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SP-8

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(Hansard)**

SP-8

**Standing Committee on
Social Policy**

Putting Student Achievement
First Act, 2026

1st Session
44th Parliament

Thursday 30 April 2026

**Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Loi de 2026 donnant la priorité
à la réussite des élèves

1^{re} session
44^e législature

Jeudi 30 avril 2026

Chair: Brian Riddell
Clerk: Vanessa Kattar

Président : Brian Riddell
Greffière : Vanessa Kattar

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CONTENTS

Thursday 30 April 2026

Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026, Bill 101, Mr. Calandra / Loi de 2026 donnant la priorité à la réussite des élèves, projet de loi 101, M. Calandra.....	SP-213
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL POLICY**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DE
LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE**

Thursday 30 April 2026

Jeudi 30 avril 2026

The committee met at 1000 in room 151.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Vanessa Kattar):

Good morning, everyone. In the absence of a Chair and a Vice-Chair, it is my honourable duty to call upon you to elect an Acting Chair. Are there any nominations? MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I nominate MPP Lorne Coe.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Vanessa Kattar):

MPP Coe, do you accept the nomination?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Yes.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Vanessa Kattar):

Are there any further nominations? There being no further nominations, I declare nominations closed and MPP Coe elected Acting Chair.

PUTTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
FIRST ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 DONNANT LA PRIORITÉ
À LA RÉUSSITE DES ÉLÈVES

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care / Projet de loi 101, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'éducation et à la garde d'enfants.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Good morning, committee members. I call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Social Policy to order. We're meeting today for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 101, An Act to amend various acts in respect of education and child care.

Catherine Oh from legislative counsel is here to assist us with our work should we have any questions. A copy of the amendments filed with the Clerk has been distributed electronically. A hard copy has also been provided to you.

Before we begin with considering the specific sections of the bill and the accompanying schedules, I will allow members to make comments to the bill as a whole. Afterwards, debate will be limited to the specific amendment, section or schedule under consideration.

Committee members, pursuant to standing order 83, are there any comments or questions on the bill as a whole? MPP Pasma, please, when you're ready. Thank you.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you very much, Chair.

This is not a good bill. The stakeholders that came to speak to us on Monday, who represented only a small sub-

section of all the people who wanted to make comments on the bill, were very clear that this does not address the real challenges in our education system; that there are serious concerns about the centralization of power in the hands of the minister, including the sweeping liability protections that he is giving himself, which the Canadian Civil Liberties Association said are almost unprecedented.

We heard that none of the teachers or education worker unions were consulted, neither were the trustee associations or the principals. These are the people who are on the front lines of our education system every single day, who know the challenges that our kids are facing and what supports are actually needed to support them. They were very clear that it is not the changes that are being put forward in this bill, which doesn't even contain the words "classrooms," "class sizes," "mental health" or "special education."

This is a bill that is going to cause more problems for our education system and drive it into even deeper crisis, not address any of the challenges or actually support or protect student achievement or student well-being.

The NDP will be voting against every clause in this bill. We will be voting against this bill. I urge the members on the government side to also listen to the public, to listen to teachers and education workers and principals and trustees, and don't support this bill. You have an opportunity here to do something good for our kids. You will wear this legacy as much as the minister if you pass this bill, so please, for our kids, do not support this bill.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I'll just keep my remarks brief. Our schools are not safe places to learn or to work, and that's because class sizes are too big. They have grown. Special education has been starved. Boards have had to find \$800 million that the government doesn't give them. There's a mental health crisis in our schools that the minister actually acknowledged when he was here earlier this week.

There's not one thing in this bill that will make one child's class smaller. There is not one thing in this bill that will make sure that a child who has exceptional needs will get the help that she needs. There is nothing in this bill that's going to address the mental health crisis that exists in our schools.

The question is, if we're not doing that, why are we doing this? It's not right. The bill should be withdrawn.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I do have the same concerns, obviously. Incidentally, just earlier this week, on Tuesday night, we had yet another education town hall where we heard from parents, education professionals and teachers. We have heard the same message all over again and it confirms what we have been saying: People are not confident in this government to do what needs to be done to help our class sizes to be smaller, but more importantly, have more adults in our schools. There are not enough adults to support our kids.

Il y a également toute la question des francophones. On est très inquiet par rapport à la portée de ce projet de loi, qui constitue une menace constitutionnelle envers le droit des francophones d'avoir une éducation qui est par et pour les francophones, parce que le ministre vient s'ingérer et se donne les pouvoirs et le dernier mot sur des décisions qui devraient revenir aux conseils scolaires. Je vais également proposer des modifications à ce projet de loi pour exactement faire valoir ces droits-là.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I actually acknowledge that I think the government understands some of the problems that kids are facing in our schools. I know that the minister has gone to lots of schools and visited and listened to teachers. My concern is that when we come up with solutions, we have to come up with solutions that are rooted in widespread consultation. If you have a good process, you can stand by that outcome every day of the week.

What we hear with all the experts that came—these are folks who represent hundreds of thousands of education workers. My experience in schools since COVID is that the kids are not okay, the teachers are burned out and the ed workers are spread too thin. Our kids need those caring adults. We call it co-regulation. They learn how to regulate their emotions through the caring adults in their environment. When they don't have access to those caring adults in their environment, they don't learn how to regulate. We're seeing unprecedented amounts of Internet addiction, mental health crises and kids' special education needs not being met, and that's because there are too few caring adults, who are struggling. This is a canary in the coal mine.

I probably see that this bill will pass and it will go forward, but I hope if you walk away today thinking that next time an education bill comes forward and we want to solve a problem—we're going to talk to the people who work in that sector. We're going to talk to the folks who do this job every day in a meaningful way, in a good process and we're going to do it with the evidence and data that jurisdictions across the world are doing to solve these problems.

1010

Our kids really need our help right now and our kids are our future. If we don't invest in their well-being, if they don't get to learn how to read, they don't get their special education needs met, we're going to have a generation of kids who have been failed and abandoned by us.

I urge the government that, going forward, we start from a good place, with meaningful, respectful and not-token

conversations with stakeholder groups, those that represent them, that we dig deep into the evidence and research around these issues so that we can come up with solutions that will be effective. I don't see in this bill solutions to these problems and things that will affect good change for our kids and the caring adults that support them.

I worry about the impact of that. I think it's going to have a ripple effect that I don't think any of us really want to realize and we don't want to process. It's going to happen, I think—these kids become adults, and we'll have to reckon with what we have left them with today in terms of our education system.

I believe in an education system that provides the support that kids need to learn and thrive, that there is access to care, access to support in a meaningful way that ensures that they get to learn, just like we all did when we went to school.

I won't be supporting this legislation because it wasn't rooted in the real experiences of ed workers and it's not supported by evidence.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: We're here to discuss and to vote on amendments to Bill 101, but the entire bill should be thrown out. This bill is about dismantling our public education system. It's a power grab by the Minister of Education to control everything that is said and done in every school. He's already put out a notice to school boards that if a student speaks out and makes a statement—so for example, a student makes a political statement, like they criticize the OSAP grant cuts that this government has made at their graduation—the school board will be penalized for that. He's trying to dictate what every student says in every school in the province.

This bill here extends that power. This government's record on education is abysmal. They have increased class sizes. They have cut \$6.5 billion—an inflationary cut of \$6.5 billion from our schools. They negotiated pay for teachers and expenses for special education and then underfunded by \$900 million. Then they say the trustees are being fiscally irresponsible because they're not making the cuts fast enough to make up for the funding shortfalls that this government is handing them.

Then they seize control of the school boards. They have taken control of eight school boards. They've displaced the elected trustees and replaced them with the minister's appointed superintendents. Now they have got this bill to even further extend the minister's powers. One of the big attacks on our democratic rights here, not only that they have displaced the trustees that we elected in Ontario but now, with this bill, they're going to cut the pay, they're going to increase the responsibilities and they're going to leave the trustees as basically scapegoats for the abysmal education policies of this government. But if nobody runs, the minister will be appointing his henchperson to be a trustee.

This is an attack on our democratic rights. This bill is an attack on our students. It is an attack on our public and Catholic schools in the system. It's an attack on our democratic rights.

The Conservative members there, you're going to be voting on this clause by clause, and I encourage you to stand up for the students, the parents and the staff in our schools in this province and vote against this bill. Vote for our kids. Don't just raise your hand when you're told to raise your hand because what you're doing is going to be harming children in this province.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further comments? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I just want to make sure that we also mention on the record the serious equity and accessibility concerns, along with the constitutional concerns about this bill. There were multiple stakeholders. The AODA Alliance and Ontario Autism Coalition were able to come to speak but we know that there were other organizations representing persons with disabilities and Parents of Black Children and the Black Trustees' Caucus of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, who all raised concerns that this bill does not even mention accessibility or equity and that the measures that are in this bill have the possibility of making even greater challenges, putting even greater barriers in front of students with disabilities and Black and racialized students within our system.

I think we also have to recognize that there are constitutional concerns about this bill. Obviously, the government should never be infringing on the Constitution or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If they go ahead with this bill, that could be costly to the Ontario taxpayer because, all of the liability provisions in this bill notwithstanding, there are serious constitutional concerns. The Catholic trustees and the Catholic teachers raised concerns about the lack of respect for denominational rights. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association said that there are serious concerns about section 2(b) of the charter and freedom of expression. If the government forges ahead with these changes without consultation, then the Ontario taxpayer is going to end up paying once again for court cases that drag on and on, because this government just wouldn't consult or listen to people up front.

So, again, I think it's very important that we withdraw this bill, go back to the drawing board, work with education stakeholders and partners who represent the people who are working in our schools every single day, the students who are in our schools, and actually reflect their needs and their rights.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: I just want to emphasize what my colleague MPP Pasma has said about that.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association has said that this bill potentially violates freedom of speech in our schools because it will give the minister the power to dictate what students and staff and teachers can and cannot say in our schools. That's an abysmal attack on our democratic rights in this province.

When you look at this power grab in this bill—the minister is extending his powers. In Bill 30, in the fall, the minister gave himself the power to sell schools to anyone any time he wants. Then you look at what's happening here.

I was in Calgary in the fall, and I was visiting a friend in Calgary–West. There are 30 schools in that riding, and only 12 are public schools; the rest are all private schools. They've had right-wing, Conservative governments in power in Alberta for decades, and they've privatized the education system.

I think that's what this bill is another step towards—dismantling our public and Catholic schools and privatizing the system. So I strongly encourage the Conservative members here to vote against this bill.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: This government has been in power for eight years. How did our schools get into this state—how did they become not safe places to learn or to work? How did class sizes get bigger? How did special education get starved? How are we not addressing the mental health crisis in our schools? Why? Because the government is not focused on the right things. It's focused on doing things like buying luxury jets, acquiring an airport, things like that—not focused on the 5,000 schools or the two million students in this province.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further comments? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just want to highlight what I've been learning about the root causes of why we're in this state.

I hear again and again—they're called fail-to-fills. If a teacher is sick, a lot of boards don't fill in that sick person's post. That class ends up getting taught by a principal or a special ed teacher or rolled into something else. It means that most kids are missing out on their special education supports. I also learned from the EAs and ECEs and CYWs that when they call in sick, they don't replace them either. So boards, because of these short funds, the gaps in funding, are actually trying to balance budgets—and sometimes it's not a choice; there are no people to fill in those posts. They end up balancing the budget by not filling in those posts. That means those kids are not, maybe, at school, because the EA who supports them isn't there that day. It means kids aren't getting their special education help, so they don't get their literacy support.

I talked to a special education teacher the other day who said she got to teach her reading recovery program twice in the month because she was fighting fires. We know that, when I talk to principals, they are also fighting fires instead of doing the work that they need to do. So it's kind of like we've spread ourselves so thin by not funding our sick days and making sure that we have staff to fill those in that the place is just trying to survive, and it's at a breaking point.

1020

I do worry about the control that this government is taking. The minister doesn't have a background in education, and I don't know what his intentions are. I think he's trying to create a distraction where he's blaming these budgetary gaps and shortfalls on a trustee's milkshake or on governance.

Don't get me wrong; I think we need to make some improvements to how we do governance. That's part of what I've put forward today, amendments to try to make

this bill do some good things in terms of how trustees function and how we deal with attendance. But I worry that this is more of a distraction and it's not going to address the root causes. I think that, more and more, as the wheels fall off in terms of education, we're at a point where we need to sit down and think to ourselves what we really want our education system to look like, because I know that the people in the system really care and it's a moral injury to them to not be able to do their job in the way that they want to.

The problem is gaps in funding and a lack of recognition for how the system works and how it can work well. I think the solution includes meaningful collaboration with experts in making evidence-based decisions and meeting the moment of this mental health crisis. Whether it's gambling addictions, pornography addictions, social anxiety, depression, it's hitting kids at a younger and younger age and in a more serious way. We do not have the supports in the community to address the needs of kids with special education needs, autism, developmental disabilities, mental health issues.

I worry that this will further marginalize racialized students without recognizing the root causes of why they might not always fit the education system. We need to address their voice as well.

So I hope we can make some amendments to make lemonade somehow, but I worry we're trying to make lemonade out of rocks.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Are there any further comments?

As you will notice, Bill 101 is comprised of three sections and five schedules. In order to deal with the bill in an orderly fashion, I suggest that we postpone the first three sections of the bill in order to dispose of the schedules first. This allows the committee to consider the contents of the schedules before dealing with the sections on the commencement and short title of the bill. We would return to the three sections after completing consideration of the schedules.

Is there unanimous consent to stand down the three sections of the bill and deal with the schedules first? Please put your hands up. Okay.

Schedule 1, Child Care and Early Years Act, amendment number 1, section 1 of schedule 1. I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I move that section 1 of schedule 1 to the bill be struck out and the following substituted:

"1. Subsection 54(1) of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 is amended by striking out 'and' at the end of clause (b) and by adding the following clauses:

“(d) provide services to support operators of child care and early years programs and services and service system managers in carrying out their functions and duties under this act; and

“(e) develop a full continuum of French-language education that is adapted to the reality of francophone communities.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Just to briefly explain if it's not obvious enough, it is very important to protect Franco-Ontarian rights to access francophone education, and that includes the development of a full continuum of French-language education from early childhood to the beginning of their careers. This amendment just ensures that this right is clearly protected in this bill.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Is there any other further debate on this section? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. It's lost.

Shall schedule 1, section 1, carry? Is there any further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: We know that the government didn't consult on this bill, but daycare operators raised concerns about this schedule because of that lack of consultation, that there are no details on what this actually means, what difference it will make and how child care providers will be involved in the changes that are made.

We also know that it doesn't actually address the challenges that our child care system is facing, which have a lot to do with the lack of funding, which is impacting recruitment and retention of child care workers, addressing the actual cost of the materials that they need to provide to their kids in order to offer them a safe, healthy and stimulating environment. So we are going to vote against this clause to tell the government that they should go back to the drawing board and actually consult with child care operators and staff on what is really needed to support our kids.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Carried.

Shall schedule 1, section 2, carry? Is there any debate on this section? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Carried.

We'll now go to section 2.1, NDP amendment 2. Go ahead, MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I move that schedule 1 to the bill be amended by adding the following section:

“2.1 The act is amended by adding the following section: “Information and Privacy Commissioner

“73.1(1) The Information and Privacy Commissioner may set requirements regarding the collection, use, disclosure and production of a person's Ontario education number.

“Same

“(2) If requirements set by the Information and Privacy Commissioner under subsection (1) conflict with the requirements of section 73, the requirements set under subsection (1) shall prevail.

“Same

“(2) The Information and Privacy Commissioner may, from time to time, review the collection, use, disclosure and production of Ontario education numbers by the Ministry of Education.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate on this section? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I want to explain why we're moving this amendment, Chair. We've heard concerns from parents—most particularly, parents of Black children—that they're concerned about the expansion of Ontario education numbers into early-year systems because of risks related to profiling and early streaming and increased surveillance without clear safeguards or demonstrated benefit. We know that they were here earlier at Queen's Park calling for the government to finally implement the Dreams Delayed report from the Ontario Human Rights Commission, which stated clearly that there is systemic anti-Black racism in our system, and one of the concerns that they had was surveillance of Black children, along with streaming.

I think that the government needs to take these concerns seriously. They should definitely implement all the recommendations of the Dreams Delayed report. But I think they need to, once again, go back to the drawing board and actually speak with and consult with parents and ensure that, when we're making changes, we're actually minimizing the risk of harm, addressing equity concerns and making sure that all children in Ontario receive the respectful education that they deserve, whether it's in K-to-12 or whether it's in early childhood education.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? NDP amendment 2: All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. It's lost.

So now we'll go to schedule 1, section 3. Is there any debate on this section? Are members ready to vote?

1030

Did you have something, MPP Collard?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Sorry, can you repeat where we're at? We're on schedule 1 or schedule 2?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Schedule 1, section 3.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Okay. I'm good. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Carried.

Is there any debate on schedule 1? Are members prepared to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Carried.

This is going to be a long day.

Schedule 2, section 1: Is there any debate on this section? Are members ready to vote?

MPP Collard, go ahead.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I have an amendment to move.

Interjection.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I'll wait.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Carried.

Liberal amendment, new section 1.1. I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Je propose que l'annexe 2 du projet de loi soit modifiée par adjonction de l'article suivant :

« 1.1 La Loi est modifiée par adjonction de l'article suivant :

« "Respect des droits linguistiques

« "1.1(1) L'exercice des pouvoirs conférés au ministre en vertu de la présente loi et de ses règlements doit se faire dans le respect des droits garantis aux titulaires des droits liés au français.

« "Idem

« "(2) Il est entendu que les droits visés au paragraphe (1) comprennent le droit à la gestion et au contrôle des établissements d'enseignement de langue française." »

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Cet amendement-là vise, encore une fois, à assurer que les droits des francophones soient respectés et cela inclut le droit des francophones de gérer et de contrôler ses institutions d'éducation.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Lost.

We'll now go to NDP amendment, adding subsection 0.1. Go ahead.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I move that section 2 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

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

"reports

"1.1 request a report,

"i. from the Auditor General with respect to any costs to the province of Ontario that would result from the passage of schedule 2 to the Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026, and

"ii. from the Ombudsman with respect to any actions the minister takes or intends to take under an authority under this act that resulted from the Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026;"

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Pasma again.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm moving this amendment because there were some significant concerns raised about the costs of all of the new layers of bureaucracy that the minister is adding to the Education Act, including all of the various reports and requests for permission that are going to need to be sent in to the minister, along with the new layers of bureaucracy at school boards. This adds the costing from the Auditor General so the public actually has a sense of how much we're going to be paying for all of the minister's new bureaucracy. It allows the Ombudsman to weigh in on the equity and accessibility concerns about the many new measures that are being introduced in this act, all the powers that are being centralized by the minister and the new CEOs.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: I just want to echo what my colleague MPP Pasma says about this amendment. This government, with this bill, instead of cutting red tape, as they always talk about doing, is actually increasing the red tape. They're demanding that the school boards provide a whole bunch of documentation to the minister so that the minister

can control everything that happens in every school like a puppeteer.

And all those additional positions, all of that additional documentation that's going to be required, all the people that are going to be required to pay for it—that's all going to come out of the existing education budget, which has been slashed over the last number of years under this government and under the previous government as well.

Our schools are grossly underfunded in this province. The class sizes have increased. Every school board in the province pays more for special education services than they receive, and yet students with special needs are still stuck at home because there aren't enough staff in the schools to actually provide them with the service that they need in order to attend. So this government is violating their right to actually attend school, and yet the government is downloading the cost of more red tape so they can control more without providing better service to the students.

When the minister says that he's going to focus on getting funding into the classroom, this is the exact opposite of that. This government is creating more red tape so the minister can demand more documents and have more control over our schools and take more money out of the classroom so the service in our classrooms will be even worse for students.

This is an NDP motion to actually fund all the red tape that the government is creating. I hope the Conservative government will recognize that they're creating a whole lot of red tape and that they should fund it from the central provincial budget rather than taking the money out of the classrooms.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. The motion is lost.

We'll now go to the NDP amendment amending subsection 2(1) of schedule 2. Is there further debate on this, or comments? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I move that subsection 2(1) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out paragraph 3.3 of subsection 8(1) of the Education Act and substituting the following:

“policies, guidelines: assessment of student achievement
“3.3 after taking reasonable steps to facilitate student attendance, including steps with respect to special education, mental health, transportation, class sizes and alternative high schools, establish policies and guidelines for the assessment of student achievement with respect to pupils attending schools under the jurisdiction of a board and require boards to comply with the policies and guidelines;”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Is there any debate on this section? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This section of the bill allows the Minister of Education to determine how students will be assessed, and he has already made it clear that he intends to include attendance in part of a student's grade. We've heard concerns from students—both student organizations and individual students contacting the committee—

along with teachers and education workers, that this has a negative impact on our students who are already on the margins and struggling because it doesn't address any of the reasons why students are not actually in class, which has to do with the fact that they're not getting academic support in large classes, that special education supports and programs are being cut, that there is not enough mental health support in our schools. Only one in 10 has regularly scheduled access to a mental health professional.

The government has broken funding for student transportation, and so in far too many places in the province, there's not reliable student transportation or students are travelling far too long, or because of the state of northern roads and the government's failure to address them, the buses can't actually get to school because of accidents on the road.

We are also seeing around the province many boards cutting alternative programs, including alternative high schools, which really help students who are on the edge of dropping out to remain in school with increased support so that they actually are able to get the credits they need to graduate from high school and move on to post-secondary education or into the labour force with a high school diploma.

I don't think it's fair for the minister to punish students when it's the ministry that is failing these students, and that's not even getting into the more than 20,000 students who are not attending school in Ontario at all because they have disabilities and there aren't supports to keep them safe or support their learning in school, or the tens of thousands of students who aren't allowed to attend for a full day or a full week because—the number one reason is that there aren't supports to keep them safe or that principals are calling for parents to come and pick the child up because they're not able to support the student for the rest of the day.

1040

Until we address all of these reasons why students are not at school full-time, the minister should not be including attendance in grades. So this amendment states that the minister has to address all of these reasons why children are not at school before he is allowed to make attendance a mandatory part of a child's grade.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'm obviously speaking in favour of this motion.

The minister, in this bill, is saying that he wants to be able to deduct marks from students whose attendance is too low.

My question to the Conservative members here today—there are special-needs students who are not allowed to attend school because they do not have the staff supports in the school so that they can actually attend the school safely. So how many marks will this minister be deducting from their report card because they're missing school because the government is not providing the funding for staff so that they can actually attend? It's for any of the Conservative members.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: Just further to MPP Glover's comments: When the minister was here, we did ask him what the top three reasons for absenteeism are in schools, and he couldn't provide a clear answer or any answer—it was very anecdotal, very regional. If you don't fundamentally understand the cause of a problem, how can you propose a solution? I just wanted to add that in.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: On one hand, I am grateful that the government is acknowledging the problem of chronic absenteeism in our school system. It's something I've been raising for two years, since I got here.

I was an attendance counsellor for 11 years. Our social workers in schools are our attendance counsellors. Our caseloads are enormous. Before, we had to help kids who were kind of struggling; now a lot of our attention goes to kids who are struggling to come at all, with very few days each month.

When you look at the stats, since smart phones were introduced in 2012, suicidality and social anxiety and depression have gone on the extreme—and we're not even really fully analyzing violence in schools. Violence in schools is because of trouble with regulation. When you look at what social anxiety really means, it means that kids struggle to look at people in the face, they struggle to talk on the phone; they'd rather message or text. We see kids who are not getting a good night's sleep.

I think the way in which we're addressing the issue is where things fall apart. Experts say the main reason that kids miss school is because they've had a traumatic incident—they're part of a Black, Indigenous, racialized community; they're living on low incomes and they have to help their family members; or they don't have a lunch. I can't tell you how many times I've sat with a family and tried to explore why their kid is not at school and they say, "I don't have food to send with my child." I think by the time somebody gets to high school, those habits can become very entrenched. We should be putting a lot of time and energy into grade 9, to make sure those kids have really good habits when they transition from elementary school to high school. And we should be putting in a lot of resources in kindergarten, to make sure kids have a really good start. Because I'm letting you know that the groups that I've identified, not to mention kids with developmental disabilities and special ed needs—we see those patterns emerging, of them feeling stupid, not feeling motivated to go to school and not thriving, and having other behavioural things that come from that, and that starts at a very young age. So this is trying to use a Band-Aid for a gunshot wound.

It also could further diminish people's motivation. A lot of kids need to find hope. If you think about a semester system, for example, kids have marks—it's the first time that they've been graded and they could fail. They've gone through all of elementary school with staff trying to buoy them up and help them continue on with their studies. Now

they end up in high school, and if they've missed a number of days in September and October, they've already lost hope, and that's when their report card comes out. So by the time the report card comes out, they've lost all their hope, and then if we add a participation mark on that to boot, we're behind the eight ball.

That's what alternative schools really do. They find a flexible, non-semester type model so that kids can learn at their own pace and they can get more individualized support. The marks just aren't supported by evidence.

In fact, if we took the time to look at the Attendance Works data—they're the experts. They're an American organization but they have decades and decades of data. The thing that they say is, don't punish people for attendance. Whether it's suspensions and truancy, whether it's courts or whether it's lost marks, those three things only add insult to injury for folks who are already struggling to get by day to day. We have to invest in the root causes.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Lost.

We will now go to independent amendment 6. Do you want to go ahead? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I move that section 2 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

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

“policies, guidelines: student absenteeism

“3.3.1 establish policies and guidelines to address frequent absences by pupils and, for the purpose, the minister shall,

“i. require communication strategies and team-based supports for pupils and families of pupils experiencing attendance challenges,

“ii. require a board to annually collect and publish data on the number and types of absences by pupils attending schools under the jurisdiction of the board, and

“iii. require a board to annually publish the data collected under subparagraph ii broken down by race, ethnicity and students with disabilities;”.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Can you read the first part of the motion, please?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: The “I move” part?

I move that section 2 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: If we want to address absenteeism, and I think we all do, this is where it's almost like health care—a team-based approach with folks who have expertise and early intervention is essential. If we do that, it will cost us less and it will help kids to thrive.

The data is essential. I have been anecdotally seeing a difference in the amount of students missing more and more days. I think we have heard about it from people we have had conversations with. We really need to ensure that that data is up to date on a regular basis. For example, most parents don't even know that their kid has been missing a lot of

school until the first report card and, by then, maybe two months have passed. We've really missed a lot of time.

Not only do we need data early on and early intervention for kids in the beginning of a semester—those who are parents in the room will know that they want to know what's going on with their kids and try to get help as soon as possible. We need that team-based approach, but the data will help us identify what are the root causes. Are there low-income kids who don't have lunches? Could we institute a food program? Will that help attendance? Are we seeing a disproportionate number of kids with special education needs who are missing school? Is that because of staffing issues? Is it because we didn't do an assessment early on? Do we have enough supports in kindergarten?

Most times, a kid shows up in kindergarten maybe with complex disabilities and the school really doesn't have a lot of information. We're starting off the kid's first year in kindergarten, right off the bat setting this kid up to fail because we don't have a lot of those screening tools early on to make sure that we have supports in place when that kid starts kindergarten.

The data is essential and that's what Attendance Works really talks about. If you are interested in learning about how to seriously address attendance issues, they have amazing resources. Jurisdictions, states and provinces across the world are addressing absenteeism in a really meaningful way and finding great results and that's because they base their solutions on team-based care and good data.

I hope you will support this amendment.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Lost.

We will now go to Liberal amendment 7. Go ahead.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Je propose que le paragraphe 2(2) de l'annexe 2 du projet de loi soit modifié par adjonction de la sous-disposition suivante à la disposition 3.7 du paragraphe 8(1) de la Loi sur l'éducation :

« iii. tiennent compte des réalités géographiques, linguistiques et représentatives qui sont propres aux conseils scolaires de langue française. »

1050

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Le changement ici vise la disposition qui adresse les politiques sur les dépenses. Un contrôle sur les dépenses, pour les francophones, ça interfère avec le droit constitutionnel des conseils scolaires de se gouverner, et il y a un risque constitutionnel si on ne modifie pas la disposition pour s'assurer que les francophones vont être tenus en compte dans leurs réalités géographiques, linguistiques ou représentatives. C'est pourquoi l'inclusion spécifique de cette disposition est importante.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Lost.

Now, we'll go to NDP amendment 8. Go ahead. I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I move that section 2 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(2.1) Paragraph 6 of subsection 8(1) of the act is amended by striking out ‘approve for use’ and substituting ‘approve, but not require, for use’.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Go ahead.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm moving this amendment because this section of the act allows the minister to determine which books and resources teachers will be allowed to use in the classroom. We've heard concerns from teachers who came to the committee on Monday that this does not respect the professional expertise that teachers bring to their jobs.

We know that there are concerns from other groups as well that, if we're talking about a centralized list, a restrictive list that is created by the Minister of Education in downtown Queen's Park, that does not reflect the diversity of the communities around the province, whether that's demographic diversity—areas with newcomer populations, Black and racialized populations or Indigenous populations—but also the geographic diversity. Not every community is the same, not every student is the same and teachers should be able to use their professional judgment to determine what are the best resources to support the students who are actually in their classroom.

We've also seen in Alberta how dangerous it can be for a government to give itself sole and exclusive power over what books and resources may be in schools, where 200 books were removed from the shelves of schools after the Premier gave herself the power to dictate what books schools could and could not have—books that included 1984 by George Orwell and *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood.

We don't want to see book bans here in Ontario. We want to see respect for the professional expertise and experience of teachers. We want to see all children reflected in the materials that they use. We want to see Franco-Ontarian children have access to materials in their own language—Franco-Ontarian French, not badly translated English materials—that also reflect their history and culture.

So we want any list of approved resources, books and textbooks that the minister creates to be prescriptive, not restrictive.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. I just want to echo what my colleague MPP Pasma has said. This section of this bill gives the Minister of Education the power to ban books in our schools. She mentioned what has happened in Alberta, where the Premier has banned 1984 and *The Handmaid's Tale*. Both of those books are about a dictatorial takeover of democratic societies. And so, why is the Premier of Alberta banning books that are about a dictatorial takeover of democratic societies?

And then you look at what this bill also does. It also gives the Minister of Education the power to appoint trustees if nobody runs for the position.

In another bill before the House, the government is taking the power to appoint regional chairs in eight different regions of the province. These regional chairs will be able to govern with one third of the votes of the elected

councillors, and those elected councillors will not have one vote each. The minister will be able to determine how many votes each of those elected councillors actually has. It's a dictatorial takeover of the regional councils in the province of Ontario.

So why does this government want to give the Minister of Education the power to ban books, especially books that are about a dictatorial takeover of democratic rights when they have anti-democratic legislation before us today, and they have other bills that are anti-democratic in the Legislature? I'm asking the Conservative members: If you vote against our amendment here, then you are voting for the Minister of Education to have dictatorial powers to ban books in the province of Ontario. Is that something that you want to support?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: So when this bill came out, I consulted with the education unions. This was one of their major red flags. I want to thank OECTA, OSSTF, AEFO and ETFO.

Definitely, if you talk to a new teacher who is just getting started, they're feeling overwhelmed and they want help. They often go to a more-senior teacher to get resources. If the government wants to help teachers access resources not out of their own personal budgets, but by providing maybe some textbooks or resources, like Teachers Helping Teachers, and some resources that can help to financially access those teaching tools—by all means. I think a lot of new teachers would be extremely grateful. People get bounced around from grade 8 to grade 3 to grade 4 to kindergarten and so on, so you have to create your own treasure trove of tools every time you switch grades.

But by mandating curriculum in this way, it really takes away from a teacher's autonomy. People have to be themselves and practise in a way that's authentic to them. This will take personality away from the teacher and not recognize that they went to school for—I mean, it was two years—12 months to learn how to do their job well. We have to give them that flexibility to do their job well.

I think every classroom has very different dynamics. We have very complicated classrooms right now, so we can't have a one-size-fits-all when it comes to curriculum. We need to make sure that the curriculum or the way we're delivering materials—whether it's using more tangible items or using more up-and-down movement, rather than written exams and things like that—fits the population of students in their classroom.

I have heard the minister say some offensive things when it comes to populations: a lack of understanding about mental health and how we, as professionals, kind of explore how kids are feeling; a misunderstanding about questions we might ask that are totally legitimate; and also minimizing the importance of ensuring that kids can fully express their sexual orientation, gender orientation, their culture, their language. All these things risk being omitted, silenced and oppressed if we don't ensure we can meet kids where they're at.

I do caution the government on taking steps to centralize their power more and micromanage. This feels like an

operational issue rather than a governance issue. I think our role is to be government, not to tell people what to read. I caution against this move.

Thank you. I support this amendment.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Collard.

Mme Lucille Collard: I also want to speak in support of this amendment. I find this new power very concerning. The minister has not given any explanation as to why you would need to remove some books, or what kind of books that would be. Books are very culturally oriented when it comes to different schools, different regions and different-speaking schools, as well.

Obviously, I am very concerned about the impact that this may have if the minister was to decide, one day, to just remove books that talk about the history of the fights that the Franco-Ontarians had to lead and the detrimental policies that past governments have made with regard to francophone rights. That would be devastating and change the way francophones can understand their own history. I find this very concerning, very overarching without any kind of logical explanation for this.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I also want to raise some concerns about the use of third-party platforms, especially if the minister is going to start requiring that these platforms be used. We know that, with the minister's recent announcements about financial literacy courses, he's requiring students to use modules developed by TVO rather than that content being delivered by a professional teacher in the classroom. Students are going to have to pass a test that's developed by TVO as well.

1100

In this case, TVO is a public entity, but nothing stops the minister from requiring schools and teachers to use third-party platforms that could be owned by any company, even American companies, which would then have access to our children's data. As a parent, that concerns me greatly. I think that when the minister is recommending any platforms, obviously we shouldn't be recommending private, for-profit platforms and resources to be used in our schools, but we should certainly allow teachers and principals the discretion of determining whether or not it's appropriate for our children's data to be held by this private company.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. Lost.

We'll now go to the Liberal amendment on page 9. Go ahead.

Mme Lucille Collard: I move that subsection 2(3) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out paragraph 7.1 of subsection 8(1) of the Education Act and substituting the following:

“policies and guidelines: educational materials

“7.1 establish and require boards to comply with policies and guidelines,

“i. respecting the use of educational materials approved under paragraph 6, such as textbooks and other learning materials, in instruction,

“ii. respecting the establishment, content and adoption of rules and procedures, by boards, to govern the selection and use of educational materials for instructional purposes,

“iii. requiring consultation with francophone teachers and educational professionals on educational materials, and

“iv. requiring that any policies, evaluations and resources for French-language education be developed and adapted for and by the French-language education system;”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Is there any debate? I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Simply explained, the addition of the two last paragraphs would require the consultation with francophone teachers and educational professionals on learning materials for francophone boards. It's very important that the material be adapted, culturally adapted and approved by francophones who know the importance of the materials. It's also important that it can't be just translated materials but truly written French material.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I do want to say that I think any attempt by the minister to govern educational materials should be done in consultation with teachers and educational experts. The minister has no education experience himself. He has no professional qualifications. I don't know on what criteria the minister would be determining what materials are acceptable other than ideological, and so any list of materials should be developed in consultation with experts.

But I also recognize that Franco-Ontarians have a particular constitutional right to manage their own education system “par et pour.” One of the things I hear frequently from francophone students and teachers is that the materials that they have in their classrooms are not appropriate. Sometimes, they don't have French-language materials at all. They are using English-language resources and, far too often, they are using badly translated English resources that don't reflect their culture, their history, their context but also are not helping to develop a strong knowledge of their own language because they are being taught with materials that use bad French.

The minister definitely needs to respect that constitutional right of Franco-Ontarians and any selection or approval of resources should be done in consultation with francophone teachers and education experts.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Lost.

We'll now go to the independent amendment on page 10. Go ahead, MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I move that subsection 2(5) of schedule 2 to the bill be struck out.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Debate? Go ahead, MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: One concern I have is sometimes when we don't pay people well, we run the risk of not

having good, qualified people. There are some challenges to some of the mandates that have been done, and I'm not sure if they were fully explored. That's my concern.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: This amendment is actually the same we were going to propose as well, which concerns the removal of climate surveys. We believe that climate surveys have a purpose. They are useful to know what's happening in our schools in order to adapt the allocation of funds or resources where it's needed. I think it's important to understand what's happening—how kids feel, but also the professionals that support our kids. I think that the removal of the surveys is problematic. If the minister wanted to maybe control them better to make sure that they are actually useful, he could have gone with some requirements to make them useful at another time. But removing them altogether is just wrong.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I support this amendment. Far too often from this government what we see is that, if we can eliminate the data that shows there's a problem, then they don't need to do anything about the problem.

There's a move across a whole variety of sectors to remove any collection of data or public reporting of data. I'm concerned that now we're going to remove one of the only tools that we have to actually find out what is happening in our schools, to listen to students about what challenges they're experiencing, to be able to track over time whether decisions are making those challenges better or worse so that we can make evidence-based policy. I think that we have heard very clearly from students, teachers, education workers and principals that those surveys are a very important source of data, even at the school level. So I don't support any move by this government to remove those climate surveys.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: With regard to climate surveys: I actually spoke to directors of education who are monitoring these. As social workers, I think there was a concern, definitely, that when we're asking pretty personal questions about how kids feel, there could be a negative impact; we could be triggering something. So our board—as a social worker, we made sure that all social workers were on deck to respond if kids were triggered or there was something that arose from those.

And things did arise from the climate surveys, because we are talking about things that are very personal and very sensitive. So we had mechanisms in place to make sure that kids were cared for. It actually helped us identify with some students who had things going on and nobody was aware.

I think what it does is it helps us monitor trends if we see a high incidence of bullying or we see a high incidence of isolation. In our region, for example, Waterloo Region Community Foundation did a survey, and they found that there is a low sense of belonging in our region. That prompts

their investment to make sure that they're investing in creating connectivity and community across our region so that our community can feel more connected.

While I understand that there's a lot of misunderstanding about that, because I've heard the minister take a climate survey out of context and pull little nuggets out of it that he didn't understand—I think it's a lack of understanding. Because, as a social worker, the things he was talking about were, “Does a kid feel lonely sometimes?” or “Do they feel overwhelmed?” Those are things—we are learning how to talk about feelings. When I was young and maybe when the minister was young, we didn't have good emotional literacy. That's a fact. We took away kids' tears. And don't get me wrong; we can't be all tears all day long. But we need to find that balance. We need to give kids a language to talk about their feelings, and we have to be brave enough to ask questions.

I did hear from our school boards—that's what I do: I take this information and I do a check with the people who do this work every day. They don't agree with the removal of the climate surveys, because that oversight in how they're managed and how they're organized is really helpful. If anything, we should be asking more questions about how these climate surveys could translate into action and how we could make sure resources are going to ensure that, if we see a lot of bullying, we see a lot of social isolation, we're ensuring that those resources are there to support kids who are struggling with that in a school community.

1110

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: In testimony earlier this week, the minister admitted very clearly that there's a mental health crisis in our schools. And I've said earlier that there's nothing in this bill that's going to address the mental health crisis in our schools. Actually, I should have said there's something in this bill that's going to make it harder to address the mental health crisis in our schools. This should be struck down. There's no good reason for this to be here.

If the minister himself says there's a mental health crisis and doesn't think we have to address school climate issues, I would suggest that maybe he's not the right person for the job.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I would argue, too, it goes along with hiding information—if we don't ask the question, there's no problem, right? So if we're not doing climate surveys anymore, we're just abandoning kids with the issues and pretending like those issues don't exist.

School boards really want to know what's going on with kids so that they can help. So I think data is really essential, and this is data. In my board, Waterloo Catholic, we used that data really seriously, to address what our kids were going through and invest in programming to support the kids with what they were going through. So I do think we need good data, and this is part of it.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise

your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. It's lost.

We'll now go to Liberal amendment 11. MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: This is actually the exact same amendment that we just debated and voted on. So we can skip that one. Just withdraw the amendment.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Okay.

Independent amendment on page 12: MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I move that section 2 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(6) Section 8 of the act is amended by adding the following subsection:

“Restriction

“(1.1) A policy or guideline established under paragraph 3.3 shall not require the assessment of student achievement to include attendance at school as a component of a pupil's final grade.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just want to reiterate that we researched this, and experts and people who have been doing this work for decades say that this is harmful. They urge any jurisdiction—state, province or otherwise—to remove punishment and consequences for kids who struggle with attendance. They believe in a team-based approach addressing root causes of attendance—like poverty, disability, marginalization, racialization.

First, if we do anything in this place, let's try to not do harm. As social workers, we say, “First, do no harm.” And that's why I ask that we remove that.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This morning, on my way into the building, I ran into my friend Emily, who's from Ottawa West-Nepean. We were talking about Emily's son, who has some mental health challenges and some chronic health challenges and has not been attending school because of those challenges. Emily told me that she asked her son what he thought about this policy and he said it would only make things worse.

When students are already on the margin of potentially dropping out, being told that they're going to be penalized for the challenges that they're facing just makes them feel like it's not worth attending at all. This is, I believe, the opposite of what the government is aiming for with this bill, which is to encourage attendance. When kids are already struggling to pass a class and then they're told, “Every time you don't show up, it's going to make your grade worse,” they're just going to give up entirely.

What we need to be doing is addressing all of the reasons why students are not in class. We need to listen to the many, many witnesses—which included high school students themselves writing in; and the Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne, FESFO, who said that this is going to make it more challenging for students, not better; and the teachers who said that that reduces the extent to which a mark actually shows a student's learning and how well they mastered the course material. Now much less of that mark is going to reflect their learning. When they go

off to university, part of the mark that they'll be using to apply for university is just going to say, "I show up," rather than, "I've mastered the material and I'm ready to move on to the next level of learning."

I think government needs to go back to the drawing board and actually consult with teachers and education workers and students and parents and principals to tackle the root causes of absenteeism.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just want to caution—I know that if I go to a friend's birthday party or I go to a group of students and ask, "What do you think?", of course, I might get a group of people who say, "This is a great idea. Absenteeism is a problem. In my day, we did this. We didn't have the issues that we have today." I'm not sure what people will say, but they might be quite approving of this kind of policy because it's what we knew, decades back. But we got rid of that policy for a reason.

I caution people on talking to folks who have no expertise in the field, who really aren't faced with the root causes of these things, and basing our decision on that, because we can end up with a really harmful policy if we asked people who don't build roads how to build roads or people who don't work in health care how to deliver health care, if they think that's a good idea. Good leadership is making decisions that are based in evidence and based in the expertise of people who work in the field.

I had one more thing to say, but that's where I think this is coming from. I appreciate they we're trying to address the issue, but it feels like we're trying to address the issue with a solution that doesn't require taxpayer dollars. I think the root causes—like mental health supports in schools, special education supports, help for kids with autism, addressing poverty—do require taxpayer dollars. But I think we'll do better in the end because we'll have a really thriving generation of students who can now fill in our labour needs and things like that.

So just cautioning people, because I know I've asked groups of people who don't work in education, who don't have expertise in attendance, and they like it, but we can't make decisions based on that. It kind of undermines the expertise of people who do this job in the education sector, and we don't do that—we don't apply that to building a bridge or providing health care. So we shouldn't just run roughshod just because we think we know more about education than people who work in education.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I agree with this amendment because I think this is the wrong way of going at the problem. If kids don't go to school, it's because there are some issues with going to school. While this may help some of the kids that just need that encouragement to go to school, for those who have more complex problems—like mental health issues—that don't want to go to school because they have social anxiety, this will just add to their burden and so this is not going to help those kids.

In francophone schools, there is a shortage of French teachers and what happens is that kids have substitutes all

the time. My kids were saying that themselves: "I'm not going to class because we have a substitute today and we're not going to do anything. We are just going to have to work on our own. I might as well do that at home. I'm going to be more efficient because I'm not going to have the pressure of the other people being noisy." Because that's what happens when you have a substitute: The class is undisciplined.

So I just think, while it may help some of the kids to be more convinced to go to school, it's not addressing the root cause. The shortage of French teachers is actually a real problem that we need to address.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I also want to make sure that we are considering the impact of the government's cuts to student transportation funding. In Renfrew county last year, there were eight weeks where a school bus was not running. I spoke to parents who had to drive an hour one way to take their children to school, which meant that if they were doing the pick-up and drop-off, they would be driving four hours a day to get their kid to and from school. I spoke with teachers and education workers who said there were kids who simply disappeared from the classroom.

There is currently a bus operator strike in Near North District School Board. We shouldn't be penalizing those kids because they can't get to school because the government won't provide the funding that would allow that strike to be settled.

We've heard a lot at the Legislature over the past few weeks about the impact of the poor condition of Highways 11 and 17 because of the fact that they are not twinned and the government's lack of action on highway safety. We know that there are dozens and dozens of accidents on those roads every year that shut down the whole road—sometimes for five or six hours; sometimes for 24 hours or more—which means that a bus simply can't get through. Until we're actually addressing the challenges of getting every child to school every single morning, we shouldn't be penalizing students for not being able to get to school.

1120

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further comment? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Lost.

We'll now go to Liberal amendment on page 13. I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I move that section 2 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

"(6) Section 8 of the act is amended by adding the following subsections:

""Consultations

""(1.1) Before establishing policies and guidelines under paragraph 7.1 or 27.4 of subsection (1), the minister shall hold public consultations and publish the rationale for each policy and guideline on a government of Ontario website.

""Policies or guidelines re board's public communica-

“(1.2) A policy or guideline established under paragraph 27.4 of subsection (1) shall not limit,

“(a) public communications on the fiscal policy of the government of Ontario or on the policies and directives of the ministry; or

“(b) the content of public communications made by individual board members.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: Section 7.1 allows for regulations that relate to the approval of educational materials and also 27.4, which is school board communications. So there are a couple of things here. Number one is it could lead to the banning of books. So anything that we do in that regard, that policy should be clear. One of the things that’s happening with this concentration of power in the corner office at Queen’s Park is that local voices aren’t heard. These are decisions that people should have input on locally. They should have that through their representatives, but they should also just have the opportunity as individuals to speak directly to the government about the policies that they’re taking with regard to educational materials, books, whatever else, and for how their school boards are locally governed.

This amendment also doesn’t allow the government to restrict the communications of the trustees currently at the board, and I would ask all members to support this motion.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: The Canadian Civil Liberties Association has raised some pretty significant concerns about ministerial control over the public communications of elected trustees, and I’m just going to read part of their submission into the record:

“Elected officials have a fundamental right—and responsibility—to communicate with their constituents. Restrictions on that communication interfere with the free flow of information between public representatives and those that they represent and may also raise concerns under section 2(b) of the charter.”

We’ve seen, Chair, time and time again, that the minister has behaved very vindictively towards trustees who have dared to engage in advocacy against policies of the government. It’s clear that that is a major source of his rage towards the Ontario Public School Boards, Association and Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association, that they have dared to say that the minister’s funding of education is not sufficient to actually meet the needs of every child. So there’s a pattern here where it’s clear that the minister does not care for people who provide factual information that is contrary to the message that he wants to send out.

Then there are also the constitutional concerns about restricting the communications of publicly elected officials simply because you don’t agree with that content.

There are also concerns, I would say, based on what we’ve seen, with the supervisors that the minister has appointed. I am in Ottawa; my daughter is in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. I received the regular emails from the supervisor, which—first of all I will say that he only has my email address so that the school can communicate

with me about my daughter, not so that the supervisor can share his propaganda, and yet, that’s what he has been doing, and the information that he has been sharing has not been factually correct; it has been political spin.

So I’m concerned when the minister is setting communication policies and could potentially prevent trustees from countering any information that is not factually accurate, that we are then depriving parents of the right to know the truth about what is happening in our schools and why it is happening. I think that any measures that the minister takes to set policies for communication, there should be a rationale that is publicly shared, rather than the minister banning whatever occurs to him on any given day that he does or does not like. The public should know why decisions are being made and what ramifications those decisions will have.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Yes, I guess I worry about—we live in a world full of misinformation and disinformation, and I think it happens in government as well. I think we have to tread very lightly when it comes to freedom of speech and who’s running the show in terms of what gets published and what doesn’t. I have heard the government, the minister, say things that I found could be harmful to kids and so I worry that—of course, we all have a bias. I have a bias, you have a bias and so that’s why we have—we can have some checks and balances, but they have to be thought through really carefully. When we start limiting freedom of speech without any checks and balances, I think we run the risk of oppressing and silencing people who have legitimate things to say. It’s cleaner, but democracy is messy.

So I think just as I have been showing my concern about the changes to the FOI legislation where any PC member—for the most part, because cabinet is so large—doesn’t have accountability and their staff don’t have accountability about their actions and what they’re doing, we need that transparency and accountability here. I believe that’s what this amendment is about—to make sure that there is some transparency and accountability about how there could be politicization of educational materials in a way that could cause harm and spread more misinformation and disinformation.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Lost.

We will now go to the Liberal amendment on page 14. I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Je propose que l’article 2 de l’annexe 2 du projet de loi soit modifié par adjonction du paragraphe suivant :

« (6) L’article 8 de la loi est modifié par adjonction des paragraphes suivants :

« “Évaluation des impacts sur les conseils scolaires de langue française

«“(1.1) Avant d’établir une politique ou une ligne directrice en vertu de la disposition 7.1 du paragraphe (1), le ministre évalue les impacts de celle-ci sur les conseils

scolaires de langue française et fait en sorte qu'elle n'ait pas pour effet de réduire leur capacité d'exercer leurs fonctions de gestion et de gouvernance.

« "Adaptation du matériel scolaire aux réalités franco-phones

« "(1.2) Les politiques ou lignes directrices établies en vertu de la disposition 7.1 du paragraphe (1) doivent prévoir que :

« "a) le matériel scolaire destiné aux conseils scolaires de langue française est élaboré par et pour les franco-phones en fonction de leur réalité linguistique et culturelle;

« "b) ce matériel ne peut être imposé de manière uniforme lorsqu'une telle obligation compromet l'adaptation pédagogique aux besoins des élèves francophones.

« "Communications publiques des conseils scolaires

« "(1.3) Les politiques ou lignes directrices établies en vertu de la disposition 27.4 ne peuvent limiter la capacité des conseils scolaires de langue française de représenter et de défendre les intérêts de leurs communautés." »

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Bien que le ministre a indiqué que les droits des conseils scolaires francophones ne seraient pas affectés par la loi, les nouveaux pouvoirs que le ministre se donne pour dicter ce qui va être le matériel numérique, l'évaluation du rendement des élèves, les politiques relatives aux dépenses des conseils scolaires et le matériel scolaire constituent nettement un risque constitutionnel parce que ça ne respecte pas les droits des Franco-Ontariens à gouverner leurs institutions scolaires par et pour avec les décisions qui ont un impact sur la façon dont l'éducation est livrée.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

M^{me} Chandra Pasma: Les Franco-Ontariens ont un droit constitutionnel à gérer leur propre système d'éducation par et pour les Franco-Ontariens, et les matériels et ressources qui sont utilisés dans les salles de classe sont tellement importants comme parties d'un système éducatif francophone. Même la qualité de la langue est reflétée dans les matériels et ressources qui sont utilisés.

1130

Donc, je pense que cette partie du projet de loi nuit à ce droit constitutionnel. J'ai peur que ça va avoir pour résultat une poursuite judiciaire et les Ontariens et les Ontariennes vont payer encore une fois pour une décision du gouvernement sans consultation, sans réflexion sur les droits des Franco-Ontariens. Donc, je vais voter pour cet amendement et contre chaque tentative du gouvernement de limiter les droits des Franco-Ontariens.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Lost.

We'll now go to government amendment on page 15. I recognize MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I move that section 2 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

"(6) Section 8 of the act is amended by adding the following subsection:

"Expenses

"(2.1) A policy or guideline made under paragraph 3.7 of subsection (1) may provide that, despite anything in this act, a board shall not pay certain expenses of a member or reimburse a member for certain expenses or that such payment or reimbursement shall be restricted in accordance with the policy or guideline."

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I have serious concerns, Chair, when the minister is giving himself the power through regulation rather than legislation to control the expenses of school board trustees to the degree that the minister can dictate that a certain member cannot be reimbursed for expenses.

We should have a general policy that covers all expenses for all members, which is overseen by the school board chair and the director of education, rather than the minister behind closed doors—particularly because we've seen how vindictive this particular minister can be. Any trustee who has dared to speak out against the policies of this government has come under pretty vicious and personal attack from this Minister of Education.

I don't think in Ontario we want to be in a position where a minister is dictating policy without any legislative oversight to punish particular people for daring to speak against his own policies, no matter how detrimental they are.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm glad we're talking about expenses. Look, I've got a deal: I'll vote for this if we can make a regulation that doesn't allow the Premier to buy a luxury private jet without telling anybody. Would that be a good deal?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I'm just going to caution the member: Let's keep to the subject we're talking about today.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, we're talking about—thank you very much, Chair. I appreciate that. I will stick to the subject, but what I'm pointing out is very clearly that their actions are incongruous with the stated intent of this section in the bill. That's all. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: As a former trustee, I'm worried about this new ability of the minister to set in regulation what the work of a trustee may or may not be worth. I can tell you that the few thousand dollars that I was getting when I was even the chair of the board was not reflective of the amount of work that I was devoting to that.

I think we can't allow the minister to diminish the importance of the role of a trustee by trying to even further disengage them or demotivate them from running for trustee by removing, possibly, any kind of compensation that they may be getting out of the important work that they're doing. So I can't support that kind of new power that the minister wants to have.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote?

All those in favour, please put your hand up. All those opposed? It's carried.

We'll now go to NDP amendment on page 16.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I move that section 2 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(6) Section 8 of the act is amended by adding the following subsection:

“Duties of minister

“(3.1) Before making or amending any guidelines, orders, directions or regulations under an authority under this act that resulted from the Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026, the minister shall,

“(a) consult with, and consider the feedback of, the public, parents, teachers and other educators and their associations, special education advisory committees and such other persons as the minister considers appropriate;

“(b) ensure that an impact assessment is done to ensure there are not anti-Black impacts or negative impacts for students with disabilities resulting from the guideline, order, direction or regulation;

“(c) ensure that the guideline, order, direction or regulation complies with the recommendations set out in the Dreams Delayed action plan, dated March 27, 2025;

“(d) at least 90 days before making or amending the guideline, order, direction or regulation, post a draft of such document on a website of the government of Ontario that is accessible to the public;

“(e) consider any feedback received as a result of a posting under clause (d);

“(f) consider the needs of students with disabilities and ensure that the guideline, order, direction or regulation,

“(i) enables students with disabilities to have equal benefit of education at a school board, and

“(ii) does not create or continue any disability barriers that would adversely impact students with disabilities; and

“(g) provide a public statement with respect to how the minister reached their conclusion under clause (f).”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: We've heard from many of the stakeholders and education partners who are vital to the functioning of our schools every day—the teachers and education workers, the principals, the trustees, parents' associations and students—that they were not consulted on the contents of this bill. There was no attempt to take into account their needs, to reflect their priorities or even to ensure that what is in this legislation does not cause any harm.

There were particular concerns raised from disability organizations, including the AODA Alliance, the Ontario Autism Coalition and ARCH Disability Law Centre, that the bill will make things worse for students with disabilities because it doesn't even mention them or take their particular needs into account.

We heard from parents of Black children in the Black Trustees' Caucus that this has the potential to cause greater

harm to Black students and racialized and Indigenous students because it does not even mention them or take their needs into account. The standardization and harmonization of many measures mean, in fact, that there will be a reduction in the extent to which education reflects their reality and their needs.

The Minister of Education has taken no steps to implement the Dreams Delayed action plan more than a year after it came out, and the Ontario Human Rights Commissioner confirmed that there is systemic anti-Black racism in our system.

What this amendment does is require that, before he can use any of his extensive new powers in this legislation, the Minister of Education must:

—consult with parents, with the public, with students, with teachers, education workers and other stakeholders and special education advisory committees, who really know the details of what special education is like on the ground in their particular school board;

—ensure that impact assessments are done to make sure that nothing the minister is implementing under the new powers granted to him by this act is harming students with disabilities or harming equity-seeking students;

—that the minister actually makes public any rules he is considering before it happens so that the public has an opportunity to weigh in; and

—that when the minister implements any policy, guideline, order or direction, he has to ensure that it is not creating barriers, and he has to provide a public statement about how he reached his conclusion that it is not creating any barriers so that, once again, there is accountability for the decisions that the minister is making and there is transparency so people understand why he is making these decisions. That transparency, again, is an important part of accountability so that people know what conclusions the minister is reaching and why.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I think this is a very reasonable amendment, actually. I think this is the way every bill, every legislation, should be structured. Before the ministers propose some ideas to fix some problems, they need to understand the problem. I think the only way to do that is by consulting with the stakeholders, and clearly this has not been done in the elaboration of this bill because that's not the text we would have before us today.

Having an impact assessment—of course. We can't fix after the damage is done. We need to know in advance what the changes are going to do in terms of effect in our schools on our children, not after the damage is done.

1140

Again, it might be easier to support government legislation if they actually could be more transparent and provide a public statement as to how they came to the conclusion that the proposed legislation is needed.

I will support these amendments.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think this amendment tries to bring democracy back into the way we teach kids. I think the attitude in this bill undermines how important educational materials are to kids.

We are forming little people, little minds; big people, big minds. If we try to dictate that, I think those are the actions that we see of governments that are moving too far to the right and moving toward centralization of power and authoritarianism. Those are the characteristics of what happens in schools when there is major screening of what kids learn in schools. I think in order to make good legislation about educational materials in general, it's essential that we talk to people who actually work in this field and create educational material, the people who use those materials and the families that are in our system.

I have things that I would like to see in terms of curriculum changes. For example, in Estonia, they have good curriculum on misinformation and disinformation. We want to build students that are critical thinkers, and that's what teachers do. They help kids ask questions and think through issues.

I worry that by using a sledgehammer approach to controlling what kids learn in schools, we miss out on all of the messiness of democracy that I think ends up with more deep roots. A process like this is really what all of the stakeholder groups are asking for. That's what I heard from ETFO, OECTA, CUPE and all of the groups, that they want to be part of the process. They are experts in the field.

I actually heard from the parent councils. They weren't allowed to speak, and they thought it was hurtful to them that they have dedicated a lot of their advocacy and the work that they do outside of schools as volunteers because they care about their kids' education, and the leaders of the parent councils weren't able to raise their concerns at our committee.

I support this amendment, but I hope this government takes the amendment as a good template on what good process looks like. I look at the IPV consultations. They were so robust. We had lots of experts. I would love to see where that goes because it was well researched, and that's what we should be doing when it comes to education because it is as important as healthy relationships for adults. The curriculum our kids learn is essential to having a thriving society, so I will be supporting the amendment.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I also just want to add that to our schools work best when there are partnerships between students, parents, teachers, education workers, equity and human rights advocates, trustees who are locally elected and locally accountable and the government. What we're seeing here is a sweeping-aside of all of those other education partners, and only the Minister of Education is going to get to have any say.

We're taking away any professional expertise and first-hand experience from people who are on the ground every single day in our schools. The government is not listening to parents and students who know what their needs are, who know where the system is failing them. They're not

listening to disability advocates and parent advocates about the real, systemic challenges that their kids are facing, the barriers that that's creating and the harm that it is causing. They are trying to also take away accountability for these decisions from our communities.

This amendment is an attempt to restore that partnership, to say that the minister's powers have to be enacted in partnership with all of these people who have a stake in our schools; who know what's going on in our schools; who have a right to a meaningful, equitable and high-quality education in the province of Ontario; and who know what is lacking in order to make that real.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote. Please raise your hands, all those in favour. Please raise your hands, for all those opposed. Lost.

We will now go to the independent amendment on page 17. I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I move that section 2 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(7) Section 8 of the act is amended by adding the following subsection:

““Use of digital textbooks, etc.

“(2.1) A policy or guideline established under paragraph 7.1 may provide that digital textbooks and learning materials are available for a teacher's use but shall not require digital textbooks and learning materials be used in instruction or for instructional purposes.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Go ahead.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think it hearkens back to respecting teachers' autonomy and their judgment in the classroom. Don't get me wrong—none of us are perfect. I get that. Things can go astray. But that's why we have principals; that's why we have governance in school boards to help out if needed. But teachers went to school. They are experts. A lot of them have done this for many years. They're good at what they do. A “thou shalt” approach kind of is dismissive of that expertise.

I just want to put a little flexibility in here. I know that the minister's directives are trying to protect against harm. I think they could do more harm by alienating teachers, not listening to them and limiting the amount of flexibility and expertise that they can bring into the classroom.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I want to raise some concerns that I've heard from teachers with regard to digital textbooks, one of which is that some teachers believe that there is far too much screen time already involved in children's education and so they don't want to see any move to make that screen time mandatory.

I've also heard from teachers, particularly ones that are teaching in some more low-income neighbourhoods or boards, that there is not equitable access to devices in the first place. I know that in some boards, the amount of funding that is being put towards laptops or computers is so low that even after four years of high school, the board's amount would not buy a single Chromebook for the student.

Then there's also equitable access to Internet, particularly in the north, where we know that despite the govern-

ment's promises, they have not provided wireless broadband to everyone. If there is a uniform requirement to use digital textbooks and learning materials, then that is not actually going to be equitably available to all students.

I've also heard concerns from teachers that many of the digital textbooks that we are using come from large education companies that are for-profit, and in some cases American, and don't reflect the reality in Ontario. I think there are concerns, particularly when we are in a trade war and we have a buy-Ontario procurement policy, supposedly, that we be very careful in how we approach mandatory requirements to use digital textbooks, particularly when there are fees required to be paid every single year, unlike with the purchase of paper books where, once the school owns them, the school owns them. So I will be supporting this amendment.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please put up your hand. All those opposed, please put up your hand. Lost.

We'll now go to NDP amendment on page 18. I recognize MPP Pasma. Go ahead.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I move that section 2 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(7) Section 8 of the act is amended by adding the following subsection:

“Information and Privacy Commissioner

“(5) The Information and Privacy Commissioner may,

“(a) set requirements regarding the collection and use of student information related to the prescription of educational materials under paragraph 7.1; and

“(b) from time to time, review the collection and use of student information related to the prescription of educational materials under paragraph 7.1.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: We know that when we're on the Internet, our data is not safe. We are being tracked and surveilled. When the minister is mandating that certain digital tools be used in the classroom, particularly if they are third party or from a private, for-profit company, we don't know how our children's information is being collected, how our children's information is being used and how that might, in particular, be used to market things to our children. I think as parents, we should be very concerned about how our children's information and data is being used. Certainly, no company should have access to our child's information, whether that's academic information or personal information, simply because the Minister of Education mandated it.

1150

This amendment allows the Information and Privacy Commissioner to set requirements around the collection and use of student information for digital materials and to review whether or not that collection and use is respecting the requirements set out by the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Lost.

Shall schedule 2, section 2, as amended, carry? Is there any debate on this section? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Chair, we've heard many concerns from students, parents, education workers, teachers, trustees, community members, parent involvement councils, disability advocates, equity advocates about the serious concerns of the centralization of power in the hands of the minister, the lack of accountability, the lack of consultation, the extreme overreach of the powers that the minister is giving himself.

Education works best when it's a partnership that respects professional expertise, respects the needs of every child and respects local democracy, local accountability and includes parent voices. What we have here is a section that makes the Minister of Education the emperor of education in addition to the fact that, in other sections of this bill, he's trying to shield himself from any consequences for the actions that he's taking. So the NDP cannot support this section of the bill.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Any further debate? I recognize MPP Collard.

Mme Lucille Collard: I can't either support this section. All the amendments that I've proposed on this bill were to try to formalize the engagement of the minister not to attack the francophone rights. Clearly there is no interest on the part of the government to support that, so there is clearly an indication that the minister has every intention to do whatever he likes, whether it does affect francophone rights to govern themselves or their education system.

I won't be supporting this section.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Any further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Carried.

Schedule 2, section 3, NDP amendment on page 19: I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I move that section 3 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(3) Section 11 of the act is amended by adding the following subsection:

“Same

“(6.1) Before the minister provides an approval or confirmation in respect of clause (6)(a.1) that may impact a facility of the school board, the minister shall ensure that the approval or confirmation will not negatively impact the accessibility of the facility to students, staff and other members of the community.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Go ahead.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: We know that, despite the adoption of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the timeline that was in place for the province to be fully compliant with that act, our schools are not fully accessible at present. The minister and the government have not exercised their responsibility under the act to ensure full accessibility, despite the fact that, in addition

to the rights under the AODA, every child has the right to an equitable education in Ontario, which means that they have to have equitable access to the school building and its facilities.

This requires that, if the minister is going to exercise any power under this legislation with regard to school facilities, he must ensure that, before providing that approval or confirmation, nothing would negatively impact the accessibility of the facility.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed. Lost.

We'll go to Liberal amendment on page 20. I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Je propose que l'article 3 de l'annexe 2 du projet de loi soit modifié par adjonction du paragraphe suivant:

« (3) L'article 11 de la loi est modifié par adjonction du paragraphe suivant :

« "Obligation de consultation

« "(11) Le ministre consulte les conseils scolaires de langue française ou leurs associations représentatives avant de prendre un règlement en vertu du présent article qui pourrait avoir des répercussions sur leur gouvernance ou leurs activités." »

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Évidemment, encore ici, j'essaye de mettre l'emphase sur le point que c'est important de consulter les conseils scolaires ou leurs associations lorsqu'on va faire des changements autres que ce qui est déjà prévu dans la loi, étant donné que le ministre a tous les pouvoirs de développer des règlements et des directives. S'il ne le fait pas en consultation avec les conseils scolaires francophones, il va y avoir un impact négatif, parce que, clairement, dans la loi, ce n'est pas protégé. Je suis très préoccupée par ceci. C'est pour ça que je propose cette obligation de consultation.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? Please raise your hand if you're in favour. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Lost.

Shall schedule 2, section 3, carry? Is there any debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This is a pretty transparent attempt by the Conservative government to gain access to land in downtown Toronto. There are not a huge number of school-board-controlled entities in Ontario, but of course, the biggest one is the Toronto Lands Corp., which manages a great deal of publicly owned land in downtown Toronto that this government has very clearly had their eyes on for a long time. We know that they have developer friends who would love to have access to these public lands, especially at fire-sale rates. We do not want to see a scenario where the minister can simply give himself control over a school board entity like this through simple regulation and requiring approval and confirmation from the minister, and so we will definitely be voting against this section.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I'll be voting against this section as well. If you take a look at the history of this government and its focus on land and favouring certain well-connected insiders, it makes us nervous.

But more importantly, schools don't belong to a corner office at Queen's Park. Schools belong to the communities and families they serve, and those communities invested not only money but time in their neighbourhoods to build a community, to build a school. This is going to fundamentally change their ownership of that, their control of that. It's wrong and I'll be voting against it.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): MPP Glover, you had your hand up.

Mr. Chris Glover: I used to be a trustee in the Toronto District School Board, and I sat on the Toronto Lands Corp. The TDSB has just under 600 schools and it is the second-largest landowner in the city of Toronto, next only to the city of Toronto.

When you look at the history of this Conservative government, everything they've done has been a real estate scam. One of their very first actions was to sell the Hearn gas plant to a speculator—a friend of the Premier's—for \$16 million for 16 hectares of property when most property in downtown Toronto goes for at least about \$40 million per acre—just grossly underpriced. Then we had the greenbelt scandal. We had the Ontario Place scandal. We had the foundry. We had all of the dozens of MZOs that have gone to speculator friends of the Premier's. All of the land along the Bradford Bypass and the 413 was brought up by friends of the Premier and donors to the Conservative Party just before they announced those extensions, those highways.

Now the Conservative Minister of Education wants control over the property of the TDSB—all of our schools, the 600 schools that belong to the people of Toronto that have been paid for by the taxpayers of Toronto, that are maintained by the taxpayers of Toronto. This minister wants the power to sell it to anyone, any time that he wants to, and that is a gross violation of his powers as the minister. He is not the minister of real estate; he is the Minister of Education. He should be fixing what's happening in our schools, not selling off the property from underneath our students.

I will be voting against this section of the bill. I hope the Conservative members here will also vote against it and vote for the people of Toronto and the people of Ontario to maintain community ownership of their schools.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I'm going to stop you right there, and we're going to recess now to 1 p.m.

The committee recessed from 1200 to 1300.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Welcome back. We will resume consideration of schedule 2, section 3 of Bill 101. Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? Carried.

We will now go to schedule 2, section 4. There are no amendments. Shall schedule 2, section 4, carry? Is there any debate on it before we start that? Are members ready to vote? All in favour? All against? Passed.

We will now go to schedule 2, section 5. Any debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This is the section of the bill that gives the minister and cabinet sweeping liability protections. When the minister was here on Monday, he claimed that this was standard practice for the government, and yet the Canadian Civil Liberties Association said in their brief that these proposed sections contain, “some of the most aggressive liability-shielding provisions seen in Ontario legislation in recent memory. These sections extinguish causes of action against ministers and crown agents personally, bar most tort and related remedies in court, and eliminate causes of action against the crown for acts of third parties related to functions of the act.” It says as well, “Bill 101’s liability provisions come dangerously close to insulating provincial decision-making from all meaningful legal accountability.”

Obviously, we have deep concerns every time that a government tries to protect itself from any meaningful legal accountability for the consequences of its own actions. I think one of the things that is incredibly important in a democracy is that there is accountability for decisions that are made and the impacts that those decisions have. But that should be particularly the case when we are talking about our kids and their well-being and their academic achievement.

I also think that a government that had the intention of truly addressing student achievement and student well-being wouldn’t need such sweeping immunity and barriers to legal accountability. Nobody is looking to take the government to court if:

- they are actually going to invest and make sure that our kids have pencils and books;
- there are qualified teachers and educational assistants to support them;
- the government were acting to bring down class sizes and ensure that there are special education supports and classes available;
- they were addressing the shortage of mental health supports within our schools;
- there was actually safe and reliable student transportation that brought our kids to school on time every day;
- our school buildings were safe and in a good state of repair, then there wouldn’t be any need for the government to protect itself from meaningful legal accountability.

And so I think in addition to the very serious concerns that this raises about accountability in a democracy, there are also some pretty fundamental questions about why would an act that gives the minister sweeping powers also need to give the minister sweeping immunity. What is the minister intending to use his powers for that he needs just so much protection from?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: As I said earlier, there is not one thing in this bill that is going to make one child’s class smaller. We know they’re too big. Not one thing in this bill that is going to get a child who has an exceptional need—who is not getting their need met—that need met. And there is nothing in there to address the mental health crisis that the minister acknowledged fully in the committee.

But there is a heck of a lot in this bill about liability. The government seems to be more concerned with protecting itself than giving students what they need. Now, when you combine this preoccupation with liability and the fact that the government is protecting itself by retroactively eliminating freedom of information for cabinet ministers and their staff, it’s like everything is behind closed doors and you’ve got no recourse. That’s the message that they’re sending to families: “We’re not accountable. We don’t have the tell you what we’re doing, and if you find out, we’re not responsible.”

You should vote against this section.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Carried.

Go to schedule 2, section 6, NDP amendment on page 21: I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I move that section 6 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(1.1) Clause 58.1(2)(k) of the act is amended by adding the following subclause:

“(i.1) the determination of the roles and responsibilities of the members of district school boards,”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This is an amendment to try to address the fact that the Minister of Education is removing so many powers from school board trustees with this act when school board trustees are the democratically elected representatives of local communities and parents. They are the local voice of communities and parents. This creates a scene of great confusion for parents and communities as to what responsibilities and roles and powers our elected representatives actually have and what we are able to hold them accountable for. This would ensure that the minister is clearly spelling out, “Here are the powers and responsibilities.”

Another thing that we’ve seen repeatedly from this government over the past eight years is a lot of finger-pointing, a lot of dodging of accountability by claiming that the outcomes that they are responsible for with their funding cuts are actually the responsibilities of the teachers in your child’s classroom or the school board trustees who are not spending the money that the government is giving them appropriately.

This is a tool that also helps to provide greater clarity for accountability to parents so that the Minister of Education can’t simply pass the buck for anything he doesn’t want to take accountability for, because it will be clearly spelled out to parents, “Here are the powers, responsibilities and roles that your elected school board trustees actually have.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: People should understand the roles and responsibilities of the people they elect. It’s that simple. It’s a good amendment. I’m going to support it.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Members ready to vote? All in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Lost.

We'll now go to the independent amendment on page 22. I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: The spirit of that amendment is just that we—

M^{me} Lucille Collard: You have to move it.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Sorry, yes. Moving things.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Yes, you missed your motion.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I've got to move it, yes. I'm sure you'll find it moving.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Definitely.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I move that subsection 6(3) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out subsection 58.1(10) of the Education Act and substituting the following:

“Number of members on a district school board

“(10) A regulation under subclause (2)(k)(i) shall not provide for a number of members of a district school board that is less than one member for each electoral district, as determined under the Representation Act, 2015, within the area of jurisdiction of the district school board.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Toronto is enormous. It has the bulk of our province's population, and here we are saying that—who knows if they can charge their mileage? Who knows if folks can charge their coffee when they meet with a family? We've limited it to \$10,000, and now we want one TDSB trustee to cover two ridings. We do enough—we work pretty hard to address the needs of our constituents, and I think it's a pretty full office and a full job. So it worries me that we're going to spread that person even more thinly across two ridings.

1310

So the purpose of this is to try to find some parameters around how many trustees can be on a board and take into consideration the population density, complexity and demands of the job of a trustee—especially as it relates to those in Toronto who are affected by this.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I think it's a pretty fundamental principle, in a democracy, that people should have equitable access to decision-makers and to supports that are provided from local elected officials. This means that somebody in a smaller municipality or jurisdiction—there might be 20,000 people being supported by a single school board trustee. In Toronto, there might be 300,000 people being represented by a single school board trustee. If you're going to reach out to your trustee and you're in an area where there are only 20,000 people, you are definitely going to get your phone call answered, and that person is going to have time to reach out to the superintendent or principal and mediate a resolution to your situation or bring your concern to the school board table. If you're in a situation where your trustee is representing 300,000 people, then despite how seriously they're approaching their work with the best of intentions, there might just not be enough hours

left in the day to get to your phone call, let alone provide such fulsome support. We also know—especially with the limitation of compensation for school board trustees—that this is not a full-time job, despite the work being full-time. Many people have to work a full-time job, in order to pay the bills and survive, on top of this work. So this is work being done supporting the numbers of, in some cases, two federal ridings, or 50 and 60 schools, off the side of your desk, in your evening and weekend hours. It's going to drive good people who are committed to supporting our kids, our parents, our communities away from running for school board trustee.

And we already know that the Minister of Education said publicly that where someone doesn't run and is elected, he intends to appoint people.

So this just feels like a backdoor way for the Minister of Education to centralize power in his own hands and shut down local democracy, taking away any accountability and support and advocacy and voice from parents and communities.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: This is a very sensible amendment that—I want to try to frame it this way. So I'll say—starting with MPP Leardi—going left, your riding has just doubled, but going right, your riding stays the same. Forget about how that affects you. How does that affect the people who live in your now-doubled riding, and do they have the same level of representation as the people on your right? No.

This provision in the bill is punitive. It's not punishing trustees. It's punishing people—it's punishing families, it's punishing kids, to say, “You deserve less representation than everywhere else.” That's what you're doing in this bill. And if you were sitting on this side of the table, you wouldn't stand for it. You wouldn't stand for it if somebody came to you and said that to you in your caucus. “By the way, your riding has just doubled. But your colleague—it stays the same.” You wouldn't stand for it, and the people you represent wouldn't stand for it either.

So I'm going to support this amendment.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. It's lost.

We'll now go to the Liberal amendment on page 23. I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I move that subsection 6(3) of schedule 2 to the bill be struck out and the following substituted:

“(3) Subsections 58.1(10) to (11) of the act are repealed and the following substituted:

“Number of members on a district school board

“(10) A regulation under subclause (2)(k)(i) shall not provide for a number of members of a district school board that is less than five or more than 12.

“If number of members is 12 or fewer

“(10.1) A regulation made under subclause 2(k)(i) that provides for a number of members of a district school board that is 12 or fewer has no effect until January 1, 2030.

“Certain persons not included

“(11) The numbers referred to in subsection (10) or (10.1) do not include any person elected or appointed to a district school board under section 188, a student trustee or the director of education of an English-language district school board.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further comment?

Mr. John Fraser: What we’re essentially trying to do with this amendment is let’s just take some time to think about what we’re doing here and think about the fact that we’re saying to a certain group of people, certain families, certain kids, that you deserve less representation than other people. Think about it. None of us would stand for that.

I think the previous amendment was a great amendment. This is just an opportunity for us to say, “Maybe we should think about this. Maybe we should give it a little bit time.”

So I would just encourage members to support it. I really, really firmly believe that there has to be a certain level of equality between people when it comes to their representation at a similar form of governance. You can have minor differences because you’re in a framework of 10%, 15%, 20%, but literally doubling?

Do you know what this looks like to me? This doesn’t look like a governance improvement or a governance strategy or something that’s going to make a class size smaller or help special education or help mental health. This thing in the bill is punitive and vindictive, and it doesn’t belong there.

I encourage my colleagues to support.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I just want to reflect, Chair, on the fact that this amendment is giving the government time to think about a section of the bill that is continuing this government’s weird obsession with Toronto, because it is the TDSB that is the only one that’s impacted by this limit of 12.

There are already TDSB trustees who represent more schools than exist in some school boards in the province, and now we’re going to double the number of schools that those trustees are expected to represent. It is bizarre that someone in Toronto should have to represent twice the number of schools that exist in an entire school board in the province when the minimum number of trustees that is set for a school board is five. We’re talking about a school board with 30 schools having five representatives each overseeing six, and a trustee in Toronto could be overseeing 50 schools individually.

It once again seems to be weirdly focused on taking away representation from people in Toronto, much like the government already did with municipal councillors in Toronto, ensuring that people in Toronto have less access to their local representatives, less voice.

We’re seeing legislation just brought forward by the government which takes away the Toronto Islands and Billy Bishop airport from local control, taking away the voice of people who actually live in Toronto about what should happen with this airport in the middle of their city—

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Let’s stick to the topic, please.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It is part of the topic because it’s part of the pattern that this government is conducting where they don’t seem to care about the voices of people in Toronto, their representation and what their needs are.

So I’m going to support this amendment as a way of giving the government the time and space to actually think about the decisions that they’re taking and how it affects people in different parts of the province, but particularly in Toronto.

1320

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I know it’s not required and people don’t have to speak if I ask them to. I would just like to hear one response as to why this amendment is not a reasonable thing—if anybody is interested or wants to take a stab at it.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Is there any further debate on this? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please put their hand up. All those opposed, please put their hand up. Subsection 58.1, Liberal amendment, has been lost.

Shall schedule 2, section 6, carry? Any debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I also want to add, in addition to the arguments that we’ve made on behalf of democracy, Chair, that it’s fundamentally anti-democratic to have the minister arbitrarily decide how many representatives a school board or how many representatives parents and students may have, as opposed to the scenario we have now where it’s set based on a formula. Why should we not have a formula that applies equally to everybody in the province? Why should the minister have the power to arbitrarily decide by himself, based on whatever whim he’s feeling at a given moment, what kind of representation people in the province deserve?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Any further comments or debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please put their hand up. All those opposed, please put your hand up. Schedule 2, section 6, has carried.

We will now go to schedule 2, section 7—independent amendment, subsection (0.1), page 24.

I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I move that section 7 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(0.1) Subsection 169.1(1) of the act is amended by adding the following clause:

“(e.1) report annually to the public on the effectiveness of policies developed by the board to promote the goals in clauses (a.1) and (a.2), incorporating the feedback collected from surveys from its pupils and staff, and parents and guardians of its pupils, with respect to the effectiveness of those policies.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I say this often: I think we need to measure twice and cut once. I understand the criticism of the government about the climate surveys and that we shouldn’t be collecting data for data’s sake. If we’re going to do a climate survey, we should create good data and we should measure ourselves against those data. It’s about

accountability. It's about transparency and measuring the impact of policies on outcomes. Let's measure outcomes. Do these policies and practices effect better outcomes for our students?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Sub-section (0.1), an independent amendment, has been lost.

Shall schedule 2, section 7, carry? Any debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: We heard grave concern from many stakeholders—both those who had the opportunity to appear at committee as well as those who submitted written comments—that this lack of data is going to have an incredibly harmful impact on our ability to address and even identify core concerns that our children are experiencing, like the crisis in mental health, like the challenges with accessibility and anti-Black racism that children are experiencing within our schools.

We heard from students, including FESFO, saying, "If you're going to make any changes, just make the survey simpler and more engaging and ensure that there's concrete action, but don't eliminate them completely." Parents of Black Children asked that we maintain a mandatory mechanism and that we include race-based data so that there can be better action on anti-Black racism. The Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens asked that we maintain the mandatory mechanism for collecting data and that we make sure that there's particular attention paid to francophone realities. The three principals' councils representing all four school systems in the province said, "Please continue," because the loss of data is going to have a profoundly negative impact on the ability to address systemic concerns. Even if you were to replace it with other mechanisms for student and community voice, the fact that it would no longer be an anonymous process would mean that individuals wouldn't be coming forward with very serious concerns.

If there are any changes that should be made, it should be to help set minimum consistency standards so that we can track data across the province and not just across school boards.

I think it's very important that we listen to the voices of students and of people who are on the ground in our schools every single day, saying that this data is very important, that it helps to identify challenges that we need to address, it helps us identify whether or not we're making progress or things are getting worse. I hope that the government will listen to the voices of our students and of the people on the ground and vote against this section.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: The government is limiting liability in this bill. They're changing freedom-of-information laws and saying, "You can't have access to this," and this section of the bill is saying, "We don't think collecting data is important." Does anybody know where we've kind of heard that before? It might be south of the border.

Vote against this section.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think as someone who worked in schools, I found that the survey explored a lot of difficult subject matter that we don't always collect in other ways. For example, social anxiety is the number one mental health issue that kids are facing right now. I don't know if the government actually has data about that. If we ask what's the biggest health concern for kids and we don't know, that's an issue.

I know member Leardi—his wife is a principal. She needs to know what's going on in this school where she is presiding to know what are some ways in which we can organize our resources and our supports to meet some of the emerging needs in our schools.

Social anxiety is one of those quiet ones. We know about violence in schools because it's very obvious if a kid is acting out. Staff are doing incident reports. We can document that and that's legislated through unions and workplace protection. We can't always measure if a kid doesn't show up, if they're not making eye contact. I hear from teachers that more and more kids aren't talking in class. That's a form of social anxiety called selected mutism. It's emerging, but I think with the lack of climate survey, those trends will go unnoticed.

Our government doesn't know that social anxiety is the biggest mental health issue facing kids right now and that should be alarming to us. We need to know what's going on in our schools. We need to know what's going on in our school boards. If we don't measure it, we won't know and it just creates more silence around issues that are really, really important right now and we should all want to do better by that.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: It would be good to hear some defence of the government's position on this bill. The member mentioned selective mutism. I'm sure it might be endemic by now. It would be good to hear something. If you're going to put forward a piece of legislation, you should be able to defend it or explain it or say something.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: We know that the minister is getting rid of those surveys because he didn't like some of the questionnaires. He has given some examples. But I think that if he doesn't like some of the questionnaires, instead of getting rid of something that provides data on the climate in our schools, he should provide some parameters as to what he wants to see measured as opposed to simply getting rid of it.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think, too, I'm concerned that the minister himself hasn't had adequate training when it comes to equity, diversity and inclusion. I hear about his response to people's concerns about the training that was done in Peel on gangs. When I hear of him talking about questions that relate to gender and gender expression and pronouns, it shows a lack of understanding of the realities

that exist in our communities and a lack of sensitivity to the people impacted by these types of oppression.

1330

That's more why he wants to get rid of this climate survey, rather than doing the heavy lifting he needs to do to build his capacity, to have these conversations, understand people's realities that are different than his own, because these are the realities that need to be expressed in schools.

We know racialized communities and queer people are under-represented when it comes to trustees, when it comes to leadership in schools, so it's essential that we have a way to capture the voice of those students. I don't believe that the minister is in a great position to truly understand those realities students face, and he's shown that by taking harmful actions and saying harmful things in the media and in the Legislature. That's part of my opposition to him removing these climate surveys. It comes from a place of ignorance.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Schedule 2, section 7, has carried.

We'll move on to section 7.1, Liberal amendment 25. I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I move that section 7.1 be added to schedule 2 to the bill:

“7.1 The act is amended by adding the following section:

“Publication of policy list

“169.1.1(1) The minister shall publish a list to a government of Ontario website that describes the policies that a board may make decisions on without oversight from the ministry.

“Timing

“(2) The first version of the list described in subsection (1) must be published within one month after the day the Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026 receives royal assent.

“No limitation on powers of board

“(3) For greater certainty, nothing in subsection (1) limits the powers of a board.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Debate?

Mr. John Fraser: This is something the AODA brought forward to us. The message is—and we talked about it a couple of times before—people are being shut out. People don't know what's happening in their schools. They don't know what their trustees can do. They don't know what the policies are.

I just heard recently that the Toronto District School Board that's under supervision, which the minister has said is going to be the case for all school boards—because it's really supervision. He said that. He said the bill is going to create supervision for every school board. In that board, they're not going to let families know class sizes, how big their class is—every family.

That's the point. You're not just pulling it away from trustees; you're pulling decision-making and information and accountability away from families. The minister can't even really describe what trustees are going to do and what they're doing there. He wants to essentially say to not just

trustees but families in Toronto, “You only get one person for essentially what's two of our ridings.”

We have to be open and transparent with people. These are their schools. There are too many kids—5,000 schools. They belong to the community. They belong to the families that they serve.

Withholding information? People are busy. People are just trying to pay their rent, buy groceries, get their kids to soccer and get done what they need to get done. They don't need a government that's getting in between them and their kids' school, and that's what's happening. This amendment is really trying to point that out.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: When you have a democratically elected trustee, part of their job is to help you navigate concerns that you might have within the education system or answer your questions. But another part of their job is to take the bigger picture of the questions and concerns that they're hearing, whether it's from individual parents reaching out or whether it's through consultation with their constituents to identify the systemic issues, take them to the board table, develop policies and programs and adapt budgets to address those concerns. That's what people expect from our democratically elected trustees. What the government is doing with this bill is taking away a lot of the power of trustees to do that, because they're giving an unelected, unaccountable CEO the power to override what trustees are even allowed to debate at the table.

So, again, I think it comes down to transparency, because if we're going to have accountability, we need to have transparency about who is making what decisions and who is being allowed to make what decision so that parents understand when they reached out to their trustee about concerns—for example, about special education, about there not being enough special class placements or that there are specialized classes that are being closed—that there's not a policy or a budget change being made at the board table because the government is not allowing trustees to do that, not because their trustees don't agree that policies to support kids with disabilities and special needs are important. If we're going to hold our trustees accountable, we need to know what powers they actually have to act, and if we're going to hold the provincial government accountable, then we need to know what decisions the provincial government is accountable for by not allowing our local representatives to take action.

So I think this is about transparency, which is so, so important in a democracy, where we have the right to hold our decision-makers accountable, and I'll be supporting this amendment.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise their hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Liberal amendment 25 is lost.

We'll now go to schedule 2, section 8, government amendment 26. I recognize MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I move that section 8 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following clause to section 191 of the Education Act:

“(f) specifying circumstances in which section 191.3 does not apply.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Debate? MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: Okay. It would be nice—kind of handy—if, when you put forward an amendment, you would give a brief explanation of the point of the amendment. We’re doing that over here. It’s really helpful to understand why the government is proposing something. That’s why we have debate. That’s why we talk about things. So I’ll give you an opportunity to explain it, but what it looks like to me is another punitive measure in the bill that relates to trustee compensation and wagging the finger again. And the person wagging the finger is one of the people who unanimously supported the Premier buying a private luxury jet. So it makes it really hard to accept the sincerity of this amendment. But if someone would like to explain it over there, I would really be interested in hearing your explanation.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: So this government amendment is changing a section of the act that gives the minister the power to set expense policies, and the amendment says that, in certain circumstances, the minister does not have to pay members of a school board their expenses for the discharge of their duties.

My problem with this section of the bill is that expense policies should be determined by a formula that applies to everybody equally. The minister shouldn’t be able to change the rules to target a certain person just because that person said something that he doesn’t like. It would be like if the federal government stepped in to arbitrarily deny us an expense claim because they didn’t like something we were saying about federal policy.

We deserve transparent standards that apply to everyone equally, but, like my colleague, I find it deeply concerning when not only is the government not prepared to have a transparent standard, but they’re not even prepared to be transparent about why they think there should not be a transparent standard.

The people of Ontario deserve transparency about what the government is thinking and doing so that we can hold them accountable for their actions. As the Canadian Civil Liberties Association says, the rule of law requires that government be answerable for its actions, and part of being answerable is giving an answer.

1340

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: So it’s almost 2 o’clock and we have not heard any explanation, any answer other than a government member—with all due respect—reading out the amendment. One of two things is happening: The ministry didn’t give you the reasoning behind the amendment so when you put it forward, like we have, you do it; or you don’t believe in the amendment. So, which is it?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour? Please put your hand up. All those opposed? Government amendment 26 has passed and carried.

Shall schedule 2, section 8, as amended, carry? Any debate? MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I just want to state for the record again, Chair, that what we should expect is a standard formula that applies to everyone equally in a democracy that is administered by non-partisan staff, not by an ideological minister with an axe to grind who is known to be vindictive towards people who have criticized him or his policies. That’s what we should expect in a democracy. What this section of the bill is doing is the exact opposite of that.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just worry about how we’re affecting this board governance by eroding some of the respect that comes with the job. If you don’t pay people adequately, you get people who might be motivated—I’m not sure. I just feel like it’s going to affect the quality of people who run in this next municipal election. I really think that we want good people at the table who take this job seriously. It’s just a matter of respect.

Are we going to pay for people’s mileage? Was that amendment because we realize the impact of not paying for membership fees because we made a decision without actually doing our homework and we heard from people about all the benefits of the membership fees? Some of these fees are for people to learn and be better at their job. Do we want fewer people to learn and be better at their job? Do we want people not go to out to that rural school because gas is expensive and they can’t afford it if we don’t provide some mileage? Are we not going to pay for someone’s coffee when they go to a coffee shop to meet with a family? There are certain amounts of fees that we should pay, and it shows respect for the job.

I think if we limit the amount of remuneration for folks doing what I would call kind of messy, hard work—it’s emotional labour in a lot of ways—I worry that we won’t get good-quality candidates running in this municipal election and it will actually do the opposite of what I think the minister is trying to achieve. I think he wants to have better functioning governance, but if we get candidates that are not as qualified and aren’t doing professional development, it will actually erode the quality of our school boards. That’s my worry about some of these limitations and the control over the honorarium without a lot of detail about what’s behind it and why the changes. That’s why I’m against these guidelines.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I think we also need to consider the equity implications of this section. What we want is for our school board trustees to be people that have a stake in our local schools. Of course, that could be many members of the community, but it should include parents of young children because it’s parents whose kids are at school. But when the honorarium or compensation is not enough to even cover the cost of child care while you’re at school board meetings, that’s going to discourage young parents from running for school board trustee and having their voices heard.

If the honorarium is so low compared to the work level that somebody who is working full time can't afford to take any time off work to attend meetings or to read documents ahead of an important meeting, then we're only going to have people who have retired or are independently wealthy be able to fill these roles. We want people who are in all kinds of situations in life to be able to run for these roles because in a democracy, we want our elected representatives to reflect the population and not be a certain subsection who can afford to do this as a hobby on the side.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 2, section 8, has carried, as amended.

We will now go to schedule 2, section 9, NDP amendment 27. I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I move that section 9 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(2.1) Section 195 of the act is amended by adding the following subsection:

“Approval by minister

“(2.1) The minister shall not give an approval under subsection (1.2) or (2) unless the minister has determined that the approval will not negatively impact the accessibility of any school site to students, staff and other members of the community.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: As I mentioned earlier today, the government is not compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, despite the fact that the deadline to be compliant has come and gone. Not all of our school facilities are accessible to students, staff or members of the community.

This is a section of the bill that is giving the minister new powers over school lands and school facilities—and so this section is requiring that the minister actually abide by law in Ontario by considering the accessibility of a site and ensuring that any school site does not reduce accessibility for students, staff and community members.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm concerned because I thought we wanted to cut red tape. This is another level of approval.

Another concern is—sometimes I don't know if the government always understands the nature of schools. They're kind of weird, flowing things, where you have growing and shrinking populations, but you have bricks and mortar that are meant to serve the community. I live in downtown Kitchener. We have an empty school. I would love to see something done with it. We're all working to try to see if that school can be revitalized and opened up again. We had a shrinking population, but now we have high-rises all around that school, and we need it again. If we had sold that school five years ago, before the high-rises went up, we wouldn't be able to service the population. We have overpopulated schools all around that school that we need to revitalize. It's a tricky business. And I know the minister is saying, “Trust me,” but I don't think he has done his homework well enough to prove that he has earned that trust.

So I support this amendment because it's trying to add a bit of thought and measurability into the decisions that are being made so that we can rationalize why they're happening and ensure that it doesn't cause any harm to individuals with disabilities etc.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a good amendment, and I encourage all members of the committee to support it.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? NDP amendment 27 is lost.

We will now go to NDP amendment 28. I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I move that section 9 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(4.1) Section 195 of the act is amended by adding the following subsection:

“New construction

“(5.1) The minister shall ensure that any school building that is constructed after the day subsection 9(4.1) of the Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026 comes into force complies with,

“(a) any accessibility requirements set out in the Ontario building code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005;

“(b) any relevant recommendations set out in the final report of the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee, dated January 28, 2022.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This is another amendment that comes from the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance, in reflection of the fact that the government is still not AODA-compliant and they have not implemented the recommendations from the final report of the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee, which looked at how accessible and inclusive our education system is for students with disabilities. In both cases, the government is sadly lacking.

Since the minister has not of his own volition taken steps to ensure that every new school that is built in the province of Ontario is fully accessible, this amendment requires the minister to do just that.

1350

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I look at this amendment and I think, actually, if somebody who didn't do what we do here looked at this amendment, they would say, “Don't they do that already?” The fact is, we don't, and it's over a long period of time. It's not just on one government. One would think we do this; we don't. And I think the expectations of these days now are that we try to be compliant with the thing that we made a law, all of us together some time ago—about 20 years ago, 25 years ago.

I support this amendment.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just want to thank the member for bringing it forward. As somebody who doesn't face a physical disability—or even invisible—I am grateful that we're trying to shed light on the gaps in our system and ways that we can just get it right the first time moving forward.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? NDP amendment 28 is lost.

We will now go to NDP amendment 29. I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I move that subsection 9(5) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection to section 195 of the Education Act:

“Approval of minister

“(6.1) The minister shall not give an approval under subsection (6) unless the minister has determined that the approval will not negatively impact the accessibility of any building to students, staff and other members of the community.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Again, this is a section of the bill that has to do with capital projects, repairs and improvements of school buildings, and it requires that any repairs or improvements respect accessibility for people with disabilities, students, staff and community members. It's another amendment that's being brought forth by the AODA Alliance, because our buildings in Ontario are not currently accessible to everyone.

It's 2026. They should be accessible. There's no excuse for not taking action. This amendment requires the minister to ensure that any amendments or repairs are accessible.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just want to personalize this a bit. I remember that there was a student that I worked with. They were a newcomer from Eritrea. He and his mom came, a single mom. They didn't know that he had muscular dystrophy. He was at school. We noticed he was just falling all the time and he couldn't support himself. Over the process of them getting more comfortable in Canada and accessing services, he ended up being outfitted with walkers, and that progressed to power chairs.

It was a school that wasn't AODA, so it ends up costing the board thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars to try to retrofit a building after the fact to make sure that there are proper washroom facilities, that he can get from A to B in terms of the school floors.

For that student in particular, it's already pretty challenging to face a disability like muscular dystrophy when you're in grade 7 and you want to be cool. But not being able to move around by yourself easily and having to have a staff person take care of you because they need to help you get from A to B and help you use washrooms individually, it just adds a lot of cost and it adds a lot of shame to

somebody who really ought to have every opportunity he can to move through his childhood as best as possible given the circumstances that he faces already.

To not build a building in a way that makes sense for a kid in a power chair who is facing a shortened lifespan—to me, it doesn't make fiscal sense and it's not humane. So this is a small amendment we could add that I think just tweaks a few things when you're building a school to make sure that this kid can move through this school as easily as anybody else.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Go ahead.

Mr. John Fraser: I'll be supporting this motion.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Are the members ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? NDP amendment 29 is lost.

We'll now go to government amendment 30, and I will ask MPP Pierre.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I move that subsection 9(5) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following clause to subsection 195(7) of the Education Act:

“(0.a) the activities that constitute additions, erections, alterations or improvements that require the minister's approval under subsection (5) or (6) and any requirements that boards must fulfil in order to obtain an approval;”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Go ahead.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: This is the amendment to make it clear that large capital projects involving a lot of money should be kept on track, because we want to keep those on track. But this does not envision that routine small items would be captured.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): MPP Fraser?

Mr. John Fraser: It's good to hear something from the other side.

Chair, this adds regulatory power to the minister. I would like to see the regulations first and won't be supporting the motion.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): MPP Pasma?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I would like to congratulate MPP Leardi for finding his voice.

This amendment is coming to a section of the bill that allows the minister to add a great deal of new red tape to constructing and altering schools.

We already know that there are delays that are happening that are dragging out new builds and expansions for years, which often means that, for school boards, by the time the project is completed, the funding that was committed by the government doesn't actually cover the construction costs. And so a school board is left to fundraise from the community to cover the full cost, which, of course, raises equity concerns for smaller rural communities and also francophone school boards, which don't have the same population to turn to to fundraise for the cost. I think the last thing that we want to be doing is increasing the timelines for constructions and alterations of school buildings in the province.

It's also deeply ironic that a government that claims to be against red tape is adding unprecedented amounts of red

tape to the education ministry. They've been cutting education funding repeatedly, year after year. The FAO says that there's another \$900-million reduction coming this year. The minister said very clearly on Monday he has no intention of adding any funding to school boards or the ministry to cover all of the red tape that's being created. So any level of regulation that's going on here, any additional hoop that school boards need to jump through, is just money that's coming out of our kids' classrooms.

So the NDP does not support this government amendment or the entire section.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? Government amendment 30 is carried.

We will now go to Liberal amendment 31. I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I move that subsection 9(5) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection to section 195 of the Education Act:

“Accessibility

“A policy established under subsection (7) must provide details about how the policy ensures the accessibility of the school site, land or building and complies with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Can you reread the accessibility part, please?

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, pardon me. The whole piece, right?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Yes.

Mr. John Fraser: “Accessibility

“(7.1) A policy established under subsection (7) must provide details about how the policy ensures the accessibility of the school site, land or building and complies with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: This amendment, again, is an amendment that was brought to us by the AODA Alliance with regards to ensuring that no policies would be made that would actually impede accessibility to schools. That's why we put it forward.

As I said earlier, I think putting forward these amendments—most Ontarians would think that it's already happening, and it's kind of surprising that it's not across the board. I encourage all members to support it.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Pasma.

1400

Ms. Chandra Pasma: We've heard a number of times this afternoon, Chair, about the importance of ensuring accessibility for all Ontarians with disabilities—students, staff and community members—and how our school buildings are not already accessible. It's quite surprising, given the fact that they're not accessible is actually not compliant with legislation in Ontario, that the government would keep voting against amendments that would ensure that we did become compliant with the law. But I'm

hoping that this time's the charm and government members will vote for accessibility.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All in favour, please put up your hand. All opposed? Liberal amendment 31 is lost.

We'll now go to Liberal amendment 32. I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I move that subsection 9(5) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection to section 195 of the Education Act:

“Needs of francophone community to be taken into account

“(10) The minister must take into account the specific needs of the francophone community when making any decision under this section.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I will respect the intelligence of everybody here. I trust everybody understands clearly what this means.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: We know that, far too often in this province, the francophone school system and Franco-Ontarian students are an afterthought. They suffer from policies that are adopted that are one-size-fits-all. But they are also frequently in buildings that are not at the standard of English schools; in fact, often, they are hand-me-downs that the English school boards no longer wanted to use, so they became francophone schools. This means that their buildings are often in greater need of repair or expansions to meet the needs of the community, or that they have a need to construct new buildings.

I would say a right of francophone students is equitable access to new and appropriate school facilities. I think it's very important, when the minister is making any capital decisions around land or about building repairs, improvements, additions, that he pay particular attention to the rights of Franco-Ontarian students, and in particular, their right to an equitable education, which means equitable access to high-quality facilities.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I want to add that the reality on the ground is that, very often, French school boards have to move really quickly when land becomes available to be able to build a school later. The process of approval for any real estate already takes a very long time, including the funding, and very often, it puts francophones in a more vulnerable position. That's very important. That's what it means when I'm saying that, before making decisions under this section, we need to think about francophone rights and not put additional obstacles for them to be able to acquire buildings for schools that they much need.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please put your hand up. All those opposed? Liberal amendment 32 is lost.

Liberal amendment 33: I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Je propose que le paragraphe 9(5) de l'annexe 2 du projet de loi soit modifié par adjonction du paragraphe suivant à l'article 195 de la Loi sur l'éducation :

« Prise en compte des réalités francophones

« (10) Dans le cas d'un conseil scolaire de langue française, le ministre exerce les pouvoirs qui lui sont conférés par le présent article dans l'objectif de préserver la croissance et la vitalité des communautés francophones et en tenant compte des besoins qui découlent de leur dispersion géographique. »

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Un peu comme je l'ai déjà expliqué, il y a une réalité géographique qui fait que les conseils scolaires francophones ont besoin de toute la disponibilité possible pour pouvoir acquérir des terrains afin de combler les besoins qui sont loin d'être comblés quand ça vient à l'accès à l'éducation en français.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

M^{me} Chandra Pasma: Je veux parler particulièrement des conseils scolaires francophones à Ottawa, le CECCE et CEPEO, parce qu'ils sont les conseils scolaires qui ont la croissance la plus rapide dans la province.

La communauté francophone à Ottawa, c'est la communauté qui grandit le plus vite. Donc, il y a un grand besoin d'espaces pour les élèves franco-ontariens à Ottawa. Mais puisque le gouvernement réagit trop lentement, il y a des situations où des élèves sont dans des bâtiments qui ne sont pas du tout appropriés pour les élèves, même pour des raisons de santé et de sécurité, comme la vieille école qui se trouve au cœur d'Ottawa présentement.

Mais aussi, ça met les conseils scolaires dans une situation où ils dépensent plus pour des solutions temporaires comme les portatives. Le CECCE va dépenser plusieurs fois le coût d'une seule école juste pour mettre en place ces portatives et tous les services dont les portatives ont besoin.

Donc, il faut absolument que le ministre, en exerçant n'importe quel pouvoir lié aux projets capitaux où à la construction de bâtiments, prenne en compte la réalité diverse de la communauté franco-ontarienne sur le terrain. Et surtout, quand on a une situation où la population grandit, qu'il y ait des places pour accueillir les élèves tout de suite, parce que sinon, les élèves vont aller vers le système anglophone, et une fois qu'ils sont dans le système anglophone, ils commencent à perdre leur langue, leur culture et leur histoire. Ils ne reviennent presque jamais au système francophone, donc il faut assurer dès le début qu'il y ait des places dans les écoles francophones qui sont égales en qualité aux espaces qui sont offerts aux élèves anglophones.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? Liberal amendment 33 is lost.

We will now go to schedule 2, section 9, as amended. Does it carry? Any debate? MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: We have grave concerns about the overreach of ministerial power in this section of the bill, which gives the minister significant control: the power to approve or not approve the acquisition of any land.

We've already seen a situation in the province a few years ago where a developer held a thousand-dollar-a-plate fundraiser for former Minister of Education Stephen Lecce. A few months later, the school board in Wasaga Beach was given money for a new school which, lo and behold, just happened to require land that that developer owned. I think that raises red flags for people in the province about how decisions around land use are being made, how capital funding is being granted.

This would ensure that the Minister of Education had the power to make that happen in the case of every single new school.

We also know that there is already a huge backlog in repairs to schools across the province. It was \$16 billion the last time it was reported, but the government stopped reporting it five years ago, which means that you know that amount is not going down; it's going up. And the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario says that within seven years, 75% of schools will be below a state of good repair because the government's funding is not sufficient to ensure that we're repairing all schools.

We shouldn't be adding even more roadblocks to getting schools repaired in the province by requiring that every single repair go to the Minister of Education for his personal approval. We certainly shouldn't be diverting capital funding to the new layers of bureaucracy at the Ministry of Education that are going to need to deal with all of the paperwork for these approval requests. We shouldn't be taking the board's time and using it to navigate this red tape process instead of just focusing on getting the repairs done, on getting schools built and on getting land acquired to so we can meet the needs of our students.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Thank you, Speaker—oh, you got a promotion again. Thank you, Chair.

I think what I'm noticing is that there's a bad example of a situation that went poorly, and then we create legislation that kind of overexerts control and power so that it never happens again, as opposed to dealing with situations as they come.

When it comes to real estate, it's very transactional and I worry about the short-term impacts and long-term impacts of putting so much power in the minister's hands. I think real estate can be quite complicated and it feels a bit paternalistic, that we're ruling with an iron fist and that we have to fear the minister, because who knows what will happen? We have to ask permission for everything we do.

1410

When I think of raising my kids, as people grow up and they become more capable, there is a level of trust that exists and it helps people thrive. We all make mistakes, but I worry that we're holding on too tight, and if you

squeeze things too tight, you will get a pretty adverse reaction.

I do worry about some of the micromanaging that seems to be happening in this bill, because there is one bad example of people who made mistakes and, now, we're making legislation that overcompensates, I think, for that. That's my two cents.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate?

Mr. Chris Glover: In the fall, the government passed Bill 33, which gives the minister the power to sell any school in Ontario to anybody, any time he wants, for any price that he wants. What we've seen since then is that a Conservative donor, who attended a thousand-dollar-a-plate fundraiser, attended this thing, and then Wasaga Beach needed a new school and the school that they're to be building is on land that's owned by the donor who attended the thousand-dollar-a-plate Conservative fundraiser. This just reeks of conflict of interest, of cash-for-access.

This bill before us actually says that any changes to land that any school board makes have to be personally approved by the minister. So he's taking control of all of the schools and all of that real estate in the province, and this is a government that cannot be trusted with real estate. They've shown that again and again, with the greenbelt scandal, Ontario Place, with all the properties along the 413 and the Bradford Bypass that were bought by Conservative donors and friends.

Their donors are making billions of dollars off public assets and public real estate, and this bill just gives the minister even more power to do that with the schools in the province. So I would encourage anybody who cares about schools, who doesn't want to see cash-for-access, to vote against this bill.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: This section, clearly, is not only stripping away power from local boards, but it's totally ignoring francophone realities, so this section is not good for anyone. It's only good for the minister and I can't support it.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour, please put your hand up. All those opposed? Schedule 2, section 9, as amended, carries.

We will now go to schedule 2, section 10, Liberal amendment 34.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Je propose que l'article 10 de l'annexe 2 du projet de loi soit modifié par adjonction du paragraphe suivant à l'article 195.0.1 de la Loi sur l'éducation :

« Obligation de consultation

« (11) Avant de donner une directive ou de prendre un arrêté visant un conseil scolaire de langue française en vertu du présent article, le ministre consulte de façon sérieuse le conseil en question. »

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further comment?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Oui, en fait, ici encore une fois, on parle de consultations, mais de consultations sérieuses. On ne veut pas avoir simplement un exercice où on coche

la boîte. On voudrait avoir une consultation où les parties prenantes sont consultées, que leurs commentaires sont pris en considération et sont reflétés dans la législation.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Liberal amendment 34 is lost.

Government amendment 35.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I move that section 10 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out subsection 195.0.2(1) of the Education Act and substituting the following:

“Board vicariously liable

“(1) If a board is subject to an order under clause 195.0.1(1)(b), any current or former member of the executive council, deputy minister, employee, officer or agent of the crown, or a current or former trustee, employee, or officer of another board selected for the purposes of clause 195.0.1(1)(b), is deemed to be an officer of the board and not an employee, officer, or agent of the crown or of the selected board, for the purposes of any cause of action against the person and any claim for vicarious liability in relation to the person's acts or omissions under section 195.0.1 in managing or administering the addition to, or erection, alteration, improvement or repair of, the board's buildings.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further comment? I recognize MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: This is a technical amendment. It deals with the people who are managing capital projects.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I want to raise the concerns again that this is protecting the government and the government's agents against any accountability for their own actions, which is incredibly important in a democracy. As the Canadian Civil Liberties Association says, it's “fundamentally incompatible with the rule of law's requirement that government be answerable for its actions” and it's also transferring “financial risk to local boards while insulating the province from legal consequences for its own decisions.” Again, because the board's funding is funding that is coming from the government for education, that means that any funds that are coming in response to liability judgments that are shielding the people actually making the decisions, those funds are coming out of our kids' classrooms. This should not be happening in a democracy.

I just want to say to the members on the opposite side that, if you were sitting on the opposition side of the table or if you were here just as citizens, you would not agree with the premise that governments should not be accountable for their own actions. You would not agree with the premise that people should not be able to expect answers or accountability from their governments. You won't always be on that side of the table, and I urge you to vote as citizens and not as government members being given directions from the ministry on how to vote.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I can't support that kind of amendment. No one should be allowed to have this kind of liabilities exemption.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Government amendment 35 has passed.

Government amendment 36—I recognize MPP Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Through you, Chair: I move that section 10 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out the portion of subsection 195.0.3(1) of the Education Act before clause (a) and substituting the following:

“Extinguishment of causes of action

“(1) No cause of action arises against the crown or any current or former member of the executive council, deputy minister, employee, officer or agent of or advisor to the crown, or another board selected for the purposes of clause 195.0.1(1)(b) or any current or former trustee, employee or officer of the selected board, as a direct or indirect result of,”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: That's another technical amendment to ensure consistency of language throughout the bill.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: You know who has power without having to exercise any accountability for it? Dictators. Is that really what the government wants to position itself as—dictators within our education system, in which no government official, no minister—the cabinet doesn't have to take any accountability whatsoever for its actions?

In particular, this section is about capital projects. MPP Leardi said earlier that this section was about getting capital projects done as quickly as possible. I think we have serious concerns—when we're talking about speed and removing any accountability, any transparency from that process—that we are not making decisions that are actually going to ensure our children are in safe, healthy school facilities.

1420

You have to ask, as my colleague said, could it be about ensuring good deals for insiders, but the government doesn't want to have to bear any accountability for making decisions that are enriching their friends rather than making the best use of taxpayer dollars? I think a government that has nothing to hide is willing to be accountable.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Government amendment 36 is carried.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Chair, I'm requesting a recorded vote on the next motion, please.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Okay.

Next, we'll go to schedule 2, section 10, as amended. Shall it carry? Any debate? MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: In addition to the concerns that we've already raised about the powers that this gives the

minister to grant land to the friends of the government without any transparency or accountability; in addition to fact that it's adding significant red tape to repairing, building and expanding schools when we know that there are already delays in that process, when we know that repairs are already underfunded, when the minister has already clearly said he's not going to provide any funding for the new bureaucracy, which means that all of this red tape is going to be paid for by our kids in terms of fewer teachers in their classrooms and fewer pencils in books; in addition to all of the concerns about the lack of transparency and accountability, all of the shielding that the government is giving themselves here—I think there are also questions about equity and what rights our children have in terms of access to good, healthy schools in every single part of the province.

This section also gives the minister the power to put any individual that he wants in charge. We just can't support that kind of overreaching power for the minister, and so we will 100% be voting against this amendment and very happy to record that vote.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote?

Ayes

Coe, Dixon, Jordan, Leardi, Pang, Pierre.

Nays

Clancy, Collard, Pasma.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Government amendment 36 has carried—no, I'm sorry. Schedule 2, section 10 as amended has carried. It's not even 10 o'clock p.m. yet.

New section, 10.1, independent amendment 37: I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I move that section 10.1 be added to schedule 2 to the bill:

“10.1 The act is amended by adding the following section:

“Oversight evaluation committee

“218.3.4(1) The minister shall establish a committee to evaluate the creation of mechanisms for the independent oversight of members of district school boards.

“Composition

“(2) The committee shall be composed of,

“(a) experienced teachers and early childhood educators, including,

“(i) teachers and early childhood educators with knowledge of special education, and

“(ii) teachers and early childhood educators that represent all areas of Ontario;

“(b) representatives from each teachers' bargaining unit;

“(c) a representative of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association;

“(d) a representative of the Women of Ontario Say No organization; and

“(e) the Integrity Commissioner appointed under the Members’ Integrity Act, 1994.

“Plan

“(3) The committee shall prepare a plan respecting,

“(a) enhancements to district school boards’ codes of conduct;

“(b) adequate training for members of district school boards regarding a board’s code of conduct; and

“(c) procedures and remedies for breaches of a board’s code of conduct.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Go ahead.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I know my colleagues from Waterloo region know very well what it looks like when trustees are fighting each other. It costs taxpayers millions of dollars in court fees, stress and public angst. When trustees are fighting with each other, they’re in the paper all the time. They use public dollars to get into legal battles.

In Waterloo Catholic, a trustee was wrongfully penalized for a code-of-conduct accusation. A lawyer had said she did not break the code of conduct, yet still vindictive trustees pursued her, penalized her and kept her out of voting, out of speaking, out of attending events etc. and participating as she should as a trustee. What this resulted in is hundreds of thousands of dollars that are meant for our kids in our schools being misused by people who did not take advice—to persecute somebody who they did not agree with. It led to many—women especially—removing themselves of a post because they were treated so poorly, attacked by the public—led by a group full of misinformation.

It was wasteful of taxpayer dollars. Now, the school board is being sued for \$1.7 million for the harm caused to that person. This money is better spent in the classroom.

I think we need to come up with a proper process outside of courts where we not only educate trustees on what codes of conduct really are, what conflicts of interest really are, but we have a mechanism for mediation and oversight where some of these vindictive and harassing actions are dealt with in a manner that does not waste taxpayer dollars, does not cause harm and stress to the public and our institutions.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Go ahead, MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I’ll be supporting this amendment. We do have a code of conduct here, actually, for us as members. That’s something anybody in a position of governance or anybody who is elected should have, so I’ll be supporting the amendment.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just want to say too, I’ve heard the minister complain about this very thing. I think all of us don’t like to see this kind of behaviour from our elected officials, and we don’t like seeing taxpayer dollars wasted in this way.

I imagine you might not vote for this because I’m an independent member, because I’m not sitting on the other

side, but I hope you will take this amendment forward in future to create these parameters where we can move forward with governance in a way that’s respectful to the taxpayer dollars and creates more respect and harmony on our school boards. I hope you’ll consider it going forward, because I know we all care about this misuse of taxpayer dollars.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour, please put your hand up. All those opposed? Independent amendment 37 is lost.

We will now go to schedule 2, section 11. There are no amendments. Shall schedule 2, section 11, carry? Any debate? Ready to vote? All in favour, please raise your hand. All opposed, please raise your hand. Schedule 2, section 11, has passed and is carried.

We’ll now go to schedule 2, section 12, Liberal amendment 38. I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I move that subsection 12(2) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsections to section 230.3 of the Education Act:

“List of criteria

“(5.1) The notice required by subsection (5) must include a list of criteria that the board can satisfy in order to have the order revoked.

“Publication of list

“(5.2) The minister shall publish the list of criteria described in subsection (5.1) on a government of Ontario website.

“Automatic revocation if list not provided or published

“(5.3) The order is immediately revoked if,

“(a) the list of criteria described in subsection (5.1) is not included in the notice; or

“(b) the minister fails to publish the list to a government of Ontario website within one month after the day the order is made.

1430

“Transition

“(5.4) The following rules apply with respect to any order that was made and not revoked before the day the Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026 received royal assent:

“1. The minister must provide a list of criteria to the board that the board must satisfy in order to have the order revoked.

“2. The minister must publish the list of criteria on a government website.

“3. The order is immediately revoked if the minister does not comply with paragraphs 1 and 2 within one month after the day the Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026, received royal assent.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): MPP Fraser, could you reread 2?

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, sorry.

“2. The minister must publish the list of criteria on a government of Ontario website.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Thank you.

Further debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I think it should be fair, open and transparent so the people who live in a board that’s under

supervision know what criteria under which they've been taken over but also under what criteria they can satisfy the obligations. It can't be arbitrary.

One thing I've noticed with this minister is the arbitrary approach to education. One of the best examples was the EQAO results which sat on the minister's desk because he wasn't quite sure what to do with them, or he wanted to think about them a bit more, not realizing that those results were something that people should have had two months before—the arbitrary nature of saying what board is under supervision, the arbitrary nature of putting forward an amendment that essentially says, “Look, we're going to change the tax implications for trustees, who don't make very much money, but I'm good with buying a private luxury jet for the Premier.”

My point is, it should be clear—not just to the trustees, not just to the people who work at the board, but to the people whose kids go to school in the board, just like so many of us have kids that go to school or grandkids that go to school. I think it's open and transparent, so I would respectfully ask that my colleagues support it.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm going to be supporting this amendment. We didn't support Bill 33. We still don't support the powers that Bill 33 gives the Minister of Education, which he has been very enthusiastically exercising. But if the government is going to proceed with this approach where the Minister of Education can take over a school board at any moment for any reason that he wants by declaring that any single thing that he wants is suddenly a matter of public interest, then I think that people of Ontario deserve some clarity on what criteria a board actually needs to meet in order to come out of supervision and what kind of timelines there might be involved in that.

Just as an example, the minister said that he was putting boards under supervision because of deficits and that the supervisors he was appointing were going to have mandates to eliminate the deficit. But in a number of boards, the supervisor is running a deficit in some cases even greater than what the elected trustees were. Meanwhile, they're making all kinds of decisions that have nothing to do with a deficit or with finances, including cutting certain programming, eliminating classes for students who have disabilities. People should know what mandate has been given to a supervisor and whether or not a supervisor is meeting those criteria.

I also have serious concerns right now when the minister is out in public saying that he will leave these boards in supervision for a year, two years, 10 years, when we're a few months before local school board elections. He has already made it very clear that he is prepared to appoint trustees where a trustee is not elected. I don't know why a trustee would want to run, why a member of our community who is deeply committed to our children's education would want to run if the minister is telling them that not only will they not be able to exercise that role in this four-year term, but maybe not even in the next four-year term, and maybe halfway through the one after that.

But what the minister could be pulling on us is a bait and switch, where he's telling us the boards won't come out of supervision any time soon so people don't step forward and run. Then, the election passes and, lo and behold, the minister pulls supervision, there's no elected trustees, and so the minister gets to appoint everyone that he wants to the board. This is a scenario where it's very dangerous to have this much power accumulated in the hands of the minister, and so I think people deserve clarity and transparency on what criteria need to be met and how those criteria will be satisfied.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm just grateful to the members beside me for putting this forward. I think we're trying to put some parameters in place so that people have a better understanding of what's going on—what the rules are, why things are happening—and there's an even-stein way to measure things.

Also, we can't just put people in jail forever and put them under supervision forever. There has to be a way out. We see lots of governments get into messy situations without a plan on how to get out, and it seems like it's been an expensive endeavour of adding people who aren't from the area, who don't have a background in education to supervise a board. So I think if it's not working, we also need to have that represented and communicated.

So, I'll be supporting this amendment. I hope the government will consider putting in some checks and balances to make sure that boards that are under supervision can have their way back to democracy, because this supervision method of takeover is an affront to democracy.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Go ahead, MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: One of the things that I've seen over the last eight years is that Premier Ford is not happy being the Premier of Ontario. He wants to be the Premier of Ontario, he wants to control the mayor of every city, and he wants to control every school board and every decision that's made in every school board. That's what this bill is about. It's about giving the Minister of Education—Ford's appointee—the power to determine everything that's happening in schools.

And the minister has exercised completely arbitrary power to take over school boards from the trustees that the people of Ontario have elected. They have overridden that democratic process. For the most part, the excuse that he gives for seizing control of these school boards is that they weren't making cuts fast enough to make up for the funding shortfalls handed to them by the provincial government.

Now, this bill even secures that power to a greater degree. This is a power grab by a government that has shown absolutely no willingness to take responsibility for the education of our children.

As far as the education system goes, this government has increased class sizes. Their superintendents, where they've taken control of school boards, have cut special needs classes. There's a Model Schools Program in Toronto,

the TDSB, and this government is cutting the Model Schools Program. This is a program for students in low-income schools to give them a bit of a heads-up, a bit of catch-up so that they can actually be successful. Superintendents are targeting students from low-income communities, from racialized communities, students with special needs.

Yet, the minister wants even more power to silence any opposition, to control and have everybody in the school boards operating like strings on a puppet. It's an absolutely outrageous attack on the democratic process that has been running our school boards since 1816. For over 200 years, we have been electing school board trustees to run our school boards. The reason that we have one of the most highly educated workforces in the world is because of our public and our Catholic schools in this province, and this government is destroying them in order to privatize them.

We will absolutely be voting against this section of the bill, and we will be voting against the bill in its entirety. I really hope that the members of the government side there will listen to the people who have come and deputed at this committee, they will listen to their constituents and they'll vote for the best interests of the students, which means voting down this bill.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Liberal amendment 38 is lost.

1440

We'll now go to government amendment 39. I recognize MPP Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: I move that subsection 12(2) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out subsection 230.3(11) of the Education Act and substituting the following:

“Regulations

“(11) The lieutenant general in council may make regulations prescribing circumstances for the purposes of paragraph 3 of subsection (1).”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Leardi—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Just stop there for a second. MPP Pang, can you—under “Regulations”—reread that, please?

Mr. Billy Pang: At (11)?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Yes, please.

Mr. Billy Pang: “The lieutenant general”—

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): The Lieutenant Governor.

Mr. Billy Pang: Sorry.

“The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations prescribing circumstances for the purposes of paragraph 3 of subsection (1).”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Thank you. Now, I'll go to MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: This is a regulation-making provision.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Government amendment 39 is carried.

We'll go to schedule 2, section 12, as amended. Any debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This amendment is revising sections that were just adopted in Bill 33 six months ago. This is what happens when governments don't allow bills to go to committee, to allow for scrutiny when government members behave like rubber stamps. A few months after you passed a bill, here you are, fixing your own legislation.

We didn't support this gross overreach by the minister in Bill 33, and we don't support it now.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please put your hand up. All those opposed, please put your hand up. Schedule 2, section 12, as amended, is carried.

We'll now go to schedule 2, section 13, government amendment 40. I recognize MPP Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Through you, I move that section 13 of schedule 2 to the bill be struck out and the following substituted:

“13. Section 230.4 of the act is repealed and the following substituted:

“No proceedings against board without leave of minister

“230.4(1) Subject to the regulations, after notice has been published in the Ontario Gazette under clause 230.3(3)(b),

“(a) no proceeding against the board shall be commenced or continued in any court without leave of the minister; and

“(b) no order of any court shall be enforced against the board without leave of the minister.

“Suspension of limitation period

“(2) Subject to subsection (3), where the commencement or continuance of any proceeding or the enforcement of a court order is prevented under this section,

“(a) the running of any limitation period relating to the proceeding or enforcement is suspended until the minister gives leave to commence or continue the proceedings or to enforce the court order, as the case may be; and

“(b) the person having the right to commence or continue the proceeding or to enforce the court order shall, immediately after the leave is given, have the same length of time within which to commence or continue the proceeding or enforce the court order, as the case may be, as the person had when the notice was published in the Ontario Gazette under clause 230.3(3)(b).

“Same

“(3) Subsection (2) does not apply unless application is made to the minister for leave to commence or continue the proceeding or to enforce the order within the relevant limitation period and the minister refuses to give the leave.

“Effect of order

“(4) Subsection (1) does not apply in relation to a board that is subject to an order under subsection 230.3(1)

after the minister makes an order of a type described in clause 230.5.1(2)(b) or (i) with respect to the board.

“Regulations

“(5) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations,

“(a) prescribing circumstances in which leave of the minister is not required under clause 230.4(1)(a) or (b);

“(b) providing that clause (1)(a) does not apply in respect of any proceeding against a board or that clause (1)(b) does not apply in respect of any order of a court against a board.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Here’s another highly technical amendment which preserves an existing authority that, as I said, already exists.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: The authority that this section is setting out or protecting is that the Minister of Education can say that nobody can continue or start a court case of any kind. Whether it’s a human rights, civil or employment case, these are scenarios where a board is under supervision of somebody appointed by the Minister of Education, who has sole power over all decisions being made by the board, with no accountability to the local community.

And what it means is that a supervisor could ignore a collective agreement, a supervisor could ignore employment legislation, a supervisor could ignore the human rights of your child. They could cut your child’s special education class placement, they can take away an EA from your child, they can fire hundreds of teachers within the board, they can close Indigenous and other equity programming in the board, and you cannot pursue any kind of court action, whether it’s a human rights case or whether it’s a case that the Occupational Health and Safety Act has been violated, unless the Minister of Education gives you permission to do that.

Nobody’s rights in the province of Ontario should depend on the permission of the Minister of Education to defend or pursue those rights, and that certainly shouldn’t be the case when the Minister of Education and the Minister of Education alone is choosing the person who is making the decision or undertaking these actions, and the person who is making these decisions or undertaking these actions is accountable solely to the Minister of Education. This is way too much unaccountable power, centralized in the hands of a single individual with no recourse for individuals.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I want to state again, there’s this preoccupation with ensuring that nobody is liable, that they’re protected. It’s hard to understand why there’s a preoccupation with this. Is the risk that great, that you had to put in legislation, and what is the risk? Can somebody answer that on the other side? Why? I’m trying to understand why we wouldn’t treat it—the way we treat it has worked for a

long time. Why would we not want to give people the opportunity—why would we want to take the opportunity for people to seek recourse through the courts away from them? I don’t think any of you would like that.

It’s pretty telling, when you start removing people’s right and access to their legal rights, to the law. You restrict information that you give to people or that they can ask for. And what it doesn’t do is fix the problems that are in our schools: class sizes that grew and are too big. Nothing—absolutely nothing.

There’s a preoccupation in this bill—also with this government—to avoid liability, to avoid being responsible for the decisions that are being made. It’s one thing to just avoid it upstairs in the chamber, and it’s one thing to avoid it in the media, but now we’re talking about avoiding it in the courts. Basically, making a law that says, “We can suspend the law when we want to.” Are we under martial law?

I know that we’ve got a few lawyers around the table here. I would like to hear somebody’s opinion on that—how they would see that from the other side or just a neutral side, how they would view that as someone who respects and is bound to uphold the law.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just feel like folks who are harmed won’t have access to justice.

In the case of Waterloo Catholic, if the courts had not been there, that trustee would not have been reinstated to her post. She would not be, again, allowed to be voting and participating in her role as she should have, had she not had the support of the courts to say she did not violate the code of conduct. So what recourse would she have had? It would have led to grave injustices.

I have worked with so many families where harm might have happened at a school and it’s—they’re looking for justice. They’re looking for accountability on harm that might have happened to their child. To deny people access to justice because it involves a school means we’re taking a huge section of our society away from accountability, justice. I don’t think that’s the kind of society we want to build, where some people have access to justice and other people don’t.

There is no guideline about what the minister would approve going to courts and what the minister wouldn’t approve going to courts. So I feel like this goes against some of the rights that people have in our society.

I don’t think we’re building trust with our community when people don’t have access to courts and justice. I think they’re an important part of a healthy democracy.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. I declare government amendment 40 carried.

Shall schedule 2, section 13, as amended, carry? Any debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour, please put your hand up. All those opposed? Schedule 2, section 13, as amended, has been carried.

We will now have a five-minute break. Come back at 3 o'clock.

The committee recessed from 1453 to 1500.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): We're back in session.

We will now go to schedule 2, section 14. Shall schedule 2, section 14, carry? Any debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 2, section 14, is passed and carried.

We'll now go to schedule 2, section 15, Liberal amendment 41. I recognize Mr. Cookie.

Mr. John Fraser: Mr.—what?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): MPP Fraser.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Cookie Monster.

Mr. John Fraser: No, it's not a cookie. I'm eating vegetables. Please, I want that noted for the Hansard: I'm eating vegetables.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I've been watching you. You've had two eclairs or something.

Mr. John Fraser: No, I had two croissants. Oh, my gosh. It's the diet police; there we go. Okay, I'm being watched. Thank you very much, Chair, for your comments on my dietary habits.

I move that subsection 15(1) of schedule 2 to the bill be struck out and the following substituted:

“(1) Subsection 230.15(2) of the act is repealed and the following substituted:

““Appointment of minister

“(2) Where a board is subject to an order under subsection 230.3(1), the minister may appoint a person, who may be an officer or employee of the board, to exercise the powers and perform the duties of the board that the minister may provide, and the person so appointed shall be paid the salary and allowed the expenses that the minister may determine.””

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Go ahead.

Mr. John Fraser: It's all good? I didn't miss any words?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): No.

Mr. John Fraser: Good.

So, just simply, it changes section 15(1) so that it does not revoke subsection 230.15, which says the board must set a supervisor salary in consultation with the board.

The reason that this is important is, first of all, we learned the salaries are in the range of \$350,000 to \$400,000, and there's a variety of ways that people are being paid, that people are working. The most common qualification is generally they're accountants, CPAs—no offence to any accountants in the room—with no educational experience, and they're someone that's connected to the government, that's a Conservative Party insider. So I think if you want the board, which is essentially the people in the neighbourhood, to pay a supervisor, it would be good to be talking to them about it so there's some clarity.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All in favour, please raise your hand. All opposed, please raise your hand. Schedule 2, section 15, Liberal amendment 41, has been lost.

We'll now go to Liberal amendment 42.

Mr. John Fraser: I move that section 15 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(1.1) Section 230.15 of the act is amended by adding the following subsection:

““Publication of salaries and expenses paid

“(4.1) All salaries, fees, remuneration and expenses paid under subsection (4) must be published on a government of Ontario website on the first day of each month in which an order made under subsection 230.3(1) is in force.””

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: So it's just transparency. We all publish our expenses every month—ministers do; Premiers do. I think it's reasonable. I think it's fair. I think—

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Debate? Were you finished, John?

Mr. John Fraser: No, I'm done.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: So we just learned recently, when the sunshine list was published, that some of the minister's supervisors are doing an end-run around public transparency by billing through private companies as consultants, which means that their salaries are not showing up on the sunshine list.

I think that the people of Ontario deserve to know what we are paying people who are receiving taxpayer money, particularly when those taxpayer dollars are coming out of our kids' classrooms—not just out of the provincial revenue generally, but out of a school board's budget. So every dollar that a supervisor receives is one dollar less that's being spent on EAs for our kids, for pencils and books in the classroom, for clean and safe schools. I think that's basic transparency and accountability that people deserve.

We also know that the Minister of Education is giving himself the power to severely cap expenses for trustees who are publicly elected. Then, because there's, you know, “one rule for thee, another rule for me,” we should at the very least know what supervisors are billing for expenses and what taxpayers are paying, especially as, again, the money is coming out of our kids' classrooms.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Yes. I think we want to uphold values of truth and transparency. People are really feeling it. They're having a hard time paying for a roof and food. And so they want to be represented well and they want their tax dollars to be used well, because life is so expensive.

I think it's a way to build trust with the public. When tax dollars are being misused and they're not being used for education, people lose faith in government.

We've created a two-tier system—a system that divides PC insiders and how they're treated; it's not a merit-based appointment process. We heard a lot, in the fall, about merit-based ways of assessing people. These appointments are not merit-based. They are based on people with

affiliations to the party, maybe those who maxed-out their PC donations.

So I would like to see, moving forward, that we create a bit of fairness and transparency. I'm glad the member put this forward so that the public can really know how we're spending their tax dollars, and they can decide if that's a good use of money or not.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Liberal amendment 42 is lost.

We'll now go to Liberal amendment 43. I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I move that subsection 15(2) of schedule 2 to the bill be struck out.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: This essentially removes the section which mandates the board pay all the supervisors' legal fees.

I just think, if the minister wants to appoint somebody, then it's their responsibility to pay the legal fees. I think that's only fair. I'm surprised that we have to take this out of the section. If the minister wants to be responsible for education and the decisions that he makes, then, if he makes the decision to put somebody in somewhere and they get into a situation that requires a court action or some sort of legal action, the minister should be responsible for it.

I want to clarify something that I said earlier, because I just want to make sure that any accountants in the room or listening at home won't be offended: What I did say is that most of them are CPAs or have accountancy, but most of them don't actually have any educational experience. Our schools are more than just counting beans.

1510

If you were going to go and take over a GM plant, you would not send a CPA in who didn't have experience in building cars or auto plants. If you did send them in and they didn't have experience, you would send some other people with them to make sure that they understood the organization and the mandate of the organization that they were supervising. That's why the amendment's here.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm going to be supporting this amendment because, in addition to the fact that I find it unacceptable that the government would require a board to cover all of the costs of a supervisor who may be facing a civil, administrative, investigative or other proceeding which they would be involved in as a result of their actions in that role, the list includes "criminal," and I don't think we should ever require school boards to be paying legal fees for criminal investigations or trials of a supervisor who is making decisions regarding our children's education.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? Please raise your hand, all in favour. All opposed, please raise your hand. Liberal amendment 43 is lost.

Shall schedule 2, section 15, carry? Any debate? MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm going to be opposing this section, Chair, because I think it's completely inappropriate that the minister is setting arbitrary salaries that Conservative insiders, donors, former MPPs, former candidates, former staffers are receiving, particularly as these funds are coming out of our children's classrooms when our children already don't have resources or qualified staff who are supporting them and their school buildings are not always safe and healthy. But also, in addition, no dollars should be coming out of our school boards that are intended for our children's education to go to pay the legal fees of a supervisor, particularly if that supervisor is facing a criminal investigation or criminal charges.

Funds that come from Ontario taxpayers to pay for our children's education should be going directly to pay for supports for our children to provide the highest-quality education, not to provide great salaries and benefits for failed Conservative candidates and staffers looking for a soft landing and certainly not to protect them from the consequences of their own actions.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed? Schedule 2, section 15, has carried.

We'll now go to schedule 2, section 16, government amendment number 44. I'll recognize MPP Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Chair. Through you, I move that section 16 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out "minister" in subsection 230.15.1(1) of the Education Act and substituting "member of the executive council."

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The minister is a member of the executive council, so that's the way it should read.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This section of the bill, Chair, once again provides sweeping liability provisions for the government, which the civil liberties association has called "some of the most aggressive liability-shielding provisions seen in Ontario legislation in recent memory." It says that these arrangements are "fundamentally incompatible with the rule of law's requirement that government be answerable for its actions. Bill 101's liability provisions come dangerously close to insulating provincial decision-making from all meaningful legal accountability."

This should not be happening in a democracy. Citizens should be able to expect that our decision-makers are accountable to us and that it is in particular the people who are making the decisions who are accountable. We don't support the provision as it is, and we are certainly not going to support an amendment that expands the liability protections of this bill even further.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All

those opposed, please raise your hand. Government amendment 44 is carried.

Government amendment number 45. I recognize MPP Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: I move that section 16 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out section 230.15.1(4) of the Education Act and substituting the following:

“Proceedings barred

“(4) No proceedings shall be commenced against any individual specified in subsection (1) in respect of matter referred to in that subsection.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Can you reread the first line, please?

Mr. Billy Pang: Sorry?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): The first line: “I move”—

Mr. Billy Pang: I move that section 16 of schedule 2 to the bill is amended—

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Be amended.

Mr. Billy Pang: —be amended—sorry—by striking out subsection 230.15.1(4) of the Education Act and substituting the following:

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: This is a technical drafting amendment that makes cross-referencing accurate with the remainder of the bill.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Government amendment 45 is carried.

Government amendment 46: I recognize MPP Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I move that section 16 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out “or employee” in the portion before clause 230.15.2(1)(a) of the Education Act and substituting “deputy minister, employee”.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: This amendment adds the words “deputy minister.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: The Canadian Civil Liberties Association has already said that this bill contains some of the most aggressive liability-shielding provisions seen in Ontario legislation in recent memory and that it’s fundamentally incompatible with the rule of law’s requirement that government be answerable for its actions and that the people who are making the decisions are ultimately accountable for the decision.

Therefore, we don’t support any attempt to expand the number of people who are shielded by the already sweeping liability provisions in this bill.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Government amendment 46 is carried.

Shall schedule 2, section 16, as amended, carry? Any debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Once again, when people are looking to exercise power with zero accountability for it, that’s what we would call a dictatorship. That’s not what we want to have in Ontario. It’s certainly not what we want to have in our education system or what we expect from the people who are making decisions about our children’s education, their well-being and their futures.

We can’t support any attempt to remove consequences for actions or insulate provincial decision-makers from all meaningful legal accountability.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think we all want to live in a province where we value the rule of law and that nobody is above the law. The amount of people in this place and in this legislation that are now above the law is alarming.

I’ve worked in schools, and I want the adults in those schools to be held accountable if harm is done. If you can think about the last century of what’s happened in our schools, it’s important that we have truth and we have reconciliation, that we have accountability and that everybody has to face justice if they’ve broken the law.

The problem is that I think this government doesn’t want to answer for their mistakes. I see them not measuring twice and cutting once. We see legislation being rushed through. We see people being put in place in position of power with very little qualifications. We see this happening in the United States where people are in charge of ministries and jurisdictions with no qualifications for that.

If we’re going to run things this way, there has to be accountability, and I don’t think anybody should be shielded from justice. I think it will be shocking and alarming to the public to hear about what’s going on in terms of people being above the law.

I won’t support this amendment.

1520

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Schedule 2, section 16, as amended, has carried.

We’ll go now to schedule 2, section 17. Shall schedule 2, section 17, carry?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Debate?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Debate? Go ahead.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you, Chair.

This section gives the minister the power to create regulations that basically bypass the usual legislative process for boards that are under supervision. It says that the minister can set aside provisions of the Education Act for those boards. It also allows the minister to make any such regulations retroactive, and that just begs the question, why don’t we just abolish the Legislature and make the minister the emperor of education? Then he doesn’t have to deal with all the niceties of coming for legislative approval and rubber stamps by government members.

There are also serious concerns about what happens when you implement retroactive regulations, because it means that people are making decisions without knowing

what the consequences or regulatory framework will be. People should know what rules they're operating under when they are making decisions, without risking a scenario in which the ground underneath their feet might shift and they might be held accountable for breaking rules that they didn't even know existed.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think it just expands the inequity in our province, where processes apply to some school boards but not others and putting boards under supervision at a further disadvantage for having checks and balances.

I don't think that's a good way for us to govern the province, to have a two-tiered system where some people are taken over, possibly indefinitely. They don't know why. They don't know how to get out of that supervision and now the rules don't apply. It just doesn't seem fair, and I think we can do better. So I won't support this amendment.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please put your hand up. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Schedule 2, section 17, has carried.

We'll now go to schedule 2, section 18, government amendment 47. I recognize MPP Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Chair, and through you: I move that subsection 18(2) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out subsections 232(5.1) and (5.2) of the Education Act and substituting the following:

“Same minister’s approval of estimates

“(5.1) A board is required to obtain the minister’s approval of its estimates in the prescribed circumstances and, if such approval is required, the estimates approved by the minister are deemed to have been approved by the board for the purposes of this section unless otherwise specified by regulation.

“Same

“(5.2) The minister’s approval of a board’s estimates may be subject to any conditions that, in the minister’s opinion, are necessary or desirable, and the minister may require the board to comply with the conditions.

“Same

“(5.3) The minister may not approve a board’s estimates under subsection (5.1) if the approval would result in the board being non-compliant with subsections (3) and (4).

“Same

“(5.4) For greater certainty, an approval of a board’s estimates under subsection (5.1) does not constitute an approval of an in-year deficit as described in subsection (5) or vice versa.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): The fourth paragraph, (5.3)—can you reread that, please?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Yes.

“The minister may not approve a board’s estimates under subsection”—

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Excuse me, MPP Coe. That’s not what we have written here. Can you check that again, please?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Okay. I am. That’s what I have here. Under “Same”?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Under “Same”—(5.3).

Mr. Lorne Coe: Let me read it again.

“Same

“(5.3) The minister may not approve”—

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): There’s no “not” in the one we have.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Okay, well I have a “not” in here. I’ll take it out.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Just a second.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): We’re going to recess for five minutes.

The committee recessed from 1525 to 1531.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): We’re back in session. Government amendment 47: subsection 18(2), schedule 2. I recognize MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I move that subsection 18(2) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out subsections 232(5.1) and (5.2) of the Education Act and substituting the following:

“Same minister’s approval of estimates

“(5.1) A board is required to obtain the minister’s approval of its estimates in the prescribed circumstances and, if such approval is required, the estimates approved by the minister are deemed to have been approved by the board for the purposes of this section unless otherwise specified by regulation.

“Same

“(5.2) The minister’s approval of a board’s estimates may be subject to any conditions that, in the minister’s opinion, are necessary or desirable, and the minister may require the board to comply with the conditions.

“Same

“(5.3) The minister may approve a board’s estimate under subsection (5.1) only if it would result in the board being in compliance with subsections (3) and (4).

“Same

“(5.4) For greater certainty, an approval of a board’s estimates under subsection (5.1) does not constitute an approval of an in-year deficit as described in subsection (5) or vice versa.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This section of the bill is giving the minister the power to set rules and parameters for board budgets and require a board to obtain the minister’s approval for its budget. I already find this pretty problematic because it’s the Minister of Education who provides core education funding, and he is providing funding knowing that it is not sufficient for the areas that boards are required to pay, whether it’s that they’re required to pay under programs of the Ministry of Education or directives in the Ministry of Education or whether it’s statutory payments like CPP and EI. The minister knows that there are shortfalls, for example, in covering CPP and EI costs, but he’s not providing the funding to fully cover those costs.

So it's problematic if the minister is then giving himself the power to set additional parameters for budgets with no requirement that the minister properly fund budgets, or whatever requirements he's setting forth.

This amendment is actually expanding the power of the minister with regard to board budgets, with, as the minister said on Monday, no additional funding coming to education.

We don't support any expansion of the minister's power with regard to school board budgets.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think this amendment kind of highlights where things are going wrong. My kids know that our tax dollars are used to fund education, and right now, the way we're funding education isn't fair. The boards have to pay for CPP. They have to do it. They should be filling in sick days, and sometimes they don't to save money and balance our budget. And the impacts of not filling in sick days, I can't even describe. I think we all need to spend a day in a school where sick days aren't getting filled and see how well it's going, because this is the care of our kids.

I studied business, and we did not study education, and so the impact of education cuts to try to balance a budget wasn't described in my business courses. We weren't talking about a lot of things. I would bring up, "Well, what about the environment? What about labour laws?" And they would say to me, "Sorry, we don't have time to talk about that today because we're just doing the math." And I really want to be living in a province where kids' learning comes first. These in-year deficits arise because the government is not paying their bills. Again, they don't pay for any repairs to administrative buildings. If you have a flood or a leak or an aging administrative building: "Sorry, you're out of luck. I hope you can sell some more cookies." I think it's problematic.

I get that the minister wants to have more power over these things. He seems drunk on power. He seems to want as much power as he can possibly have, but he doesn't want to do his own math and pay his own bills, and that's where the problem lies. And so the funding does come from our kids' education. It comes from the reading recovery programs. It comes from kids getting support, those who have disabilities, because the government isn't paying their bills.

I urge you all to look into this: Boards who filled sick days are in deficit positions, okay? And we don't fill sick days for EAs, ECEs, CYWs almost universally. Social workers, not at all, and we're the ones responding when there's something like Tumbler Ridge. We're the ones who are responding, and we don't get filled in for our sick days. That's because people are trying to fill the budgets or trying to balance the books.

So I don't think the government's opinion will help us out in this matter. I wish the government would just pay their bills, especially on things that are required by school boards, such as sick days and CPP. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: As I said earlier this morning, it's eight years later and we have this state of education where the minister is saying, "I need to take control of everything." But the truth of the matter is he has had the ability all along to influence decisions, to supervise, to manage, to work with people. He doesn't need additional powers, and this is a massive overreach.

There are 72 school boards in Ontario. There are 5,000 schools. There are two million students. Ontario is a huge place. You can't control all that from a corner office in downtown Toronto, and eventually, it will come back to haunt the government. It will. The challenge is, in between now and then, students are still going to have class sizes that are too big, special education students are still not going to have what they need, and the mental health crisis—that the minister has acknowledged here in this room—will not be addressed.

Thank you. I'll be voting against.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: My understanding is that this section of the bill actually gives the minister the power to set rules and parameters for board budgets and requires the board to get the minister's approval for its budget. That's the power that he wants to have: total control over every school board's budget.

So then the question is, well, what kind of responsibility does he have? The minister has the responsibility to fund the budget, to actually provide funding, but he doesn't. The minister, this ministry, this Ford Conservative government, does not provide adequate funding for special needs. Even something as simple as employment insurance and CPP payments, the government is responsible—this is a federal government requirement, and this government doesn't provide school boards enough to make those EI and CPP payments. And so that has to come out of the classroom. That money comes out of the classroom.

The ministry is saying, "Hey, you're going to have to do the budget exactly the way we say, but we're not actually going to fund the required components of the budget; you're going to have to cut that out of other parts of the classroom." And in the other section that we just debated, the ministry's saying, "If this really harms a child and they're not getting the education they need, then you can't sue the ministry for their negligence."

1540

It's just such an atrocious power grab. That the government would even want to seize this kind of power shows that they have no concern, that they are deliberately going to undermine our schools, that they are deliberately going to deprive children of education. We already see them cutting programs for special needs students, for students in low-income communities. They are just shielding themselves from liability, but on the other hand, taking this dictatorial control over everything about our schools. It's an absolutely appalling, appalling attack on our public education system.

These Conservative members are here today, and they refuse to speak and they refuse to do anything but raise their hand when they're told to raise their hand. You are harming the children of this province. These decisions that you are voting for, this policy—

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): MPP Glover, could you stick to the subject.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay.

You are going to be responsible for the harm that comes out of this. I hope at some point you'll actually stand up for the students of this province and say to your Conservative caucus, this bill is appalling. What you're doing to our children in schools is appalling. What you're doing to our children is appalling. Tell your caucus to back off.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: The way I see this amendment, the government actually expands the minister's power over boards' budgets even further. So now, instead of some cases where the board requires the minister's approval for their estimates, the minister can go further and require that certain changes are made and then pass the estimates himself. That amounts to full control of the board's finances.

I would also note that this section actually extends to Catholic and French boards. So while the regulation might or might not exclude French boards, this statute empowers the minister to violate constitutional minority language rights.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. Government amendment 47 is carried.

We will now go to NDP amendment 48. I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I move that subsection 18(2) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection to section 232 of the Education Act:

“Same

“(5.3) The minister shall not give an approval under subsection (5.1) unless the minister has determined that the approval will not negatively impact the accessibility of any facility of the board to students, staff and other members of the community.”

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Please go ahead.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This amendment would ensure that any decisions that the minister is making regarding budgeting would have to take into account accessibility. We've already spoken a lot about how the government is not compliant with the AODA. There are many areas of board budgets where the government is massively failing children with disabilities, including, quite simply, just the right of these kids to be at school, let alone to have a meaningful, safe and supported education.

There should not be any power granted to the Minister of Education to approve board budgets that is not accompanied by a legal requirement for the Minister of Education to actually and finally respect the rights of every child in the province, regardless of whether or not they have a

disability, to receive a meaningful and equitable high-quality education in the province of Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. NDP amendment 48 is lost.

We shall now go to schedule 2, section 18, as amended. Shall it carry? I'll ask anyone if they want to debate it, and I'll go to MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: In addition to the concerns that I've already raised about the Minister of Education having the power to set parameters for board budgets and approve board budgets when the minister is so egregiously and deliberately underfunding education himself, I also want to note that the minister has publicly said on several occasions that he will be exercising this power—which, he actually has much broader power to exercise. But he has said he will be using this power to approve board budgets in cases where the trustees are refusing to approve the unelected, unaccountable CEO's budget, which means that the minister will be using this power to overrule the people that parents and citizens are selecting to represent ourselves, to bring our voices to the board table. He will be overruling those people who represent community voices on budgets, preventing us from being able to have a say in budget decisions and preventing us from being able to hold those who are making budget decisions accountable.

Therefore, we will be voting against this section of the bill.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I know that the minister is taking over or collecting or accruing or growing his power. I've heard him say that if the funding formula is flawed, that he will fix it. I hope that, in his efforts, in his exploration of the finances of the Ministry of Education, he will talk to ed workers, families and people in leadership positions who understand the finances of the board so we can really zero down. Because, right now, it's kind of a universal blanket; it doesn't take into consideration the complexities of needs that kids have right now.

There's no extra money if you happen to have a board which has kids with greater needs and complex disabilities, for example. And so, it really kind of shortcuts the moment, because we're at a moment where kids really are struggling with their mental health. You just have to turn on the news and hear about gambling addiction, pornography addiction, human trafficking, kids with social anxiety. We've seen a major spike in suicidality, depression etc. at very young age.

None of that is accounted for in our current funding formula, so I oppose this minister's ongoing pursuit of additional powers. But I will hope that, if he is serious about fixing the finances at the ministry, he will really consider the funding formula, ensure it requires everything that's required and also meet the moment of the needs of our kids, because they need more resources now.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand.

All those opposed, please raise your hand. Schedule 2, section 18, as amended, has carried.

We'll now go to schedule 2, section 19: Liberal amendment 49, and I will go to MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I move that section 19 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out “a board” in clause 233(3)(d) of the Education Act and substituting “an English-language public district school board”.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Go ahead.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I'm done reading it.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Sorry. Further debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: Section 19 gives the ministry the right or power to prohibit a board for using revenue for certain purposes. The partial control over their finances would infringe on the meaningful control required by minority education rights. This amendment would exempt Catholic and francophone school boards from these regulations.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All these opposed, please raise your hand. I declare Liberal amendment 49 lost.

Shall schedule 2, section 19, carry? Debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: One of the powers that our democratically elected trustees have is to pass budgets that reflect local needs and priorities. That includes measures to respond to particular needs that are being experienced within the local community. We know that not all of Ontario is the same, not every student in Ontario is the same and, therefore, that we need to take into account regional, linguistic, cultural, ethnic differences in our students and in our communities.

What this measure does is it allows the Minister of Education to restrict how boards are allowed to use the funds that they are given in their budgets, which means that the Minister of Education is allowed to prevent our democratically elected local trustees from responding to community concerns. It could mean that certain concerns and issues are just simply not addressed.

1550

I don't believe that the minister in downtown Toronto should have the power to overrule democratically elected community voices that are responding to local needs and concerns for literally any reason that he feels like.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Clancy.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think the public should be concerned that we don't always know what's going on. Often-times, legislation comes forward and it says, “in the regulation, in the regulation, in the regulation,” and there isn't really the same process for flushing things out—the details in a regulation. It means that the public doesn't really understand the impact or they don't know the scope of what's going to actually happen.

I have to echo my colleagues and say that I think we see too much happening in downtown Toronto that impacts the whole province, which is very mixed and very diverse.

So we can't paint everything with the same brush. And that's kind of what's happening when one person who lives in the GTA has this immense amount of power over the localized decision-making.

So I won't support this amendment.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? Schedule 2, section 19, is carried.

Schedule 2, section 20: There are no amendments. Shall schedule 2, section 20, carry? Any debate? Are members ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 2, section 21: Shall schedule 2, section 21, carry? Any debate? Ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? Schedule 2, section 21, carries.

Shall schedule 2, section 22, carry? Any debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I just want to flag again concerns that parents of Black children have raised about how private data is being used, particularly to surveil students or to stream them.

The government, before expanding any use of student private data, should be consulting with parents and the privacy commissioner, particularly with regard to tracking even more data.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All in favour, please put your hand up. All opposed, please put your hand up. Schedule 2, section 22, carries.

Schedule 2, section 23, Liberal amendment 50: I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I move that section 23 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out “unless the board has obtained the prior written approval of the minister” in subsection 280(2) of the Education Act and substituting “without cause”.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: Section 23 stipulates that the board can only fire the CEO if they have ministry approval; the government argues that it's to protect them from retaliation over budget disagreements.

This amendment would protect CEOs from being fired without cause, without stripping the power from school boards, so I ask my colleagues to support it.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? I declare it lost.

Shall schedule 2, section 23, carry? Any debate? Are members ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? Schedule 2, section 23, is carried.

We'll now go to schedule 2, section 24, Liberal amendment 51. I recognize MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I move that section 24 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out “The director of education of an English-language district school board” in subsection 283.0.1(3) of the Education Act and substituting “An English-language district school board”.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? I recognize MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: This amendment simply puts the hiring of the CEO back in the board's control.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? I declare Liberal amendment 51 lost.

Government amendment 52: I recognize MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I move that section 24 of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out subsections 283.0.1(3) to (6) of the Education Act.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Debate? Are members ready to vote? All in—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Go ahead.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: This deals with the commencement date of the chief executive officer changes.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: We don't support the provisions by the government to change how school boards are governed, putting people with no education experience in charge, giving them power over the budget, hiring and operations, particularly as the budget and hiring is what determines how education is delivered in a board. Therefore, somebody with education experience who's accountable to the public through democratically elected trustees should be the one making all of the decisions.

Therefore, we're not going to support anything that messes around with it, even if it's the coming into force, because it's a bad change. It shouldn't be implemented at all.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Further debate? Are members ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? Government amendment 52 is carried.

Shall schedule 2, section 24, as amended, carry? Any debate? Are members ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? Schedule 2, section 24, as amended, carried.

Section 24.1: Government amendment 53. I recognize MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I move that section 24.1 be added to schedule 2 to the bill:

"24.1 The act is amended by adding the following section:

"Chief education officer

"283.0.1.1(1) The director of education of an English-language district school board shall appoint an employee of the board as the chief education officer of the board.

"Same

"(2) The director of education may be appointed under subsection (1) as the chief education officer of a board.

"Qualifications

"(3) A person shall not be appointed as the chief education officer under subsection (1) unless the person is a member of the Ontario College of Teachers or has equivalent qualifications as may be prescribed by regulation, and meets any other qualifications as may be prescribed by regulation.

"Regulations

"(4) The minister may make regulations,

"(a) prescribing the powers, duties, responsibilities and qualifications of chief education officers in English-language district school boards;

"(b) governing performance appraisals of chief education officers, including the frequency and timing of appraisals and the standards, methods, processes, timelines and steps to be followed and the input and material to be taken into account when conducting the appraisals."

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I am just curious: Would any member of the opposition meet this definition? Would any member of the opposition here today qualify under these conditions?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Debate? I recognize MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I don't believe any of us here is running to be a director of education or chief education officer. However, we do represent the voices of our constituents and of people across Ontario, all of whom are saying that the people making decisions in our schools should be people with educational experience and that the CFO, the person making budget and hiring decisions, should be responsive to a director of education with educational experience and not the other way around. So we do not support this amendment.

1600

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Committee members, pursuant to the order of the House dated April 21, 2026, I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections and proposed amendments to Bill 101.

If requested by a member at this time, a waiting period up to 20 minutes will be permitted. Thoughts?

Mr. John Fraser: Sorry, what was the question?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): If requested by a member at this time, a waiting period of up to 20 minutes will be permitted. So you get a 20-minute break.

Committee members will know that, from this point forward, those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved. I will take the vote on them consecutively. Are members ready to vote? Okay.

Let's finish off with section 24.1, government amendment. Are members ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? I declare it carried.

Government amendment 54, section 25 of schedule 2: Are members ready to vote? In favour? Opposed? I declare it carried.

Liberal amendment 55: Are members ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? I declare it lost.

Shall schedule 2, section 25, as amended, carry? All in favour? All opposed? It is carried.

Schedule 2, section 26, Liberal amendment 56: Ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): It's lost. Shall schedule 2, section 26—

Mr. Chris Glover: Just check the record.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Oh, I think I would go back in time.

Shall schedule 2, section 26, carry? Ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 2, section 27, Liberal amendment 57: Ready to vote? All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Liberal amendment 58: The motion is out of order. As Janse and LeBlanc note on page 651 of the fourth edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, “an amendment which would render a clause unintelligible or ungrammatical is also out of order.”

Shall schedule 2, section 27, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 2, section 28: There are no amendments. Shall schedule 2, section 28, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 2, section 29: no amendments. Shall schedule 2, section 29, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Liberal amendment 59—did I miss one?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I feel like she’s a schoolteacher. She does an excellent job.

Schedule 2, section 30: no amendments. Shall schedule 2, section 30, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 2, section 31, Liberal amendment 59: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Liberal amendment 60: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Liberal amendment 61: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Liberal amendment 62: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Shall schedule 2, section 31, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 2, section 32, no amendments. Shall schedule 2, section 32, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 2, section 33, NDP amendment 63: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Government amendment 64: All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Government amendment 65: All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Shall schedule 2, section 33, as amended, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Shall schedule 2, as amended, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

There are no amendments to schedule 3. I therefore propose that we bundle sections 1 to 9. Is there any agreement on that?

Shall schedule 3, sections 1 to 9, inclusive, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Shall schedule 3 carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 4, section 1, Liberal amendment 64: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Liberal amendment 67: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Shall schedule 4, section 1, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Shall schedule 4, section 2, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Shall schedule 4 carry?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: On a point of order?

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Yes?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Chair, can you clarify, when we voted on 66, did you say 66 or did you say 64?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: He said 64.

Mr. Chris Glover: He said 64.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Then I’ll reread 66. Is there unanimous consent that we go back to 66? Okay.

Liberal amendment 66: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Shall schedule 4 carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

There are no amendments to sections 1 to 5 of schedule 5. I therefore propose that we bundle sections 1 to 5. Is there agreement? Are members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 5, sections 1 to 5, inclusive, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

1610

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Point of order: I don’t think we did Liberal amendment 67 on schedule 4.

Interjections.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: We did? Okay. I’m just flaking out.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): All right.

Schedule 5, section 6, Liberal amendment 68: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

NDP amendment 69: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Shall schedule 5, section 6, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 5, section 7: There are no amendments. Shall schedule 5, section 7, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 5, section 8: There are no amendments. Shall schedule 5, section 8, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 5, section 9: no amendment. Shall schedule 5, section 9, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 5, section 10, Liberal amendment 70: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Shall schedule 5, section 10, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 5, section 11: There are no amendments. Shall schedule 5, section 11, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 5, section 12, Liberal amendment number 71: All in favour?

Mr. Chris Glover: NDP amendment 71.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Oh, this one’s not my fault. If you can see, it says “Liberal.”

NDP amendment number 71: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Liberal amendment 72: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Liberal amendment 73: All in favour? All opposed? Lost.

Shall schedule 5, section 12, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 5, section 13: There are no amendments. Shall schedule 5, section 13, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 5, section 14: There are no amendments. Shall schedule 5, section 14, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Schedule 5, section 15: no amendments. Shall schedule 5, section 15, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Shall schedule 5 carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Bill 101, section 1, contents of this act: Shall section 1 carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Section 2, commencement: All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Shall section 3 carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Bill 101, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care: Shall the title of the bill carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Shall Bill 101, as amended, carry? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

Shall I report the bill, as amended, to the House? All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

This meeting is now adjourned. Thank you very much for being here today. It was a long day.

The committee adjourned at 1615.

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