as we campaigned for? Every initiative we brought in so that hard-working families could pay less taxes, you vote against and the Liberals vote against; every initiative so that hard-working families can pay less taxes, we vote for and you vote against. We understand that. We know that. We understand there are some people who actually support you high taxers who want to take more money from hard-working families because you think you can spend it better than they can. We fundamentally disagree. That's why we were elected in 1995 and in 1999, and I suggest to you in 2003 or 2004 we'll be re-elected again.

**Mr Hampton:** What we get, Premier, is the lengths your government is prepared to go in order to load the deck in favour of private education. Let me give you the numbers. For a family with an income of \$100,000 a year, if they send two children to private schools, with private school total tuition of \$14,000, what it amounts to, with your tax credit and the other tax breaks, is almost \$10,000 in tax breaks to send their children to private schools. That's very generous funding for private schools at the same time that you're forcing public school boards to cut their budgets.

The question of fairness is this: before you load the deck in favour of private schools while you deprive public schools, don't you think you ought to have the courage to go out there and hold public hearings across the province so people can have their say?

**Hon Mr Harris:** First of all, we're happy to have public hearings. We're happy to hear from the public, and they'll have their opportunity both on the policy and the implementation of the policy. We welcome that advice.

But again, I make no apologies for hard-working families to try and lessen the tax burden on these families. I think this is something we are elected to do; it's something we're committed to do. If I could eliminate taxes completely, I'd be happy to do it.

On the other hand, by lowering the tax rates from the punitive rates you had, making sure that we're competitive, we've found that we get more people working; we get more people off welfare. In turn, we get the kinds of dollars we need to put double-digit increases into the health care system, to put 360 million new dollars into the public education system. So it's only through tax competitiveness, in getting our tax rates to where they're competitive, that we've been able to put all these new dollars into priority programs like public education and health care.

**The Speaker:** New question.

**Mr Hampton:** What's clear, Premier, is the extent to which you're willing to go to give parents who are already well off more and more enticements so they'll send their kids to private schools and undermine the public school system. That's what is clear.

There's another element to this. When we talked to your Ministry of Finance officials they told us that private schools get to select what children they want, that private schools are not bound by any of the other rules

that govern our public schools, such as non-discrimination, such as not discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation, on the basis of ethnic origin, that they get to pick the kids. You give them public money but they get to pick the kids. Premier, that sounds to me like your government wants to fund discrimination. Before you do that, don't you think you should hold province-wide hearings so that people across the province can have their say on those issues as well?

**Hon Mr Harris:** I have never heard such a silly stretch of the facts in all of my life. First of all, we've already said we're committed to have public hearings. Secondly, if you know of any individual, any institution, any school that is violating the human rights charter here in the province of Ontario, we have laws to prevent that, we have anti-discriminatory laws, and they will be enforced. To stand in this place and make that kind of allegation, that there is blatant discrimination anywhere, and not refer that to the Ontario Human Rights Commission is a disgrace.

**Mr Hampton:** Well, Premier, you should talk to your Ministry of Finance officials, because they acknowledge that in the private school system it is children with special needs and disabled children who are in fact not accepted, that they are mostly excluded from the private school system. They point out that under your proposal there is absolutely no plan whatsoever to tell those schools that they must accept all children.

So, Premier, before you load the deck even further, before you give public money to private schools that then can say, "But we don't want your child and we don't want your child and there's no place for your child," before you fund that kind of discrimination, hold public hearings across the province and let the citizens of the province tell you how they feel about that. Do you have the courage to do it, Premier?

**Hon Mr Harris:** I've announced public hearings. Is that what you're asking me: do I have the courage to have public hearings?

You see, we've had more public hearings on more government bills than the NDP ever had, than the Liberals ever had. We've had more hours, we've had more hearings, we've had more public input; not only that, but we've consulted a lot more in advance of the bills before they've gone out for public input. So of course we said we will have public hearings.

As to any matters of discrimination, these are matters where we have laws in this country and in this province on all institutions, and these laws are there.

Thirdly, we're not planning to give five cents to any private schools.

**The Speaker:** New question.

**Mr McGuinty:** My question is for the Premier. Premier, you told us a few moments ago, and we've heard this refrain now time and time again, that the motivation behind your voucher program is to correct inequities, as you've just said, and to help out low- and middle-income families.

I've got the fee schedule here for 2001-02 for Upper Canada College. Do you know what the fees are for day

students this year, Premier? They're \$16,690. Do you know what the fees are for boarding students?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Sorry to interrupt the leader of the official opposition. The member for Brampton Centre, come to order. This is his last warning. If he yells like that, he's out.

Leader of the official opposition.

**Mr McGuinty:** For boarding students at Upper Canada College, the fees this year are \$29,690.

On behalf of Ontario's working families, Premier, can you tell us why it is in their interests that you take money out of public schools and send it over to parents of children who are attending Upper Canada College to help defray some of the expenditures?

**Hon Mr Harris:** First of all, it may have been the Liberals' intention to take money from public education to support private schools, but that's not our intention. We will not take five cents; we will take nothing away from public education in this province to implement a tax credit policy of fairness for families. So let's just make sure we have the record straight on that. It's not the way the Liberals were planning to do it. The way we do it is, not five cents out of public education.

Secondly, the tax credit, as you know, does not cover boarding costs that you mention in your question. I'm surprised you didn't know that, and I'm delighted you asked the question because we've been quite clear about that.

Thirdly, the tax credit, when fully implemented six years from now, will only cover 50% of up to \$7,000, which fits into the category of École Parsifal in Ottawa South, Lycée Claudel in Ottawa South, \$5,960, these kinds of schools. So some parents may choose to pay more or to board their students, but that of course will not be covered by—

**The Speaker:** The Premier's time is up. Final supplementary.

**Mr McGuinty:** You're the one who maintains that the purpose of this policy is to correct inequities and to help out lower- and middle-income families. Well, in the case of Upper Canada College, maybe you could explain to Ontario's working families—who, by the way, have some 35,000 of their children on a waiting list for psychological assessment because of all the school boards that have had to fire their psychologists, and, by the way, 42% of Ontario's parents in our elementary schools are out there raising money day in and day out for textbooks and computers.

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Those working families of whom I speak, Premier, want to know why it is that you have \$500 million for private schools but you don't have money to correct pressing problems they've got to contend with, day in and day out. They want to know why it is that you are coming to the rescue of parents who are sending their kids to Upper Canada College, who are already, without your assistance, paying fees in the neighbourhood of \$17,000 for a day student.

**Hon Mr Harris:** I assume you're in favour then of the \$1.37 billion in special education, more than any other government in Ontario's history, that we're investing in the public education system. I assume you're in favour of the tax cuts you voted against that gave us the prosperity so we could put \$360 million more this year into the public education system in Ontario.

I might say this: I understand why the Liberals are not asking for hearings. At least the NDP is consistent in wanting to have hearings.

**Mr McGuinty:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Had the Premier graced us with his presence here yesterday, he would have known that we raised that—

**The Speaker:** That is not a point of order. Premier.

**Hon Mr Harris:** I understand the embarrassment of the Liberal Party asking for hearings and why they didn't ask me today about hearings. When we had Bill 118, the Child and Family Services Amendment Act, the Liberals asked for hearings. We had hearings, and when we went to Sault Ste Marie not one Liberal member showed up for the hearings. So I assume that's why it's only the NDP that wants hearings and wants to get the input, and more credit to them.

#### IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE POLICY

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. As the minister knows, thousands of people from around the world come to Ontario every year to make new lives for themselves and their families, and we welcome them. This has always been one of our province's greatest strengths, even at the time that my own family came here in the Depression years. Yet there are significant financial costs associated with the immigration process, a process for which the federal government has primary responsibility. Can the minister tell the House what, if any, support the federal government provides for newcomers' settlement and training?

**Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors):** I want to thank my colleague the member for Mississauga South for her question and I want to indicate that the issues she raised are of concern to all members of this House. As we know, Ontario opens its doors to a significant number of immigrants every year. In fact, 1.3 million new Canadians have settled in Ontario in the last decade.

Whereas we take 60% of all of Canada's immigration, we're only getting 40% of the funding. We need to make sure that the federal government realizes there's a huge inequity here. Quebec gets 14% of the immigration but they get 33% of all the funding. Ontario taxpayers are paying that federal freight.

I want to urge all members of this House to contact the 100 Liberals in Ottawa from Ontario and tell them that we want this inequity dealt with in the best interests of all Ontarians, especially the support for new Canadians.

**Mrs Marland:** My own community of Mississauga has one of the fastest-growing populations in Ontario,

and we welcome thousands of immigrants who come to this province every year, many of whom arrive through sponsorship agreements. In fact, there are thousands of these agreements which fail when sponsors default on their obligations to support the immigrants whom they invited to Canada—908 people per month in the region of Peel alone. The bill for the region of Peel in failed sponsorships in the last decade is \$15 million.

The enforcement of sponsorship agreements is, again, a federal responsibility.

Would this minister tell the House what impact these failed sponsorships have on provincial services and what, if any, support Ontario receives from the federal government?

**Hon Mr Jackson:** First of all, the province of Ontario has a very strong record of support for its new Canadians who settle in our province. I know all members of the House to be concerned about the fact that we continue to increase our levels of support through a whole series of ministries and new programs. Our own Ministry of Citizenship provides over \$4 million to over 90 communities for agencies to deliver settlement services and new immigrant programs. The Attorney General's office, with taxpayers' dollars, supports almost \$15 million in legal aid for refugee claims and appeals. Our Ministry of Education provides \$42 million a year for adult ESL training and English-language training for over 70,000 school-aged children in the province.

As I said, we've had 1.3 million new Canadians in our province in a decade, and we need to make sure that the federal government steps up and stops undervaluing their commitments to new Canadians who settle in Ontario.

#### VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Stop the clock for a quick moment. We have in the members' gallery east Mr Doug Rollins, the member for Quinte from the 36th Parliament.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, Ontario hospitals have been in a state of continuous crisis since your government came into office and cut \$800 million from their budgets. Hospitals have tried to cope with the cuts. They shut down 5,500 acute care beds; they laid off 10,000 nurses; they closed their emergency rooms when the backlog of patients waiting for beds made it impossible to care for anyone else. And despite all of these efforts, a majority of Ontario hospitals have faced deficits every year. Every year, hospitals try to tell your government what they need if they're going to keep their doors open, and every year your government has played numbers games with hospital funding, reannouncing old money as if it was a new investment, waiting until the year's almost over to give hospitals their final budget, refusing to put a rational funding formula in place.

But Minister, last week you took the attack on hospitals to a new height. You accused hospital board members of intellectual dishonesty when they didn't welcome the reannouncement of the money you gave them last year. Minister, are you accusing hospital boards across this province of lying about the reality of their deficits?

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** The honourable member wants to talk about numbers. I'm quite willing to do so, because if one looks at the past two fiscal years in this province, gross domestic product growth in this province was 11.6%, but hospital funding growth was 21.3%. In fact, since we got elected in 1995, hospital spending has increased by 30%. That indicates our commitment to hospitals—20% of that 30% was within the last two years alone. We have kept our promise on hospital spending and on health care spending. The health care budget in this year's budget has increased by 5.4%, which is significantly higher, once again, than population growth, higher than inflation, higher than GDP growth. We are putting health care as the primary responsibility of our funding requirements. It's 45 cents out of every program dollar we spent. Those are the numbers that she should be aware of.

**Mrs McLeod:** You accused hospital board members across this province of intellectual dishonesty. You said basically they were lying, and what you really want to do is discredit hospital board members so you don't have to acknowledge the reality of the \$750-million deficit that hospitals are facing across the province this year.

Minister, you can't keep avoiding it. The situation in hospitals is getting more critical all the time. In March of this year, hospital emergency rooms in Toronto alone were on critical care bypass 192 hours, the highest ever for one month and four times higher than in the same month last year. Those hospital deficits are going to force the layoff of thousands more nurses. I think maybe that's how you've decided to solve the nursing shortage: instead of hiring 3,000 nurses, you're going to force hospitals to fire 6,000 nurses. Minister, that means more beds closed, more surgery cancelled, more patients turned away from emergency rooms, and your response to all of that is to attack hospital board members. It is only too evident that you are deliberately setting public hospitals up for failure in exactly the same way you set public education up for failure so you could bring in private schools. I ask you, are you going to wait until hospital board members start to quit before you bring in your private hospitals or are you just going to go ahead and replace public boards with private companies?

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**Hon Mr Clement:** The honourable member spent most of her question attributing remarks to me which are perhaps sound with her but not with me. I can say to the honourable member that the remarks which she attributes to me were not made in that context. Indeed, the context was \$120 million more for hospitals announced last week alone to help those who have performed well to meet the needs of their community. That was the context of the announcement: \$120 million more into the hospital

system; \$120 million more of taxpayers' money for health care spending in this province.

I would say to the honourable member, and through her to any hospitals that are listening, that we have in our possession the operating plans of all the hospitals and we're going through a process of dialogue with the hospitals to meet their objectives and to see what parts of their operating plans meet accountability and meet the expectations of their community and which parts don't. That's a normal process, and the honourable member I think is stoking up something which does not in fact exist.

#### ALLEGED SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS

**Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean):** My question is for the Solicitor General. Minister, on Christmas Eve of 1994, the Ontario Provincial Police issued a press release announcing that they were winding up an investigation into an alleged pedophile ring in the Cornwall area. They announced at that time that there were no charges to be laid. They condoned the investigation of the Cornwall police in 1992 and the board of commissioners of police of the Cornwall police department in a 1993 investigation, which also found that there were no charges to be laid and nothing was amiss.

Immediately thereafter, the citizens of Cornwall put some money together and did their own investigation. They obtained statements and affidavits. They travelled to Florida and they got registration slips at a motel on Birch Avenue known as the pedophile strip, and they served those documents on your department and on the department of the Attorney General of this government. Immediately thereafter, a new OPP investigation was commenced and miraculously 115 charges were laid.

My question, Mr Minister, is with regard to the first OPP investigation. What is your level of confidence with regard to the integrity of that investigation? How do you explain to the people of Ontario how that investigation and the previous two investigations by the Cornwall police missed all 115 charges?

**Hon David Turnbull (Solicitor General):** This government certainly does not tolerate the abuse of children in any manner. I think everybody in this chamber would agree that our thoughts are with the entire community of Cornwall through this difficult time.

The member knows it would be inappropriate for me to comment on specific investigations.

As you are aware, the Harris government is committed to protecting children from abuse of all kinds, and particularly sexual abuse. I was proud to bring Christopher's Law, the first sex offender registry in the country, into law. As well, the OPP's child pornography section, Project P, is the largest such unit in Canada and is looked upon by other police services as the lead agency for investigations of these types of crime.

**Mr Guzzo:** Thank you, Mr Minister. But I'm not aware, having spent most of my adult life in a courtroom prior to coming to this Legislature, that you are not free

to comment on an investigation. Let me explain to you that if in 1994 the people of Cornwall, the citizens' group, had adopted that same position, the 115 charges that have been laid would not have been laid, sir. So I don't think it's fair to suggest that we cannot comment and we cannot look at investigations of this nature. In my opinion, sir, that is our responsibility in this House, and the people who were here in 1994 let the people of Ontario down by not questioning them.

But my supplementary, sir, is more basic. In light of the obvious situation with regard to that first investigation—I put this question to the OPP officers who debriefed me after the bill, my last bill in this House, and their answer, sir, was a little more enlightening than yours, quite frankly. In light of what obviously took place in that 1994 investigation, how can the people of this province be satisfied that similar matters are not taking place as we speak and have not taken place while we have been the government of this province? How do we know that as we talk today there are not similar situations being covered up in the province of Ontario?

**Hon Mr Turnbull:** The OPP, at the request of the Cornwall Police Service, has investigated a number of allegations of sexual abuse in the Cornwall area dating back several years. Since July 1997, when Project Truth was initiated, 115 charges have been laid against 15 people. The integrity of all aspects of the justice system rests on its ability to proceed without interference. Charges may still be pending, and let me assure you that the book is not fully closed on whether charges will be laid. Any further comment by me would be inappropriate.

#### COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York):** My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday I asked a question about community care access centres and the fact that, as we speak, tens of thousands of frail seniors and persons with disabilities are receiving notices that their in-home care services are being dramatically cut or eliminated. The associate Minister of Health provided this House with a list of initiatives by your government over the last five to six years, so that's on the record. What I want to ask you to do, Minister, is to please address the issues of today.

Community care access centres have been providing services above their allocated budgets. Each year your ministry has been doing year-end adjustments to provide them with money, but that has not been rolled into their base budget. Now, without that base budget increase and with your new no-deficit law, they have no alternative but to cut those services. Those are real people who have been receiving real services and those services are being cut. Minister, are you going to accept those cuts in services to frail seniors and persons with disabilities or are you going to address the base funding shortfall for community needs?

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** As the honourable member may know,

since we came to power, the in-home funding has increased by over 72%, close to 73%. So I don't think it would be a fair characterization of our funding to suggest, by any stretch of the imagination, that we have not met some of the funding increases due to growth, due to utilization and due to the demands in the system that are met by CCACs and by the agencies that report to them. We are, of course, seized with some of the new budgets that have been put forward by the CCACs and we will be examining them closely to make sure they meet the needs of citizens in Ontario, but we also have to do so in a fiscally responsible and accountable manner. That's what we expect of every single transfer agency that reports to the people of Ontario through the government of Ontario and its funding.

**Ms Lankin:** Minister, please, over the last number of years your ministry has worked with these CCACs. Many of them, whether it be Niagara or the St Catharines-Welland area, whether it be Sudbury-Manitoulin, whether it be the six CCACs in Toronto, whether it be Waterloo, Kingston, many areas of the province, those communities have identified need above your funding levels. They have been meeting that identified need of seniors and persons with disabilities. You have been funding them with year-end adjustments. Now you have said no, and in fact the meetings have happened between your ministry and these CCACs and they have been told they have to deliver service to the allocated budget. With your no-deficit law, what it means is that those services have to be cut.

Now, please, you can make a difference. You can commit today to go back and reconsider those budgets, to understand the community need and to fund to that base community need so that individuals are not being cut. I want to ask you—I raised a number of examples yesterday—if it was mom who was incontinent, who was only getting two baths a week and now the cuts that CCAC is forced to make mean she's only going to get one bath a week, is that acceptable to you, Minister?

**Hon Mr Clement:** As she may know, part of the \$1.2 billion of extra money that our government committed, over a multi-year period, to long-term care was \$551 million for home care and other long-term-care service, and \$264 million of that is going directly to CCACs for their funding allocations, so it would be inaccurate to say we are not adding to the base allocations of CCACs.

I would say to the honourable member that from our perspective it is not this Hobson's choice. It's not a choice of adding funds or cutting services. Our transfer partners have told us that part of the government's agenda has been to ensure that they deliver the services more efficiently, more focused to the patients who need the care, and cutting out some of the overhead, cutting out some of the waste and duplication. We will continue to pursue that with the CCACs as well.

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## VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Before we proceed, we have another former member in the members' gallery east, Mr Leo Jordan, the member for Lanark-Renfrew in the 35th and 36th Parliaments.

## EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** My question is to the Minister of Finance and it has to do with the education tax credit program. We fear very much a fragmentation of the public education system and an undermining of the goals of universal access to education.

We've assumed all along that you must have conducted some fairly major analysis that would tell you where this will lead. We were surprised in our briefing by your officials to learn that, for the study they quote, they simply looked at the Internet and did a brief summary of some information they found on the Internet. Apparently they had no significant studies done to indicate what would happen to enrolment with this program. We understand you've assumed that nothing will happen to enrolment with the program.

Will you today, Minister, table the study and the research and the analysis you had conducted that showed you the impact of your program on enrolment in public schools, and will you give the House today and the public a synopsis of that major research you've obviously done so that we can understand how you arrived at no impact on enrolment?

**Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** I thank the member opposite for the question. There were substantial pre-budget consultations, as I'm sure the member opposite knows. The finance committee of this House met for a couple of weeks in Ottawa, Thunder Bay, London and Toronto. There were about 349 people who were involved in the direct pre-budget consultations. Submissions were made in writing and in person with respect to this issue of equity in education. Certainly we'll hear more as the matter proceeds through the public hearings that are going to take place, and indeed more will be heard when the public consultations take place in terms of drafting the regulation concerning eligibility for the tax credit.

**Mr Phillips:** Listen, you have embarked Ontario on a road that will have a dramatic impact on public education. Surely to heaven you haven't embarked on that road without some significant research being done to tell you where the road leads. I say to you today, Minister, you've launched us on this and if you haven't done the research, Ontario wants you to answer for that. I say again, this is a major embarking down a road for education. I want you today to get up and table the research that shows you what the impact will be. If you haven't done that, I want to know why you haven't conducted the major research

to tell us what destruction you're going to do to public education. I want the research, and we want it today.

**Hon Mr Flaherty:** We can do better than that. We don't have to rely on theory, on speculation, on might-have-beens. We have the reality in this country—in British Columbia, in Alberta, in Saskatchewan, in Manitoba and in the province of Quebec. In all of those jurisdictions, they've moved forward with funding for children attending independent schools. That's already happened in this country. We know the reality of it.

For example, in Manitoba, independent school enrolment as a percentage of the total increased only marginally from 5% to 6.6% from 1999 to 2000. That's what's happened in the rest of Canada. That's what we anticipate happening in Ontario.

#### COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF ONTARIO

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** I have a question for the Minister of Health. I want to ask you about a situation that has been bothering me for several years, and I'm not able to get any answers. I know that our government is proud to push our agenda of accountability and transparency, but I believe that we should be expecting that policy to be honoured throughout all publicly funded or public-interest institutions in Ontario.

Minister, I am wondering how our government is reacting to the fact that as the Kitchener-Waterloo Record states that many of the "complaints investigated by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario since 1994" have been either "dismissed or handled behind closed doors." I've had personal experience with that. What are you going to do to ensure that the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario is accountable and part of a transparent health care system?

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I want to thank the honourable member for Kitchener Centre for what is an excellent question. I think it has to be a fundamental touchstone of certainly this government that there be accountability and transparency in all aspects of public institutions, which not only includes government but also the College of Physicians and Surgeons and other independent or quasi-independent boards and agencies. We believe—and we should believe—that patients should have more access to information about their doctors and about the procedures that are part of doctor accountability. That's true for every profession, not just medical doctors.

I can tell the honourable member that in December 1999, the government launched an independent review of the College of Physicians and Surgeons complaint and discipline process. That review has been extremely comprehensive. It has looked at every aspect of complaints and discipline. We wanted to make sure that we could determine how the public interest was best served. We are seized with that information. We are seized now with the report and with the start of an action plan.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I used to belong to a professional body and we had a disciplinary procedure through our regulatory body, and so do the teachers. They work very well.

I want to take this opportunity to give the members of this House an example of what we could do. US states presently have legislation making all physician complaints accessible by the public. One state in particular, Massachusetts, was the first in 1996 to put all disciplinary decisions, hospital sanctions, malpractice settlements and court actions on its Web site. Are we going to follow their leadership and hold our health care providers accountable through this example of transparency? If not, I'd like to know why not.

One of the excuses I always receive from the College of Physicians and Surgeons is that the health act doesn't permit them to disclose some information. The second part of my supplementary is: if the health act needs changing, will we change it?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Again, I think the touchstone should continue to be transparency and accountability. If we have to make legislative changes in order to get to a better definition and interpretation of the public interest, we should change legislation. There is an action plan that's in response to the independent review. We are taking a look at the action plan, quite frankly, to make sure it goes as far as it should rather than not going far enough.

I think that's the key to responding to this. It has to meet our commitment to transparency, meet our commitment to accountability, and certainly we are looking for public input on this from the member himself, other colleagues in the House, in the chamber and throughout the public as well. This is something that all of the public should have some thoughts on and should have an opportunity to provide some answers to.

#### COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** My question is to the Minister of Health as well. Your regulation regarding homemaking services is forcing community care access centres across the province to discharge thousands of clients who are now considered ineligible because of your restrictions. These clients are people who are capable of living independently but are unable to complete homemaking tasks necessary for them to stay in their homes: people like Yolanda and Lorraine from Sudbury, who have no family members or friends who can assist them on a regular basis. These people are being forced, by their circumstances and your regulation, out of their homes and into long-term-care facilities and low-cost retirement homes. Yolanda and Lorraine want to and can stay in their own home if you make an amendment to your regulation to allow community care access centres to provide homemaking skills to people who (1) are unable to perform their own homemaking skills or, (2) cannot afford homemaking skills.

Minister, will you make that amendment today, in order to keep Yolanda and Lorraine and many other

people in Ontario in similar situations in their own homes?

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**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I thank the honourable member for the question. There are a number of things in play there. There are regulations in place when it comes to access to homemaking services that I believe were in place before we got into power. I would have to double-check on that, but certainly they are in place.

There are of course professional responsibilities of physicians to determine the appropriate place for a person. Is it in a long-term-care facility? Is it in a hospital? Is it for home care? These are clinical decisions rather than policy decisions, and they should be clinical decisions, quite frankly. Quite apart from that, we have our \$1.2-billion multi-year investment in long-term-care facilities. We just announced last week another 5,500 new beds that are being created in our province as part of our long-term-care strategy.

So all of these things are in place, or are going to be in place, and will provide parts of the answers to the honourable member's question.

**Mr Bartolucci:** That regulation was changed in 1999 under your mandate.

Minister, how does your collective government conscience allow you to avoid the question with rhetoric? On a daily basis, my office is getting phone calls from sick, elderly constituents: people like Yolanda, people like Lorraine, people who have lived and worked in Ontario for decades, paid their taxes and never asked for anything in return. These people do not want to be your sacrificial lambs for your government's tax cuts. These people are in the twilight of their lives. They are on fixed incomes and they never thought that their provincial government would turn its back on them, and this is exactly what you have done.

Minister, you have a letter from the CCAC Manitoulin-Sudbury, dated May 9, telling you that you are underfunding community care access centres across the province. Today, will you commit to the Manitoulin-Sudbury CCAC, and every CCAC across this province, that you will increase the base funding and that you will make an amendment to that regulation which will allow elderly, frail seniors to remain in their own home?

**Hon Mr Clement:** Of course the honourable member probably is aware that there are CCACs which are delivering that function. That's the more accurate way to describe that.

If the honourable member is raising a particular case to me, I mentioned to another honourable member that CCAC funding has increased over 72% since our government got into power. He mentioned the Sudbury-Manitoulin case, which I believe the other honourable member mentioned as well. If there is a particular problem, if they want to work with me for a value-for-money audit to make sure they are delivering the right services to the right people up to the best of our ability, we're open for business.

## PETITIONS

### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we believe that all education resources should be directed to our public schools, not private schools;

"Whereas Mike Harris has been attacking public education for six years, chopping \$1.8 billion from the classroom and now wants to pay parents to leave public education for private schools;

"Whereas we believe that a voucher plan for private schools is wrong, unfair and steals money from public education;

"Whereas we believe that these funds being invested in private schools would be better spent on rebuilding public education through such measures as bringing class sizes down to 20 students per class in the early years;

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

"Do not turn your back on Ontario's working families. Fight Mike Harris's voucher system for private schools; fight for smaller class sizes; fight for public education."

I will very proudly sign my name to this petition.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the annual rent increase guideline for multi-unit residential dwellings in Ontario increases every year more than the rate of inflation and more than the cost-of-living increase for most tenants;

"Whereas no new affordable rental housing is being built by the private sector, despite the promise that the implementation of vacancy decontrol in June 1998 would encourage new construction;

"Whereas over 100,000 people are on the waiting list for social housing, homelessness has increased as a result of unaffordable rents and high rents are a direct cause of the national housing crisis;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement an immediate province-wide freeze on rents which will stop all guideline increases, above-guideline increases and increases to maximum rent for all sitting tenants in Ontario for a period of at least two years."

I support this petition.

### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. This is one of hundreds I'm receiving almost weekly.

“Whereas wide parental and student choice are essential to the best possible education for all students; and

“Whereas many people believe that an education with a strong faith component, be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or another religion, is best for their children; and

“Whereas many people believe that special education methodologies such as those practised in the Montessori and Waldorf schools are best for their children; and

“Whereas over 100,000 students are currently enrolled in the independent schools of Ontario; and

“Whereas the parents of these students continue to support the public education system through their tax dollars; and

“Whereas an effective way to enhance the education of those students is to allow an education tax credit for a portion of the tuition fees paid for that education;

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

“To pass the budget bill giving tax credits to parents of children who attend independent schools as soon as possible.”

I am more than happy to affix my signature to this.

#### PROSTATE CANCER

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This is a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

“Whereas prostate cancer is the fourth leading cause of fatal cancer in Ontario;

“Whereas prostate cancer is the second leading cause of fatal cancer for males;

“Whereas early detection is one of the best tools for being victorious in our battle against cancer; and

“Whereas the early detection blood test known as PSA (prostate specific antigen) is one of the most effective tests at diagnosing early prostate cancer; and

“Whereas the Minister of Health’s inaction is literally causing men to die needlessly;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to encourage the Minister of Health to have this test added to the list of services covered by OHIP, and that this be done immediately in order for us to save lives and beat prostate cancer.”

I affix my signature to this petition.

#### EDUCATION

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** “Whereas Mike Harris and the Ministry of Education, with their new curriculum changes and cuts, have been failing our province’s students;

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

“To cease cutting funds from the education system, and put back what was taken out to pay for textbooks for all grades, music, arts and physical education programs, and to hire more teachers;

“To immediately begin preparing elementary students for the secondary school curriculum (as the current students were not);

“Prepare for the doubling number of students in 2003 by working with colleges and universities now (space, teachers, admissions, marks etc);

“Abolish recent in-class time hike for teachers, which doesn’t allow proper time to prepare lessons or volunteer their time to extracurricular activities;

“Eliminate the teacher adviser group and the teacher adviser program;

“Simply, to listen to the students of Ontario and to stop ignoring them. After all, they are the ones these changes are affecting.”

I support this petition as well.

#### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr John O’Toole (Durham):** A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas wide parental and student choice are essential to the best possible education for all students; and

“Whereas many believe that an education with a strong faith component, be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or other religions, is best for their children; and

“Whereas many people believe that special education methodologies such as practised in the Montessori and Waldorf schools are best for their children; and

Whereas over 100,000 students are currently enrolled in the independent schools of Ontario; and

“Whereas the parents of these students continue to support the public education system through their tax dollars; and

“Whereas an effective way to enhance the education of those students is to allow an education tax credit for a portion of their tuition fees paid for that education;

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

“To pass the budget bill giving tax credits to parents of children who attend independent schools as soon as possible.”

I’m submitting this on behalf of a number of constituents, for instance, Jennifer Slump, and I’ll sign that petition now.

1500

#### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** I have a petition with approximately 5,000 signatures.

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:...

“Three years ago, recommendations made by the Health Services Restructuring Commission (HRSC) were confirmed by the district health council, which resulted in the merger of Picton, Belleville, Trenton and Bancroft hospitals. Unfortunately, this merger exempted Picton from remaining within a rural classification, in accord-

ance with the new framework guidelines established for northern and rural health care.

“Upon merger, Picton was to maintain 36 active treatment beds, with an additional six sub-acute care beds available by 2003. This is no longer the case. Picton is facing further reductions due to its reclassification from rural to partially urban. Why? Is driving 35 to 40 kilometres one way to reach medical care not far enough?... We are a large county and for many residents access to medical care is precarious and daunting....

“The provincial government has stepped in and overruled the review of the rural and northern framework, resulting in our community being recognized as partially urban and subject to further downsizing. What gives this governing body the right to overrun the people who were first responsible for the origin of our community hospital? We must not forget the support of those organizations such as the Women’s Institute, service clubs, Ladies Auxiliary ... churches and the many individual bequests.

“Our hospital was built in 1959 and dedicated to the memory of our servicemen. We must now join together and support the war being faced by our local hospital.”

We call upon the Minister of Health and the Premier, Mr Harris, to realize “that the reductions being enforced upon our community hospital should not become reality.” We must preserve “our doctors, our services, our outpatient clinics that are so essential....”

I am pleased to add my signature to this petition.

#### PROTECTION OF MINORS

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas children are being exposed to sexually explicit materials in many commercial establishments; and

“Whereas many municipalities do not have bylaws in place to protect minors, and those that do vary from place to place and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials; and

“Whereas uniform standards are needed in Ontario that would make it illegal to sell, rent, loan or display sexually explicit materials to minors;

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

“To pass Bill 95, the Protection of Minors from Sexually Explicit Goods and Services Act, 2000, as soon as possible.”

I am pleased to attach my signature to this petition.

#### SOCIAL AUDIT

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Mike Harris government has undertaken a massive reform of the way social service programs are managed and delivered in this province; and

“Whereas the government’s language, actions and policies over the last six years have reinforced the worst kind of stereotypes about people on social assistance without offering Ontarians any proof that the policies they’ve put in place are meeting the needs of those whose circumstances have forced them to seek temporary assistance from Ontario’s social safety net; and

“Whereas this government, when challenged on how well their Ontario Works programs are working, points to welfare caseload numbers as their one and only measurement of success or failure; and

“Whereas a social audit would determine how this government’s policies are impacting on low-income children and families and allow for enhancements to improve the well-being, employability and economic security of individuals and families in need;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the government of Ontario conduct a social audit of its Ontario Works program.”

This is going across the province. This was sent to me by the Ottawa West End Legal Services, and I’m very pleased to add my name to this petition.

#### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre):** I have a petition here on behalf of residents of the Minister of Transportation’s riding, and I am pleased to present it on his behalf.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas wide parental and student choice are essential to the best possible education for all students; and

“Whereas many people believe that an education with a strong faith component, be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or another religion, is best for their children; and

“Whereas many people believe that special education methodologies such as those practised in the Montessori and Waldorf schools are best for their children; and

“Whereas over 100,000 students are currently enrolled in the independent schools of Ontario; and

“Whereas the parents of these students continue to support the public education system through their tax dollars; and

“Whereas an effective way to enhance the education of those students is to allow an education tax credit for a portion of the tuition fees paid for that education;

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

“To pass the budget bill giving tax credits to parents of children who attend independent schools as soon as possible.”

These are from people from Mount Hope, Hamilton, Ancaster, Caledonia.

## MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):**

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current level of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) services in Ottawa is the lowest of any major urban area in the province and waiting lists for these services exceed 7,000 patients and seven months;

“Whereas the delays experienced by patients waiting for these services are potentially harmful to their health and often result in the mental anguish of uncertainty, needless suffering and financial burden;

“Whereas Ottawa-area hospitals have submitted proposals for increased MRI services;

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

“That the Minister of Health be directed to take immediate action and provide sufficient funding to resolve the alarming backlog of patients waiting for MRI scans at Ottawa hospitals.”

I affix my signature.

## ELECTRICITY GENERATING STATION

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Further petitions. The Chair recognizes the member for Mississauga South.

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** Thank you, with deep gratitude, Mr Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity. I am presenting this petition on behalf of Gary Carr, the member for Oakville—the Speaker—and myself as the member for Mississauga South. It reads as follows:

“Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas Sithe Energies Canadian Development Ltd is actively pursuing the development of an 800 MW electricity generating facility; and

“Whereas the 14-hectare parcel of land on which the station is proposed is located on the east side of Winston Churchill Boulevard in the Southdown industrial district of Mississauga;

“Whereas Sithe has stated its commitment to an open dialogue with communities where it has a presence and to being responsive to the concerns of the same; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has a responsibility to ensure the safety of Ontario citizens and to determine how this facility will impact those who live in its immediate, surrounding area,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario direct the Ministry of the Environment to undertake a formal environmental assessment of the Sithe project.”

I am happy to add my signature to this petition.

## OPPOSITION DAY

## EDUCATION FUNDING

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** The Chair recognizes the member for Parkdale-High Park.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** It’s my pleasure to rise on behalf of my party on this opposition day about the commitment this party has—and this government has failed to provide—in favour of public education, that it has put forward, to the detriment of every child in public education in this province, schemes to give incentives with public money—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. Either you need unanimous consent to take the place of Mr McGuinty or Mr McGuinty has to be here to move that motion.

**Mr Kennedy:** I seek unanimous consent to speak in place of Mr McGuinty.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is it agreed? It is not agreed.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** It is agreed.

1510

**Mr Kennedy:** The resolution to be debated this afternoon, an opportunity that we are providing through our opposition day, is, that in the opinion of this House, the government should make reducing class sizes in our public schools to a real cap of 20 students per class in junior kindergarten through grade 3 its top education priority and withdraw its plan for private school vouchers.

This is a vital opportunity for the people of this province to finally be heard. After six years of this government attacking public education, they have finally made clear what their real agenda is. They have—

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. Mr Kennedy has moved opposition day number 3, and now the Chair recognizes the member for York South. Debate?

**Mr Kennedy:** It is vital that the people of this province take this opportunity to talk back finally to this government, to a government that has not been in any way responsive or responsible when it comes to the public education system, but instead has found and has put forward for us a lazy option, an option essentially of giving up on the public education system.

Yesterday at our public meeting in my riding of Parkdale-High Park we had people from, for example, Etobicoke Centre. Nativity of Our Lord school, for example, is inviting the Minister of Labour from this House and says to him, “Come down to our school. Explain to us how \$300 million for private school vouchers is going to make our school that has portables, that has decrepit conditions,” quoting that parent, “but a wonderful educational opportunity”—how will that become better because you have decided, in your government, to take money away and put it instead into private school vouchers?

The thing that this government needs to be able to—

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to go on the record that I received no such invitation.

**The Acting Speaker:** That's not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for York South.

**Mr Kennedy:** The minister will be receiving his invitation, and I know that the families—I think he'd better check with his office, because the families and the parents of that community have said they have tried to meet with that member and have been unable to.

Perhaps this member knew that this is what the government was up to, and this is a challenge we've put. I wrote to each individual member at the beginning of the year. I wrote again last week and said, "If you have the confidence of this policy, please take it on as legislators and explain it to the people who are in public schools." For those who have done it, I commend them. I would say, though, for the government as a whole, this is your obligation as legislators. You now have a policy. You have said—and the people of Ontario need to understand what they're saying. They are saying, "Here is a wide-open exemption." Here is something that is not about fairness, it's not about a particular type of school; it's about any kind of private school whatsoever in this province receiving an incentive. The family's getting an incentive of \$3,500.

What the government has to tell their constituents and the province as a whole is that no other jurisdiction does this. No state, no province, gives private school vouchers. The other thing that this government may not wish the public of this province to understand is that in the United States, at least, those jurisdictions put this on a ballot. They had referendums, 35 of them last fall. Every single time that vouchers and tax credits were put to the public, they were defeated, because in the light of day this government's proposals become obvious. They become clear for what they really mean. What they really mean is finally deducting and taking things away from the students in public education.

In the next few days it will become clear that what the Premier said in the House today is no validation, that in fact the funding for public education has been reduced by this government, has been reduced this year and has been reduced in every single year it has been in office.

That is not substantially the case. The case for public education is the case that has been there and that we need for the future about the merits of public education. But there is no question that this is a backdoor attack that allows people, in fact encourages them, to leave public education.

The mechanics around the dollars are this: for each student that this government now encourages for the first time, the first government anywhere in North America, to leave—"Here's some money if you leave"—for every student who leaves, they take the funds with them, and the essence of public education is not about that self-interest kind of thing that has been encouraged to parents and to families. Instead, in public education we have students who are maybe \$1,200 students. They are the

students who come ready to learn, who have had all the advantages, who got the ability to do very well, and they found a home in public education. But alongside of them are students who need some extra attention, who need to be learning, who need to be taking advantage of the extra services that we can provide in public education, and those students may for one year, for two years, cost a lot more. The reason we have public education is to pool those opportunities for those students, to make sure that no matter what their background is, no matter what their economic situation, we're allowing them to have excellence in the same school because we're able to put those children together.

If this proposal is allowed to take precedence over the needs of public education, we won't be able to offer that in future. We won't have sufficient resources to say, as we in this party want to say, that public education has to be about excellence for all. This party opposite, the government party, would encourage people to leave public education, to essentially have \$3,500 of public funds to go to private school, where there are no conditions, where there are no restrictions, where there is no Soviet-style government of this particular nature with its heavy hand on the schools, on the teachers, on the principals, restricting their ability to deliver innovation and responsiveness to the people who are here.

I think in all of our communities parents are starting to become alive to the fact that this government has stolen control of their local schools away from them, and in putting forward this opposition resolution, we think they can take it back. The way to take it back is not just to be against this ham-fisted policy, this lazy policy that the government, until forced to, has been afraid to put to public hearings. We understand they made a very small concession. They're still afraid to take it to their own ridings; they're still afraid to take it around the province.

We call upon the public to contact the clerk of the standing committee on finance to tell them that they want to be heard. Today is the day that the people of Ontario have to stand up for public education, because a large number of their representatives are patently afraid to do so, are not willing to stand up for public education.

The way we think to fight for public education is to improve it. There need to be things done with the \$300 million and the commitment that this government is not prepared to put into public education. We need lower class sizes. This government came in and increased class sizes, cut funds, took away teachers, overloaded the system. We think our students deserve better.

We proposed in our plan for public education to make 20 the maximum in primary grades in this province, and we think that initiative by itself will pay for itself, but it does take commitment. It costs \$350 million to ensure an excellent education for our students in the lower grades. That's where our priority should be. That's where the focus of this House should be: how can we make the young children of this community get their literacy, get their numeracy, have that taught to them in the lower grades, get the individualized attention that the taxpaying

citizens of this province have every right to expect but for some reason the members opposite want to deny them, don't want to give them full value for their tax dollars?

We have heard in some of the petitions read by the members opposite that somehow this is giving parents their money back. There are people in this House, people in this province, who don't participate with the education system because they don't have any kids in the system. I, for example, have a preschool child. But it doesn't matter. We all invest in public education. We don't give refunds for any purpose, because the value of public education is such that we all have to invest in it.

This government, at a time when it had \$14 billion in increased revenue, has cut funding for education by \$1.8 billion. With this initiative, with this idea that somehow they are going to encourage people with public funds to go to private schools, they stand exposed as lacking that elemental commitment to making sure not only of lower class sizes but that excellence in education gets shared around.

**1520**

We say, for example, lighthouse programs are what this government should be focusing on: to take the good programs that are taking place in schools, to fund that to make sure that they are learned by other programs, so that other places can have the advantages of the very significant excellence that already exists in the system; to take the teachers who have made that happen, in math or in special education or in some of the inner-city schools or some of the rural schools and pay, as a government, to make that occur all around the province. Take advantage of the fact that we have a public education system on both the separate and secular side, and we can make those systems even better.

We have also said we would pay to see master teachers, to see people mentor the new teachers to make sure that we don't have what this government has handed us today for public education: 4,400 teachers who left last year for reasons other than retirement. They voted with their feet to say this isn't a jurisdiction where they can practise the profession of teaching—of inculcating among our young the ability to be part of this society, to be successful in society, to have good paying jobs in this society—because the government has given up on the system.

We see that most clearly in the initiative today when the government says that they can continue to deprive children of the essentials, of textbooks, for example. This year, each of the members opposite should be back in their riding at some point and describing to them why there aren't going to be any textbooks available. A new curriculum in grade 11: there will not be money to buy the books for most of the subjects, because the government has other priorities. It thinks tax cuts are important, it thinks tax breaks and vouchers for private schools are important, but it doesn't think that books and teachers and attention to students on an individualized basis matter, and that's fundamentally what we're here

today to speak about. It's to put on the record, to have the public of Ontario see first-hand, where the commitment and the priorities are of all members of this House.

The tax voucher system—the private school voucher—allows this government to be harmful to all publicly funded schools: to take \$6,800 out—after they've paid their first \$300 million—to actually have the audacity to have a system where they will benefit from the difference between the \$6,800 and the \$3,500 of public funds they're prepared to give people to take their kids to private schools. This is a means, eventually, after losing us at least \$300 million out of the public purse, to continue to take money from schools. The Premier said it could be \$700 million. Other people have estimated that with even small growth increments, it could be much, much higher. That money will leave the public system but, perversely, a good part of the money won't even go this special, rarefied route to parents. It will go instead to this government to use for its tax cuts, to use for its other priorities that don't include children.

Fundamentally, this is about changing an agreement we've had in this province for decades. And more fundamentally, it's about removing the rug from under any reasonable plan for the future, for this province to move forward in the 21st century. If there is one thing we can do as a jurisdiction to confer some benefit, to do something positive, it's what we do in those 12 and 13 years during public education. The attack the government has made on that system has been regrettable and reprehensible, but now it becomes comical for the government to have any pretence that they believe in that kind of future where everyone is offered a chance of excellence.

Instead, they have made it very clear: if you want to pack your bags and leave the public education system, if you want to join the Conservative Party and take a lazy approach, rather than hunker down and fix things and make them better and improve and provide the things that people need, if you just exit, the Premier is saying to us today that the Conservative Party will pay you to do that. That's not a role for a public official in this province, that's not a role for a Premier, and that's not leadership on public education.

Instead we have our leader, Dalton McGuinty, providing very clear leadership, very clear policies, very clear options for this government to take up today. Just as we did when we put forward a peace plan last December, we want to see peace in our high schools. We said to this government, "We've got a plan. We acknowledge you're the government of the day. Take this plan and put your name on it. Bring peace to the schools. You can have some of your badly thought-out policies, but at least give extracurricular activities back." For 240 days this government refused to do that. For 240 days they showed us their true priorities and instead, finally, lamely, reluctantly, dragged to the finish line, and at the end of the year they considered they might be partly responsible for a situation that they initiated.

Today I hope to hear the members opposite change their minds. This is not the kind of thing that any single

party has the right to do. This government has no mandate. This government said opposite things a year ago. This government has no right to trifle with 2.1 million kids in the public education system.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I rise in support of this resolution. I just want to say at the outset, I thought it was interesting that the Liberal education critic talked about the Liberals providing clear policy, because—I don't know—if you listen to what's going on when it comes to discussions they're having with people in support of private education, they tell them behind closed doors that they support it, and then when it comes to talking to people who want to support public education, they are saying that they're going to support public education. The Liberals, as always, are falling down on both sides of the issue, and what's interesting, all at the same time. It amazes me. It always amazes me that the Liberals can get away with that.

I want to say up front, as a New Democrat and for the rest of the caucus, that we are clear on this issue of public versus private school funding. We are opposed to this voucher tax credit system that the government is proposing in this year's budget, which will allow people who choose to send their children to private schools to get what is in effect a voucher at the end of the tax year. The government wants to say this is not a voucher. The only difference in what the government is proposing is that if you had an actual voucher, the parent would get the \$3,500 in September, but because it's a tax credit, they'll get it back as a tax credit in the month of March. Rather than the voucher, you're getting a tax credit, but it all works out to the same thing; rather than being paid in September, you're being paid in March.

In the time that I have in this debate, I want to say a couple of things when it comes to public education and where we have seen policy in this province go over the last six years. I want people to think back to about the summer of 1995, after the Conservative government came to power in June of that year. If you remember, Mr Snobelen was appointed as the Minister of Education, and at that time in the summer of 1995, in speaking to bureaucrats at the Ministry of Education—and this was caught on tape, because they had videotaped his speech to give back to the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Education—Mr Snobelen said, “We will create a crisis in education as the backdrop to be able to do the fundamental changes that we want to make in the education system as Conservatives.”

I say, as I said back then, that if anything should have happened to Mr Snobelen at the time, he should have had to resign as the Minister of Education on the basis of having divulged what was a cabinet discussion, because I believe that has been the policy of the government when it comes to education and health care over the last number of years since they've come to power.

If you severely underfund the system, if you create the crisis, you create the condition by which you're able to open up the doors to make the kinds of changes that this government wants to make. So let's look at how they've created a crisis.

One of the first things the government did was change the whole way we fund schools in Ontario. There used to be a time when funding for schools was split about 50-50, depending where you lived, between local school boards and the provincial government. It was a partnership. The school boards would go out and raise, by the way of municipal levy, money to be able to pay for education at the local level, and the province kicked in about 50% in order to make this function work. The important point is that there was a combination and a balance, I would say, between local control at the school board level and provincial guidelines by way of the province.

As a result, the province, because it put in a part of the money, had a say in determining what the curriculum was and in making sure there were provincial standards set across the province. By way of the school board being able to raise its own funds, they were able to deal with local issues. For example, in our communities of northern Ontario, it allowed the school boards to offer French immersion programs in the way that made sense for our communities. It allowed them to introduce programs that dealt with the environmental issues of our particular part of the province. It also allowed the school boards to deal with aboriginal programs to make sure that we try to sensitize young children growing up in non-aboriginal communities about the realities of what First Nations people have to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Those were some of the things you were able to do at the local level, because the school board trustees had taxing powers and also the ability to determine what was going to be done inside the school year.

The government then said, “We want to get away from that.” What they did was, they not only took over complete control of education, but they changed the way that financing was done in education at the primary and secondary levels. What they did was basically to say from now on schools would be given money on the basis of the square footage they have in the schools. Now what you've got is this ridiculous situation where we're not really looking at how many kids are in the school to determine how much funding has to happen at the local school level; we're looking at the square footage in the school for the number of pupils. As a result of that, we have some great inadequacies when it comes to the amount of money available to certain schools to deliver programs.

**1530**

The second thing was that by taking over complete control of education, the province of Ontario basically is now able to call all the shots. The school boards are still there, although there are fewer of them, which in itself is not a bad thing, but they've basically neutered the power of the school board trustees to deal with local issues. Now the province barks and the school boards have to say, “Yap, yap, how high?” I don't see that as being necessarily a good thing for education.

They have created a crisis in education, first, by changing the way we fund schools; second, by taking

complete control of the schools by way of provincial control; and third, they've picked a huge fight with the teaching profession in Ontario. Since 1995 the Tories have worn like a badge of honour the number of battles they've had against the teaching profession in this province. I think that has led to a great disservice, not only to teachers in our communities but also to students and parents who see teachers as others who are trying to go out there and do the best they can in the system we have. As a result, we now see fewer and fewer young people choosing to enrol in teachers' college to go into the teaching profession because they've watched Mike Harris for the last five, six or seven years bash teachers at every occasion. They say, "Why should I go into a profession where I'm constantly getting bashed? Maybe I should go do something else."

The figures now are clearly showing that only about 50% of the number of people are enrolling in educational programs that lead to a teaching degree today that there were a couple of years ago, a complete drop by half the number of people going into the teaching profession. As a result, we will have a teaching shortage in this province in the not-too-distant future.

So the government has gone in and has underfunded the system. They've cut almost \$2 billion out of the public school system. They've taken complete control of education. They've neutered the power of the school boards and the school board trustees. They've changed the funding formula to reflect footage rather than the number of pupils who are in the system. They have created a backdrop by which we are now starting to see failure of our public school system to a degree we've never seen it before.

I would also argue that on a lot of the school testing issues, where the government has come up with province-wide testing, which is not a bad idea in itself, they've set that up to fail. I've talked to a number of people in the teaching profession who were responsible for grading the provincial exams, who were hired by the Ministry of Education to do it. I'm being told that in a number of cases, when they went out to do the grading, they were told to change the grading after the grading was done. I think the government is trying to demonstrate that there's this huge problem in the system of public education and that somehow or other we've got to fix it.

We find out in the budget of the year 2001 what the government has planned, and that is that they want to give Ontarians, as they say, the "choice" between sending their children to the public system of education or a private system: religiously based or non-religiously based private schools. I think that's really dangerous for a number of reasons. In the time I've got left, I want to tell you why I'm opposed to it and why I think most Ontarians are opposed to it. There are some people who support this, no question, but they are not in the majority.

First of all, parents who choose to take their children out of the public system and send them to a private system are doing so based on their religious beliefs, by and large. That's the biggest reason why children go into

the private system. There are some Montessori schools, which is a bit of a different issue, but on the question of the majority of private schools out there, most of them are faith-based schools. So they're choosing to take them out of the public system and put them into the private system on the basis of their faith. I understand that as a parent, but I believe you can do that within the public system. If we, as parents, want our children to be raised in our faith, which is perfectly acceptable and should be encouraged, we need to figure out a way to make that happen within the public system. I would argue it's not by allowing parents to opt out of the public system into a private one that we should be doing it. What we should be saying is, "How do we go to our public school systems, both French and English, and say, 'I want to be able to make sure that my child is raised in my religious belief and has a component of their education that is based on faith.'" You can do that within the public system, but instead the government chooses not to do that and would rather divert the children, by way of choice of the parents, into the private system.

I believe you can accommodate faith within the public system. I don't believe the best way to do that is in an entirely private system. By allowing the child to move from the public system into the private system, there are a number of questions that have to be asked. Number one: once the child goes into the private system, what assurance do we have as taxpayers—because we are the ones who are going to be paying by way of our tax dollars—that those children, when they go into the private system, will be following some sort of public curriculum that is province-wide?

We know that faith is going to be part of the education. I understand that, I accept it, I respect it and I encourage it. But on the question of education, I want to make sure as a taxpayer that at the end of the day the children who would end up in the private system, who are there now or would go in the future, have basically a requirement to follow our provincial guidelines when it comes to curriculum, making sure as well that there are certain provincial guidelines that are followed when it comes to issues of discrimination and a whole host of other issues.

There's no mechanism to make that happen. You could make it happen, I would argue, if we decided to do that. But creating a whole other basic system of education, a the private system to get there, is not a good use of taxpayers' dollars. I would argue: make that a combination within the public system. We should be trying to strengthen the public system so that we can give our children the very best education possible so they can go out and compete in tomorrow's economy.

I don't think that fragmenting the system to a greater degree by way of increasing private schools is going to be a way to strengthen education overall. What it does, by the Premier's own admission and by the minister's own admission in letters they wrote to us, wrote to the Liberal opposition and wrote to the public on this issue is that when you're giving somebody a tax credit—I don't

care what the amount is—you're taking money away from the public system to offset and pay into the private system. It is taking money away from the much needed dollars that are necessary to strengthen our public system.

What I would argue is simply this: if we as a Legislature decide we want to encourage the ability of parents to choose a way of making sure that the faith the family has when it comes to religious beliefs is ingrained, not only in what they do at home but to a certain extent in what happens at school, we should be looking at how to do that in a public system. I would argue against doing it in a private system.

In the few minutes I have left, the other thing that I would say is that the government, both in the 1995 and the 1999 elections, never ran on a ticket that said, "Vote for us and we'll give you private education." In fact, they ran opposed to that. My leader Howard Hampton in a leaders' debate in the 1999 election put that question squarely to Mike Harris and Mike Harris said, "I will never support funding the private system." He was very clear about that.

Ontarians made a choice. They chose to elect, freely and democratically, the Conservative government by 44% of the legislative votes in Ontario in the last election, but they did so in the belief there was not going to be private schools. I argue there is no mandate for the Conservative government to move on this initiative. I believe that either should be put to a referendum for the people of Ontario or the issue put off to the next election.

If the Conservatives believe there should be private education, or the Liberals believe there should be private education, depending which day of the week it is because some days they're in favour and some days they're against—when they walk into a religious-based school or they're being lobbied by people who send their kids to private school, they say, "Yeah, don't worry, we're in favour," but when they go out and talk to the public they say a different thing—at least the parties would be able to state clearly what their position is in an election.

The voters would then have to make a choice. If they believe, as a majority, that there should be funding for private schools, let the voters decide. That's the way the democratic system should work. I don't believe it's right for a government to do these huge shifts of public policy when they don't have the mandate to do it.

You should shelve this whole issue till the next election. If you really feel strongly about it, put it in the next campaign as part of your campaign literature. Maybe then, if people understand, they will have a choice. My guess is that the vast majority of Ontarians would vote against such a proposal and would sustain any party that stands for public education. With that, I thank you very much for having this time in debate.

1540

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** Thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss a very important new initiative of our government. I thank Minister Flaherty and Minister Ecker for the leadership they have shown in bringing forth the initiative we've talked about, the tax credit issue.

Over the next five years, we propose to phase in a partial tax credit for parents of children at independent schools. Let me make it clear right off the bat: this is not a voucher system. There is a difference. Once again, even the resolution put forth by the opposition clearly shows they do not understand the difference between a voucher and a tax credit. Instead, they've dwelt today on fearmongering and speculation.

Let's also make it clear that this is not a new initiative for any province.

**Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain):** Yes, it is.

**Mr Dunlop:** No, it's not. All of the western provinces as well as Quebec have shown leadership in this. We have started this in Ontario and we have shown leadership.

We are not funding private schools. We are giving a tax credit to hard-working Ontario families. This is all about expanding choice. It means more choices for parents and more choices for students. For years, the Ontario government has heard from parents who want their children educated in their own culture and religion. Even in my riding, which is primarily a two-board system, I continually get letters at all times from parents wanting some more choice. Some parents feel that the only way to do that is to send them to an independent school, but for many families the cost is overwhelming. Everyone is not wealthy. That's what the fearmongering I am hearing from the other side is on the tax credit issue—that it's only for the wealthy. You know full that's not the truth.

The Ontario government believes that the time has come to address the concerns of the parents. We continue to strongly support the public education system. In fact, our funding for public education has increased to \$13.86 billion this year. I believe that shows a strong commitment to public education. For the 2000-01 year, we have increased our investment in public education by more than \$360 million. Since our government came into office in 1995, education spending in Ontario has increased from \$12.9 billion to \$13.86 billion in this next school year.

As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, I have visited a number of new schools in Ontario. Just in new pupil places alone, beginning in 1998-99, there was \$132 million spent on new pupil places, new construction in Ontario. For this fiscal year, that number has gone up to \$315 million. I have visited schools and done some sod turning at schools such as St Mark Catholic school in Stoney Creek, a beautiful new structure for the citizens of that area; the Holy Jubilee school in Maple in Vaughan-King-Aurora; and the Canadian Martyrs Catholic school in Penetanguishene. These are state-of-the-art schools, with state-of-the-art air conditioning and ventilating systems, with fantastic gymnasiums, with wonderful sound systems and stages for all types of activities that can take place in the schools.

But again, I want to stress how much more money has been spent just in new pupil places and making these

places a more healthy environment—a \$109-million increase in funding this year over last year for new pupil places.

At the same time, we have many initiatives in place to support and improve public education. We are taking additional steps to improve choices for parents and for students. In the budget announced earlier this month, we indicated our plan to support parental choice with a new equity in education tax credit. Subject to approval by the Legislature, it will begin in the 2002 taxation year. It will give parents a tax credit of up to \$3,500, phased in over five years, for fees they pay to send their children to independent schools in Ontario. We will be consulting with the public on the best way to implement this partial tax credit. The government will work to identify how to establish eligibility for this credit.

I want to make it perfectly clear again that this is not a voucher system. This is about expanding choices for parents. It is something parents have demanded for years. The need to address this concern once again became apparent during this government's pre-budget consultations. That's why we do pre-budget consultations: to find out what the hard-working families of Ontario want. Other provinces support independent schools while maintaining their commitment to publicly funded education. We recognize that it is possible and desirable to support families who choose to send their students to independent schools while we continue to invest in public education.

I want to answer a concern that has been raised earlier in this House. No one is proposing to take one penny out of the public education system. Our government supports public education through a vast range of initiatives. For example, we have increased funding and other supports for students with special needs in Ontario. In fact, last year we increased spending on special education by 12%. That was the third year in a row we've increased resources in this vital area. In my own two school boards, the two largest school boards, the Simcoe County District School Board and the Simcoe-Muskoka Catholic District School Board, those increases went up by 25%, some of the largest increases in the province. I was especially pleased, before I was even involved as the PA to education, to work strongly with Minister Ecker's office to voice the concerns of the local boards and of the local parent councils to try to have those dollars increased.

We're entirely committed not just to introducing higher standards in our publicly funded education system, but to making sure the standards are met. To improve quality and accountability, we have established a more rigorous curriculum with higher standards. We have brought in standardized testing to measure students' progress. We want to assure parents and students across Ontario that teachers have the up-to-date knowledge and skills needed to help students reach their full potential. That is why we are implementing a comprehensive teacher testing program, subject to final passage by this Legislature.

We know as well that parent involvement is crucial to raising students' performance and achieving higher

educational standards. If parents want to make the right decisions and choices about their children's education, they need information. They need avenues for participation. We have created understandable report cards so that parents can see and evaluate exactly how their children are doing in school. I haven't heard a lot of criticism on this from the opposition.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** We like the report cards.

**Mr Dunlop:** I understand that. I think they're excellent, and I've heard nothing but compliments on that.

We have also worked hard to strengthen parental involvement in education through our school councils. School councils now have the right to make recommendations to the principal or school board on any matter. I want to say to you as a local member, I did take Mr Kennedy up on his challenge about going out and visiting schools. In fact, as PA I've really enjoyed visiting schools. I've met with a number of school councils and listened to the concerns that parents have. The one thing that has really impressed me about the school council people I have met with is their knowledge of the system, their knowledge on student-focused funding and on the different programs and initiatives our government has. Yes, there are concerns out there, but as a representative I try to listen to them and voice their concerns and take them to the minister.

But one thing I want to say, something that I wanted to talk about or briefly mention, is, not having been in school for a number of years, since my two children were there, I want to compliment the schools on the discipline and the school spirit I see in the schools. I visited some high schools, for example, like St Theresa's in Midland and Midland Secondary School and Orillia District Collegiate and Vocational Institute under the principalship of Rick Beer. I want to compliment them on the types of schools they are running.

**1550**

Principals and boards, of course, will be required to seek the views of school councils in a number of key program and policy areas. They will have to report back on actions taken in response to school council recommendations.

We are also providing parents with a stronger voice at the provincial level. We have recently expanded the Ontario Parent Council to include six regional representatives chosen by school councils from across our province. I want to say that I've met with a few of these representatives already and I think the Ontario Parent Council will be a very valuable asset to the provincial government.

In January of this year, we announced the creation of a Task Force on Effective Schools. The task force will recommend ways to improve board management practices, planning systems, school improvement plans and teacher excellence. The examples I have cited prove our education commitment, not just to publicly funded education but also to supporting parental involvement and parental choice.

One aspect of parental choice relates to the very personal cultural and religious decisions that may go into sending one's children to an independent school. I'll tell you, as a representative, since this announcement I've had a number of letters from parents. Some are concerned about the tax credit system, but most of the letters are in full support of our initiative.

Every student in Ontario deserves the best education possible. For some families, personal, cultural and religious values may lead them to placing their children in independent schools.

Our equity in education tax credits supports choices in education. In a healthy and respectful way, it runs parallel to our commitment to improving student achievement, raising standards and making Ontario's education system the best in the world.

In closing, I want to make one slight comment on something that the education critic from the opposition party had mentioned. He referred to us as a Soviet-style government. On one hand, I hear the opposition saying to us that we want to privatize everything. They're continually complaining about privatizing, as though they hate the private sector. On the other hand, they're referring to us as a Soviet-style government. There's something wrong there. In a Soviet-style government, they take away from the privatizing and there is no privatization. So I'd like to correct him on that and I hope he can refer to us as something other than a Soviet-style government, because certainly this is a Soviet-style opposition.

I want in closing to also thank a number of schools that I visited recently. I want to thank principal Alison Bradshaw, from the David H. Church school, that I visited last week in constituency week; principal Mary Hick and her staff at the Marchmount public school; and principal Larry Morley at the Coldwater public school.

I want to take this opportunity to say that I am opposed to the resolution. I want to pass it on to my colleagues for further comment.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** It's difficult for me to speak briefly about something I care about so deeply, so maybe I'll just spend my few minutes saying why I care so much.

I believe that there is an enormous strength to the public school system, and an enormous obligation. That obligation is to its inclusiveness. There's been a lot of talk about choice that's provided through this tax credit, the choice to opt out. That is a choice that people now have. But the great commitment of the public school system is to provide a system in which no one is shut out. Beyond that, the great challenge of public education has been to achieve educational excellence in offering that universal education to every child in a way that attempts to meet the needs of each individual.

It sounds like a corny 1970s kind of goal; I know that. It is a hugely ambitious goal. It's a goal that we fall short of in a great many ways. But it's also a goal that we have come closer to achieving than anybody might have believed possible, or at least we had until the Mike Harris government got hold of our education system.

I like to think of the great dream of public education as having been advanced step by step, rather like taking a giant boulder and pushing it very, very slowly up a mountain. Then Mike Harris came along with funding cuts, withdrawing support for special education that meets the needs of those individual children in many cases, putting in place restrictive barriers that shut people out even though the government puts them forward in the name of standards. The Mike Harris government has sent that dream of public education rolling all the way down to the bottom of the mountain, and now, with this tax credit, they are prepared to strangle public education even further.

Yes, the \$300 million to \$500 million to \$700 million that will be given in tax credits could have made an enormous difference to public education in achieving its goals, but this tax credit also withdraws money directly by providing an incentive to take people out of public education. It provides an incentive to withdraw the people, and with every student withdrawn from public education, the public education system loses about \$6,500. The Mike Harris government has to be congratulated on having finally found a way to take the money it wants out of public education and achieve its goal of privatization, all with one seemingly simple tax credit.

The other huge challenge of public education stems directly from its commitment to inclusiveness. Its challenge is how it can demonstrate respect for the many differences in cultural background in the students who are in our schools, how it can foster the values of mutual understanding and respect which I truly believe are values as important in this multicultural society of ours as reading, writing and arithmetic, which seem to be the focus exclusively of this government's talk about values and standards.

I believe our schools have been enormously successful in bringing together people of different backgrounds, and I believe that is the only effective way we can build that kind of mutual understanding and respect among people of different backgrounds. The tax credit that Mike Harris is introducing will destroy all of that. I'm absolutely convinced of that. It will destroy it by ushering in an era of fragmentation and segregation that no one would have believed was possible.

That's what breaks my heart: where this Mike Harris government has inexorably been taking public education, and this penultimate blow that it is about to deliver. But what makes me truly angry is to see how this Mike Harris government has, from the time it came into office, continuously set the public education system up for failure so that it could indeed move further and further on its privatization agenda.

I don't have time in the time that I have now to go over the history of what this government has done from day one to create the crisis, to attack the people who provide public education, to create the environment in which they believed they could find public support for introducing private school vouchers that will destroy

public education. I'll have an opportunity to do that tomorrow.

But I want to conclude this very brief participation in today's debate by recognizing that what will be lost if Mike Harris and his government proceed with this tax credit is the legacy of the past 150 years of public education in Ontario: the legacy of Egerton Ryerson, who truly believed that every child, regardless of wealth, should have a right to an equality of education. Mike Harris wants to create two-tiered education in which public education is a second-class system for people whose parents can't afford something better. If Mike Harris proceeds with this, it will be a truly shameful legacy of the Mike Harris government.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** I'm quite happy to stand up and support the Liberal motion of the day. I agree with most of the things that have been said by the previous speakers, Gerard Kennedy and others; we'll hear Mr McGuinty shortly. But I've got a few problems with the way the Liberals present these issues, and I want to speak about two or three if I can.

The first one is, the motion speaks to funding money to cap the primary grades, which is a very laudable thing to do. I think it's a good thing to be able, as a government, to fund capping of primary grades. Capping the grades at earlier years to that kind of number of 20 or so is a good thing, because students, of course, learn better in that kind of environment, and teachers are able to teach better. No problem.

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I think the problem is that it will cost a couple of hundred million; some say \$200 million, some say \$300 million, but it's in the area of \$200 million to \$300 million. My question to the Liberals is, where are you going to find the money for your initiative? You've got to speak to that. You can't just say, "We're going to reduce the debt, we're going to keep tax cuts, we're going to fund new programs, more for education, more for health," but at the end of the day when we ask you, "Where are you going to get your money?" you don't tell us.

I want to be able to say to you that New Democrats in the 1999 election said that we would roll back the tax cuts for those earning over 80,000 taxable dollars. Why? Because we think those people are doing OK and that the people who are not doing OK are the ones who earn \$30,000 or less, and that's 50% of the working population of Ontario. These people don't get a tax break. They don't get any money back. But those over \$80,000 earn a hefty amount of money that they don't really need. So we were hoping the Liberals, as they rail against the tax cuts—as we do, as New Democrats have done continually, consistently—would take the same position that we would, and that is to say we've got to get some of that money back. If you don't get any of that money in that way, I'm not sure where you're going to grow your money.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** We're not going to come to you for advice on money.

**Mr Marchese:** I know you're not going to come to us for advice, Marie Bountrogianni from Hamilton. I know you're going to go to someone else for advice. I hope you don't go to the Tories for advice on this one, because I know some of you say, yes, tax cuts are good. I know you say that, and that's an idea the Tories like too. Chrétien likes it. I know you won't come to us for advice, but please be honest; tell us where you're going to get your money to fund the capping of these primary grades.

As New Democrats we speak about the need to fund early childhood education from age two, as they do in France, as a more critical idea to help, to do prevention in those early years, to give to children in a class-based society the opportunities they need in those very early years before they get to JK, if they have a full-time program, and before they get to SK, where much of that educational learning is pre-set. So you want to get children at an early age where you can actually help to reduce the inequality of class, because if you come from a professional background—and not just money; money doesn't give you the kind of education that some people think people with money have. No. Professional individuals who have gone through the educational system and throughout the elementary, secondary, and college and university system are more likely to pass on those literary and those literacy skills to their children in a way that they will perform better. Not everybody in society is so lucky. So we say, as New Democrats, if you want to reduce inequality of those social class differences, put the money and the investment in the early years.

New Democrats would find some of that money by rolling back some of that income tax from those individuals so very special to the Tories, so very close to the Tories. We would take some of that money back. We would find ways, new economic development ideas that would generate some amount, but in addition we've got to get some of that money back from the income tax cuts, because at the end of it, you fine Liberals, with the Tories, if you don't get any of that money back, which amounts to from \$10 billion to \$12 billion that this government has given away, we're in trouble, you see. Neither Liberals nor New Democrats could do anything unless we find ways of bringing some of that wealth back, taking it from those, yes, very rapacious individuals who can never get enough from the Tories. Rapacity is the name of the game for these wealthy individuals who can never get enough, and they continue to demand less tax burden on these people who don't really need it, don't need the money. They in fact need to pay us, society, so that we could keep our educational and health programs. You can't buy into this idea that you can't touch the tax cuts.

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** What do the auto workers say about that?

**Mr Marchese:** I don't know. I'm only speaking about the Liberals, member for Hamilton Mountain. I don't want to speak for the others, but I want you to speak for yourselves. What some labour people might say for me is neither here nor there. They have their opinion. I'm

interested in you, as a political party aspiring to lead this place as the government, about your position.

I'm equally worried about some of the positions your members have taken. Mr Kennedy was quoted again in *Now* magazine—

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** A very good source.

**Mr Marchese:** I take all sources, whether they come from the *Sun*, the *Globe*, the *Star*, *Now* magazine, member for Hamilton Mountain. I take all of these stories as fact until proven otherwise.

When I quoted Mr Kennedy the other day from an interview he did in High Park, we confirmed that he had said what he had said, and that is that he supports fairness and that, yes, they would presumably fund religious schools, not now, but sometime later.

So my question to the Liberals is, what do you mean, you are for fairness, and not now, but when? And what do you mean when you're against tax credits? Are you in fact saying fairness means full funding for religious schools? What are you saying? I, as a New Democrat, want you to be clear about what it is that you're saying.

In *Now* magazine, it is reported that Mr Kennedy contends that funding for religious schools doesn't necessarily mean less money for the public system. Both can be accommodated, he says. How? Mr Kennedy responds, "We don't have the answer to that at this time."

You can't confuse the public out there with your own presumably consistent message through Mr McGuinty that you are opposed to public dollars for private schools, but when asked, Mr Kennedy at least, on two occasions already, has said, with this one, "Full funding for religious schools doesn't necessarily mean less money for the public system. Both can be accommodated." Please, we need clarity.

Sorry. I know there are a few people, a few citizens out there, who want the Liberals and New Democrats to collaborate because the real enemy is over there, and I agree with them. Generally, the real enemy is there. I have no problem with that. I know where the reptiles are. Generally speaking, I know they're on the other side.

On the other hand, I believe we need sincerity, yes, clarity, yes. Consistency would be helpful. It would be helpful. We need from the Liberals a position that's clear. Are you against public dollars for religious schools, yes or no? Not yes today or no today and it might change tomorrow. Please. At least I need to know before I can say to the public, "I want to collaborate with the Liberals."

**Mrs Bountrogianni:** Oh, yes, that'll happen.

**Mr Marchese:** From time to time, I do collaborate with the Liberals. There are some fine people in the other party. There are some fine people in the Liberal Party, and I like to collaborate. From time to time I do that. I don't always attack Liberals. You know that. I think the public knows that and they watch the debates often enough to know that my attacks—at least I excoriate those people on a regular basis. You know that.

I'm asking for some clarity first on your position vis-à-vis funding for religious schools, and I know your

position that you do not support public dollars for private, non-denominational schools. I appreciate that. We're clear on that one. We are both clear on that one, I think, although I can't speak for you Liberals.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** Thank you. We don't want you to speak for us.

**Mr Marchese:** And I don't want to speak for you. I'm asking you to speak for yourselves. I only quoted a paper because you can contradict it; you can say, "No, that wasn't true. I didn't say that. No, he said that"—you can say that.

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**Mr Parsons:** Give us your time.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm not going to give you my time. This is coming around. Don't worry.

Again, Liberals and New Democrats are clearly on the same side when it comes to the fact the Tories have taken away \$2 billion from the educational system. It is an unbelievable thing that you could hear both the Premier and the Minister of Education stand every day saying they had put money into the educational system, not taken out money. They say it without squirming. They say it with a straight face. It amazes me.

We have credible sources, and an economist, that have said they've taken \$2.3 billion out of the educational system, yet you have the Minister of Education continue to deny that. God bless them. Good citizens, God bless that they can say what they want to say. And they appear to be getting away with it, except where I have been, in London. In the hearings I held in London, the people were not fooled by this government. The various speakers who came in London and Guelph in fact spoke of the cuts that have been made to this educational system that have hurt our educational system in a serious way.

We have Sya Van Giest, who was a teacher-librarian, who spoke to the people in Guelph and commented about the loss of librarians in our educational system. This is new to us? But to hear this government, you would think that there is more money for everyone and everything in the educational system. We have fewer librarians now than ever before. They are key and central to the educational system, key to learning, a key aspect of the literacy of young people, both in the elementary and secondary panels. We're losing money for our libraries in the programs run by the city of Toronto and we're losing librarians in the public system.

We have fewer textbooks now than ever before.

It's not something that I'm saying; it's the people who came to our meetings: Don Kaufman from Guelph, Ian Hendry, Sya Van Giest, Bob McCracken and Josh Alcock from Guelph, the people who have spoken to me in terms of the deputations. I'm not talking about the others who had a lot more to say about the cuts to our educational system.

We're losing our specialty teachers. Remember, good citizens, librarians don't count as part of that formula. So if you get rid of them, it's too bad. Who needs them, presumably?

We have over 35,000 special education students, as has been mentioned before, on a waiting list. They require some special attention and we don't have the resources to be able to deal with that. How can this government get away with that?

I've got to tell you, they're not getting away with it, because the people who are actively involved in educational issues across the province are not buying the statement of the Minister of Education that says, "We have put \$2 billion into the educational system."

I hear it in Toronto and I hear it everywhere. I'll be in Timmins this week and I'm sure I'll be hearing the same things, that the funding formula, one that is funded on the basis of square footage rather than the needs of children and communities, is an inadequate way to fund for education. I know why this government did it. They centralized education financing and they created this formula as a way of squeezing money out of the educational system, which they've done effectively. As a consequence, however, they've destroyed our educational system. Liberals and New Democrats agree with that. No problemo on that one.

On this resolution, when they speak about capping primary grades, New Democrats have no disagreement. But when we decide on the priorities, we have to be able to say we're going to do all of these things: we're going to give tax cuts, we're going to cut the debt, we're going to increase services, we're going to put money back into the educational system, and here's how we're going to do it. I'm saying to you, Liberals, on your resolution today, that I don't know where you're going to come up with the money to do it, because this government will have taken \$12 billion by the end of their term for corporate tax cuts to that very special interest group they pertain and belong to and another \$7 billion to \$8 billion for income tax cuts that go to individuals in society, most of whom are well to do and don't need the tax breaks. That's \$12 billion gone. When the economy slips, as it inevitably does, there won't be money in the kitty to be able to draw from so that we can continue to provide an education system that is sound for people in communities, for students and parents. And we won't have the money to be able to provide a health care system that is sound and beneficial to all Ontarians.

So I say to you, where are you going to find your money? Be frank about that. Please, unequivocally, on this issue of public dollars for private schools, are you against funding for private religious schools? Yes or no? I know you are against tax credits, as this government has proposed, as we are—we're against them—but we are against funding for religious private schools as we are against funding for non-denominational private schools, most of which don't want our money.

When it takes \$16,000 to \$20,000 to send your kid to Upper Canada College, the tax credit these people are giving to them is a pittance to people who can afford to spend anywhere from \$16,000 to \$28,000 to send their kid to Upper Canada College. Do you think those schools need the tax credit or any other kind of support? They don't want it and they don't need it. They don't want it

because they don't want to be held accountable. The money is for, yes, those privileged individuals; it's also for religious schools.

I'm sorry. I believe in a public system that is inclusive of our multicultural, multiracial community. I believe in it strongly, and I believe our public system can and must accommodate our differences, religious and cultural, in our system. That's the only place to accommodate our differences, not by fragmenting, segmenting and encouraging intolerance, which indeed happens in many of these schools, through the funding of public dollars for private schools.

In many of these private schools, you don't see too many children with disabilities. The public system has the majority of children with disabilities. The public system accommodates our differences. While we support this resolution by the Liberals, I've asked them to please, for my benefit if no one else's, but for the citizens, be clear.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. You were the only one standing. If you would like to go ahead, please do.

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** I would be very pleased to speak to the opposition day motion that has been presented to the Legislature by my leader—

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Business Services):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm surprised that the member opposite, seeing that one of our members stood in their place and obviously wasn't recognized, would not yield the floor at this point in time.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I tried.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** I seek unanimous consent—

**The Acting Speaker:** The minister has asked for unanimous consent that the speaker revert to the government side. Is it agreed? It is agreed. The Chair recognizes the member for Thornhill.

**Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill):** I want to thank all the members in the House for agreeing to the unanimous consent, and I thank the member from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for—

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** For being so gracious.

**Mrs Molinari:** Yes, for being so kind as to let us have our turn here.

**Mr Marchese:** Say what you feel. Speak from the heart.

**Mrs Molinari:** Yes, I am going to speak from the heart, because this is something that's very near and dear to me. I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to discuss the Ontario government's commitment to quality education in Ontario.

We are committed to providing students in Ontario with the very highest standards of publicly funded education. We want them to graduate high school with the knowledge and the skills they need to excel in post-secondary and in the workplace.

1620

Over the past six years our government has been putting in place numerous initiatives that have radically improved the education system. There are several key elements of our education plan. One is a fair funding focus on students. The member from Timmins-James Bay talked about the fact that we changed the way we are funding education and funding schools. He is correct: we are changing it in a way that is more fair to all of the students in the province of Ontario.

In the past the way education was funded was based on an assessment basis. So boards that were rich in assessment were able to access more dollars and more resources. Boards that were poor in assessment were able to access less. Traditionally they have been the Catholic schools. In York region we have the York Catholic board and the York public board. For many, many years the funding has been inequitable because of the assessment. With the present funding model, once it's fully phased in, all of the students in the province of Ontario will have equal dollars and equal access.

The other is more resources in the classroom. We have provided more textbooks. We've actually purchased textbooks and given the textbooks to the schools, and allowed for textbook funds in their budgets to be able to spend on more resources.

The new and more rigorous curriculum: parents demanded it, post-secondary institutions demanded a more rigorous curriculum and the employers demanded it. It was said, over and over again, that students coming out of secondary education were not prepared adequately for post-secondary studies.

Regular and standardized tests to show how our students are doing: this is accountability. We are measuring the accountability in the schools by testing students and ensuring that after certain grades they have achieved the requirement they need to be promoted to the next grade.

A stronger voice for parents in their children's education: we have mandated school councils in all schools. School councils have a very important function. They are to advise the principal on decisions that affect their individual schools.

All these initiatives are increasing the quality and the accountability of Ontario's publicly funded education system. We are strengthening education in Ontario, and building an education system that ensures our children's success means preparing them for a world that is being transformed by information and communications technology. That means that the skills they need in the workplace will continue to evolve. Many of the young people entering high school this fall are likely to have jobs that do not exist today. These rapid changes in career opportunities are realities in the province of Ontario and around the world. It is vital that our education system ensures that Ontario children are keeping up with their global peers. We must continue our strong focus on quality, student achievement and improvement.

To meet the challenges of technology and the knowledge economy the Ontario government is staying focused

on four important aspects of our evolving education system. We are increasing education standards and performance-based accountability for the system. We are providing students, parents and communities with greater flexibility and choice. We are making greater use of technologies. We recognize the importance of lifelong learning.

Allow me to give a few examples of how those trends are affecting our publicly funded education system. New, challenging kindergarten and elementary curricula are now in place. The new four-year high school program is being phased in. Our teacher testing program will ensure that all Ontario teachers have the up-to-date knowledge and skills they need to help students reach their full potential.

This fall we will phase in standards for mandatory professional development, with recertification every five years, performance appraisals, evaluation and decertification. This will ensure that teachers are evaluated consistently and regularly, with input from parents. Next spring we will begin a new qualifying test for all new teacher graduates as well as for all teachers trained outside Ontario.

School councils now have the right to make recommendations to their principal or school board on any matter. This reflects our commitment to provide parents with more avenues for active participation in the education system. This fall we will launch an annual survey to measure parent satisfaction with the education system. We are proposing to allow parents to enrol their children in any available school within the system. We are eliminating the institutional bias against home schooling by helping parents gain access to standard tests and other learning tools.

Earlier this month, in the provincial budget, we announced additional plans to increase choice in education by establishing the equity in education tax credit. It will give parents a tax credit of up to \$3,500 phased in over five years for fees they pay to send their children to independent schools in Ontario. This is 50% of the maximum \$7,000 tuition that one would pay. We are making fairness a priority so that parents who want their children educated in their culture and religion have the opportunity to do so if they wish. The equity in education tax credit is about choice, fairness and supporting cultural and religious diversity.

This government believes in listening to Ontarians. In my riding of Thornhill I have hosted several round table discussions asking the constituents of Thornhill what they would like to see the government do in a number of the issues that have come to my attention through my constituency office. Certainly providing some assistance to those who send their children to independent schools was one of the highest priorities.

In January I hosted a round table on education funding for independent schools. It was very well attended and there were many topics covered within that round table discussion. One of the areas that came up loud and clear during the end of that was that the one decision they

wanted this government to take and the one preferred choice would be to offer tax credits for parents choosing to send their children to independent schools.

I want to quote from a letter that was written in the Toronto Star from a Thornhill resident, Charles Wagner. He says in his letter:

“Many parents sending their children to private schools are not wealthy. They are hard-working people who turn to private schools because their needs are not served by the public school system.

“In many of these schools, parents sacrifice virtually every disposable dollar toward their children’s education. They are hit twice because they pay their taxes to the public education system and sometimes pay more than \$10,000 in tuition per child.

“McGuinty’s statement ignores the real hardship for poor and middle-class people who will be helped by this tax credit.

“He also fails to address the blatant unfairness of the present system. The tax credit is the first bona fide attempt to address that inequity.”

He concludes by saying, “I suggest that the future of our children and our country’s well-being hinges on educational policies. School choice will force all schools to improve their product. If your priority is our children, you will support this tax credit.”

Another resident of Thornhill, who actually was in attendance at my round table and contributed to the discussion—I want to quote from a Toronto Star article in which he was interviewed. I want to say I respect that the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan has different views on this, but when she says that this will be destroying the public education system, that is absolutely false.

Bernie Farber, who is the executive director of the Canadian Jewish Congress for the Ontario region, when he was interviewed on that topic, “rejected the argument that aiding private schools will weaken the public education system.

“That’s just not based on fact,” he said. “We will point to Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Quebec. All these provinces give funding to their independent schools and their public systems have not fallen apart.”...

“We believe, in this particular instance, Mr Harris did a courageous thing,” Mr Farber said.”

**1630**

Mike Harris is courageous, because we are in a position of making decisions that affect all of Ontarians. We listen to what Ontarians are saying and we respond to what their requests are. Our government is making it possible for parents who have been denied the choice of sending their children to independent schools in the past to now have that opportunity.

Many people are concerned that our government’s tax credit will come at the expense of the public education system. By no means is the equity-in-education tax credit meant to undermine the public education system. In provinces where this has been in place already, they

confirm that this is not the case. I’d like to quote from Lee Hollaar, who is the director of the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia, an organization representing 43 schools and about 9,000 students.

“Society is best served by having a rich array of alternatives in education.”...

“It’s not about elitism,” he says. “It’s about communities of shared values that celebrate diversity and are looking for secure alternatives.”

We are committed to a strong and effective public education system. We are increasing funding to public education by \$360 million in 2001-02. This is on top of approximately \$390 million that was added in 2000-01. Since 1995, we have increased education spending from \$12.9 billion to \$13.8 billion, which is more than that required to meet enrolment growth. Moreover, the equity-in-education tax credit displays our commitment to the betterment of education in the province of Ontario as a whole. We are providing the people of Ontario with the choice of a high-quality, well-funded public system or independent schools that offer religious, cultural or pedagogical differences.

We will continue to make new investments in the publicly funded education system to improve the quality of education in Ontario, something this government has been committed to since 1995. We have never shied away from putting parents and students first. We have made more quality reform in the education system.

I want to clarify some of the dispute between vouchers and tax credits because, through debates today and in recent weeks, the opposition keeps referring to the equity-in-education tax credit as a voucher. Once again, this tax credit is not a voucher. They obviously do not understand the difference between a tax credit and a voucher. A voucher would remove money from the public system. We have increased money in the public system. This tax credit does not take money away from the public system. The tax credit promotes parental choice in their children’s education. When a parent takes a voucher to an independent school instead of to a public school, the value of the grant is effectively taken out of the public system. This equity-in-education tax credit does not remove funding from public education. What it does is increase the number of educational opportunities available to children.

Parents in Ontario demand fairness, they want flexibility, and they want the choice to do what’s in the best interest of their children’s education. Why should we deny them that right? We are respecting cultural and religious diversity and we are making parents’ concerns a priority and putting students first. The equity-in-education tax credit responds to this concern. It supports educational choice and respects cultural diversity. There are approximately 700 independent schools in Ontario, including Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Hindu schools. In Thornhill, there are several religious and independent schools, and all these parents stand to benefit because of the equity-in-education tax credit.

We have chosen to provide the tax credit directly to parents so that they can decide where they want to send

their children to school and so the independent schools can continue to strive for excellence. Absolutely no money is going to any private school. The tax credit is going to parents who choose to send their children to religious or independent schools.

Finally, the Ontario government has increased its investment in the public education system. It is clear we are committed to the betterment of education in Ontario as a whole. For the 2001-02 school year, we have increased funding by more than \$360 million. Overall education funding has increased from \$12.9 billion to \$13.8 billion since this government took office in 1995, an increase of almost \$1 billion.

The many steps I have outlined confirm this government's commitment to strengthening public education in Ontario. The very best education of our children and grandchildren is in the best interests of all of us. By working together, we can ensure that Ontario students, today and tomorrow, make remarkable achievements in school, in post-secondary institutions, in the workplace and as caring, productive and active citizens of this great province.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I am very pleased today to have the opportunity to speak to the motion that has been presented by my leader, Dalton McGuinty, which I believe will definitely improve the quality of education in the province when it is supported by the members of this House.

The resolution presented by Mr McGuinty speaks to a meaningful reduction in class size. It speaks to the fact that this is an initiative we believe should be funded with those dollars that the government in its budget plan would suggest should be directed toward tax credits to individuals who would choose to enrol their children in a private system. I believe Mr McGuinty's resolution supports public education.

We have a public education system in crisis, and it is in crisis because it has been chronically underfunded since the election of Mike Harris. I've had the privilege, since 1985, of being very directly involved with the publicly funded education system in Ontario. Very sadly, in the latter part of my tenure as a school board trustee I was witnessing the systematic dismantling of the public education system. I witnessed a Minister of Education describe the plan of the government to create a crisis in education and, sadly, we see now in the province of Ontario that has in fact occurred.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the statements we hear from the government and from the Minister of Education with respect to the resources that Mike Harris has directed toward education. The minister would say they are putting more dollars toward education than any other government. The minister doesn't complete that thought with the statement about the realignment of services and the fact that local boards are no longer able to levy a portion of education expenses. Of course the Ministry of Education is directing more money, because it's picking up that local share.

What the government does not talk about is that in fact today less money is being spent per pupil in Ontario than

ever before—fewer dollars per pupil. In some jurisdictions in the province, those numbers can be upwards of \$2,000 less per pupil, and that has an impact within the school community, within the classroom and upon the students. My leader is presenting a resolution here today that will address some of the negative impacts that are being felt because of that chronic underfunding.

**1640**

I would like to speak to the issue of the notion of vouchers that has been presented in the budget. Sometimes members of the government rail about that terminology; it's not one they're especially comfortable with.

We have made some inquiries about the voucher system. If an individual chose to send his or her child to a private school and was in a position of not paying provincial tax, how might they benefit from the \$3,500 tax credit? The reality is, they would get a cheque from the provincial government for \$3,500. That's a voucher. That's a ticket saying, "Here, you choose not to support the publicly funded system. We will pay you for the private school choice that you make." So while you may not like that term, I believe it is very appropriate.

There were some comments made by the member for Thornhill, who would suggest to the people assembled here, and in the debate on the resolution, that the tax credit system will not in any way impact the publicly funded system. I would like to draw her attention specifically, but also the members of the House and those people who are listening, to a letter from the Minister of Education that is dated January 13, 2000. This letter was written to the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy by the Honourable Janet Ecker, who continues to be the Minister of Education.

In the body of the letter, the minister explains that, "While the government of Ontario recognizes the right of parents to choose alternative forms of education for their children, it continues to have no plans to provide funding to private religious schools or to parents of children that attend such schools. Extending funding to religious private schools would result in fragmentation of the education system in Ontario and undermine the goal of universal access to education." That was from the Minister of Education, and I have to say that it in no way is coherent or complies with the presentations that have been made by government members today. In fact, I think it demonstrates a great inconsistency.

We also have a letter from the Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris himself, written on January 18, 2000, to my leader, Dalton McGuinty, where he very clearly states that by implementing a system of support for private schools, it "would remove from our existing public education system at least \$300 million per year, with some estimates as high as \$700 million. Obviously, such an action would run directly counter to Ontario's long-standing commitment to public education." That statement was made by Mike Harris, Premier of Ontario. How inconsistent can one be?

I want to talk about the crisis in education in my riding. Here, the Premier has very clearly indicated that

supporting the private system in the province could cost anywhere from \$300 million to \$700 million. I want to talk about some of the issues I hear about in my riding. Like the member from Thornhill, I am in touch with people in my riding. I hear from them on a very regular basis about the issues they have with the publicly funded system, which they support, but they are so very distraught at its serious underfunding.

They talk to me about the fact that their students don't have textbooks. The Minister of Education, when pressed on this, will say, "We're spending more money on textbooks than we ever have before." And so you should, because this government has introduced new curricula in every grade, and that has an impact. You have not sufficiently addressed the impact that has had within our local school communities, as they do not have sufficient resources to acquire sufficient numbers of textbooks. Consequently, school councils and parent groups are out raising money for something as basic as textbooks in our schools.

Parents talk to me about the lack of resources in classrooms. Parents feel so badly that the students in the classes of their children don't have the human resources they need. They believe that in some cases there are needs for some teacher assistants and they're not there because the board does not have the resources available.

On the weekend I received calls from parents in a community that will be expected to share its administrator, its principal, because this government has changed the way that boards can now look to provide administrators within school communities. We hear from schools in rural Ontario that have part-time secretaries and part-time principals, and they deserve much more than that. Because of the underfunding of the Mike Harris government, in small rural communities the student body numbers do not enable boards to provide those full-time services that are very much required.

I hear from parents about transportation issues and how services have had to be modified because boards don't have the resources they once had in order to provide that important service, particularly in rural Ontario. I find it very interesting when we hear the Minister of Education speak about the importance of extracurricular activities. While I certainly support and believe very firmly that they are integral to the well-rounded education of our students, in rural Ontario, in some school communities where upwards of 80% and 90% of the student body is bused, there are no resources provided by this government so that those rural kids can stay after school and participate in the yearbook club or on the basketball team or in any of the other school groups such as the music club or the band. Those resources just aren't there. The option for extracurricular activities is not there. And it's not because the teachers are not there to provide that for the students; they are not there because this government will not provide the resources for the board to provide transportation for those students.

The resolution we have today from my leader is, in my opinion, one of the most positive initiatives we've heard

that will improve the quality of education for our children in Ontario. He talks about the cap of 20 students per class in junior kindergarten through to grade 3. I think now more than ever, we, as a society, are aware of the importance of investing in our youngest citizens. Surely the government must agree that this is a most worthwhile investment. We know that reducing the number of pupils a teacher has in the classroom has direct benefits for the pupils. They achieve at a higher level, and if there are challenges for the students, they are more easily accommodated and addressed in a setting with fewer students.

I very proudly speak in support of the resolution. I believe my leader has offered a very reasonable solution in terms of how to improve public education. This is a way we can support that change, by revoking the notion of supporting privately funded schools and investing in our public education system. Our children deserve that. The children of Ontario deserve the opportunity to have a well-funded, well-resourced public school system. I certainly hope that all members of the Legislature will be able to support this resolution in favour of children in Ontario.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West):** I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate. Part of the resolution before us today speaks to classroom size, so the first thing I'd like to do is to put on the record a report that was done not that long ago in which Suzanne Zeigler—who is or was a researcher for the former Toronto Board of Education and who was a researcher with the Royal Commission on Learning—gathered information based on international experience. What she found—and this is not unlike other reports—was that in order to have a significant and meaningful impact on the quality of learning in the classroom, you had to actually lower the number of students to 17, at a minimum.

**1650**

I realize that doing that in one fell swoop would cost an incredible amount of money, and I'm not suggesting for a second that's a platform we would even run on, saying, "We'll do that overnight," but I do think that if the government's going to brag about the importance of capping the number of students in the classroom, the first thing we ought to do is understand that this, in and of itself, is not going to make a significant difference. It does if you're starting at 35, obviously, just from a common sense point of view, but in terms of actually affecting the quality of learning, you've got to be at 17 students, and that is a bare minimum. They did a study in Tennessee, where they moved to 17, and they saw improvement, but marginal.

So let's understand that when you're bragging about this, you're really not at the point where it's making the kind of difference your words would suggest. What we maybe need to do is look at least at targeting that we're going to get to that figure down the road and show the public a plan. If the cost is too much to do, as I say, in one fell swoop, then let's build it in in phases. But please, let's stop pretending. I ask the government member to stop pretending that reiterating your legislated cap on the

number of students in the classroom is going to make a tremendous amount of difference, because it's not.

We on this side of the House have said to the government that almost all—not all, but almost all—of the problems we're having in the public schools at one point or another go back to funding. All roads lead to Rome; all the roads lead back to funding. Whether we're talking about supplies in the classroom, the number of students, the number of teachers, the kinds of programs, transportation, cleaning the classrooms, no matter what we're talking about in terms of the education system, at the end of the day the problems are financial.

One has to make the argument that the reason you did this—because a reasonable person would say, “Why would the government do that, especially when revenues were up and they've been in an economic boom?” The reality is that this government has taken between \$7 billion and \$8 billion a year and given that back in tax cuts that benefited mostly the very wealthy. For those ordinary, working families who may have received \$20 or \$30 a month or \$5 or \$10 a week, ask yourself, does that replace the quality of education we've lost in terms of what our children are experiencing when they go into the public education system?

The government brags a lot; they love to brag. They talk a lot about the fact that they now have a set funding per pupil. Let me read you something regarding that, and this supports an argument we've made all along. BDO Dunwoody, a chartered accountants firm, wrote to the Ontario Public School Boards' Association in January 1999 and said this: “The use of averages or per pupil grants, while simple in concept, has resulted in considerable gains or losses in many of the operating budgets of the province's school boards.”

We said that all along. I want to give credit to Judith Bishop, who's the trustee for two of the wards in my riding, wards 1 and 2, because she publishes this information and gets it out to the parents, and that's why people in Hamilton have a good understanding of what's happening and why: why we have so many problems in our public education system.

I want to mention parenthetically that this is one of the finest trustees I've ever known. I'm a big fan of Judith Bishop. She's a non-partisan individual. I want to say to the government that she's one of the few trustees I know of in all of Ontario who represents two wards, a couple of the toughest wards facing the greatest challenges in terms of income and other socio-economic challenges, especially ward 2, incredible challenges in terms of what people and families and children are facing.

She has to represent two wards. Ray Mulholland, the chair of the board, made a request at the time that you allow the board to have one other trustee, and you wouldn't do it.

I want to just underscore the fact that the only thing that makes this work at all is that we have such an outstanding trustee in Judith Bishop. Were it not for that, if we had a mere human or just someone who wasn't of that calibre, we would be losing big time. Where is this

showing itself? Meet with Judith Bishop some time and see how tired she is covering all of this territory.

I read you the quote that talked about the funding and the fact that, first of all, you're basing it on averages and, secondly, when you do it on a per pupil basis you like to say, “Oh, that makes everybody equal.” Well, it doesn't, because not all children, not all families and not all communities start from the same point.

Sometimes it's hard to get the concept about equality and fairness. When you watch the Olympic races, one could argue that if everybody started at exactly the same point, that's equal, right? I'm in the same position as the person next to me and they're in the same position and right across we're equal. If you end the debate there, it sounds like you're being fair, but you aren't, because if you take a look at the course those on the outer part of the course run a longer distance. Therefore, pure equality in its simplest form doesn't meet the test of fairness. Fairness requires that they stagger those runners so that the people on the inner track don't have an advantage and that those on the outer track aren't at a disadvantage.

When you use the funding formula you use now, you make it sound like everything is equal, but it's not fair. It doesn't take into account that there are challenges in my riding of Hamilton West, in downtown Hamilton, that do not exist to the same degree at all in Markham. Why on earth should anyone believe that giving both school boards the same amount of money is going to result in fairness for all the kids involved? But you ignore that because we've got to pay for the tax cut. That's the priority. Let's never lose sight of the fact that no matter how much we point out here on the floor, the only thing that really matters to this government is the tax cut. That's it. Everything else, everything, including our children's future, is secondary to your tax cuts, your gifts to the wealthy.

You talk a lot about spending in the classroom. Of course we know that you pulled a cute little shell game there where you said, “We're going to increase the amount of money that we spend on the classroom teaching, classroom spending,” and then all you did was redefine what is classroom spending and you took out valuable obvious things like hydro. Hydro is not included as part of classroom spending—go figure—and you can have the computers in the classroom but maintaining the computers isn't part of classroom spending. Getting the children from home to the school, transportation, a huge issue for parents, is not included. You don't even include cleaning the classroom. That's not classroom spending in Tory world. In Tory world somehow all those things aren't necessary in a classroom; therefore, you didn't include them in your formula. Where does that get us? You're able, accurately, to say, “We increased money that's being spent in the classroom where it matters,” and then, using your new formula, you show that you've increased some, very marginally, of those items that are left in the definition at the expense of everything else.

We've got a transportation crisis in Hamilton. You've been promising a formula since 1998, and we're still

waiting. We're in crisis in Hamilton, but it's not part of your classroom spending, so you can slash away at that. We've lost more support staff, caretakers and others. That doesn't count.

**1700**

Then you box in the school boards, the trustees, so that they have to follow your mantra. That explains, quite frankly, why you can stand up and say, "We've increased spending in the classroom. We've made things better. Aren't we wonderful?" Yet simultaneously, you've got every trustee, certainly in Hamilton and I suspect in a lot of other communities, including Ray Mulholland, the chair of the board, saying—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Christopherson:** I'm going to come to that, my friend, so you just hang on to that notion. We're going to come to that. You hang on.

What happens is, simultaneously those trustees are saying, "We're in crisis. We don't have enough textbooks, we don't have enough teachers, we don't have adequate transportation. The classrooms aren't as clean as they ought to be. We're having to cut English as a second language. We're having to cut all our special education programs and lay off those teachers." That's how both those things can happen simultaneously, because you changed the definition of what is classroom spending so that you can make that accurate statement, but back in Hamilton, in the real world, back on earth, our boards and our children are suffering.

In 1996, the Ontario School Board Reduction Task Force, the Sweeney report, showed that there were eight boards spending less than 40% of their expenditures on direct classroom spending, even by your new definitions. There were only 11 boards that were spending 60% or more in the classroom. Hamilton was one of the top boards. They were spending 61.5%, and the provincial average was only 53%. That's what our trustees have been able to do. But what does that mean and what is that reality? I want to compare that to what other boards are getting. Bear in mind, we are one of the most efficient boards and one of the most successful at ensuring a lowering of administrative costs and an increase in classroom spending, regardless of how you define it.

What do you do to a board like ours? What's the result? Out of 72 boards in the province, we're 69th in terms of revenue per pupil. We're one of the most efficient, we have greater challenges than most other communities, or at least many other communities, and we're one of the lowest in terms of per pupil dollars received from you. What gives?

**Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls):** It's taxes.

**Mr Christopherson:** My friend across the way from, I believe, Niagara Centre says, "It's taxes." I just want to bring to his attention and remind the member that in Hamilton, prior to you changing the law, when you no longer mandated and funded junior kindergarten, our school board trustees said, "We're not taking JK out of the system because it's just too damaging to our children." In order to pay for it, back when they still had

the power to do that—and you know, it's funny. For a government that purports to care that the government closest to the people should make the decisions that affect them the most, you took away their right to generate any revenue. In Hamilton—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Christopherson:** Hang on to your heckle for a second. No, not you, your buddy there beside you.

In Hamilton, in order to keep JK, they had to have a modest tax increase, back when they could do that. I stood in my place here and applauded the trustees for doing that because I thought it was in the best interests of the children of Hamilton. And you know what? Every trustee who stood for re-election who voted for the increase was re-elected. That sounds pretty democratic to me. We no longer have that ability because you, in the greatest centralizing of government powers in education—yes, I'll say it too—since Stalin, because that's what you'd accuse us of if we did it, you now do not give local governments any opportunity to reflect local challenges. It's all decided by the education czar. You make all the decisions and you took away all the decisions that were in the hands of the local government, and the democratic process was there to either support those trustees and return them to office or turf them out. If your thinking is right that tax cuts matter more than kids, every one of those trustees in Hamilton should have been booted out. Not one was. Why? Because at the end of the day Hamiltonians, like most other citizens in Ontario, are prepared to pay a fair price to get a quality education. That's what we had in Ontario under all three parties. We don't have that any more. You took that away from us.

Now you want to bleed away further from the public system by promoting, through tax cuts, people moving into the private education system, which just works fine for you because quite frankly I don't think you care an awful lot about the children and the families that are left behind. If they're not smart enough to make \$1 million, let them eat cake. You'll just make sure that those who have the money are able to get what they need from you. In return, you want the vote.

I want to re-emphasize in the last minute I have that in order to meet the 63.5% of education dollars being spent in the classroom, the only way the board could do it because of the rules that you put in place, because they're boxed in, was to lay off teachers who teach English as a second language.

I just did earlier today a member's statement—and you applauded—on SISO, the settlement agency in Hamilton that helps new Canadians get into the system. You all applauded and thought that was wonderful. I said to you that Hamilton is the third-largest recipient of new Canadians, whether they're immigrants or refugees, in Canada, the second-highest in Ontario, and we had to lay off teachers who teach English as a second language. How does that help our kids? Music teachers gone. The extra teachers and support that we needed for other challenges facing a lot of schools in Hamilton West, in downtown Hamilton, gone. So yes, we're proud of the

figure here, but what a price we're paying. What a price we are paying in Hamilton for your policies.

I'm just about out of time. I will, I hope, have an opportunity tonight some time after 9 o'clock to speak more directly to your privatization of the public education system. But let's be clear: there is a crisis in the public education system in Hamilton and nothing I've heard today tells me that you're hearing that message, or more importantly that you even care.

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** I'm pleased to join the debate on the Liberal opposition day motion. I guess what bothers me is that this would have been the perfect opportunity for Mr McGuinty, when he made this motion, to actually put on the record where he stands on a variety of education issues. We certainly hear every day in question period a very one-sided rant. It's certainly not a debate in that hour, more like an inquisition where Mr McGuinty gets to make all sorts of inflammatory comments but no one ever holds him to account. I guess I thought that in the one hour the Liberal Party would have today Mr McGuinty would lead off by putting it clearly on the record in this chamber for everyone in the province to hear where he stands on the issue of the education tax credit as well as a wide range of the other education initiatives that our government has brought forward.

The fact that he very selectively reads the budget and chooses to ignore the paragraph before the education tax credit that committed to another \$360 million in funding for the public board I think is nothing short of shameful. The gross misconstruing of the budget and the support we've given public education is really quite unacceptable coming from the leader of the official opposition. Instead, we've had to rely on what we get second hand.

1710

I was intrigued to read in the Toronto Star just today that the Liberal Party went out in an attempt to beat the bushes. They chose as the venue for their first public meeting the little town of Toronto. Toronto has only 2.4 million people in it and there are another 2.4 million people within 30 minutes' drive around it, but despite the best efforts of the Liberal Party to beat the bushes, get their own supporters, their own team players, in fact their own staff members, to show up at these public events, a grand total of 75 people showed up yesterday at the Keele Street Community Centre.

**Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** They've got more than that on their payroll.

**Mr Gilchrist:** Dominic Agostino has a 10th of that on his staff, I see in Saturday's apology in the Hamilton Spectator.

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** You're a slime bucket, an absolute slime.

**Mr Gilchrist:** The very first speaker—

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** You'll need to withdraw that, the member from Hamilton East.

**Mr Agostino:** I withdraw it.

**Mr Gilchrist:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. The bottom line is that the very first speaker to come forward, Diana Stapleton, a mother of two children, was just the first of many people out of that large group of 75 who showed up and who asked Mr McGuinty what he would do to the tax credit if he became Premier. Mr McGuinty was clear: he said he would scrap it.

We're not hearing those policy and public statements in this chamber where I believe it is the right of all members, if we're going to have a true debate, to hear both sides of the issue. Instead, he's hiding behind an extremely expensive initiative that, quite frankly, goes a long way to insulting students and teachers all across Ontario, because to all of us who went through an education system—not that long ago; some of my younger colleagues here quite recently—where we had class sizes of 30 or more, and I never had a class smaller than 30, I guess the submission we're getting from Mr McGuinty in his resolution today is that those teachers were incapable. We heard from Mr Christopherson that unless you're down to 17, you can't have a quality education here or anywhere else in North America. What an insult to all of my teachers and the tens of thousands of teachers who have practised so ably in this province for many decades.

As well, you pull out the old chestnut about demographic change. There's no doubt that places like Toronto have seen a significant shift in the makeup of the student population. That's not altogether true in other parts of the province. Certainly rural Ontario has seen far fewer changes, but you'd like to tar everyone with the same brush. At the same time, you'd like to create the inference that just because you come from a recent immigrant family, you're not capable of achieving anything in our school system without extraordinary supports. At the same time, in this resolution you're insulting every teacher and saying, "You're not capable of taking care of the same number of kids your parents, and not only your parents but your older brothers and sisters, took care of as teachers 10, 15 or 20 years ago." You're saying our students today aren't capable of doing without an extraordinary degree of hand-holding. What an absolutely pretentious, offensive insult to the teachers and the students of Ontario. But it is so typical of what we get from the Liberal Party.

We have seen in this budget once again an increase in the spending on public education. That is absolute increase. Those are hard dollars: \$360 million is an over 2.5% increase in funding in public education this year, at the same time that enrolment is expected to increase by only 1.5%. Math class wasn't that long ago that you can't conclude that that means per pupil, every student in Ontario is getting more money per capita than they got last year. By the way, last year they got more money than the year before etc.

The other side would suggest there's no responsibility on the part of the school boards to find other ways to control the extraordinary escalation in costs that vexed property taxpayers in the lost decade from 1985 to 1995.

We've heard time and again that in that decade enrolment increased 16%. To be fair, inflation went up 40%, and on the assumption that you couldn't do anything better in terms of finding new efficiencies than matching the cost-of-living increase, the school boards presumably would have needed 40% more money. What did they actually increase their budgets and their property tax by? Under the Liberal and the NDP governments, property taxes for education purposes went up 120% for 16% more students.

Did the quality of education go up 120%? As an employer who saw the average literacy and numeracy skills of the graduates coming and applying for jobs at my modest retail store decline year after year after year, I submit to you the answer is no.

The curriculum didn't challenge them and the teachers weren't asked to find new and innovative ways of bringing in technology, of finding ways to inspire students to meet the challenges of a changing time. Instead, we had first the Liberals and the NDP, defenders of the status quo. To this day, they continue their flawless record in that position, because everything we have suggested, every initiative we've brought forward—teacher testing, student testing, a tougher curriculum, more money spent in our schools—has been opposed by the Liberals and the NDP.

Perhaps what is most offensive, what is most galling and—you're not allowed to use the word "hypocritical" and I won't—contradictory in the position being taken by Mr McGuinty today is that he is calling for—and let me again cite the resolution today: "That ... the government should make reducing class sizes ... to a real cap of 20 students ..." a priority.

When we reduced the average class sizes, not once but twice throughout the last six years, every single member of the Liberal Party voted against that. Every single member of the Liberal Party and the NDP have voted against every one of our initiatives, including class size.

The bottom line in all of this is, they have no leg to stand on when it comes to calling for new and innovative ways of dealing with the educational challenges in the province of Ontario because they have advanced no suggestions, they have fought every initiative we've brought forward and they have ignored the parents who spoke loud and clear through their votes in 1995 and 1999. They would suggest that somehow all of the initiatives that we talked about and brought forward were somehow mysteriously derived once we had gotten to this building.

The fact of the matter is, more than any other government in the history of the province of Ontario, we challenged the voters longer and in more detail before both the 1995 and 1999 elections to seriously consider the positions we were articulating. On the basis of what they knew to be our position, they cast informed votes in 1995 and 1999. While their votes and the decision embodied in those votes may vex the opposition members every day they serve in here, if you believe in a democracy you've got to give faith to those parents who read

very clearly in the Common Sense Revolution in 1995 and the Blueprint in 1999 what we were proposing to do in the education system.

We've done all those things. The opposition has voted against it consistently. They are now trying to get onside with an initiative that would cost billions of dollars if it were followed through, and would be totally impractical. For example, in a situation where in a rural school there is a grand total of 21 students taking a particular course, they would propose that you hire a new teacher for the 21st student.

There's cost-effectiveness, there's looking for new and innovative ways of dealing with the challenge in our education system. It's a great way to pander to Earl Manners, one of your few union leader supporters, and quite frankly, it probably explains the flip-flopping on the education tax credit.

It's going to be very interesting to see the turnout on the day of the vote and whether members like Mr Colle, Mr Bryant, Mr Kwinter and Mr Kennedy are prepared to come in and say with their vote here what they said on the hustings in 1999 and before that, when they said yes to giving support to the parents who made the decision to send their kids to independent schools.

I'd like to see what their position is going to be to those same parents the day after they either avoid their responsibility and don't show up for the vote, or flip-flop on this important initiative.

But I want to remind everyone watching that at the same time they'll be voting against a budget that puts 360 million new dollars into the public system they claim to be so supportive of. The fact of the matter is, the same budget that introduced the education tax credit committed a record spending in the public system. That's been the hallmark of our government. It will continue to be the hallmark of our government. I am proud to support our budget and I will be equally proud to vote to defeat this resolution.

1720

**Mr Parsons:** Since 1982, I have been a supporter of public education as a parent, as a volunteer, as a trustee and as a board chair. I am proud to be part of a party where the leader, Dalton McGuinty, is a strong advocate and is the public voice for public education. However, since 1995 public education in Ontario has been under attack.

Ontario is different from the other provinces and is unique in that this government has attempted to drive students out of the public system since it took office. We have seen cuts to the music programs. We have seen extracurricular activities go away. We see libraries in schools now closed, open a couple of hours a day or a couple of days a week because of volunteers. We see late busing gone. The program that provided equity for rural students has been disappearing from this province because of this government.

We see new curriculum, but no funding for textbooks to support the curriculum. So this government has aggressively attacked public education and made it more

attractive to leave, because parents have to do what's right for their children. If the public system appears to not be delivering the service, then a private school becomes an attractive alternative. The reality is that this public system in Ontario serves our students and serves them well.

The main weapon of attack that's taken place against our schools has been the magic funding formula that was supposed to solve everything. Well, the first thing it did was it took away local control. It devalued the trustees elected by that community so that the parents didn't have meaningful access to elected people who could make a difference in their community. It took and funded everything based on the student—so many dollars per student. Now, that sounds fair, but in reality it isn't. If we have three or four or five fewer students riding a bus or in a classroom, it generates significantly fewer dollars for that board. But if you have five fewer pupils on a bus, you still have to run that bus. If you have five fewer pupils in that classroom, you still need to staff the classroom. So we've gone to a funding formula that severely penalizes the publicly funded school boards when there is a change in enrolment or a shift of patterns within the province.

We are seeing in much of rural Ontario a decline in student enrolment. We're seeing a lower birth rate in Ontario, and in fact the major growth that's taking place is because of immigration in Toronto. Toronto requires the additional resources, but the small rural boards are being penalized because, as one or two students leave, they're still paying the same heating bill, they're still paying the same electricity bill. So we have had an attack that attempts to drive the students out of the public system.

The public has very clearly said they don't support the voucher system, but the polls done by this government were very cleverly phrased to say that, rather than vouchers, we will have a tax credit system, because the public first reacts to it as, well, it doesn't cost anything to give a tax receipt. We know now that it will take about \$500 million out of this province.

There is only one taxpayer and there is only one pie to be sliced up. Now, \$500 million is difficult to visualize, and it is hard to imagine what effect it would have on the schools. If we put it another way, \$500 million is greater than the total budget of the Ministry of the Environment. We are in fact giving away the Ministry of the Environment or the Ministry of Natural Resources.

I also struggle with the ethics of introducing this program. The public becomes cynical of politicians who don't keep their promise. We have seen letters from the Premier, letters from the education minister within the last year. During the 1999 election, the Premier was extremely clear that he did not support funding of private schools, and now we're seeing it delivered by being slipped into a budget. This is an issue that certainly deserves public consultation. This in fact is an issue that deserves the public knowing ahead of time and being able to vote accordingly.

I believe one of the strengths of the province of Ontario has been the diversity of people who come

together. I'm not interested in just diversity in a shopping centre; I'm interested in diversity starting with the grassroots, which is within our schools. Our publicly funded schools serve every student, whether they be blind or whether they be deaf or whether they be gifted or anything in between, and the strength of our province has come from that mix working together.

I would suggest it is a very slippery slope we are starting on. We must not look at the issue of the funding of private schools in isolation. It is part of a total picture that involves the privatization of water systems, the privatization of the electricity systems in our province and the privatization of our jails and corrections. Will there be private police forces? Will there be private hospitals? If the public understands the concept of privatization, they need to realize that this is but one small building block in the large mosaic that's being created.

This province's number one obligation is not to students but to corporations. Things are being done that will make corporations happy to be in Ontario. We are in a race to the bottom to attract corporations and to have no taxes for them.

I am thrilled with our party's stance on this. I am thrilled with our leader's resolution today. If we believe in the province of Ontario as we have built it, then we believe in publicly funded, publicly accountable school systems.

**Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** I am pleased to take part in this debate this afternoon and to share some thoughts about the public schools, religious schools, private schools and the whole debate that's been going on for the last few days. I hope I can offer a little different perspective on education funding as it relates to both public and independent schools.

We are discussing today the Liberal resolution. Twenty-five students per class, 22, 20, one on one ratio: what is best? The Liberal Party never costs it out. They think they're just going to increase taxes, keep increasing the deficit because perhaps one-on-one is the best education. Perhaps it is.

Mr Speaker, I am, let me assure you and the people listening, very supportive of the Ontario school system. I'm a product of that system as well as the product of another system, a school in India, where I studied in my original education, so I have some comparisons I'll be touching on as I go along.

There's much to criticize in today's education system. Certainly the Minister of Education, the Honourable Janet Ecker, has poured her heart and soul into her portfolio for the last two years. I'm very happy to have such a competent, steady hand at the wheel. However, some problems still exist in education, and they're structural. They may be difficult, but not impossible, to tackle, for our Minister of Education.

Our 21-step plan for the 21st century, as laid out in the throne speech, includes this essential principle: in Ontario, "4,746 schools and 74,895 classrooms cannot be run"—I emphasize cannot be run—"from the Ministry of Education" in Toronto. Especially, one centralized

education system would mean one centralized collective agreement. We can only imagine how impractical that will be. Parents want the government to do more. Even more importantly, they want more input and influence in deciding how their children will be educated. Parents don't want to be ordered around at the say-so of teachers' unions or school board bureaucrats.

I have constituents of many backgrounds. Members of the House will be surprised to hear that in Peel region a language known as Punjabi, which is my mother tongue, is the second most spoken language. I'm sure the census everybody took on May 15 would highlight that as well.

The government recognizes that not every student is a round peg and not every school is a round hole. But we all have this in common: the most important thing parents want in their lives is to secure a bright future for their children, and that is known all over the world.

1730

Ontario's citizens come from across the globe. Many are willing to make the sacrifices, if necessary, to send their kids to a school which reflects their faith, their culture and their values. As many of you do, I also listen to my constituents. I listen every day and I understand their concerns. It shouldn't be necessary to take food off the table or to make those great sacrifices to give kids the education that is best for them. We must remember that parents in independent schools have already paid education taxes. Ontario's diverse families never accepted that Catholic Christian education deserves government support but that Sikh, Jewish or even Protestant Christian education did not. Past governments of every party have lagged behind parents in realizing the need for choices in education.

The equity in education tax credit is an important step in supporting parental choice. This government has committed to reducing the penalty that parents pay when they choose an independent school for their children. It is proposed to begin in the 2000 taxation year. It proposes to give parents a tax credit of up to \$3,500, starting with 10% and then going to 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%. That's a maximum of \$3,500. We will work to identify the appropriate framework for establishing eligibility for the tax credit.

As an MPP and as a parent—especially as a parent—I hear an earful about education every day. Just as we are supporting those parents who choose to educate their children in an independent school, we also encourage parental involvement and choice within the public school system. First, we made sure that the resources are in place for quality education. I'm glad to be able to report to parents that we have continued to increase our investment in public education overall. In fact, we are going to be spending \$360 million, over and above, next year. Education funding for the coming school year is projected to increase by 2.8%, higher than funding for this year. This means that education funding will have increased almost \$1 billion since this government took office in 1995, an increase from \$12.9 billion to \$13.8 billion.

I'm very surprised that all the members are coming back. There was hardly anybody here before.

I'm a member of the government that understands that parents want more influence as well. The Ministry of Education recently released new regulations that increase the accountability of the education system to parents and strengthen the voice of parents in the public education system. Effective this fall, school councils will have the right to make recommendations to the principal or school board on any other matter. Principals and boards will be required to seek the views of school councils in a number of important programs and policy areas and to report back on actions taken in response to school council recommendations.

On May 7, Minister Ecker announced a package of initiatives to enable school boards to continue to make improvements for the coming school year. Subject to the approval of the Legislature, where required, this package will include more flexibility for school boards regarding resource allocation, instructional time and remedial help, and \$50 million more that school boards can use to address their own priorities.

We're doing a lot of good things. As part of the 21 steps into the 21st century outlined in last month's throne speech, we proposed several additional measures to support increased accountability and choice in education. These measures include the expansion of standardized student testing, uniformity in education, and there are many programs.

I'm sure other members would like to take part in the debate.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West):** I'm very happy to speak to this resolution standing in the name of Dalton McGuinty.

Let me say very clearly to the people who live in Windsor West that I am very strongly opposed to a private school tax credit. My community of Windsor is second only to the city of Toronto by nature of its great diversity. How many multicultural groups live within the confines of my riding and in all of Windsor-Essex county? Some 94 different languages can be found in the heart of Windsor West. Mine is a riding that has benefited tremendously from a strong public education system, and the waves of immigration that come to the shores of Canada today are no different than those that came in all the waves of the 1920s, the early 1900s, the 1950s. In fact, a huge group that lives in Windsor, the Italians, came mostly in the 1950s.

The one great leveller for the people who came to our community was the public education system. We knew then that when we grew up speaking Italian in our home, we started speaking English when we went to school, and we went to a public education system that treated all of us as equals. I knew, growing up on Elsmere Avenue, that it didn't matter how much money my family had, it didn't matter where my family came from; I had the equal opportunity, as any other family in my riding, to excel in Ontario.

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre):** Did you learn your Catholic religion in the school?

**Mrs Pupatello:** In my view, what this government is doing by changing so dramatically the philosophy, siphoning such a huge amount of money away from public education and into private schools, undermines the very fundamental reason why Windsor and Ontario have become as tolerant as they have been.

*Interjection.*

**Mrs Pupatello:** I am embarrassed that a member opposite would dare heckle on an important matter such as this, a member especially whose history is very much like my own.

I can tell you that those community groups that are in my community will attest to a wonderful working relationship with all groups. There is no reason anywhere that this government could find that would be rationale to explain why we, as government, would encourage segregating communities anywhere, any time. This is what this does to the children of Ontario.

In my community, I grew up and went to school sitting desk by desk with Muslims, with Greek Orthodox, with Italian Catholics. All of us were equals in the same classroom, and when I went to a public school, namely Kennedy high school, I went to school with Muslims and Greek Orthodox and Italian Catholics, and we were all the same, given the same opportunity.

What this government is doing is significantly shifting education policy in Ontario. It is a thing that Mike Harris said during the last election that he would not do. The general public looked at him and believed him, and he is now doing other than that.

What I am telling this government is that it is fundamentally wrong to propose any kind of government policy that would segregate communities, that would actually encourage parents to take their children into another, separated school. It's just wrong. The one reason why we are as tolerant as we are is because we know each other.

I do not buy the argument that it's a question of fairness. I think it's an issue of tolerance, and this government does not encourage tolerance. In fact, since this debate began, it has become very apparent that what this government is doing is fuelling the fires of division. You are fuelling the fires of division between groups, between who ought to benefit and prosper in this great province of ours. This is what will be laid at the feet of the Ontario government when we go into the next election, that you would actually choose to move the \$500 million to \$700 million—which is an amount named by the Premier himself—that this could cost our system. Not only do we lose it from the provincial treasury, but every student who moves from the public system will take with him or her the pupil grant that goes to that public school. That's what this government is proposing. You take the best parents away from parent councils for the general public system. That's just wrong. We can't support that kind of notion.

This party, the Ontario Liberal Party, and Dalton McGuinty support working families in Ontario that promote tolerance, that promote a good public education

system for all children. No matter where you come from, you get the same great opportunity to live in Ontario.

1740

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):**

I've got to tell you, Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in support of this opposition day motion. At the same time I am very disappointed with the government and the policy they have recently put forward which would transfer \$500 million out of public education over to private schools.

It seems to me that government members have apparently lost sight of this heavy responsibility we all share as elected representatives who enjoy the privilege of sitting in this Legislature. We have a very heavy responsibility to protect public education for future generations. If you stop and think about the contribution of public education to our province in terms of our prosperity, our general well-being, a sense of civility, strong citizenship, virtually all of that emanates from public education, which has been supported over the decades by different governments of different political stripes. But this government has made its determined effort during the course of the past six years to kick the stuffing out of public education, and our kids are paying a terrible price for that.

You need only to take the time and travel this province and speak to parents in whatever community and they will tell you that something has gone terribly wrong inside public education. The way they experience it is in terms of loss of enthusiasm in their classrooms. They see it in stressed-out teachers. They see overcrowded classrooms, especially for their younger children. They've experienced a loss of extracurricular activities, something which is of tremendous importance to our young people in their teenage years. I can say that as a parent of teenagers. It's something that I consider an essential part of their education.

We've got 35,000 children who are on waiting lists—some as long as 24 months—for a psychological assessment so that we can better understand what their special learning needs are before we can then put them into some kind of program which helps address those needs.

I'm describing the state of public education today in Ontario. We've got 42% of elementary schools where parents are engaged in vigorous efforts to raise money to buy textbooks and computers. That's what public education is today. This is the status quo which this government has delivered to us. In that context, what does the government want to do now? They want to come to the rescue of public education by taking \$500 million out and putting it into private schools. That's what this government wants to do. According to this government, we might as well post a notice over all public schools compliments of Mike Harris and his government. The notice would read, "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here."

We've got a different take on public education. We want to champion public education for all of our working

families right across the province. I can tell you, something that we are very much looking forward to in government is taking responsibility for public education. We're not going to blame trustees, as is the habit of this government, or teachers, as is equally the habit of this government, or parents or even our children. We're going to take responsibility for bringing about real improvement in public education. We're going to inspire confidence in the minds of our parents and of that great majority of Ontarians who have no real connection any longer with public education.

There are so many good things happening in public education today. Gerard Kennedy, our education critic, instituted this wonderful program where he invited all members to take some time out of their schedules and spend it inside a school. You cannot do that and not come to understand better some of the challenges that our society has to contend with—parents, teachers and students—when it comes to delivering quality education, but, at the same time, you will quickly come to understand that there are so many darn good things happening in public education. But to listen to this government, you'd think it had all gone to hell in a handbasket. What do they do, again, in that context? After working so hard to create that image that public education is terrible, they invite parents to abandon it. They say, "We will pay you, in fact, to leave public education."

We've got a different take on it. We've got a plan to improve public education. I want to describe some of that. The crown jewel in that plan is a real cap on class sizes. We want no more than 20 children in every Ontario classroom, from junior kindergarten through to and including grade 3. Experts around the world tell us that the single most important thing that we could do to bring about real improvement in learning—and that's what it's all about at the end of the day, improvement in learning for our children—would be to make sure, especially in the early years, that they get more individual attention. Children who enjoy that benefit perform better academically, they are better behaved, they are more likely to finish their high school, more likely to go on to college and university, more likely to go on and get a better-paying job. All of that starts at the beginning and that component of our plan, in fact the entire plan, costs less than the \$500 million that this government would take out of public education and turn over to private schools.

The other aspect of our plan is this concept that we're especially proud of called lighthouse schools. It would enable our schools which are excelling in one area or another, whether that might be in terms of their students performing well academically, having a fantastic athletics program, having some outstanding parental involvement program, having an anti-bullying program, you name it—wherever there's any kind of excellence, we want to recognize it and we want to give that school some additional funding on one condition, that they share that best practice with other schools in the public system. That way we can work to ensure that all schools right across the system rise up together. Contrast that approach with a

government that would quite proudly take \$500 million out of public education and turn it over to private schools. We want to help our schools, not rob them of necessary funding.

The other part of our plan is turnaround teams. Some of our schools are experiencing some challenges. Rather than looking for ways to punish them or looking for ways to encourage parents to leave those schools, we think we should be lending them a hand. So we would assemble together a team of experts who would spend some time in schools that are having some special challenges. They'd go in there and they'd bring together the very best advice and guidance and counselling that they possibly could so that we could get that school back on the rails and inspire confidence in parents. It seems to me that as a government committed to public education for all our children, that's the kind of idea that they would want to adopt, that they'd want to run with, and they are more than welcome to do so.

The other thing that this government lost sight of long ago is that you can't bring about substantive improvement in learning for our children unless you enlist the support, the expertise and the goodwill of our teachers. The single most important resource in the classroom is not the computer and it's not the textbook and it's not whatever kind of writing implements or technology kids might use today. It's the teacher. It's the individual who stands at the front of the classroom, the individual who is on all day. We've got to start supporting our teachers in Ontario and we've got to start encouraging young people in high school today to consider a career in education. As we try to develop a knowledge-based economy here so that we can compete with the world's best, surely it's time for us to place a high value on those who happen to transfer knowledge on our behalf: our teachers. We're proud of our teachers. There's always room for improvement, and we've got a plan to help them improve what it is that they do in the classroom.

I want the government to understand, but more importantly I want Ontarians to understand, that there is a party in this Legislature that is absolutely committed to public education, for all the right reasons, that there is a party that is here working on behalf of our working families and all our kids in every corner of this province, and that we will never, ever stop fighting for those families and those kids.

1750

**Mr Spina:** He can't even convince his own caucus to be unanimous on this issue, never mind the rest of the province. This party supports public education. You want to talk about kicking the stuffing out of education? There's \$9 billion to \$14 billion in funding to the public education system. That's the stuffing we put into it.

Tax credits are not vouchers. That's what you're all about: two-faced. Tax credits are not vouchers. Not a nickel has come out of the public education—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member held up a placard or some kind of thing, and my understanding of the rules of the Legislature is that that's not allowed in the standing orders.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Sterling:** On the point of order, Mr Speaker: This member has had the opportunity to speak for about a minute and 42 seconds. The opposition has continued to shout, has continued to interrupt his speech during all of that period. I would ask you to restore that time to him so he can use that time properly.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** When I'm up, you're down. Thank you. I will restore a minute of the time. The member for Brampton Centre.

**Mr Spina:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. There has not been any money removed from the public education system. In fact, two weeks prior to the budget, the Minister of Education announced a \$360-million increase in the funding for the publicly funded system. Furthermore, I repeat that tax credits are not vouchers. They are completely different.

The member talks about the working families of Ontario. I give to him the example of John Knox Christian School in Brampton where Walter Veenstra, the president of Holland Christian Homes, said, "Thank you to the Harris government for the tax credits because our members, our families, earn \$40,000 to \$60,000 a year, and that's the tax credit we appreciate."

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time for debate has expired. Mr Kennedy has moved, on behalf of Mr McGuinty, opposition day number 3.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

*The bells rang from 1755 to 1805.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	McMeekin, Ted
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Lankin, Frances	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	
Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony	

**The Deputy Speaker:** Those opposed will please rise one at a time until recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	O'Toole, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Tilson, David
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Tsubouchi, David H.
Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Guzzo, Garry J.	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Harris, Michael D.	Newman, Dan	Young, David

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 37; the nays are 45.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

*The House adjourned at 1809.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Huron-Bruce	<b>Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen</b> (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Health and Long-Term Care) / ministre sans portefeuille (Santé et Soins de longue durée)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	<b>Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony</b> (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Burlington	<b>Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron</b> (PC) Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées	Kitchener-Waterloo	<b>Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth</b> (PC) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lanark-Carleton	<b>Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.</b> (PC) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds-Grenville	<b>Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.</b> (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	<b>Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne</b> (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Don Valley West / -Ouest	<b>Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Markham	<b>Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.</b> (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	<b>Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob</b> (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Erie-Lincoln	<b>Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim</b> (PC) Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Loisirs	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	<b>Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John</b> (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	<b>Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	<b>Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda</b> (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	<b>Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean-Carleton	<b>Baird, Hon / L'hon John R.</b> (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué au dossier de l'Enfance, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Gilchrist, Steve (PC) <b>Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan</b> (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	<b>Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D.</b> (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe-Grey	<b>Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	<b>Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank</b> (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip, deputy government House leader / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement, leader parlementaire adjoint	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	<b>Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary</b> (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	<b>Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad</b> (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	<b>Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian</b> (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	<b>Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet</b> (PC) Minister of Education, government House leader / ministre de l'Éducation, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Whitby-Ajax	<b>Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Willowdale	<b>Young, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Vaughan-King-Aurora	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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