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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 30 May 2000

Mardi 30 mai 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 30 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 30 mai 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ
EN ÉDUCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 17, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 74, An Act to amend the Education Act to increase education quality, to improve the accountability of school boards to students, parents and taxpayers and to enhance students' school experience / *Projet de loi 74, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation pour rehausser la qualité de l'éducation, accroître la responsabilité des conseils scolaires devant les élèves, les parents et les contribuables et enrichir l'expérience scolaire des élèves.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): I believe the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke had just finished speaking, so it's comments and questions.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): In response to the speech that was finished the other day by the member from Renfrew, I've got to say I agree entirely with one part of the discussion he had—I went back and read the Hansard because I knew I would be here this evening and would have an opportunity to respond—and that is, why is the government all of a sudden deciding that it's going to move forward and try to force, by way of legislation, what teachers have been doing for a long time by way of volunteering? It's absolutely silly.

This afternoon, the member will be interested to know, I had an opportunity to speak to students from the J.R. Nakogee School out of Attawapiskat. They were here visiting our Legislative Assembly as a result of the Ontario Young Travellers program that you know about well, Mr Speaker, as you have students from Sault Ste Marie as I do from Timmins-James Bay, who come down to visit. They said, "Mr Bisson, what is it we're debating today in the Legislature?" I explained that we were debating Bill 74, and they said, "What is it?" I said, "Bill 74 is all about trying to get teachers, by way of legislation, to be forced to do what they're already doing by way of volunteering." The children laughed. I think that is a response we should give to this legislation. It's absolutely ridiculous.

Why is the government deciding to do this? It's because they've decided, for political reasons, that they want to get into this whole politics of bashing teachers. The Tories figure, for whatever reason—I disagree—that it's good politics and that there are good ideas as far as advancing their political opportunities are concerned by going out and banging up on teachers and trying to pretend that the teachers are not working hard, that they're not doing the things they've got to do in our system. I say shame to a government that takes a position like that.

I think the comments the member from Renfrew made the other day on that point were perfectly valid, and I will speak to it more a little bit later.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): As usual, the member from Renfrew is always extremely eloquent in his comments. Frankly, even though many times I disagree with him, I enjoy listening to him and I have a great deal of respect for his thoughtful comments. However, particularly with what he has said on Bill 74, I think that as the husband of a high school teacher and as an individual most of whose friends are all teachers in the system—

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Still?

Mr Spina: Yes, still. You know, we may disagree on issues, but at least it doesn't harm our friendship.

What we have to keep in mind is that many of the boards, many of the teachers are extremely dedicated individuals. Frankly, there are a lot of people in the system who are already doing this. However, there are people who disagree, who want to make a point of it, who want to make a challenge out of things. In that case, let me say that this government is up to the challenge. We want to do what is best for the students of this province. I know we only want what the teachers want, and that is to do a good job for the children of our province.

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I want to congratulate my colleague from Renfrew for the great speech he made. I just want to say a few things about the education system. I went through it myself, my children went through the system, and my grandchildren. Right now the teachers and the staff are finding it harder than ever before. Just last weekend they were moving stages from one location to another. The teachers were volunteering their time on a Saturday to raise funds because they were short of different materials in the classroom.

We're going to order those teachers to volunteer more of their time? They volunteer after school, they volunteer before school and they volunteer on Saturdays and weekends. We've got a lot of excellent teachers in our part of Ontario and I know they do what is good for our families and our children.

I don't like to see the confrontations that may happen over this bill. If we ever needed a place for our students—it's different now than it used to be. A lot of them come from broken homes and they depend on their teachers so much to look after them, and they confide in them. Some of them don't have everything they need at home. I know the teachers are doing their best. They have large classes. The government should work with them and not have any more confrontations with the teachers because, after all, when you have that, it's only the students who suffer. I'm proud of the teachers. They do a great job. I know that if we have too much confrontation we'll be short of teachers.

Mr Christopherson: I would like to commend the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. Anyone who had an opportunity to watch the House earlier today—I would go so far as to say even government members, in a non-partisan way—would have to acknowledge the talent and experience this member brings every time he stands, and speaking to this bill is absolutely no different.

I think it says volumes about this government when we hear the government defending this by saying, "The vast majority of teachers are doing this and we're passing this legislation to go after the few bad apples that exist in every barrel." What nonsense. I sometimes wonder where the backbenchers in particular get the gall to stand up and offer up these arguments and keep a straight face.

Your track record around teachers is pathetic. It has been one attack after another. You only need to cast your mind back to a few years ago to remember that there were 120,000 teachers, virtually 100%—notionally, nominally, a couple of points below—of the teachers, 120,000 of the least militant workers in our society, who were out on the streets protesting what you were doing. That's just one example.

We've got teachers now who are so stressed out and demoralized that I have family docs saying to me in Hamilton, unprompted by me, that they've never had so many teachers who are their patients off on stress leave, on long-term disability. This is what their own doctors are saying about what you're doing to this profession.

Later on we'll get a chance to talk about the fact that you've now tabled a motion that's going to strangle debate yet again.

The Acting Speaker: Two-minute response.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I thank my colleagues for their comments. I really have very serious concerns about Bill 74, and I have more concerns tonight than I did 10 days ago when I made my remarks on second reading. I want to be clear: I intend to vote against this bill and I intend to work against this bill, because in my view its faults are many.

It represents a massive centralization of power to the government of Ontario. It has draconian powers that throw all measure of fairness out the window. I can't believe that my friends opposite really want to endorse a piece of government legislation that gives so much power to one side in the equation. The collective bargaining sanctions and balances and provisions that would normally be in place in a modern, progressive society are thrown out the window by Bill 74. It's unfair, it's unbalanced: draconian powers to the Ontario Ministry of Education and to the provincial cabinet, and a complete evisceration of local school boards in places like Renfrew and Simcoe and all the other communities across the province. It continues this systematic attack on the teaching profession, by Mike Harris especially, and by his government.

I met the other day in the city of Pembroke with a group of teachers from all across the county of Renfrew. They were as dispirited and demoralized as I've ever seen them. They know there are problems. They know there have to be adjustments. They look at Bill 74 and say, "Is this all we can expect from our provincial government?"

I had today in the mail two letters: one from Marion Neill in Arnprior and another from Norma Quinn at RR4, Cobden. They say to me: "We're fed up being attacked by our government. We want some respect."

They deserve respect, because as my friend from Cornwall said, "We are now embarking on a time when the teaching profession is going to be more, not less, important and teachers are going to be in increasingly short supply."

At best, Bill 74 will be a pyrrhic victory. Mr Harris, you're going to regret this because the unintended consequences of this policy will come back to hurt you.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: Extremely good comments by the member from Renfrew. I couldn't agree more with the last comments he made.

I want to take these mere 20 minutes I have to outline to the best of my ability what I think this bill is all about and what it means, not only to teachers in the communities I represent in Timmins-James Bay but also to the kids, because at the end of the day this is what this is all about. This is about affecting the education of children across this province, and for myself, the children within the riding of Timmins-James Bay.

There are three major parts to this bill, as I see it. In the first part under Bill 74 the government is saying, "We would like to be able to force by way of legislation what teachers are already doing now by way of volunteering." Absolutely ludicrous. Have you ever seen something stupider than what the government is up to?

We are all children of the public or the separate school system of the province of Ontario. All the members of this assembly have gone through the school system at the primary and secondary levels; some have even gone further. We know that when we went to school the person who ran your basketball team, the person who ran the

chess club, the person who ran the debating society, the people who ran the various organizations and clubs and activities in our schools were—who? It was the teachers.

They did it because they wanted to do it. They did it because they understood that was part of what they wanted to do as teachers and was part of their responsibility. We all know the reality when we look back at the schools we went to. I look at école secondaire Thériault in the city of Timmins. There was hardly a teacher who didn't volunteer. They all stood up to the bat and said: "It's my turn. I want to give back to the children what I got when I went through the system. I want to make it better."

I resent a government that comes to us today and says, for political reasons, "We will, by way of legislation, force what teachers are already doing because we think it's a political thing to do." That's what this is all about. It's about politics. It's about a government that is always picking enemies and trying to pick on one group or another to advance its own political agenda and its own political situation within the province of Ontario.

We saw it. The government in the early days of 1995-96, when they came to government, made welfare people the scapegoats of government. Everybody stood there and said, "Maybe there are some problems with these welfare people so I won't say anything." We let that go by. What was it all about? It was about a government trying to advance its political opportunity by bashing a group; in that case, welfare people.

We saw them choose all kinds of other opponents. One thing we have seen consistently with this government is that they have picked a fight with teachers at every opportunity. Why? Because they believe that politically there is political fodder to be had by way of bashing on teachers. That, simply, is what this bill is all about.

The reality is they already volunteer. I would argue, as it was argued by the member from Renfrew, that if you all of sudden by way of legislation—you're going to do it, because we know you've time-allocated this bill; there will be no real public debate, no real committee work—force what teachers are already doing voluntarily, they will resent it.

Let me suggest to you, as members of this assembly, that if I as a member of the government were to enter this House having designed a bill that basically carried the idea that I would force you to do your job as constituency people in your riding, and say that you shall go to five constituency events on Saturday and three on Sunday and have no time with your families—that's what you're doing—you would resent it and you would say, "The heck with you." Quite frankly, you wouldn't accept it and you'd find ways to undermine what I was trying to do by way of legislation.

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I suggest that's what you're going to be doing by way of legislation. You will frustrate teachers, you will create a poisoned atmosphere that, at the end of the day, will create a situation completely the opposite of what you

want. I argue teachers will not be as co-operative as they've been in the past, not because they want to get back at you as the government, but because by way of human nature, we don't like to be forced to do the things we're already doing. We see that as an intrusion into our personal decisions. So I say to the government on the first point, the first part of the bill, that by forcing teachers to do what they already do voluntarily, you're going to do completely the opposite.

The second thing you're doing with Bill 74 is trying to figure out a way to make teachers work harder and longer in the classrooms of Ontario. Again, this is all about politics. You have the belief somehow that somebody who teaches in a class somewhere in Ontario, at either the primary or secondary level, has an easy job. You're trying to build on the politics of this issue. You're trying to make people believe what they think they already believe, which is that teaching is an easy job.

I suggest any of the members of the assembly spend some time in a classroom. I've had the opportunity. I taught in the high school system for a couple of years as a trades teacher. I'm not a qualified teacher, but I taught in the trades capacity, and it's not an easy job. You're dealing with kids from grade 9 to grade 12 or 13 if you're in high school, and obviously younger if you're in primary, a number of whom don't want to be there. You have to find ways as an educator to motivate those kids, find ways to inspire them to learn what you know they're going to need to compete out in the real world. It's a tough job.

I had an opportunity last week to go to l'école Saint-Charles, I think it was, in Timmins to participate with grade 8 students on the whole issue of the Upper Canada Rebellion. The history teacher invited me in and said, "Would you come in, Gilles, and talk a little about the Upper Canada Rebellion and how that eventually led to the system of democracy we have today?" I only had three classes, the three grade 8 morning classes. By the end of it I was exhausted: 25 kids in each class, trying to hold their attention, trying to make sure they understood what it was I was trying to pass on, trying to deal with discipline the best I could. At the end of only three classes I walked out of there pretty wiped. I'll tell you, if I had the choice I wouldn't be a teacher, especially in Mike Harris's Ontario, because it is a tough job.

What you're doing in the second part of this bill is trying to increase the time teachers spend with students in the classroom. You're somehow trying to make us believe—the parents of the students and everybody—that this is a good thing. My argument is that it's going to lessen the quality of education.

For example, at the secondary school level, there is an eight-period system we operate in. Currently, in most boards teachers teach for six periods, they have one period for lunch and they have one period to prepare their classes, mark their exams and do all the things they've got to do.

Here's my point: Imagine, if you will, that you're an English teacher. As an English teacher, you're giving out

writing assignments to your students. Let's say that the writing assignment is a four-page document. You have four classes you teach English to, and two of whatever else. You're going to have to come back and read all those assignments of all 25 kids in each class, four pages each, in detail, make sure they've used the proper spelling, proper punctuation, have formed good sentences and that grammatically their writing made sense. It takes time. It takes effort on the part of the teacher to actually read what the student wrote so they can make constructive criticism about where they've got to increase their English literacy skills.

If you turn around and do what you're doing in this legislation and take away whatever preparation time they've got, you're going to be increasing the workload on the teacher to the point—what do you think they're going to do? Are they going to keep giving the amount of assignments they're giving now? Of course not. Teachers will give fewer work assignments, or conversely, they will not spend as much time grading those papers as they did in the past.

What's the effect? Students are going to get less quality education as time goes by. If we're to believe you, what you're trying to do with this legislation is increase the quality of education. Quite frankly, you're going to get completely the opposite, because what this bill does is force teachers into a situation where they're going to have to figure out how to deal with the extra workload either by giving fewer assignments or not spending the time they need to do the kind of quality of assignments they do.

I hear this government talk about the importance of the three Rs. Well, you guys wouldn't even know how to spell three Rs if they were out in front of you, obviously, by way of this bill. I say to the government, shame. This is wrong-headed, this is in the wrong direction. This is not a question of too far too fast. You're going in the wrong direction.

I say to the government, on the first and second parts, you've failed quite miserably. Before I move to the next part of the bill, I want to say to people watching out there that sometimes the public is led to believe or has the feeling that teachers don't work too hard and are too highly paid as it is. I just make the offer to any citizen, take the time, go into a classroom and try to do what our teachers are doing. I don't want to put teachers up on a pedestal, because that's not the point, but the reality is that it's a very difficult job. Imagine being with 25 kids six periods a day teaching English or teaching mathematics or teaching whatever it is.

Across the way you're making sour faces. That goes to show how smart you are, because you have no idea what's going on in education. That's a scary thought, because you're in charge. It is not an easy job. If what we want to do is to create an atmosphere in which to increase the quality of education in the province, you're going completely in the wrong direction. You've got to provide the supports we need within the education system to

make that happen, and you're certainly not doing it by way of this bill.

The other thing you're doing in this bill is the question of compliance. This is really a scary part. A section of this bill takes the power the school board trustees have, the little they have left after the government made changes to the legislation last time, and says that the government, the Minister of Education, may go into a school board and make any changes they want in decisions the board made in regard to how they run their board.

Under the compliance section of this bill, previously the minister only had the power to appoint an investigator and force compliance if a board was being defiant on its budget, as we saw recently with what happened in Essex. In other words, school boards were not allowed to run a deficit, and if a school board did, the minister had the right to hire an investigator and the investigator was able to look into that and to make recommendations to the minister, who then would be able to make the changes. Now, under this legislation the minister gets to run everything, more or less, because she can enforce compliance on curriculum, on co-instructional activity, on class sizes, on instructional time, on trustees' honorariums or expenses, or a violation of the funding formula envelopes. In other words, the Minister of Education and Mike Harris have taken complete control of our education system.

I just want to repeat what one learned school board trustee said in North Bay about 15 years ago: "I shudder to think what would happen if we put education in the hands of the province of Ontario."

Interjection: Was that Mike Harris?

Mr Bisson: Exactly. The person who said that was a school board trustee out of Nipissing who is now the Premier of Ontario: Mike Harris. What a flip-flop. The guy who was a school board trustee and said he didn't trust the province to run the education system then comes to power and gives all the power to the province. I say he's being a hypocrite, totally hypocritical, because what you're doing in this is taking away the ability of school boards to make the kinds of decisions they've got to make on the local level to deal with educational requirements within their community.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): That's unparliamentary.

Mr Bisson: No, I will not withdraw; he's a hypocrite.

Hon Mr Sampson: On a point of order, Speaker: I think if you look back on what was just said a few minutes ago you might find that the comment of the member opposite was a shade unparliamentary and would ask that he withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: You're correct, it is, and I would ask the member to withdraw it.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, he is a hypocrite, and I am not withdrawing it.

The Acting Speaker: You will either withdraw it or get named.

Mr Bisson: Well, considering I'm House leader, I guess I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: Did the member withdraw?

Mr Bisson: I did.

Mr Speaker, there are words I cannot use in this place that are unparliamentary. I'm not qualifying what I'm saying, but it's very frustrating. Day after day we come into this House or people watch what's happening, either what's going on in this House or the comments of ministers in the government, and day after day they try to make things out as the opposite of what they truly are. As a member of the assembly and as somebody who lives in this province, I get truly upset about what they do.

Back to the point. The point is—well, I can't go there because it's unparliamentary. That blocks that idea.

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Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Paradoxical.

Mr Bisson: Paradoxical—yeah, yeah, yeah.

Anyway, I come back to the point of what this bill does. This bill simply goes in the wrong direction. It's not a question that it's going too far, it's not a question that it's going too fast; it's a question that the government is trying to do by way of legislation what teachers have been doing for quite a long time.

En éducation, on sait très bien que le gouvernement conservateur, les membres du gouvernement, pensent pour une raison ou une autre que les professeurs de la province de l'Ontario est du monde privilégié qui n'est pas trop travaillant, qui est trop payé et qui franchement ne vaut pas les dollars que nous, la province, lui payons. Je voudrais dire que je ne suis pas convaincu, que je ne suis pas d'accord. Ce n'est pas du tout la situation.

Je voudrais vous dire la raison pour laquelle le gouvernement dit ces affaires. C'est très simple. Le gouvernement de l'Ontario veut jouer de la politique avec les professeurs de la province. Pourquoi? Parce qu'eux autres pensent que s'ils attaquent les professeurs de l'Ontario, d'une manière ou d'une autre les électeurs seront de leur côté et que, à la fin de la journée, ils vont être capables d'aller rechercher des gains politiques.

Je vous dis que c'est faux. Essayer de faire croire qu'on a besoin de rentrer de la législation dans cette province pour forcer les professeurs à faire du volontaire, quelque chose qu'ils ont toujours fait, c'est aller complètement dans la mauvaise direction. Je vais vous donner un exemple: vous avez été à l'école, au secondaire, monsieur le Président, comme le restant de nous ici. Rappelez-vous qui a fait l'ouvrage à votre école, qui se sont présentés après les heures d'école pour faire des heures supplémentaires payées par eux-mêmes, parce qu'ils faisaient du volontariat, pour prendre charge de votre équipe de hockey, du club d'échecs, du club de radio. Qui était là? C'était les professeurs. Est-ce qu'on avait besoin de les forcer à travailler? Bien non, parce que ces profs ont compris que c'était très important dès le début de l'éducation, qu'une partie de leurs responsabilités comme professeurs était d'aider les gens dans les écoles. Une partie de l'ouvrage qu'ils veulent faire est de créer les liens avec les enfants pour qu'ils soient capables d'utiliser ces liens d'une manière positive en classe. Une manière de faire ça, c'est qu'on essaie de

s'approcher des étudiants jusqu'à un certain point en donnant de notre temps dans ces clubs. Deuxièmement, les professeurs ont voulu le faire.

Le gouvernement, sous la direction de la loi 74, essaie de forcer ce que les professeurs ont toujours fait. Je dis, écoutez, vous allez avoir l'effet complètement opposé parce que, à la fin de la journée, on est tous des humains, on a tous les mêmes réactions. Force-moi à faire quelque chose et je ne vais pas le faire. Encourage-moi à le faire et je vais le faire cinq fois plus fort que j'ai besoin de le faire. C'est ça le point et pourquoi je m'oppose vraiment à cette législation. Le gouvernement, en forçant les professeurs à faire du volontaire quand 99% des professeurs le font déjà, va voir une réaction opposée où les professeurs vont commencer de différentes manières de réduire leur temps après la classe. Je pense que ça va être franchement quelque chose que le gouvernement aurait créé lui-même et dont il sera responsable.

Deuxièmement, le gouvernement veut augmenter au secondaire le temps que les professeurs restent en classe. En d'autres mots, présentement on a un système où on a huit classes par jour. D'habitude on a cinq ou six classes comme professeur, une classe pour dîner et une autre pour la préparation des cours ou pour la correction de nos examens et de nos travaux. Ce qui arrive, c'est que le gouvernement nous dit: « On va augmenter de six à sept les périodes où les professeurs enseignent, et ça va augmenter le temps de contact avec les enseignants et ça va faire une meilleure affaire. »

Ca va complètement l'opposer. Écoutez, ces professeurs-là, comme vous le savez, s'ils donnent plus de temps à plus d'étudiants et avec plus d'ouvrage à faire, auront besoin de s'organiser d'une manière ou d'une autre. Comment vont-ils s'organiser? Soit en donnant moins de travaux aux élèves, pour être capables de s'adapter à la nouvelle réalité que le gouvernement a créée, ou ils ne vont pas être capables de prendre le temps nécessaire pour faire les corrections qu'ils ont besoin de faire. Donc, c'est complètement l'opposé.

I look across the way to the parliamentary assistant who sits there as a smug, smug Conservative, and I'm highly offended, sir, by your actions tonight in this Legislature. You sit there and laugh as if somehow or other what we have to say on this side of the House—

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Are you talking to me?

Mr Bisson: I'm talking to you, and you, sir, I find quite offensive.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member not to make personal comments to members. Speak through the Chair on this subject, please.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, through you in the chair, I find the members across the way have no time to listen to debate. They've made up their mind. They're going by way of time allocation. They think that teachers are not working hard. Quite frankly, the government members on the other side of the House are a disservice to education, a disservice to the electors of this province, and are

creating a crisis—exactly the plan that Mr Snobelen tried to create in 1995.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to thank the honourable member for Timmins-James Bay for his comments. I don't think that any of us on our side of the House feel for one second that teachers in this province don't do a good job. I have a mother-in-law who spent her whole life in teaching, and I can introduce you to a good friend of mine in the audience, Terry Gregson, and his wife, Laurie. You know Terry Gregson. You might see him in the National Hockey League. He's number 4 for the referees. Terry, give us a wave there, if you would.

I believe teaching is a very tough job. I understand the member from James Bay spent two years working in the technical department in some school up north. Maybe you are frustrated at this time. But the comments that I hear from my friends in the teaching profession are that they're always crying hard times, how difficult their jobs are, how much stress they're under. But they always forget to tell you about things like the vacations, like the two weeks at Christmastime, like the two weeks in the Easter break, like the nine or 10 weeks of summer vacation. What about the people who work in the rest of the world? What about the people who created the 700,000 jobs in this province? Those people are working, what, 70, 80 hours a week in a lot of cases? You don't hear them crying like that. But we continually hear the comments from you about the frustrating job of teaching, how much extra work you put in. Quite frankly, a lot of people are getting sick and tired of those comments.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Well, I know that many people in my riding are getting sick and tired of a lot of comments. They're getting sick and tired of the comments about teachers and the reference to holidays. I am really so disappointed that you have raised that issue this evening. Is that to suggest that because we sat in this House for 43 days last year, the rest of the time we were not working in this building, that we were on holiday? I think to suggest that when teachers are not in school they're not working to better themselves or they're not working on behalf of their students—I live very close to a school and I can confirm that on Saturday and Sunday I regularly drive by the school and find the teachers' cars there. They're preparing work for students. I can attest to the fact that during the summer teachers are in their classrooms preparing them, making them ready for the students who are coming to them in the fall. To suggest that teachers are not working during those times is totally irresponsible—totally—just as it would be irresponsible to suggest when we're not in this room we're not working on behalf of our constituents.

I talk to a lot of my friends in my riding who are in the teaching profession and they feel beaten and battered, and they say: "What have we done wrong? We have provided excellent learning opportunities for students and somehow this government thinks we need a law to make us do this. We've been doing it for years." And now

they're faced with this law in their face. They don't need it. Parents in the communities know we don't need it. I'm just so very disappointed that a member of the government would have to make a reference to teachers' holidays.

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Mr Christopherson: I am pleased to comment on the excellent remarks of my colleague from Timmins-James Bay. Certainly he is someone who speaks consistently from experience, and if he doesn't have first-hand experience, then members will know from the last decade that he makes a point of getting that experience, by getting right out into the community and talking about the issue. When he speaks about the north, there are others who can match his knowledge and expressiveness here, but they certainly can't surpass it.

Mr Conway: He reads your sign language very well.

Mr Christopherson: He reads my sign language quite well. It makes my job much easier, especially since we needed that six minutes filled. He wasn't going anywhere.

I will leave responding to the comments of the member for Simcoe North to the member for Timmins-St James. I'm sure he also will have a great deal to say about that.

But I did want to reflect on my colleague's comments about why on earth would you want to compel, by law, individuals to do something they are already doing that is working. Are there a few problems out there? I would imagine so. The education system is big enough that it would be impossible for it to be perfect. There are always going to be problems here and there. But if you ask a parent, or a student for that matter, what the number one problem in the education system is, I would imagine that you would get a number of different responses. I doubt that any of them would say, "The biggest problem in the education system right now is that the teachers aren't forced to do extracurricular activities." This is all about the politics of placebos. This is about doing things that hit the hot button but have nothing to do with the real issue. What really is at stake here is the fact that you want to cover up and have people forget that you've cut \$1 billion out of education. That's what is really going on and my colleague has belled the cat.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I think members on all sides of this House—members who were teachers themselves at one point in time; some of us who are married to teachers; many of us who have children or brothers and sisters who are teachers—know full well that teaching is a difficult job. In acknowledgement of that over the past few years, we've done quite a bit on this side of the House to help teachers in their workplace. Let me give you some examples.

I spoke with some teachers on Friday. They were delighted with the new curriculum we have in Ontario, and just about from all accounts, from everyone you talk to, that new curriculum has been received very well. It was written by about 300 teachers from across the province and they did a very good job.

We've brought in testing for kids. One of the teachers who came to see me and talked to me was a grade 9 teacher some of whose kids couldn't do simple math. Part of the whole testing province-wide for everyone will ensure when someone gets to grade 9, they can do simple math.

The code of conduct: Teachers complain that there is usually one, sometimes two people in their class who are very disruptive and make it difficult for everyone else to learn. We are introducing a code of conduct.

Equalized funding: Some gentlemen who came to see me were in Catholic boards. Their funding has gone up dramatically after we passed the new funding formula a couple of years ago under Bill 160.

Average class size: The Education Improvement Commission said, "Don't let them go above the current averages that were there in 1998." We did that and we're lowering them now.

We ended the social contract. A lot of teachers who were on the pay grid moved up four places on that pay grid. In most cases, that's \$2,000 a year; \$2,000 a place on the pay grid helped them substantially.

We introduced early retirement packages so teachers with an 85 factor rather than 90 could get out earlier and open up some spots at the bottom for some new young teachers.

Finally, we brought in hundreds of millions of dollars in new textbooks, science materials and other equipment so teachers could better do their jobs in their classrooms for their kids.

The Acting Speaker: Two-minute response.

Mr Bisson: I listened to the comments from the member for Simcoe North who talked at some length about how this was really about trying to get back at teachers who get two weeks off for Christmas, a week for Easter and two months for summer. I think the government member from Simcoe North has basically divulged what this is all about. This is about teacher-bashing. This is about a government that thinks it can advance its political aim by bashing on teachers. Quite frankly, I say shame on you. What an example to the province of Ontario. What a comment to be made by a government member. If he were a cabinet minister, I'd think he should resign on the basis that he declared what the government agenda was, which would have been a cabinet secret.

I'll tell you, it's unbelievable. And then I listen to the member from Niagara Falls across the way talk about: "I know a lot about teachers. In fact, some of us used to be married to them." You know, I can make all kinds of stupid comments about that, but I won't. But my lord, I don't even want to go there because I'm going to say something that's inappropriate.

But to try to make us believe that somehow the teachers are enamoured of the position your government has taken against teachers, member for Niagara Falls, you're sadly mistaken. I don't know what you're smoking, but it's got to be illegal, and if it ain't illegal, it certainly darn well should be.

I'm talking to teachers not only in my riding but also across this province. I'm getting e-mail by the tens and twenties every day from parents and teachers out there who say you're going completely in the wrong direction. So you guys are delusional or you're stupid; I can't figure out which one.

I say to the members across the way, it's sad that we have to devolve to this level of debate, because I for one am getting sick and tired of the games this government is playing by way of politics all the time. You're supposed to be here to govern for the people of Ontario and not govern for the PC Party, to try to advance your political agenda so you can stay in and do whatever you're doing behind the scenes.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Maves: It's my pleasure to rise tonight and speak to Bill 74, An Act to amend the Education Act to increase education quality, to improve the accountability of school boards to students, parents and taxpayers and to enhance students' school experience.

I just read off in my two-minute response to the member opposite eight substantial steps that this government has taken over the past four years. I jotted those down on a whim, eight substantial steps that we've taken, and if I wanted to sit down and do so, I could come up with more things that we have done to improve education across the province. Many of these things are directly aimed at supporting teachers in our schools; for example, the hundreds of millions of dollars that we spent on textbooks and science materials and other equipment.

I remember during the debate surrounding Bill 160 a couple of years ago, one of the complaints that a lot of the parents I spoke to had at the time was, "My kids are sharing textbooks," or, "My kids' textbooks are held together with duct tape," and so on. That was a condemnation of the way the adults had run the system in the past, the way school boards had maybe allocated money. The oldest, simplest tool, the most common tool in any school is a textbook, and to have people from all schools, elementary and secondary schools from all across my riding and my region, tell me the same thing over and over was a condemnation of the way those boards operated over the years, and we addressed that directly.

I've had a lot of teachers since tell me, "Thank you for the new textbook, thank you for the computers"—because we added new computers to classrooms—"thank you for science materials" and so on. So there's a lot of things that the members opposite conveniently forget that have happened over the years that have really helped them in the classroom to do their job. And it is a difficult job, there's no doubt about that.

My wife is a young teacher. Young teachers especially move into the school system and may get assigned one grade one year, grade 1 or 2. The next year they get moved around because they're low on the seniority list; they have grade 3. They've got to do a whole new day plan every day. There's a big burden on those new teachers especially. They get moved around and have to do new courses all the time. We recognize that and we've

done a variety of things to support those teachers in the classroom.

As I said, one of the ways that we helped in the classroom was to take the EIC, the Education Improvement Commission, chaired by David Cooke, the former NDP education minister—one of his recommendations in his very first report at the time, back in about 1997 when he made the report after extensive consultations, was that we should at least freeze class sizes across Ontario at their current levels. We did that in Bill 160 and now we are adding hundreds of millions of dollars this year to budgets for boards all across the province to reduce class sizes further. Elementary grades 4 to 8 will be 24.5, JK to grade 3 will be 24 and secondary schools will go from an average class size of 22 to 21. That will substantially add more teachers to the schools and that will help divvy up the burden.

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One of our members the other night during debate talked about the fact that there are a lot of studies out there that show class size isn't the key factor in determining performance. We believe it is a determinant. The EIC thought it was a determinant, and that's why they asked us to freeze class sizes at those levels. That's why we're reducing it further. But there are a lot of things that go into determining performance, and studies from different places all over the world have shown that over time. Class size is one, and we're trying to recognize that here in this part of the bill and in the latest budget.

I'd like to get to protecting co-instructional activities for students. In 1997, the very first recommendation that the Education Improvement Commission made after their consultations was to put in the Education Act that a teacher's job entailed co-curricular activities. That was the very first recommendation Dave Cooke, the former NDP education minister, made as chairman of the EIC. Mr Cooke wasn't the only one. Ann Vanstone was the co-chair, and there are several other people who sit on the Education Improvement Commission, and they said to us, "Put in the Education Act a description of a teacher's duties." That is what is happening in this bill.

What we're also doing in this bill—over the years, and more recently in one of my Niagara boards, for instance, about a year ago there was a work-to-rule campaign. Everyone has talked about Durham, that for two years they haven't had any co-curricular activities, any school sports, anything. That is a huge loss. It's a huge loss for the kids of that school. In my board a year ago we had a work-to-rule campaign and a lot of parents tried to get school sports going. They wanted to volunteer, go into the schools and coach. They were blocked. The board was less than co-operative at the time, citing to parents different reasons why they didn't want parents to go in and volunteer and coach.

By the way, this is nonsense that volunteers can't coach, because I coached for seven years. I coached high school basketball for several years. I coached elementary school basketball teams for many years. I was coached by people who were non-teachers. This is the history of

the province where all kinds of non-teachers have come in and coached school teams, taught band and have done a variety of other things. So we ran into a problem where boards weren't very co-operative.

Second, once the boards started to relent and say, "OK, we'll try to accommodate the parents of these kids," who maybe were in grade 12 or 13 and some sport or after-school activity was very important to them, then they ran into trouble with the principals. The principals came up with reasons. They wouldn't be around to open up the gyms, they wouldn't be around to hand out the equipment and so on and so forth. There was a variety of problems.

Some teachers absolutely love to do co-curricular things, more so even than coaching. A lot of teachers, maybe gym teachers or English teachers, prefer actually coaching school teams or teaching band after school to the actual act of teaching. I know this. They've told me this and I know, having a great love of coaching myself, what this is like. Some of those teachers tried to go out of their way and help some kids after school and do some co-curricular activities after school on their own. What happened was very ugly at the time. I remember some of our volunteer coaches at the time going into the school and seeing a pair of eyes on a poster posted outside one of these teacher's classes—they were doing extra activities, even though the union told them not to do them—a pair of eyes on a poster that said, "We're watching you."

Now, this is ridiculous. Here's a teacher who wasn't on side with the union. He wanted to help some kids and he went out of his way. He did some activities with his kids and that's what he was met with. That is ridiculous, and one of the things we're trying to do in the bill is eliminate that kind of thing. We're trying to eliminate the board that gets in the way of the parents who maybe want to make sure the kids have after-school activities. We're trying to eliminate the principal who doesn't want to co-operate and make sure they have after-school activities.

A lot of times when there are negotiations between boards and unions—and all members in the House know this—they have work-to-rule campaigns. Because co-curricular activities aren't described in the Education Act as part of their duties, when they have this work-to-rule campaign there's no penalty for the teachers. They go in, they teach, they go home—no extracurricular stuff, no co-curricular stuff, whatever we want to call it, at all. Who suffers? The kids. The board doesn't suffer. Teachers don't suffer. They get their regular paycheques. It's not part of their duties as described in the act. It's only the kids who suffer. In Durham, the best-known case right now, they've been suffering for two years, and it's more than just one board in the area, I understand.

That's not on any more. What we're saying in this act quite simply is—and I'm an advocate of this. I don't step away from this. I don't apologize for this. We're saying to the boards across this province, "Look, just like the Education Improvement Act said to us, these co-curricular activities are part of the job description, and the boards now have a duty under this bill to ensure they

have plans to make sure that kids in our schools never again get robbed of a year of their school life.” It’s too short as it is, one might argue. It’s a great time in your life and for some people, like myself—having the basketball team to go and play on, having a basketball team to go and coach, that made school for me. After this House passes this bill—and I believe it will—never again will that happen, because now boards will have a responsibility to ensure that those co-curricular activities occur. They have a responsibility to come up with a plan to make sure that happens.

On top of that, principals will have the responsibility to make sure, along with those boards, that co-curricular activities occur. So if I have parents who want to make sure their kids compete on a school team or do something after school, they won’t be blocked. In fact, the boards and the principals will have an onus on them to make sure that those after-school activities occur. I think that’s vital. I think that’s fair for our kids. I’m not going to back away from that. I think it’s right.

I cited two examples, one that happened in my board. I cited Durham. Here’s an article about a reporter talking to some kids who weren’t allowed to have their school sports so they signed up for swimming outside of the school. The article says:

“The kids weren’t just denied the activities which are such a key part of school life ... they were discouraged from organizing their own. One group of students who tried to put together a swim meet with other area high schools in a neighbouring town was told they were being disloyal to their teachers.

“Disillusioned.

“When the year started, many of these kids had been on their teachers’ side. By the time it was over, they found they were disillusioned and intimidated. It was unfortunate and so unnecessary.”

Now, I don’t for a second believe that all of our teachers were doing that. I don’t believe for a second that all of our teachers out there are posting these posters outside of other teachers’ offices. But it’s got to stop, and I think this act, making these co-curricular activities part of the job and part of a board and principal’s responsibility to make sure these things happen at school, is vital for our kids so that they can have the full experience when they’re in school.

The other part of the bill that has had controversy surrounding it is basically the teaching time in the classroom at the secondary level. Right now across the province, where we have a semester system, for instance, most contracts say everyone gets an equitable load. Full-time teachers get three periods in each semester and some teachers do all kinds of other activities on top of that. Some do none at all. Some do a little bit. It’s different with everybody.

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Back in 1997, when we brought in Bill 160 and we had the debate and we had the province-wide strike, this is what it was really about. We had the fight. We had the debate at that time. By the way, once again this was a

recommendation from the Education Improvement Commission. The EIC looked at teaching time and compared the teaching time across the country. They looked at every province. Ontario, at three hours and 45 minutes a day teaching time in front of the class, compared to teaching time in front of the class of everybody else throughout Canada, is at the bottom—the least amount of time teaching classes, the least amount of instructional time. At the time, the commission said we should reduce some of the prep time—in other words, increase some of the teaching time—by 25%. That’s what we brought in in Bill 160, moving it to four hours and 10 minutes, or today we talk about 6.5 periods. We did exactly what the Education Improvement Commission told us to do back in 1997 after their consultation.

At the time I also remember a chart with the national average even above four hours and 10 minutes. It’s something like four and a half hours in front of the classroom. So even with these changes there will only be two provinces in the entire country whose secondary school teachers have less instructional time than ours. From where I sit, I don’t think the 6.5 periods—there are only two provinces that are less than us; we’re still below the national average—is asking that much. We’re following along with what the Education Improvement Commission asked us to do.

One of the things that’s vitally important to note about this is that a principal has the ability—and we tried this in Bill 160. There’s been some to-ing and fro-ing. It’s been blocked. This bill makes it clear that the board and the principals have the right to assign teaching time. For instance, this bill, with 6.5 periods per year on average, would say that in my first year as a teacher I’ll teach maybe four in the first semester, three in the next semester, and next year I’ll teach three and three. So every two years I’ve got to teach that fourth period. That’s if they decide to allocate that teaching time, that 6.5, equitably across all their teachers. But what’s really important to notice here, and what the government tried to do with Bill 160 and what we’re trying to do here, is we’re trying to say to the principals: “You know your teachers. You know who does how much in your school. You assign the teaching time as is appropriate.” There may be some teachers who don’t do any extracurricular or co-curricular activities. There may be some who do all kinds of co-curricular activities. The principal could assign that teacher who doesn’t do co-curricular activities four periods while assigning three periods to that person who does all kinds of extracurricular activities. That’s the flexibility that’s built in here, and teachers’ contracts can’t override that.

Now, there are a lot of people who have taught the exact same course load as another person who maybe comes in at 9 and leaves a little bit after 3. You know, they put in their time, they have the same courses year after year. They’ve got their day plans that they know like the back of their hand. Every teacher I’ve ever talked to understands this. No one ever denies this. You’ll never find a teacher who denies that this can be the case. At the

same time you might have a new teacher or just a very energetic teacher who coaches all kinds of teams, does all kinds of co-curricular activities, yet has to get the same course load as the other teacher who does less. This allows the flexibility to the principal to disseminate the workload among all of his staff as he sees fit.

He's got some strings. I had some teachers say to me, "What if he's vindictive and he gives me eight and he makes me do all kinds of other things?" Well, that can't really happen. You see, in the bill the board has to file a plan on how they're going to disseminate teaching time, on how they're going to assign co-curricular activities. Each principal, in consultation with the school council, has to do the same. So it would be hard, if not impossible, for any one principal to go out of his mind, be overly vindictive and cruel and try to put an unnecessary and unfair workload on any one teacher.

So there's flexibility. In the past, some principals have recognized the extracurricular activities some teachers have by saying: "I'm not going to assign this person hall duty. He teaches the same course load, he coaches year after year, semester after semester. I'm going to give him a little break on something else." This takes that principle and puts it across the whole teaching time spectrum and co-instructional activities.

There are other parts of the bill where the minister can take over a board after an investigation is done, after a complaint is made, and she can run the board. This is the same thing in section 257 of Bill 160, which is something that was there in the Municipal Act since 1931. So far, I haven't heard the teacher unions stoop to the level of talking about this by saying what a draconian measure it is, that it's new and alarming and so on and so forth. But I can assure the people at home that with that section, if the boards aren't living up to the law of the land, if they're spending money improperly, indeed after certain steps are taken, the minister can come in and take over a board. That's appropriate, and I think people would say that the buck stops at the minister's desk eventually, so she should have that authority if a board is breaking the law.

I support the bill. I've advocated for a lot of the things in the bill myself. I think in the long run it's going to be good for education in this province, otherwise I wouldn't support it. Just like many of those other things I've talked about that we've done previously, in the long run especially, they are going to be very good for education in the province.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): When I hear the members across speak to this bill, I sometimes wonder if they've been given the opportunity to read it or been allowed to understand just exactly how disastrous this is going to be in classrooms across this province. I wonder if they understand that dropping the class size by one student per class is nothing more than a ruse to try to make people believe that this is about improved education. This is about fewer teachers teaching more students with less time. One less per class per teacher, 20 more

kids per teacher on the average. More students, more teaching, more preparation, less time for extracurricular activities. That's part of what's bad with this bill.

What's worse about it is that this bill, by forcing people to do what 99% of teachers have done voluntarily, is going to destroy the spirit of the extracurricular effort that has been made by teachers who do it for the love of it and out of commitment for the students.

The worst part of all about this bill is that it deprives a group of Ontario citizens of the rights offered to other citizens. This bill deliberately suspends the rights of teachers, given to others under the labour law, to appeal inequities in their workload assignment. What the member opposite describes as flexibility for the principal could in fact end up becoming nothing more than abuse of individuals and those individuals have no right of appeal at all. The act suspends, essentially, the Employment Standards Act as it applies to teachers, because there's no limit to how many hours they can be told to teach or do extracurricular work, there is no limit to when they can be asked to do that, whether it's weeknights or weekends, there's no limit to where they will be asked to do the extracurricular work—it doesn't have to be within the board's jurisdiction—and they have no recourse and no appeal. In fact, under this bill an individual teacher could be dismissed by the minister herself for likely violation of the act—likely violation. So if a teacher happens to protest the extraordinary assignments of extracurricular activities, they could be essentially dismissed. If you say I'm exaggerating, why is that in the bill?

Mr Bisson: I listened to the member for Niagara Falls. The very reasons the member thinks we need the bill is why I think we need to oppose it. The government member outlined in his own comments what the problems with this bill are. I'll let people read the speech or listen to what he had to say. But one of the points he got into is quite unbelievable. He's saying that the government has to take power to be able to ride master over the school boards on absolutely every issue having to do with everything from curriculum to hours of work, you name it. I just want to propose something to the Conservative members across the way. What would you have done if our government under Bob Rae had made such a measure? You'd have gone ballistic. You'd have gone completely over the top. You would have said it's draconian, you would have said it's totalitarian, you would have been out there saying all kinds of things about how bad it was. Why do I say that? Because I remember the kinds of debates we had in this place from 1990 to 1995.

I go back to a comment made, oh, about 15 years ago by a school board trustee who said, "I shudder to think" what would happen if we put the decision-making power of education in the hands of the minister. That was Mike Harris. I want to know what happened from the time he was a school board trustee to the time he became Premier of Ontario. I say the government, or Mike Harris at least,

has completely flip-flopped on the position he had when he was a school board trustee.

The reality is that school boards across this province are, by and large, responsible when it comes to the actions they take. They're accountable to the people. We have the right as individuals to elect them or throw them out of office if we think they're doing something wrong. If that's not good enough for you, that means you don't believe in democracy, because that's what the democratic principle is. I don't know. Stalin tried it, Mao tried it, now Mike Harris is trying it, and I don't think it's going to work any better.

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Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise to compliment the member for Niagara Falls for his extremely thoughtful presentation here this evening. He talked about his own wife, his own spouse, being a teacher in the system, someone who really understands what's going on there. He complimented the teachers, and I fully agree with him. We have a very large number of teachers. Most of our teachers are excellent teachers. I have a daughter who's a vice-principal in the Durham board. She literally gives 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I recognize the kinds of things that teachers are doing.

But what is a government to do when a union comes along and says, "You can't give voluntary work to your students. You can only work the four hours and 10 minutes," or whatever it was they were working? "Thou shalt not volunteer." When they threaten teachers who want to volunteer, we have a problem as a government, and we are responding with this bill. I think it's a very responsible thing to be doing under the circumstances, but it's unfortunate we have to do this. If the union wasn't acting so silly, this would not be happening. It's just a simple response to unions demanding that teachers not do this in certain boards. Teachers in my riding have had nervous breakdowns because of union tactics and what unions have been doing with those teachers because they wouldn't go on a picket line. I, for one, think that is most unfortunate.

That's why we're responding with the co-curricular activities. It was so well put by the member for Niagara Falls. He went on to describe some of the other problems that teachers are having with their unions. Granted, it's a very small minority, because the rest of them are absolutely frightened to say anything about this very authoritarian union they have to work for.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): None of the concerns that the members opposite have raised will be solved by this bill, particularly by the extracurricular portion of this bill. Those of you across who were executives, and there are many of you, know that there isn't any management theory or course written in the last two decades that would support this kind of management style on any group of people. It's not only professionally unsound, it's pedagogically unsound. A teacher does not punish a whole class when two students are misbehaving. You can deal with the Durham board,

you can deal with those teachers who threaten other teachers. This isn't solving that problem.

Let me tell you about Monica Moran, a physical education teacher at Norwood Park on Hamilton Mountain. This teacher mentors other teachers to become coaches. She coaches the cross-country team, the three-pitch team, junior basketball, senior basketball, volleyball, she's athletic adviser to the staff, all track and field teams are under her, swim team is what she coaches, she coaches intramural sports at lunch, she's a DJ for school dances, she operates the school store for fundraising, she's on the staffing committee, she spends an overnight week-long trip at Camp Wanakita with the students, she heads the school council as the adviser, she's involved in fundraising; and professionally, for those who believe that teachers don't believe in professional development, she's taking leadership 1 course, she has taught for Brock University, she's taking summer courses, she does professional development after-school workshops, and she's a designated teacher when the principal isn't at the school.

This isn't a teacher who requires this bill, and most don't. This is a teacher, however, who coaches 17 teams who now will be required to coach maybe two and who may very well choose to do that because of the insult. The morale is low. If I thought this bill could improve education, I'd support it. Anyone who knows anything about human nature, about managerial theory, about pedagogy, about any kind of ethics of working with other people, cannot support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Two-minute response.

Mr Maves: I applaud that teacher the member opposite mentioned. This teacher, and many others like her, will now maybe get a little bit of support and maybe a little bit of recognition for the load she carries. This bill finally allows that, and I think that's important to note.

The member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan is incredibly insulting. I don't know if it's my age, I don't know what it is, but she always makes this arrogant comment, "I wonder if the members opposite are allowed to read the bills." I can assure you, I read the bills. I read the bill with Bill 160 beside me so that I can cross-reference. I read the bill with the Education Act so I can go through and see exactly what the bill's doing. I do that all the time, so I do understand the bill. I really resent when you get up, and other members often get up, and have that arrogant attitude that for some reason we don't do our homework. We do.

I support this bill for all of the reasons that I said. We had this about teaching time a year ago. The rules on the books are as they are in this bill, that for all teachers, on average, there should be 6.5 classes in a year—6.67 because 1.7 is additional for remedial or other things.

The member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan also got into fearmongering, and some of the unions are doing this too, that all of a sudden some of these teachers are going to be persecuted and they're going to be forced to do all kinds of crazy things at crazy hours. This is nonsense.

Interjections.

Mr Maves: This is nonsense. This is why the board has to file a plan. This is why the principals at every school have to file a plan. This is why they have to talk to their school councils about the plan so that doesn't happen. Quit your fearmongering. You fearmongered for four years in the education sector and you're still doing it now. It's not helping the situation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Dombrowsky: I find it very interesting that so regularly when we talk about the truth we're accused of fearmongering.

I just want to read a quote from an editorial in the *Napanee Beaver*. It's a very highly regarded paper in my community. The editor writes, "Perhaps the minister would have been better off attending the Napanee District Secondary School performance than throwing a press conference at Queen's Park.

"While Ecker may believe that there are masses of teachers unwilling to play a part in extracurricular activities, we have seen plenty of evidence to the contrary. Let's hope her bill doesn't take away the enthusiasm that's so apparent in the work of our county's teachers."

I also would say that I'd like to share my time with my colleague from Sudbury because we both have an interest in education and certainly I think we're going to be singing from the same page tonight.

With regard to the very fine teachers in my riding, this is a wonderful opportunity to tell you about, for example, the educator of the year in Hastings and Prince Edward county, Gloria Nelson. She was recognized by the Hastings-Prince Edward county community, not only by her colleagues. Certainly they recognized her great abilities, but this is an honour that's bestowed upon her because parents and members of the community write to the board and they share with the members of the board the wonderful qualities of this individual.

One of the things that has been written about Gloria Nelson, who is a teacher at Sir John A. Macdonald public school in Belleville, is that she spends many hours gathering ideas and items that make the curriculum challenging, motivating and exciting for her students. Her insight and awareness of students has been noted as phenomenal. She has written numerous curricula for environmental studies, math and reading for grade 1 and has assisted with the writing of various portfolio and integrated units. She has conducted workshops for other teachers and facilitated meetings for primary teachers on several non-instructional days; obviously a very committed person who did not require legislation to demonstrate within her professional community and her school community the love, devotion and commitment that we know all good teachers require in order to do their job well.

2000

I would like to talk about the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board. Tom Murphy is a teacher at Our Lady of Lourdes school in Kingston. Tom was recognized by his board with the Archbishop Spence Catholic Teacher of the Year Award.

Some of the statements that were made within the community: "It is impossible not to learn in Mr Murphy's class." "Any teacher has a powerful opportunity to make a profound difference in a child's life. Mr Murphy recognizes and embraces this opportunity and the students in his class reflect this commitment by emerging as better students and better persons." "He loves what he does and he models this through his energy, creative ability, connection with students, school involvement, personal life and the practice of his faith."

Also, while the Limestone District School Board doesn't have a particular award, they were very happy to tell me about just some of their outstanding teachers; that is a problem when we start naming people. I know, in my own family, I could talk about teachers of our children who I have considered to be outstanding. In the Limestone District School Board there is Jo Bishop, who has spent over 50 Friday nights watching 20,000 teenagers at school dances, and didn't need a law to do it. Harold Card helps with intramurals and keeps a computer lab running, and Dianne Thomas ensures every student, teacher and volunteer in her school receives special recognition on their birthday. It probably sounds like a little thing to the people on the other side of the House, but I know in a school community that those things are very appreciated. They don't just happen and they don't happen in the four and a half hours that a teacher spends in front of the students. They happen on their time.

There is another part of the bill that I would like to address this evening, and it's with regard to what I believe is the very draconian nature of the bill: that part of the bill that talks about the compliance that will be required by the school board. It enables the minister to take over a board and fine and suspend trustees. This of course is an area of interest for me because in a former experience I was a school board trustee. I took that responsibility very seriously and I was very proud to go to the board table as the elected representative of the people of my community.

In the case of non-compliance—and it is the minister who would determine whether or not there would be compliance—the minister would name a replacement to the board; not the community, but the minister. And the minister would determine the salary to be paid, not by the ministry, but by the board. How inappropriate for the minister—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Niagara Falls needs to be in his seat if he is to say anything whatever. I've warned him before.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I would like to understand in what other situation the minister or a minister of the crown has the power to remove an elected official and replace them. Where else is there a precedent for this? If a board applies any of its funds other than the way the minister would have ordered the funds to be directed, the members of the board are disqualified for five years from holding any office for which elections are held; not just being a school board trustee, but they would be prevented

from looking for any elected office that would be managed by the Municipal Act. That is totally unprecedented. This is a very punitive measure. People are being judged, and they are being denied rights that we enjoy in a democratic society without the benefit of trial by jury or by judge, by the Minister of Education. This is totally inappropriate and unacceptable. It's unacceptable because the people in the communities have elected the trustees to consider their better interests.

If the action of an elected representative, in following through on that commitment to the people who elected the individual, would not be favourable to the minister, he or she can be removed by the minister. The community is not even consulted about who should replace this individual. The minister decides that.

If the board believes it's in the better interests of the students they serve to take particular actions that the minister may not agree with, the minister can then prevent these elected people from holding office. If it has not been determined that they've broken any law, but they have garnered the wrath of the minister, they're fined \$1,000, kicked out of their job and told, "You can't be elected for another five years." That is draconian.

There is no other precedent in this province.

Mr Maves: It's already in the Education Act.

Mrs Dombrowsky: There is nothing in the present Education Act that gives the minister this problem.

Mr Galt: Have you read it?

Mrs Dombrowsky: I lived it. I was a trustee for 15 years. I would suggest to those members across the way who are so ready to volley to read the bill. Take your own advice and read the Education Act. Find out what's there, find out what trustees are responsible for and then come to this House and defend what this bill presents here. It is positively draconian and unacceptable. It's an affront to the people who elect trustees in their communities. You are thumbing your nose at the election process in this province. It's totally inappropriate and unacceptable.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm privileged to follow my fellow Liberal member because she has only told you exactly the way it is. Let me continue with that.

This government not only refuses to acknowledge the dedication of teachers in this province but has demoralized and shamefully twisted a once proud profession. Let me say on behalf of the government, even though I'm on the opposition side, that I want to apologize for this government, for the legislation it has brought into force, into play over the course of the last six years. It has failed miserably to realize the most important component of any educational system:

(1) Dedication: I have never seen in any piece of government legislation the importance of the dedication of a teacher outlined.

(2) Nor have I ever seen in any piece of legislation the importance of the compassion that a teacher has for individuals outlined in their legislation.

(3) Nor have I ever seen in any piece of legislation the importance of the commitment of the dedicated teachers of Ontario to the children they teach.

(4) Nor have I seen in any legislation the importance of love and respect that teachers have and hold for the students they teach on a daily basis.

On behalf of the government that refuses to acknowledge the teachers of Ontario, on behalf of the Mike Harris government, I apologize for not recognizing the dedication, compassion, commitment, love and respect that the teachers of Ontario have for their students. They have over the course of the last six years put up with an incredible amount of abuse, and Bill 74 continues that abuse. In fact, it goes to new heights. It is draconian in nature. It will not stand the test of time in the courts of law. There is a violation of individual rights here that is beyond anyone's wildest expectations. I do not understand the reasoning behind Bill 74.

2010

I spent 31 years in a classroom or in schools in Sudbury, and I will tell you that to a person I received cooperation, commitment, dedication, love and respect. I received extra hours on a daily basis and I never had to force my teachers to become involved in the children's lives—never. I have never, ever in 31 years received a refusal from a teacher to co-operate in an extracurricular or co-curricular activity. It just didn't happen.

The reality about this legislation is that the Minister of Education is trying to solve a problem she had in her area, a problem, I might say, that could be easily addressed if this government weren't so bullheaded and thick-skinned and so unwilling to compromise. The problem could be solved in Durham but, instead, she chooses to punish every child, every student in elementary and secondary school in one way or another.

This bill in particular punishes secondary school students. Mind you, let me make a projection: The parents of this province will be up in arms when they begin to understand the serious ramifications this bill had on the teachers who are charged with providing quality education to their children. The high school students I've talked to cannot believe that the government would be doing to their teachers what they're doing in Bill 74 when they understand their teachers to be more than willing to provide extracurricular activities, more than willing to go the extra mile to ensure that quality education takes place within and outside of the classroom.

For the past five years, this government has insisted that the many changes they've made have bettered education without one iota of proof that that has happened. Has the cost of education gone down? There's no question it has gone down, but so has the number of classrooms, so has the number of students, so has the number of teachers. Has it been done with more or less legislation? It has been done with more legislation, more change. We have seen an unprecedented period of change, of instability, of confusion within the educational system, not caused by school boards, not caused by teachers, not caused by students, but clearly caused by a government that has

decided that a public education system is not worth protecting.

In fact, all of this legislation that has taken place over the course of the last six years is setting the stage, we know, for charter schools, whether you want to admit it or not, and certainly you won't because it's the truth, and God forbid that you should ever admit to something that's truthful. You haven't done it in Walkerton, you haven't done it in health care, so why should you do it in education?

Let me tell you, the people of Ontario are no longer fooled. Even your friends, even those who are ardent supporters of earlier educational reform that you implemented, are having trouble with this one. What you have done categorically is destroyed an individual's right of choice; you've destroyed any human right attached to a teacher's ability to make choice, to have a say in what he or she will be involved in. I don't think the government members understand that these co-curricular activities can be assigned by a principal 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at any time.

Mr Galt: Where did you get that?

Mr Bartolucci: It's written in the legislation. The member might want to check the legislation to find out that it's written there. I suggest to the members across the way that they might want to go to page 2 of the act, if they can find it, to find what is expected of the principal in demanding that teachers become involved in co-curricular activities.

It is important that you read this legislation. It is important you understand that what you're asking for will not stand up in a court of law. It will not stand the test of time. But what it will have done is destroyed morale in the schools, it will have destroyed some extra-curricular activities and it will have destroyed students' opportunity to a complete education because of what you are expecting of your enforcer. This is nothing shy of totalitarianism. It is nothing short of a form of government that should be less than acceptable in a democracy.

I suggest to you, my friends across the way, that you have not enhanced education. You have and you continue to put a strategy in place that in the end will destroy public education, destroy sound secondary school public education. However, the people of Ontario will not allow you to do it.

Mr Maves: I want to address the comments made by the member from Hastings-Frontenac. I want to assure her that the legislation and the part of the legislation that deals with compliance with board obligations do indeed exist in the province. It has existed in the province since 1931 as part of the Municipal Act; it exists now in the Education Act. The situation within which it exists in the Education Act now is that if it is determined that there is severe financial mismanagement in a school board, then all of the steps and procedures that are listed here that the minister can take and the provincial government of Ontario can take in respect of that mismanagement are the same. As a matter of fact, this bill lessens some of the

things the ministry can do in the current Education Act when it comes in and takes over a board.

Mrs McLeod: That's simply not true.

Mr Maves: It is true.

I want people at home to understand that under this part of the act, if a parent at the school council or someone makes a complaint to the ministry alleging that a board is about to break the act, maybe because their class sizes are going to exceed the average, or maybe they're going to take funds out of the special education pool which is supposed to be protected and apply them somewhere else—a variety of different things the board could be doing which would violate the act—then the minister will send in an investigator. The investigator would do a full investigation, report back that, yes, they're in violation of the act. Then the minister could go to cabinet and say, "We think we need to take over the board," and in this part of the act she has to specify that—take over the operations of the board—and correct that situation.

It exists in the Municipal Act; it exists in the Education Act—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

2020

Mr Cleary: First of all, I'd like to congratulate my two colleagues for their well-thought-through speeches. I know that Liberals care about children and the education system and I know that this bill is nothing but an attack on the education system.

They talk about volunteerism. In our part of Ontario, we have many of our teachers and retired teachers and others in the education system who work and volunteer many hours for the children's treatment centre for some of the less fortunate children in our community.

I guess we all want the best education for our children. I know that in my family and my wife's family they are all teachers and I've never heard too much complaining until lately when this bill came forward. I've heard from many teachers I've never heard from before in my 28 years as an elected person in my community, but they're very upset about this bill.

In my lifetime I've negotiated many settlements, with many municipal and other contracts, and I know that when you sit down around the table and you negotiate, everyone seems to be happy. I'm sorry that this bill will make some of these changes. I've had letters from many teachers in our part of Ontario and many other parts of Ontario whom you normally wouldn't hear from. They have something they're very concerned about. You can tell a teacher before they become a teacher because they have a love for the children and they want to make Ontario a better place, and to work with the children because they're our future.

I would hope the government would take a second look at this piece of legislation and maybe allow some changes, because I think it's very serious that we're going down this particular road.

Mr Christopherson: I want to comment on the very effective words of the member for Hastings-Frontenac-

Lennox and Addington. Correct me if I'm wrong but I believe she said during her comments that she was for 15 years a school board trustee. Is that correct? That's a long time. That's as long as I've been in public life in total, between municipal and this place, and I think is longer than just about any government member I see across the way. If I'm wrong, then I stand corrected, but I don't see anybody making that correction.

I think we all agree that's a long time, that's a great deal of experience, and obviously someone who has a great deal of respect and support and trust in their community, to stay in office that long. I've got to tell you that in Hamilton we have trustees of the same calibre, from all different walks of life, from all different political backgrounds, some of them apolitical, but all of them caring, and yet you're treating the trustees the same as you are the teachers, in a way that suggests somehow they're to blame for something, that they've done something wrong.

You slashed their pay to the point where it's difficult to get people who will do that job for \$5,000 a year. I'm not saying that trustees do it for the money, no more than I believe any of you across the way run for office just for the pay. I believe you're there for a broader purpose, and so are trustees. Now what have you done to trustees? Now if they dare to even vote against your policy, the policy of your minister, if they dare express their democratic right to vote against, they're subject to a \$5,000 fine, which is a year's pay, and they can't run for office for another five years in a municipal capacity.

You've just got so many people you're going after that you must be running out of individuals and organizations to attack, because you've virtually already covered the landscape—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is a pleasure to take part in this debate. The member for Sudbury was very apologetic. If he wants to apologize so much I think what he should be doing is apologizing to the students and to the parents, because they are the ones who are being held hostage, not by the teachers but by the teachers' unions.

A few moments earlier the member from the third party said that we have no major problems. Let me assure you there are major problems. That's the only reason we brought forward Bill 74, the Education Accountability Act. What is the major problem? The major problem is when teachers withdraw co-instructional activities on the urging of the unions. The major problem is when teachers refuse to write supporting letters when kids apply for scholarships.

I'm very fortunate that in Mississauga where my younger daughter is studying in Grade 9—she's part of the new curriculum—she has very good teachers. She has taken part in rugby after school. She has taken part in band, chess club. This has been provided, in terms of extracurricular or co-instructional activities, by very good teachers. I want to make sure, in bringing forward and supporting this bill, that all the kids in Ontario have an

equal opportunity, that they all are given the chance to excel.

It is very important. It's not only important that they get classroom instruction but extracurricular or co-instructional activities are very important. I'm sure most of us who have gone through the system can think back to some of the sports we enjoyed, to some of the drama clubs we took part in that made our lives much better. I want to make sure that, because of this bill, every child in Ontario has that opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I would like to, first of all, thank the member for Niagara Falls for his comments, because it allows me to expand on something that I didn't in my remarks. I would say to the member for Niagara Falls that there have always been measures within the Education Act to ensure that boards were fiscally responsible and accountable to the people who elected them. That has always been the case.

Interjections.

Mrs Dombrowsky: What is new in this legislation—if the member opposite who is heckling would care to listen to the explanation, they might learn something—is the Henry VIII clause that allows the minister to—

Mr Spina: That's responsibility, boy. It's pretty easy to spend money.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Brampton Centre does not have the floor.

Mrs Dombrowsky: What the minister has not had the power to do in the past—only when it was demonstrated that a board was fiscally irresponsible was the minister able to take action. The most offending part of this particular part of the legislation, while there are many, is the issue of non-compliance and what that is. That allegation can be brought forward by a group of taxpayers who may or may not even have children in the school system. The minister determines the non-compliance.

To discipline school board trustees is one thing, but this act also gives the minister the ability to discipline employees as well. Employees of school boards are not employees of this government. Again, it is totally inappropriate and draconian for the Minister of Education to place himself or herself in that judgmental role, taking such drastic measures.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dunlop: I rise this evening to speak in favour of Bill 74, which I believe will further help to improve the quality of education in our province. Since this government was elected in 1995, we have been pursuing a challenging plan for education reform. Our plan is designed to make Ontario's education system the envy of the world, and that is from junior K up to and including university.

Parents have told us that we need to provide more direction to the school system to ensure that students come first. If approved by the Legislature—and I understand there's a awful lot of debate and controversy on this—the proposed Education Accountability Act would

amend the Education Act to ensure that school boards do the following: provide co-instructional activities such as sports, arts and special school activities; actually meet the provincial standards set two years ago for the amount of time secondary teachers spend performing key teaching duties; meet new province-wide standards for lower average class sizes at both the elementary and secondary levels; and meet other additional province-wide standards and fulfill their legal, educational and financial responsibilities.

This legislation builds on our government's commitment to provide students with an excellent education, based on the highest standards, clear expectations and frequent, straightforward evaluation.

2030

In the final report of its review of Ontario's 72 district school boards, released on April 13, 2000, this year, the Education Improvement Commission highlighted the need to increase the education system's accountability for student achievement. The legislation proposes a method to ensure that school boards are held accountable for making responsible decisions about the school systems under their care. Accountability also means an education system that is constantly looking for ways to improve and do things better, a system that is prepared and able to act on its obligation to provide a meaningful and relevant education to students who are growing up in a rapidly changing world where a quality education is a passport to a promising future.

Our government has always understood that the foundation of an education system is built on the hard work, dedication and talent of Ontario's teachers. We must support them by giving them the necessary tools to perform their jobs and in turn create a better future for our province. That is why we are investing more money into educational materials in the classroom instead of on wasteful administration outside the classroom.

Recently, I attended an education forum at Elmvale high school, which is just outside my riding, in Simcoe-Grey, which Mr Wilson represents. I had the opportunity to meet an excellent teacher who had worked with her students in putting together a CD. She had worked an average of 16-hour days putting this project together and in the process inspired her students around her. In that forum, the students came up to me and they asked me to acknowledge the dedication that she had put into the CD. I appreciate that kind of effort. She is a good example of the efforts teachers put in.

I also think of Paul Delany, another teacher in my riding, who teaches at Victoria Harbour public school. He has spent countless hours trying to arrange visits with dignitaries throughout the world—dignitaries such as the Honourable Hilary Weston—to come to their school and help to inspire the students at that school. For his efforts, in 1999 he was awarded the Ontario teacher of the year.

My own mother-in-law, Mrs Mary Taylor—she's now in her early 80s—taught her whole life in the public and separate school systems. She was very proud of her career because in her extracurricular instruction she

taught a school rhythm band which, for over 20 years in a row, won awards at all the local music festivals.

I can think of another couple of examples in my own family. First of all, the music department at the Park Street Collegiate where Mr Passfield and his staff taught not only my sisters and brothers music, but my daughter was taken on a trip to Scotland; my sister was taken on a trip to Spain with the band from Park Street. I think of the value of the guidance department at the Park Street Collegiate, which taught both my son and daughter the proper courses so that my daughter could fast track on to university and my son could go into a proper trade.

I could go on and on about the number of excellent teachers in our province, but the sad thing is that I could also go on about the poor teachers in the system. We all know, and more importantly the principals know, of teachers who leave school early in the day, or whenever their time frame is up, and very seldom put in extra effort. Many teachers have complained to me about this.

The other shameful practice is the withdrawing by the teachers' unions of extracurricular activities as a bargaining chip against school boards, such as the situation in Durham region. It is sad and it is unacceptable that students are being used as pawns in a political battle between the teachers' unions, the boards and our government.

If you believe the e-mails and the letter-writing campaign, you would think that every single teacher in this province is against this legislation, but I would like to read a letter to the editor, found in the Toronto Star, from a teacher.

Mr Levac: One.

Mr Dunlop: I guess there's only one; there's probably only one.

"As a teacher of many years, still enjoying my teaching responsibilities, I am comfortable with the legislation, just introduced by the provincial government, proposing a stronger definition of the requirements of teachers and school boards.

"I would suggest that those who feel threatened and want to point fingers should take a look at the teacher union executives and their zealots who decided decades ago to force members to withdraw 'voluntary' services as a negotiating tool.

"Many of us heavy-duty volunteers warned that if unions didn't stop using this tactic, the boards and/or government of the day would take the option away. But let's be realistic. It hasn't been truly voluntary ever since the union bosses started telling teachers when we could or could not give freely of our time to students."

That letter was written by Terry Ross, a teacher, and I would like to thank this teacher for putting so clearly what one of the intentions of this bill is designed to do.

While we are thankful for the number of good teachers in our education systems, we are also fearful of the number of poor teachers who are teaching our children. That is why I feel that teacher testing is an important instrument to help identify the poor teachers who disadvantage our system.

Getting quality teachers into our classrooms is an important process for this government. That is why beginning next fall all teachers will have to be recertified every five years. They will have to pass required courses, written tests and other assessments. This will ensure they are continually improving to meet the demands of a changing world. Beginning in 2001, new teachers will have to pass a test to qualify to teach. This will ensure they know the curriculum, teaching skills and methods.

In the next eight years, nearly 40,000 teachers will retire. To make sure that all teachers get a strong start at the beginning of their careers, we will be designing an induction internship program where they will get coaching and support from more experienced colleagues. New standards will ensure consistent teacher evaluation across the province. A new review process will determine if teachers not meeting the standards should have their certification removed. Parents and students will be given an opportunity to be involved in this process.

Teachers trained in other jurisdictions in a language other than English or French will have to pass an oral and written language proficiency test before they can teach in English or in French.

Quality teaching is also about excellence and accountability. We will be looking at ways to provide quality assurance through a third-party process that includes parents, educators and experts.

Excellent teachers also deserve recognition. We want to develop a system that recognizes teaching excellence.

I would encourage all members of this Legislature to vote in favour of this historic bill so that we can continue to improve our education system. I understand the controversy surrounding the bill, and I can tell you that in my own riding I have had a number of educators come to see me, as well as letters and e-mail, and I've had a number of appointments with the teachers' federation, the local secondary school teachers' federation and a number of our school councils. In my particular riding, I am encouraging them to continue to pass that information on to me so that I can pass it on to the Minister of Education.

I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this tonight.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mrs Bountrogianni: Earlier I referred to Monica Moran, a grade 7 and 8 teacher at a middle school on the mountain. I want to talk about some of the other activities that middle schools do, just so you understand that it's not just Monica. There are a lot of other teachers in this school and a great majority of teachers across the province who do these amazing things with our kids all day long.

At Norwood school they have volleyball—girls' junior and senior and boys' junior and senior—cross-country running, band, basketball, an art club, a yearbook club, drama and dance, instrumental ensembles, dance committees, school store, official helpers, peer mediation—which is very important, particularly for some of our troubled kids—a library club, a swim team, three pitch

teams, an environmental club, a science club and a fund-raising club. They also have choirs, recorder clubs, track and field, chess, checkers and all sorts of intramurals.

I also want to talk about a teacher who, two years ago, made a huge difference in a student's life, speaking about extracurricular activities. I really wonder, in whose wisdom do you think this bill—who will they change? Do you think that this bill will change those teachers that leave at 3 o'clock? How do you think this bill will change those teachers who leave at 3 o'clock? By forcing them to stay? We know that in every profession there are those who may be there in body but not in spirit. This bill won't change those people. There are other creative ways for screening applicants for the teaching profession.

The teacher I was referring to earlier took in a student and actually housed the student in his—the teacher's—parents' home, because he was raped by someone at a co-op placement, of all things, in my riding. He took the time to actually take this kid to his parents' home because the kid didn't feel safe any more where he was living. He had generalized what had happened to him.

2040

Mr Christopherson: I want to comment on the remarks of the member for Simcoe North and pick up where my colleague from Hamilton Mountain left off when she talked about the fact that you're not going to change things by passing this law in terms of the quality of the instruction and the leadership and the compassion and the experience that teachers pass on to their students.

During his comments, the member for Simcoe North mentioned his mother-in-law, who was a teacher, how much she enjoyed teaching and how fulfilling it was and the amount of extracurricular activity that she performed and how his own kids and his siblings benefited from it, and then said, sort of as a throwaway line, "And I could name just as many situations where it doesn't work." I think that's probably where a lot of people in the province differ with the honourable member. I would agree with my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, and I said so earlier, that you're going to get the odd person in any group who doesn't meet the standard that's expected of the group. This may come as a shock to you, but there are members of the public out there who would determine that there are some of us who don't meet the standard they believe should be set. I don't hear you suggesting any way that that's going to change.

For that matter, earlier you were commenting—and I think this is where the real gist of it is—"They get the summer off and they get this time off." I thought to myself that every period of time you've just mentioned that teachers get off, in terms of being in this place, you get more time off than teachers do, and yet no one ought to suggest that that's the only thing MPPs do, least of all me. So for you to suggest the same for teachers, I think what we are seeing is a mean-spirited attack on teachers that has nothing to do with the quality of education our children receive.

Mr Gill: It is my pleasure to not only take part in this debate but also bring into the record a letter, if I may take

the liberty. It is from a teacher, Terry Ross. This was published in the Examiner on May 16 this year.

“As a teacher of many years, still enjoying my teaching responsibilities, I couldn’t help but comment on the legislation just introduced by the provincial government which has proposed stronger definition of the requirements of teachers and school boards.

“As one who is comfortable with the legislation, I would say to those who feel threatened and want to point fingers to take a look at the teacher union executives and their zealots who decided decades ago to force members to withdraw ‘voluntary’ services as a form of negotiating tool.

“Many of us heavy-duty volunteers warned if they didn’t stop using this tactic the boards and/or government would take the option away. ...

“The unions claim that this government is confrontational and bashing teachers. Is it confronting and bashing all teachers or just those who should have already started thinking about another career? I have less fear of this government than I have of the unions or boards. At least I know where it’s coming from.”

That’s signed Terry Ross.

These are some of the comments that teachers are making. Some of the members opposite mentioned some of the good teachers, and I agree with them that there are many, many good teachers who are already giving of their personal time to teach the kids in the extracurricular activities. I want to make sure, if I may reiterate, that every kid in this province should have that opportunity.

Mr Cleary: I just want to say again, I will work and vote against this legislation. I think it’s just another swipe at our teachers. As one teacher said to me recently: “What next is going to be legislation? You have to have legislation so you can qualify for citizen of the year.” He also spoke of local teachers who are fit to be tied, teachers I have never seen demonstrating or even writing letters before.

This government has done many foolish things, and I think this is one of the worst. It’s a heartless move, and I don’t think the government and government members will get many brownie points from this.

I’ve belonged to many organizations in my life and I know that teachers were the first ones there to volunteer and to work along with the rest to make our community a better place to live. I always figured that a teacher’s a teacher because they wanted to be a teacher, and I always figured a teacher knows best. I think lumping them all together is very unfair. I know that it would leave a great hole in our community if you were to take the volunteers out of it who are teachers and teaching staff, because they raise money in the community; they work Saturdays and Sundays, late at night. Some of them even go to the students’ homes to help them with their homework.

I think it’s very sad that we have to come to this stage. I would think there would be other ways and I would hope the government would take a second look at this issue, because when you force people to do something, it

doesn’t always work out. It never has in history and it won’t now.

The government has a majority—they can make black into white—but I think this is one of the biggest mistakes they’re making.

The Acting Speaker: In reply?

Mr Dunlop : I thank the members for Hamilton West, Hamilton Mountain, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, and Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh for their comments.

Earlier, it was mentioned that the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington had spent 15 years as a trustee. I appreciate that, because at that same time—and I didn’t argue back with the member from Hamilton West at the time—I had spent 18 years in municipal politics.

In that 10-year time period from 1985 to 1995, as a municipal politician I watched the education taxes go up 140%. At that same time, in the Simcoe Country District School Board, the enrolment went up 16%, and inflation was running around 40% at that time. So we, as municipal politicians, put a lot of emphasis on that fact and we complained to the governments of the day, as we complained in the mandate of this government, about the high cost of education. I feel something had to be done about it.

I hope I haven’t offended by my comments about the holiday time, but the fact of the matter is, that’s what people say to me continually. As business people, as people who have two or three weeks of holidays a year, a lot of people feel there is a lot of complaining going on in the education system. Maybe those people aren’t justified, but certainly it’s a complaint I hear on a continual basis.

I know this legislation is very controversial, as I said earlier, and I—

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): How many days have we sat this year?

Mr Dunlop: Yes, we’ve sat 43 days in the year, but I basically work seven days a week. Yes, I do. I work seven days a week; maybe you don’t. The fact of the matter is that we work hard at our job and I will continue to support this legislation.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Levac: I am both honoured and saddened to participate in the debate of Bill 74, as limited as it’s going to be. I want to bring to the attention of our viewing public that this will be very limited debate considering the extremity and the extreme lengths—

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Windsor-St Clair, the Minister of Transportation, order.

Mr Levac: As I was saying, this debate is going to be very, very limited. Considering the changes that are going to take place in the Education Act, we deserve more than two days of debate. We deserve way more than the closure that this government’s going to impose upon us again. The public of Ontario, the people of Ontario, the citizens of Ontario, should be provided with

an opportunity to give full and open debate and public information regarding this.

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I'm also splitting some time with the member for Windsor-St Clair.

I want to read the title of the act into the record: An Act to amend the Education Act to increase education quality, to improve the accountability of school boards to students, parents and taxpayers and to enhance students' school experience. It's more like this: An Act to amend the Education Act to continue a phony war, to jeopardize the quality of education, to neutralize school boards and trustees, to punish teachers and principals, to attack and show contempt for democracy.

I want to share some of my experience as an educator for over 20 years in the province of Ontario, and also 20 years and more as a student. I can think of no more noble and important a profession than education.

I want to share again my comments about education that I made at the beginning of Education Week, the activities of which, by the way, are almost always completed by volunteer time before and after school by teachers and support staff as a showcase of what happens in schools day in and day out every week.

"Today marks the beginning of Education Week across the province. For over 20 years I've had the pleasure and honour of participating in the many activities that highlight what is offered on a daily basis, every week in classrooms in every school in the province. I stand to proclaim what I've always known: The teachers of our province provide a lifeline to the future.

"To the teachers of our province I say thank you. Thank you for the professional way in which you do your job. Thank you for always challenging yourselves to improve and innovate. Thank you for sharing your gifts and the art of teaching with us for our children's sake. Thank you for sharing something that all too often seldom ever gets mentioned: Thank you for sharing your love. Your love of learning and your love of children is what is most appreciated.

"From the first time a child learns to zip up a coat, ties shoelaces, identifies colours and letters or counts to 100, you were there. The mystery of reading and writing was solved with help from you. You taught us about fair play, sharing, critical thinking, problem-solving, science, physics, history, geography, French and more. You bring light to dark places.

"Let us celebrate Education Week by expressing our appreciation for the teachers of Ontario. Let us celebrate every week by dedicating to be the best partners we can be. As parents, students, educators, legislators and communities we must commit to creating a climate of trust, respect and dignity within our education system for all of our partners.

"Speaker, Education Week only represents what happens every week in our schools. Again to the teachers of Ontario, thank you. You are appreciated."

I want to share with you an opportunity that I've taken very large pride in, and that is remembering each and

every one of my teachers: in kindergarten, Miss Holtendorp; in grade 1, Miss Brady; grade 2, Sister St Maurice; grade 3, Mrs Walker; grade 4, Miss Jackson; grade 5, Mr Nolan; grade 6, Mr Ryan; grade 7, Mrs Szeman and Mrs Yoe; grade 8, John Store and Mr Parent; and my music teacher, Sister Noella. What I want to say to you very clearly is that each and every one of these teachers gave of themselves, their dedication, their love, to make sure that I had the opportunity to express and be myself.

Mrs Walker taught me many, many lessons about being dignified, being proud, being a good person.

Mr Ryan, my grade 6 teacher, who became my director of education later on, was always there with wonderful sports activities for us, before and after school. He taught us right from wrong.

Mr Store, my principal, always made sure that each and every one of us had a little snack at the beginning of the day, because I grew up in an area that was not privileged.

Mrs Szeman, for the first time in her life, coached a hockey team because no one else was available at the time. She rolled up her sleeves and said, "I'm going to learn this game and I'm going to coach each and every one of those kids."

Sister Noella taught music for over 70 years, and I am so proud to say that Sister Noella is an amazing teacher, with a contribution to education across this province that absolutely no one can rival. She taught religion until she was 92 years old.

Into high school: Mr Robertson, Mr Fuss, Mr Barkley, Mr Howard, Mr Gibbson, Mr Ryan, Mr Forter, Mrs Toth, Mr Newman, Miss Wilson, Miss Squires, Mr Hutton, Mr Chisolm, Mr Hagey, Mr McDonald, Mr McArthur, Mrs O'Brien, Mr O'Donald, Mr Hagey again. Mrs Chislem and Mr McGregor-Brown took their own time to take us to Europe, giving us all of that guidance and opportunity.

Why am I spending time talking about this? Because I want to make it perfectly clear that the members opposite do not understand the valuable contribution our teachers make, by creating a phony war. What they're trying to do is punish people and put them in their place.

I want to share with you some of the e-mails I've been receiving. This isn't from a teacher, this is from parents, Linda and Kirby Oudekerk:

"As a parent whose children have come through a successful school system, I am very concerned that the new school legislation (Bill 74) will have a very negative impact on the education of children of this province. I know that my children's teachers did not work just the four and one half hours per day that was suggested in the government ads before the last election"—spending millions of our dollars to say so—"I know that they spent countless hours preparing and perfecting lessons, teaching, marking and creating term tests, completing report cards, tutoring students who were struggling and falling behind, calling parents with concerns or accolades for what their children had accomplished. All this time mentioned does not include the countless hours of their own time spent outside the classroom leading and

coaching students and sporting events, field trips, as well as”—we have to fundraise for these events—“because they felt that they were an important part of their students’ overall education. Why would you want to increase their workload? If teachers have more students per day, won’t that mean less time per student? My children have done all right, but I am fearful of what is in store for my grandchildren in this province” under this government.

Another e-mail from a teacher and a constituent:

“I am a teacher in your riding. The government’s announcement that it is making my extracurricular activities mandatory is” totally “insulting.

“I regularly volunteer in a great variety of ways to ensure all the students in my school receive the best education possible.

“I do it because I have the time.... Teachers and students need support, not coercion.” They don’t need to fight a phony war. They don’t need to be “forced to do more with less, this government should be looking for ways to improve our ... system, not tear it down.

“I am tired of being treated with disrespect” and given no dignity “by this government. I am proud to be a teacher. I want a government that supports my work and public education.”

I am telling you right now that I am getting an average of 10 to 15 of these e-mails a day, by parents, by citizens, by taxpayers, by teachers, by principals, by superintendents, by directors, by many people in the riding of Brant who are saying: “Enough with the war. Would you please get on and try to help us create a better system for our province?”

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Christopherson: I want to compliment the member from Brant on his obvious strong feelings on this issue, and being a principal I don’t think it should come as a surprise. I would suggest that rather than the derision he’s faced from the government benches, it would make a lot of sense—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Well, you see now, the member from Durham just found out that the member from Brant is a principal, and that made him laugh. My whole point is that, rather than laugh, you ought to listen. If nothing else, he’s management. Doesn’t that make you feel better? You know he’s not a real teacher in terms of everyday teaching, which of course would make him evil in your eyes. He’s a principal, a manager. Now that would mean you would listen to what he has to say, but you don’t want to listen. They don’t want to listen to anyone in this House who has real experience. You don’t want to listen to a teacher, you don’t want to listen to a principal, you’re not listening to us as parents, and in terms of listening to the public, if one takes a look at the insulting amount of time you’ve put forward for public hearings, you obviously don’t want to listen to anyone.

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The member for Brant said—and I believe I’ve quoted him right—that your real intent here is to punish and put

teachers in their place, and that’s exactly what you’re doing. Many of you talked about the importance of individual teachers and your schooling experience, and somehow you managed to disconnect and dissociate your experience, where all of the extracurricular activities were voluntary, to some notion that the whole thing is not working now. It was OK for you but not for anyone else. This is so phony, and that’s why teachers are so angry, so demoralized. They’re leaving in droves. We’re losing our best teachers. You’re the only real threat to education in this province.

Mr Galt: I listened quite intently to the member for Brant in his presentation. There’s something I could agree with him on in the whole thing: thanking teachers and recognizing them for what they do for our children. I certainly respect those comments, but after that he absolutely and totally wasted his 10 minutes. He had an opportunity to say something and he went on reading testimonials and a bunch of other stuff. I understand he’s a principal, we’re being told he’s a principal, and he had such an opportunity and he blew the whole thing.

I want to zero in on part of what he could have been talking about that some of the others have talked about. I hear them talking about teachers having to be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week—what garbage—and they’re going to have to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He said, “Look on page 2.” Let me tell you about page 2 and paragraph 7.1 and subsection (2.1):

“(2.1) The plan required under paragraph 7.1 of subsection (1) shall include a framework within which principals shall operate in assigning the duties described in clause 264(1)(1) to teachers and temporary teachers.

“(2.2) The framework shall address assignment of duties,

“(a) on school days and on days during the school year that are not school days;”

Saturday, when they might be having a volleyball tournament, happens to be a non-school day. So how else would you write it? Then (b) says, “during any part of any day during the school year.” It might be an evening that they might be having a volleyball game. How else would you write it? I don’t think you quite understand. Then it goes on,

“(c) on school premises and elsewhere.” It’s unfortunate I don’t have more time.

Mr Duncan: In addition to this bill being an attack on teachers, in my view it’s an attack on public education. The Harris government is attempting to steal control of education from local authorities and from educators into their own hands.

I applaud my colleague from Brant, who spoke eloquently not only with the perspective of his experience but with the background and citing teachers who have helped him personally. I must confess I was somewhat nostalgic thinking about teachers in my life, Denny Deschamps, Father Q. Johnson and many others, who had gone the extra mile for us as students, who had opened a new world to many of us that we might not otherwise have experienced.

My little boy is in grade 4 at St Gabriel elementary school in Windsor and two of his teachers, Mrs Lemiski and Mrs Muzzin, his third- and second-grade teachers, are retiring at the end of this year. I can tell you that those teachers were in the classroom long beyond the last bell and they were inevitably there before the first bell. They were prepared to meet with parents; they were prepared to work with kids.

This bill is an attack on the fundamentals of public education and it's an attack on our teachers. When given a choice of who to stand with, the teachers of this province or that government, I choose the teachers every time.

I found the comments from the member for Simcoe North, Mr Dunlop, absolutely appalling when he tried to suggest that teachers didn't do their share, that they were lazy because they had the summers off. I'll remind the member, whose government only sat 40 days in the last session, whose Premier never comes to this House to answer questions, that those teachers work harder than that member. That member is lazy. He doesn't do his job.

Interjections.

Mr Duncan: They get upset about that, but that's what they were saying about teachers. They are extremely—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation):

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member has been cautioned on many occasions by the Speaker about how inappropriate it is to discuss the attendance of members, including his own leader, who wasn't here for various bills today, and he knows quite well that in point of fact if you measure the number of hours our Legislature has sat in comparison with when they were the government, he knows we have beaten them over and over—

The Acting Speaker: Order. It is of course inappropriate to refer to a member's absence.

Mr Duncan: I never referred to a member's absence.

The Acting Speaker: I'm not sure I heard that.

Now is there a point of privilege, member for Windsor-St Clair?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Questions or comments?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): In response to the member for Brant, apparently he was a principal in the education system, and I commend him for that and his litany of important teachers. Each of us would thank the important teachers who affect our lives, but I think the member for Northumberland raises a very good point. He could have taken his 10 minutes, as a professional educator, to raise the germane issues here in Bill 74.

I will raise one. I have listened to my riding people, teachers, of whom many of you would know my wife is one, and would say that 98% of the teachers I know, including my sisters, my wife and my oldest daughter, who will be teaching high school this fall, are dedicated, and I'm proud of them. What I am not proud of is Earl Manners and the union rhetoric that has taken over the profession and ruined it. I recall the rhetoric, "Hell no, we won't go," "Six out of eight," that kind of stuff. Most

good teachers will have no problem dealing with paragraph 7.1.

I will say this to you and to the House and on the record: I have cautioned the minister of the importance of making sure the language suits the purpose in Bill 74.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: No, no. I think, respectfully, most excellent professional teachers, irrespective of what their unions have said, will be volunteering for the outdoor ed and the weekend tournaments. Whether it's called co-instructional or whatever it's called, they'll be there for the students.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Levac: The only thing I can say about the members on the other side is that I really feel sorry for you. You've lost the perspective of what I was trying to say.

I want to come back to the member for Sudbury. I apologized to the teachers of Ontario for the way this government has acted and continues to talk. Every single member over there does not get it. You just don't get it. You've got hundreds and thousands of teachers and their families demoralized to a point where you've taken and negated their years and years of dedication and love for children and you've made it snuffy—you've turned it into a little game.

Interjections.

Mr Levac: You're sitting there yapping on, trying to take me off my track. I'll tell you right now, I would be ashamed to have you as a student in my school. I would make sure that you had a code of conduct laid on you so that you would never be able to act that way in a school, ever. The way you treat teachers, the way you treat the trustees, the way you treat the boards of education, I cannot believe it. These are the kind of people we've got running our government, who put people down.

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You should be celebrating and lifting up the people of the province of Ontario. You should be selling those things. You should be telling the people of Ontario that you are exceptionally proud. But no, you've gone down to the gutter. You have played to the lowest common denominator of meanness. You've taken every piece of professionalism that our teachers have and you've turned it into garbage. You cannot stand the fact that somebody has enough dignity in this House to stand up for each and every one of those teachers whom I know I've had and the members on this side have had. Shame on you.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: I am pleased to have this opportunity to join in the debate. Let me begin, first of all, by acknowledging the comments of the member from Simcoe North, who corrected my statement with regard to the 15 years; I acknowledge his 18 years' service. I assume, since he was there that long, that he also provided excellent representation to his constituents. So my record does stand corrected.

Let me talk a bit about something that I don't think there has been too much time on. My colleague from Timmins-James Bay did talk about it briefly, but I want

to spend a little more time on it, and that is this whole notion that the government wants to listen, that they care about what people have to say. Let's be very clear about what has happened here in this place. You've introduced this bill, brought us to the point of second reading—not particularly fast for your government, but in the context of the history and tradition of this parliamentary place, it's like greased lightning.

We have a situation where I believe you've done that deliberately to make it very difficult for parents' groups, councils, teachers' organizations—yes, Earl Manners and others—who are legitimate, important stakeholders. You've done this to disallow them the time they need to prepare and comment and give intelligent perspective on an important piece of legislation. In fact, a number of the government backbenchers tonight have acknowledged—I believe the member for Simcoe North and the member for Niagara Falls, among others—that this is very controversial. They made no bones about it. They weren't prodded by anyone or tricked into it. They admitted that this is very controversial.

One would think, when we're dealing with our children's education, where the government members themselves are acknowledging that it's controversial, that you would want to take the time to listen to people who have expertise, who care about this issue, who have knowledge beyond what we have here in the opposition benches, so that in the midst of deciding which way to go when dealing with a controversial issue of this great importance, you wouldn't make any mistakes. We can't afford for you to make any mistakes. Like many of the members here, I'm a parent. I have an eight-year-old daughter. I can't afford and she can't afford for you to make a mistake.

What have you done? Today you've tabled a time allocation motion, which means that this debate tonight is the last debate on second reading. We'll have one more debate, but it will be on the motion to shut off debate. But that's it at second reading, it's done.

One would expect that next I would say to you that as the House leader for the NDP I've received notice that we're going to have ample opportunity to have input into this bill. I would ask anybody watching to draw their own conclusion and make their own judgment. On an issue that the government itself has said is controversial and important, here's how much opportunity you the public have, whether you're a teacher, principal, parent, staff or student yourself, here's how much opportunity you have to participate in the development of Bill 74, an extremely far-reaching piece of legislation: Wednesday, June 7, in the morning, the committee—that would be the justice and social policy committee, which is where this bill is being sent—in Barrie, there will be one whole morning—

Mr Bartolucci: Half a day.

Mr Christopherson: Half a day is correct. One morning, in Barrie; Friday, June 9, Ottawa, one day. After that, there is no more. There is no more after that in terms of public input. I'm going to get to the clause-by-clause, and I'll have a comment about that too, after I finish

commenting on the fact that you are offering, on a bill like this, one morning in Barrie and one day in Ottawa. That's it. No one else gets an opportunity to speak to this. No one else gets an opportunity to make their case or their argument to this legislative committee that ordinarily played an important role. Now it's strictly pro forma. It's just a formality. It's a scam, a sham, something where you can't quite take the next step to eliminate it but you have in effect, in all but name only, eliminated any kind of role for the parliamentary committees to play.

After that, the committee will return on June 12 and they will spend a grand total—if everything goes correctly that day, because it depends when question period wraps up—of a whole two and a half hours for clause-by-clause on a bill that runs 19 pages. We don't know how many amendments.

I can tell you this from personal experience, having just dealt with the construction bill, Bill 69—my friend Mr Bartolucci from the Liberal Party was there also. You should know that there wasn't enough time in one afternoon to even read all the amendments; not debate them, not consider them, not sit back and roll up your sleeves and do the work that committees are supposed to do in terms of a detailed review of legislation. No, no, we did not have enough time to even read all the amendments.

The government amendments were the only ones that were read. I want to tell you, they were speed-read into the record. There was fast voting just to give it legal sanction, because there has to be a vote. But there was debate around one clause, maybe two, but only one that was significant. Even on that one, we didn't get all the answers, if you recall, because we had to keep bringing in staff and taking recesses. I did not fault the parliamentary assistant for that. He's not the expert. That's why he brings in staff. That's one clause. One clause was all we had time for. All of the amendments weren't even read, let alone debated. It's a joke.

That's exactly what's going to happen to Bill 74, a joke of a process. By the time most of the public realizes what has passed, it will long be over. The way you schedule things, when we look at how you've governed over the last five years, your hope is that people will go off into the summer and it will just become one of those things back in history and they will long forget about it by the time school opens again in September. It's so obvious; it's so shameful.

In the less than one minute I have left I want to mention one more thing, and that is that this government continues—although not quite so much tonight—still likes to talk about tax cuts being the be-all and end-all. We know that to pay for your tax cuts, there has been almost \$1 billion taken out of education on a student per capita basis.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: On a student per capita basis, you've taken out almost \$1 billion to pay for your tax cut, and now with Walkerton, we're seeing some of the

examples of how those tax cuts are paid for. We all agree that we can always make things more efficient. We can always make things better. We can improve them. But when you cut billions and billions of dollars from our environment ministry, what happens? Walkerton. When you take hundreds of millions of dollars out of our education system, what happens to our kids' education? The sad reality is that we won't know that for a generation or two, but I can tell you that I have no doubt this is not an improvement in our education system.

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Going after our teachers and going after our trustees is not how we rebuild and recreate the kind of environment you talk about and brag about when you talk about how wonderful your upbringing was and the schooling you had. This is not the way to do it. This is how bullies do it. This is not how leaders do it. All we've seen from you is the bully in schoolyard, time after time. I want to tell you, in terms of school board trustees, this whole province ought to be so blessed as to have someone like Judith Bishop, who we have in wards 1 and 2 in Hamilton. That's the kind of person you're wrongfully—

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr O'Toole: To the member for Hamilton West: I question if Earl Manners wrote his speech. I would ask him also, in his reign of government, the social contract, how many public hearings did you have? How much did you consult or did you dictate the opening and ripping apart of contracts?

I would say to you that there has been ample discussion on this issue. Education has been paramount on the minds of Ontario citizens. The quality of education is what this is about, and it's about our students.

I can say that I do have sympathy for some of the remarks made this evening with respect to 7.1, and I think it's important: "The plan required under paragraph 7.1 of subsection (1) shall include a framework within which principals shall operate in assigning the duties...." We're talking about co-instructional time. I can't emphasize too much that the professional individual teachers, not the union leaders, not Earl Manners and not Marshall Jarvis, are all already doing it.

What they're trying to do here is clarify this subsection (2.2): "(a) on school days and on days during the school year that are not school days." Clearly this implies a weekend when they're on an outdoor education program or perhaps a tournament. But yes, there are those who will misconstrue this. It's the union leaders who are beguiling the people of Ontario. What this about is about our students being able to have a tournament and to go camping, and most of the teachers want to do it anyway.

The member for Hamilton West is so far off the track here—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I am pleased to respond to the comments of the member for Hamilton West, but I must concur with the member for Durham, who just spoke on the government side, when he said that

education has been paramount on the minds of Ontarians. He is absolutely correct. The reason it has been is that this government has been so vindictive and has tried to take money out of education, without declaring it to be so, in the name of efficiency, in the name of providing more quality.

I say to the members opposite that you know as well as I do, because you hear from parents: from parents who have children in special education, from parents who have children in various programs. You hear from teachers and you hear from trustees. Maybe they've given up. Maybe they feel they shouldn't be talking to you any more because you don't listen.

As the member from Hamilton West has rightly underlined tonight, in the name of trying to put a veil on the money that has been taken out of education, we will do certain things, and we'll put the boots to the teachers, and we will impose mandatory volunteerism, which is an oxymoron if ever I heard one. You will be obligated to contribute your time to give freely to the children, which 99% of teachers are doing at the moment, because two school boards, perhaps, in the Durham area, of which the member has just spoken, had a particular difficulty. Do you think they might have had the guts to go in there and talk to them and see what they could do? No. They now impose a system throughout Ontario on all teachers, and they are being destructive to public education in this particular community.

Interjection.

Mr Patten: The member laughs. Public education is being undercut today, I say.

Mr Galt: I was entertained by the member from Hamilton West as he read the speech written by, obviously, Earl Manners, because who else would write a speech with that kind of content? He's so unionized, he listens to them, he gets donations from them, the party gets donations from them, it's no wonder he would read a speech written by Earl Manners.

I wanted to talk about, as part of what he was referring to, the 24 hours a day that they keep wanting to go on—

Mr Christopherson: I win.

Mr Galt: I'm sure, if he's happy that he thinks he's winning over there, he's sadly mistaken.

With the kind of support from the unions and carrying on using their speeches, that's why we're into this. It's because the unions interfered. If the unions hadn't interfered on the co-instructional time, we would not have to be doing this. I think it's unfortunate that it's necessary. The only reason we have co-instructional time in here, telling teachers and principals what has to happen, is because the unions—I underline, the unions—limited what teachers could do, told teachers they couldn't give their volunteer time. That's the kind of thing that's going on in school boards in this province.

What is the solution? I ask the member from Hamilton West, what is the solution when unions use that kind of underhanded tactic and teachers end up with nervous breakdowns because they can't give their time to do

volunteer work for the students in their class? That is why we had to bring in this kind of legislation.

Finally, we're going to put the students first, put the parents first and put the taxpayers first in the province of Ontario. No longer are we going to put the unions first. Thank you very much.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): What I think we have to recognize, and the member has well recognized, is that despite the rhetoric on the government side about teachers' unions and so on, the people who are directly affected by this are, yes, members of the teaching profession, but indirectly affected are the students in the schools. For years and years we have had individuals in the teaching profession who have given countless hours of time. I was talking to a couple the other day who were getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning to coach rowing, then going into the school and coaching another sport after. We have people who work with the debating clubs, with drama clubs and so on. All these people have done this of their own volition. They have not had to be required by the government to do so. Yet, what we have now is a government which is going to simply pick a fight with members of the teaching profession for no good reason at all.

These are people who have become demoralized by what this government has done. Instead of going to school early in the morning and being enthusiastic about it, instead of going there and saying, "I'm looking forward to the day, to the week, to the weekend, even, when working with students," what we have now is as many people who go into the school system and say, "Mike Harris is finding one more reason to pick a fight with members of the teaching profession." You'll find the students are sympathetic to that point of view. They are very thankful, many parents are extremely thankful, for the additional work that teachers will do with students in our system.

Unfortunately, this government has decided that it's good politics to pick a fight with the teachers. There's a certain group of people out there who like to respond well to the bashing of teachers in our system.

I think ultimately what you have to look at is what the impact is on students. I hope that there are enough

moderate members on the government side to understand this and who are prepared to tell the Premier that he should withdraw this legislation and start again.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Christopherson: Thank you very much, Speaker. Let me also thank the members for St Catharines, Durham, Ottawa Centre and Northumberland. Let me say to the member for Northumberland that when he said he was speechless in responding to my comments, I felt at that moment I won. I won at least that round, if not the overall war. I'll take it as probably the highlight of the evening that I made the member for Northumberland speechless.

I agree with my colleague from Ottawa Centre when he talks about the member for Durham's comments, that the quality of education has been paramount in the minds of the people of Ontario. That's true, and it certainly was in the last election. The reason for that is because people were so upset about what you've done to the education system.

Health care and education were the two big issues when you went door to door. We all know this. The two issues were health care and education. It wasn't because they wanted to compliment you. It was because they were so upset with the damage you had done to the education system.

I want to agree with the member for St Catharines. No matter how much you try to throw around the word "union" like it's evil or dirty, I would also say to all of you over there, how come you don't use the same kind of tone or language when you talk about police unions, or when we talk about doctors' unions, or how about investment unions? There are other collectives in our society. But you choose to use, as always, the divisive tone, "Divide and conquer." The problem is that it's not just a political game; it's our kids' futures. That's what hurts so much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. It being 9:30 of the clock, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2133.

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