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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 25 October 2000

Mercredi 25 octobre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 25 October 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't believe a quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Mushinski): Would you check to see if there's a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Orders of the day.

MINISTRY OF TRAINING,
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2000
LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT
AU MINISTÈRE DE LA FORMATION
ET DES COLLÈGES ET UNIVERSITÉS

Mrs Cunningham moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to enact the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, repeal the Degree Granting Act and change the title of and make amendments to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities Act / Projet de loi 132, Loi édictant la Loi de 2000 favorisant le choix et l'excellence au niveau postsecondaire, abrogeant la Loi sur l'attribution de grades universitaires et modifiant le titre et le texte de la Loi sur le ministère des Collèges et Universités.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): Mr Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member for Thornhill.

I'm very pleased and honoured to have this opportunity to celebrate the vast new opportunities that are opening up for our students. We know the world around us has changed dramatically in the course of our lives. We have seen the introduction of an era characterized by the instantaneous flow of information across borders, a fast-paced technological innovation that is creating whole new fields of study and work, and of the emergence of a global marketplace where our students must compete with the best and the brightest in the world.

I have extreme confidence in the ability of our students, and indeed our working adults, to seize the opportunities and meet the challenges that this change will bring. It is our job to assist them, to provide them with a full range of choices for high-quality education and training that they will need throughout their lives to reach their full potential.

1850

As Ontarians, we are proud of the investments we have made in our post-secondary education and training systems. We have all benefited from the highly educated citizenry that is the envy of other countries. I want to remind my colleagues that our success is the result of vision and conviction to ensure that our post-secondary education and training system is responsive to the needs of our students.

I'm reminded of a time in the early 1960s when the choice for a post-secondary system was limited to a university level program and one man had the vision to see that times were changing, that students needed more choices to prepare for the vast new opportunities that were being created in that time of growth and prosperity. I'm proud to say that the Honourable William G. Davis not only had a vision for a new system for those changing times; he and his government also had the courage and the conviction to create Ontario's network of new colleges of applied arts and technology that opened up a whole new era of learning, a whole new range of high-quality, relevant programs that would prepare students to enter the workforce.

Few would argue that there were skeptics when Mr Davis set out his bold vision for students. Where are those naysayers today? Who among us in this Legislature has not celebrated our colleges' commitment to our students? Our colleges have reached out to employers and built links with our local communities, all to ensure that the programs they offered continued to evolve so that students continued to have access to high-quality and relevant programs that kept pace with changes in our economy and made sure our students got jobs.

We can draw inspiration from that experience as we once again look forward to a time of growth, of opportunity and of innovation, and our government is doing that. We have a new vision. Our Premier, our caucus and our cabinet have a new vision for the future. Our vision is of a post-secondary system that provides high-quality learning, that is relevant to the real needs of students and the workplace, that will have a place for every willing and motivated student. Our system will be accessible to

people throughout their lives, lifelong learning to ensure they have opportunities where and when they are needed to upgrade their skills or acquire new ones.

Like Mr Davis, we are moving forward with our plan to turn that vision into a reality. We've already taken steps to strengthen our publicly funded system and to ensure it is responsive to the needs of students and communities. That is our first priority.

We are meeting increased demand for student spaces through SuperBuild, which, with our partners, is investing \$1.8 billion to create 73,000 new student spaces at our colleges and universities. This is the single largest capital construction commitment to post-secondary education in the past 30 years. We have already increased operating grants to \$2.4 billion this year to allow our institutions to begin to plan for this increased enrolment.

We are expanding access to high-demand programs through our access to opportunities program that will increase enrolment in the growth areas of science and new technology, and we have many private sector partners to assist us. We have introduced new programs and incentives to strengthen our system's research capacity so that we can continue to attract the best and brightest faculty and researchers. Our challenge fund right now is at \$550 million over 10 years, a huge investment, and with great recommendations from our post-secondary sector, our universities, we have established a base fund of \$30 million to support that great research in our universities and in our colleges.

I should mention our Premier's research and excellence awards: \$100,000 is given to each scientist who wins these awards to encourage them to stay in Canada, to do great research, to have an assistance and to make sure the work they do will be a model for those who follow, so that we will always have our graduate students, new professors, new instructors there for our students.

Right now I will say we are expanding access, of course, in our research and development programs because it's necessary. That was a bold venture on behalf of our government. We're also ensuring that our community needs are being met through the introduction of a new nursing baccalaureate program and incentives for our medical students to locate in underserved areas where our people need them, where they count on them. As well, we're increasing enrolment in our teacher training facilities, our faculties of education. We are actually planning, over the next five years, to increase our training spots by 31,000 spaces. We hope we do have a plan to respond to the needs of our young people and our education system, and to the vision and dreams of young people who want to become teachers.

We are also taking steps to help students manage the cost of their education. This is very important. In our post-secondary system in Ontario, some 35% of 18- to 24-year-olds have access, a number that is greater than anywhere else in Canada and perhaps in North America. We are very proud of the opportunities our young people have, if they are motivated and qualified, to attend our

post-secondary systems. The taxpayers of this province are providing the largest amount of student assistance to our young people, so that they can all have that opportunity.

We are also taking steps right now through our Ontario student opportunity trust fund, which is over and above what we refer to as OSAP. We have established these funds at each of our colleges and universities, so that they will be accessible in a very personal way to those people who need them. In addition, we've announced a five-year tuition policy for young people who want to plan, along with their parents, for their dream to attend our post-secondary education facilities. This will see our increases capped at 2% per year for the next five years. This of course could mean an increase of \$34 for college students each year for five years and \$77 for university undergraduate arts tuition. This is what our people will be planning for. This is part of their dream.

This fall, more than 4,000 high-achieving students graduating from our secondary schools earned Ontario's first Aiming for the Top scholarships. When fully implemented, \$35 million will be invested annually in these tuition scholarships that recognize both academic excellence and financial need. Accessibility is our goal. Excellence is also our goal.

The introduction of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Statute Law Amendment Act, 2000 builds on our work to date and is another step in giving shape to our vision, our plan to support our students. Today I am moving second reading of this bill, which will continue the evolution of our post-secondary system by providing Ontario students with more choice when it comes to high-quality programs. If passed by the Legislature, this bill would be the next step in our comprehensive plan to bring post-secondary education into the 21st century and address the changing needs of students and employers.

I welcome the debate that this legislation has encouraged. Constructive discussions based on the realities our students face today are important to us and to our democratic process. It is vital to the development of informed policies to support our students as they pursue their goals in today's world. We always welcome discussion and debate.

1900

I'd like to take a few minutes to remind the members of changing realities today's students are facing. First of all, they are not of the traditional college or university age. Today's students reflect a wider cross-section of Ontario's population, from recent high school graduates to working students starting out in the job market to mature students looking for the specialized instruction they need to move ahead in their careers. Basically, we're trying to meet the needs of lifelong learners, no matter how old they are, no matter where they live.

A wider spectrum of students requires a wider spectrum of choice. Some students want access to programs that are not offered by their local colleges or universities. Others are working full-time and want more programs

available at times and places that are convenient for them. And let's not forget our college students, whose outstanding achievements have not, until now, been recognized with the degree credential that is essential for employment as they compete for specialized, high-tech jobs with Ontario employers who do business around the world.

Any one of these students could have families, and they need flexibility and they need choice. Any one of them wants to finish their degree or start their degree at any age. Right now we have far too many students writing us letters saying this is not possible, so we are looking for even better ways and more choices. We are committed to ensuring that all of Ontario's students have the full range of quality educational choices they need, where and when they want them, to compete and succeed in today's rapidly changing world. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Statute Law Amendment Act, 2000 would assist us in achieving that goal.

I said this bill helps us move ahead with our plan for post-secondary education. But I can assure you that this vision is based on extensive input from students, parents, faculty, employers and others, and not just hearings but letters, phone calls, meetings, meetings with members of this Legislative Assembly. They want choice. They want more choice. In particular, this bill does reflect advice we received during the many consultations my parliamentary assistant Tina Molinari, the member from Thornhill, and I had with stakeholders throughout the spring and summer and into the fall.

In addition to these face-to-face consultations, we encouraged everyone with a particular interest to submit in writing to our office their ideas and recommendations on the best way to implement this new degree-granting policy. In many instances, we met with them as well. We met with groups who had specific interests or concerns they wished to discuss. We met with over 150 individuals representing public universities and colleges, academics, private vocational schools, student groups, labour, business and various other associations. More than 400 copies of our consultation paper, "Increasing Degree Opportunities for Ontarians," were sent to stakeholders, and the paper was also posted on the ministry's Web site, so that everyone with an interest in our education system who wanted to and who took the time was able to participate.

The consultation process was very informative and very constructive. We gained first-hand valuable insight from the knowledge and expertise of those who participated, and much of what we heard is reflected in this bill. Based on those discussions, this bill, if passed by the Legislature, would essentially do two things: it would make amendments to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities Act and would replace the Degree Granting Act with the new Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000.

The new Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000 is enabling legislation. It will establish the Post-secondary Education Quality Assessment Board,

a very key component of the success of this legislation and the ongoing process. This board will establish rigorous standards to maintain and enhance the quality of programs available to students. Only after a full assessment will the board make recommendations to the minister based on the quality of the program and the institution's ability to provide it. We're underlining quality of the program and the institution's ability to provide it to our students, who come first. It is this process that would also make it possible for Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology to grant applied degrees, and would allow for the expansion of more private post-secondary institutions in Ontario.

I'm proud to say that Ontario is home to some of the best publicly funded universities in the world. Our universities have been successfully competing on an international basis for many years. They have a strong record of academic achievement and are able to attract the brightest and best faculty and researchers.

We have much more work to do together with our colleges and our universities to make sure that we grow, that we're even stronger and that we actually maintain and enhance our commitment, which is our first choice in this great province, and has been for decades and decades.

Allowing the introduction of private universities will complement our excellent post-secondary system. Competition to attract students by providing more responsive programs will only serve to enhance quality and innovation in the province's post-secondary system as a whole. It will also bring our university system more into line with the range of choices offered in all other areas of education. Our elementary and secondary school students currently have a choice between private and public education.

In Ontario, we currently have 2,000 students studying in existing private universities, such as Redeemer University College in Ancaster, compared to more than 240,000 in our public universities and colleges. We have 42,000 students studying in private vocational schools, schools that give our young people opportunities to get good jobs in areas where they need them, whether it be business, technology or health-care-related. And we have 169,000 in publicly funded colleges of applied arts and technology.

I would like to correct what I just said: the 240,000 number is in our public universities; the 169,000 is in our publicly funded colleges. There are actually, though, some 90,000 students studying in our private elementary and secondary schools.

In spite of the efforts and the great commitment of so many of our citizens in this province who are involved in our post-secondary institutions, our universities, our colleges, our private vocational schools, in our training, whether they be involved in our apprenticeship training, our Job Connect programs, our school-to-work transition programs, our summer jobs, in spite of all of us, all of those terrific people who really like to work with young

people, in spite of all of this and all of our partners, we still have more to do.

And just as important to note, we have many students leaving the province to get the post-secondary education of their choice, because they could not get the specialized programs they wanted in Ontario. These students have been going to other provinces. We know them. They're our neighbours. They're our relatives. They're young people we talk to, sometimes in our own communities, sometimes in the workplace. They're young people who have been going to other provinces, to the United States and even abroad because Ontario has failed to keep up with other jurisdictions. It is estimated by the Institute of International Education that more than 7,000 students from Ontario are studying outside this great province.

Previous governments in Ontario have stood still while other jurisdictions have moved ahead to ensure their students had programs that responded directly to the increasingly sophisticated entry level skills required by a changing job market so they can get a job.

Many US states and Canadian provinces allow private universities to operate side by side with an extremely healthy system of high-quality public universities, including British Columbia, Alberta and New Brunswick.

In the United States, 22% of students are enrolled in private degree-granting post-secondary institutions.

Interruption.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I thought that it was the Speaker's role to ask that there be no heckling from the public gallery.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Heckling from the public gallery is not allowed. You'll be asked to leave if you continue.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: No, she's not. There will be no heckling from the members' gallery or the public galleries, or we'll have to ask you to leave.

1910

Hon Mrs Cunningham: In the United States, 22% of students are enrolled in private degree-granting post-secondary institutions.

Ms Mushinski: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would you ask that the members in that gallery stop making gestures as well as heckling?

The Acting Speaker: The member is correct. There are to be no gestures or heckling from the galleries. If there is, we will have no choice but to ask you to leave.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: World-renowned schools—

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would suggest, with all due respect, that it is your role to take that up, and it's not the role of the member for Scarborough Centre to harass the students who are sitting there. I think it's inappropriate for her to be standing up and asking you to rule on something she sees and the Speaker doesn't see.

The Acting Speaker: I will decide here what's a point of order and what's not a point of order. In fact, there was some heckling from the gallery and it is the privilege

of any member here to stand on a point of order and point to that if they so choose and to ask the Speaker to rule on that. I did, and hopefully there will be no more disturbance.

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The clock did not stop during that point of order. I hope the Speaker would be flexible in the time allotted for us.

The Acting Speaker: I am not going to be, but I would hope that we would not have this kind of go-round for too much longer.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: World-renowned schools such as Harvard, Yale and Stanford are private degree-granting institutions. Britain and Australia also allow private universities to operate as a supplement to the public university system. In the late 1980s, Buckingham University in the UK and Bond University in Australia were established as private universities. Students in Japan, Mexico and Korea, to name a few, also have a choice of public and private universities.

While our competitors have moved to help students keep pace with these changes, previous governments in Ontario have put the onus on students to take the time to acquire two or more degrees and diplomas to get the right balance of academic and applied skills that employers require. For too long, we have watched as our students and their parents have been asked to assume the extra costs of getting a degree in another jurisdiction.

It is time for us to face reality. Students require more, not fewer, opportunities right here in Ontario, close to home where they have the support of their families and friends, and where the resources are not as expensive.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker: Please have that person removed. Stop the clock, please.

Minister.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: My words seem somewhat appropriate. It is time for us to face reality, and the reality is that students require more, not fewer, opportunities right here in Ontario. We must ensure that the post-secondary system provides our students with a full range of high-quality choices.

While the legislation we are discussing this evening, if passed by the Legislature, would allow private universities to provide more flexible and relevant opportunities for Ontarians in a broader choice of fields, I want to send a clear signal to any potential applicants—and, I might add, to the members opposite—that quality education in Ontario is not negotiable. We are determined to maintain or enhance our standards of quality and protect the interests of students.

A private institution applying for degree-granting status in Ontario must meet rigorous criteria, both formal and informal. First it will need to meet or exceed the criteria set by the Post-secondary Education Quality Assessment Board. Second, it will need to have strong student protection measures. All new institutions will be subject to our key performance indicators that students are increasingly using to make informed decisions about their

education futures, and they are taking these decisions very seriously. They want to know what percentage of students graduate and go on to get a job.

I also want to remind the members that there have always been some private institutions in Ontario; this is not something new. However, for the most part, these universities had a religious foundation. We are simply proposing to extend the degree-granting authority to secular private institutions where there is a demonstrated demand from students.

Private universities will not receive public funding, capital or operating. The proposed legislation specifically addresses this issue, and I quote: "The giving of a consent does not entitle the person to whom the consent is given to any funding from the government of Ontario."

This government is committed to ensuring that new degree-granting opportunities are accessible to all Ontarians, regardless of financial circumstance. Therefore, students attending these new institutions will be eligible to apply for and receive financial help from the Ontario student assistance program once the institution has proven itself, and there are requirements. OSAP supports our students, not institutions.

As I mentioned earlier, the new Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000 would make it possible for Ontario colleges of applied arts and technology to grant applied degrees. Individually and through the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario, colleges have been urging the government for a number of years to permit them to grant applied degrees. Our students need them.

This expression of interest is the direct result of demands from both employers and students for advanced training beyond the diploma credential in specialized college programs that would differ in structure and content from university programs.

Allowing colleges to grant applied degrees would help us provide students with the wider range of choices they require. Colleges, with their links to industry, are well positioned to offer training in emerging areas. It is appropriate that this training be recognized with the applied degree credential.

Colleges will be permitted to offer applied degrees in areas where there is a demonstrated employer demand for degree-level applied education and training, and where current diploma programs are not fully meeting emerging needs. As part of the application process, proposals from colleges to offer applied degrees will need to demonstrate employer support.

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This credential is being introduced to colleges on a pilot project basis. Up to eight projects per year will be approved for three years. Examples of areas where college applied degree pilot projects might be granted include plastics, information technology, electronics, automotive design and manufacturing.

It is important to note, however, that the primary role of Ontario colleges will not be altered by the applied degree project. Colleges of applied arts and technology

will continue to focus their efforts on providing high-quality certificate and diploma programming in programs of one to three years' duration. At the end of the pilot period, the projects will be assessed and a decision made on how to continue permitting colleges to seek degree status for college programs.

This is another area in which Ontario has been lagging behind other jurisdictions. In Canada, colleges in Alberta have been offering applied degrees since 1995. University colleges in British Columbia and Nova Scotia offer a range of credentials, including degrees, diplomas and certificates.

In Michigan and other states, associate degree programs are two-year programs that prepare students for entry-level positions or offer credit recognition for university transfer. There are two broad categories of associate degrees: academic and applied associate degree.

As I mentioned, protecting students' interests is a priority, and this legislation also contains measures that would protect students attending private degree-granting institutions. Before granting consent for new private degree programs, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities would have to be assured that the institution could provide appropriate financial protection for students. An applicant would also have to make arrangements to ensure that students have access to their transcripts in the event a school closed.

As part of this legislation, we are also proposing to strengthen the enforcement provisions for violations related to degree-granting authority. This would include increased fines for offences of up to \$25,000 for individuals and up to \$100,000 for corporations.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities would have the power to appoint inspectors to investigate whether it would be appropriate to change, suspend or revoke a consent for degree-granting authority. The minister would also have the power to suspend or revoke a consent to operate in Ontario. These measures will help to maintain the high quality of an Ontario degree.

Proposed amendments to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities Act would also give the minister similar powers with regard to the administration of the Ontario student assistance program. These would include permitting the minister to appoint inspectors to ensure that institutions are administering the Ontario student assistance program properly. This change would help us ensure both the viability of private institutions and the protection of both taxpayers and consumers. New provincial offences would be created to deal with cases of OSAP abuse.

The act proposes that an individual convicted of any one of the offences could be subject to a fine of not more than \$25,000 and/or a term of imprisonment of not more than one year. The act proposes that a corporation convicted of an offence could be subject to a fine of not more than \$100,000.

We are delivering on our commitment to crack down on OSAP fraud. These measures, if passed by the Legislature, would send a strong message that the Ontario

government will not tolerate misuse of taxpayers' dollars and would help us ensure that OSAP is fair to the majority of students who are following the rules.

Our young people are entitled to our assistance. So many of them work so hard to work throughout the summers and to plan in advance, many of them in our secondary schools working with their parents, to go on to post-secondary education. Many times they need our assistance, and it will be there for those who are qualified and those who are motivated. These young people need our support, and we cannot let those who do not follow the rules take away from those who work so hard.

These are the kinds of proposals we are in fact making. If passed, the legislation would take some inspiration from the past as well but keep a focus on our students' future. It is part of our vision for a high-quality, relevant system that provides all our students with opportunities for learning where and when they need them. The bill would promote greater relevance, flexibility and innovation in our post-secondary system, which would make it responsive to the changing needs of our learners. In doing so, it would help to ensure Ontario's continued prosperity and the future prosperity of our students. It would allow them to be working members in their communities who in fact want to give back so much that they have received. It would allow them to have a great quality of family life, where they have the time to be very active members in every way imaginable in these wonderful communities across this great province of Ontario.

Through our vision, and other elements of our comprehensive plan for post-secondary renewal, we have taken long-needed action to strengthen and grow our publicly funded post-secondary education system. We have added spaces to meet increased demand, we are promoting high-quality programs and research and we are helping students better manage the cost of their education.

We are so very proud of all who work in our post-secondary system to give our students what they deserve and what they need, of those who go beyond the call by providing our students with the kind of emotional support, the kind of mentoring support and the absolute desire to make sure that each and every one of them is successful. We thank everyone for helping our students in our institutions.

We are entering a very exciting phase in post-secondary education with this third expansion of our post-secondary system. At the end of the Second World War, we expanded the university system to accommodate the needs of returning veterans. These are very different times. In the 1960s, we witnessed Ontario again rise to the challenge by creating the college system, which has served us so well, and for which our veterans gave their lives. I don't feel they'll be disappointed now in the year 2000 as we are again rightfully looking at our post-secondary system with a sense of responsibility and vision. We're looking at reshaping the system for today's realities, realities such as a need for continual skills upgrading and the proliferation of on-line courses.

This is a new century. The last century moved from a system of elitism when it came to our post-secondary opportunities at our universities right through 100 years where we have the largest number of 18- to 24-year-olds attending our colleges and universities. Our post-secondary system is for all who desire, are motivated and in fact qualify to be there, and we should be so very proud.

If passed, this legislation would promote the choice, relevance, flexibility and innovation in our post-secondary system that will ensure it is responsive to the changing needs of all our learners, no matter how old they are, no matter where they live. In doing so, it will help to ensure Ontario's continued prosperity, the future prosperity of our students and in fact the quality of life in communities across this great province.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just like to say that the member from Thornhill, who's going to speak next, is doing this on her birthday. I think we should thank her family for sharing this evening with us.

1930

Mrs Molinari: Thank you, Minister.

It is a pleasure for me to speak today in support of second reading of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Statute Law Amendment Act, 2000.

All of us share a vested interest in ensuring that our post-secondary education system responds to the needs of students and employers. We have all benefited from the highly educated and trained citizens who have passed through this system. This has been a key factor in our shared prosperity in recent years. Ontario already has one of the highest post-secondary participation rates in the world. But we can't become complacent in our past successes. We must move forward if we want to continue to lead Canada and most other countries in economic growth, job creation and prosperity.

That's what this legislation is all about, renewing our post-secondary system so that young people are prepared to lead full and productive lives. But it goes beyond young people. We also need to create an excellent post-secondary system that caters to non-traditional students, such as working adults, some of whom want to continue their learning while juggling the needs of their children, their aging parents and their jobs, and mature students who need opportunities to upgrade their education and training throughout their lives.

More and more frequently, traditional university students, too, are attracted to unique programs or delivery models offered by institutions that provide them with increased flexibility in scheduling their course load as well as greater access to a wider range of choices, no matter where they live in Ontario.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I took an active part in the consultations that preceded the introduction of this legislation. Minister Cunningham and I visited cities across the province and spoke to stakeholders from colleges, universities and the community.

I hosted a consultation on Bill 132 in my riding of Thornhill. The stakeholders included in this consultation were: two university students, one from Queen's science program and one from York's liberal arts program; a university dean; a college professor; a university administrator; an owner of a private vocational school; and business owners. I believe the makeup of this group reflected the structure of all the consultations throughout the province.

This group also exemplified the collaborative effort of all participants to provide the minister and myself with visionary comments and suggestions for our consultation paper. We looked to these groups for their best advice on how to implement the policy decisions announced in April.

For some time, students, parents and employers have been asking the Ontario government to allow greater flexibility in the opportunities available to students to acquire the marketable skills they need to prosper in today's world. They asked for more flexibility in the way they could learn, and they asked for new types of programs, ones that would provide the right balance of academic and applied skills, the types of programs already available to their counterparts in competing jurisdictions.

That's why in April we announced our intention to increase the range of choices available to Ontario students to earn a degree. We announced that we wanted to create a level playing field, with opportunities for Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology to offer applied degrees, and wanted to permit the establishment of more private degree-granting institutions in Ontario. We wanted these new initiatives to help our post-secondary system better serve Ontario's students, and that's why we asked our stakeholders for their best advice.

During the consultations, we heard many different points of view, but I was especially encouraged by the feeling that we were all working toward the same end: making Ontario's post-secondary education system serve the changing needs of students. The result is that we are here today to debate second reading of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Statute Law Amendment Act, 2000. This legislation, if passed, would allow post-secondary education in Ontario to come into step with other jurisdictions. Students in other parts of Canada, and in fact all over the world, have had access to forms of education denied to Ontario students: applied degrees and private degree-granting institutions.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has told you that more than 7,000 Ontario students every year study out of province because they have chosen another type of education. We want them to have the choice of staying in Ontario. If this legislation is passed, students will no longer need to leave home and accrue extra costs to get the type of education they feel will fill their educational needs.

The new Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, which would be created by the legis-

lation before us today, would make it possible for Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology to grant applied degrees and would allow more private post-secondary institutions to establish themselves in Ontario. By increasing the range of options available to students in Ontario and establishing the Post-secondary Education Quality Assessment Board, we would be promoting excellence in our degree-granting institutions and making Ontario's education system the envy of the world by ensuring that our institutions are responding directly to the changing needs of our students, as well as to the requirements of those who need to upgrade their education.

As you have heard, the quality of these proposed new programs would be strictly monitored by the Post-secondary Education Quality Assessment Board. New applied degree programs and the degree programs to be offered by private institutions would be compared against rigorous criteria established by the board. The board would then make recommendations to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities about whether or not the proposal should be accepted. In order to carry out its duties, the proposed legislation would give the board the powers to establish review panels to assess the education quality of proposed degree programs, establish advisory committees and undertake research.

The Post-secondary Education Quality Assessment Board would be an important force for maintaining quality. There will be no compromise when it comes to the quality of education available to Ontario students. Clearly, if we are to give Ontario students the range of options they have been asking for, we need to be more flexible and innovative in how they are delivered, but not at the expense of the excellence and quality of the education content.

The same will be true of the applied degree programs. Applied degree programs will not replace or diminish the value of similar programs at the diploma level, nor will they duplicate university degree programs. Before the proposal receives approval, a college will have to demonstrate that there are unique employment opportunities for graduates of the new applied degree program at a level that is different from that of a diploma graduate or a university graduate in the same field.

This government is committed to securing a better future for Ontarians through high-quality education and stronger skills. Students and employers are increasingly looking for new combinations of skills to meet the demands of the rapidly changing global economy. Allowing colleges to grant applied degrees will provide students with the wider range of skills and knowledge they will need in a rapidly changing world. Colleges, with their links to industry, are well positioned to offer advanced training in emerging areas such as multimedia, plastics and automotive manufacturing, just to name a few.

I assure you that applied degrees will not be offered in areas traditionally covered by university programs. This was a message we heard quite clearly during our consultations. There needs to be a clear distinction between a

college applied degree and a university degree, particularly in the same field of study. We certainly agree with this. What Ontario students need is more choice, not more duplication.

Post-secondary education is a big investment for students and their parents. They make this investment in the hope of a profitable return in the form of a good job and a successful future. With the possible advent of new types of post-secondary programs, it is important that their investment be protected. That's why this legislation includes strong student protection measures.

Before granting consent for new degree programs to be offered by a new private post-secondary institution, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities would require an assurance that the institution could provide appropriate financial protection for students before degree-granting authority was given. We are also proposing that if an institution is closing down, it must make arrangements to ensure students have access to their transcripts through another institution or trustee. This system has been used successfully in other jurisdictions such as Australia.

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I would like to note that in addition to protecting students, this legislation would also protect taxpayers. Specifically, it would protect them from the abuse of the Ontario student assistance program, which is intended to help students in financial need get a post-secondary education. Under the proposed legislation, subsections 12(1) to (4), it would become a provincial offence to obtain awards, grants or loans to which a person is not entitled, to assist such activity or to fail to provide information or provide false information.

The amendments under clauses 12(5)(a), (b) and (c) introduce penalties for these offences. Persons convicted of such offences are liable to a fine of up to \$25,000 for an individual, up to \$100,000 for a corporation and/or up to one year's imprisonment. These penalties are modelled on the offence provisions in the Ontario Works Act, 1997. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities may appoint inspectors for the purpose of determining compliance with the act, grants and student loans. This new power will aid in ensuring that institutions are administering OSAP properly.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the legislation we are debating today is an excellent balance between giving students the flexibility they want and need in a post-secondary education and ensuring that the interests of students and taxpayers are protected.

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions? Further debate?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Mr Speaker, I thought there was an understanding that our critic for this portfolio had asked to stand down her time. Has that been arranged?

The Acting Speaker: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Mr Curling: Further to that, I would ask for your guidance here. If I lead off and our lead person is not here, does it go to the third party?

The Acting Speaker: No, you can start. You can do 20 minutes.

Mr Curling: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Although I did not anticipate being up so early, it is a pleasure for me to comment on this piece of legislation.

As I listened to the debate and the presentation of the minister and the other honourable member, I was not at all surprised by the type of commitment the minister has to post-secondary institutions and to college and university training, but I want to delve a bit more into this. First, I think the minister is going in the right direction, that of more choices. But you must be very careful about all this. We're going in the right direction in having more options, but I'll get to that later on.

The minister stated that they had consultations. I would still have hoped that a more open forum would have been around, so that more students could be involved in giving their concerns and input to this matter, because they have a tremendous amount of concern.

Let me put in a little background. In my background as a former administrator of a post-secondary institution, I have seen the frustration of many students from many angles, from financial support while they're at college, to how they access the proper training they need—and no availability of this training was there. Many of them have failed and dropped out of university or college for that reason. That concerns me a lot.

I heard the minister give compliments to Mr Davis, the former Premier of this province, who had opened the community colleges. Yes, I think it was quite a visionary thing to do at the time. There were many people who were not able to go to post-secondary institutions at the time, or go to university, and the opportunity came for them to go to community college. That has developed to be one very important aspect in our society today.

But we also found that the growing pains of the community college suffered tremendously, especially when this government started the cutbacks in the post-secondary institutions. As you know, \$400 million was cut back from this area and they have put back \$200 million. The only emphasis that we can hear each day is that the \$200 million went back, but still yet they are in a deficit of funding it more for those institutions.

We know, of course, that Ontario's rapidly changing, demanding workforce needs trained and skilled individuals. The government of Ontario needs to ensure the people of our province that education will be accessible and affordable for those who want it. Having more options doesn't really mean that it's more accessible. Sometimes with many of these options we have—and these private institutions that are going to be developed—we know that many of those individuals or students are unable to access them. It can be very costly.

Of course, the minister has assured us that no public funding will be flowing to these private institutions. That is not really so, as you and I know, Mr Speaker. I'm sure that a student who has OSAP will apply to these private institutions and will be able to get in anyhow. That's public funding money. That will more or less deplete

some of it for those who want to have access to the other universities.

I also heard the minister state that there are thousands of people going across the border to get the kind of education they want, which they can't acquire here. That is so, too; that is very much so. But the fact is that, because of the underfunding and the limited resources that these universities have here, they're not able to do that. Sure, we have one of the best universities in the world and we brag about that. If we have the best universities in the world serving our communities, why is it so difficult to get into some of these universities?

My daughter, for one, obtained her master's degree across the border after trying tremendously, making every effort to get into a university. She could not get into any university to do her master's degree, but had to be transporting herself almost daily across to Niagara Falls. Even having obtained her degree, she still would say, "Oh, I wish I had obtained my master's degree in Ontario." The fact is that there were no resources here to do so. The reason for that was the resources from this government for the support of post-secondary institutions were wanting. That is one of the main things.

I just have a short time, and there are so many aspects of it I want to touch on. I want to touch on some of the problems we may face in giving approval to have private universities here. A question is asked: what if they are folded up and they go bankrupt and they go out of business? A couple of things happen. The individuals who have applied to the university and may have invested a year in it and have borrowed money from the Ontario student assistance program would then still owe that money, although the government has said that if that happens, they will then come in and try to offset that cost. But the investment of that student, a year, is gone—the investment of boarding, lodging, all of that. A year of investment is all gone.

There is another concern I have, and I heard the minister and the other honourable member mention that they will make sure that credits are transferable. Let's for a minute talk about transferable credits. There are universities and post-secondary institutions here where even within the same university students are having difficulty in transferring from a nighttime continuing education program to a day program. Let me explain that a little bit. You were taking, for instance, an engineering program in the continuing education—let's call it Engineering 151—and you have passed. But you want to transfer into the day program. Some of the day programs will not even take that. That's the kind of game that's being played within the same institution.

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I would like to see some guarantee that if the institutions themselves are offering credits to any courses here, they are transferable to any and all other universities in Ontario. I'm not quite sure I'm assured of that, because, on the other hand, the minister is saying that a private institution can be created here only if they can demon-

strate that there are courses being offered that are not available in the other universities.

If you are taking courses and training programs that are not offered anywhere else in Ontario, when that private institution folds, where do they get that credit? How will they be credited with that? I think that's one of the issues that they should address, and they should address that pretty fast.

I am extremely concerned, while we're talking about viable options, about whether it is so viable at the moment that at a later time of the year when the chicken comes home to roost, when those places have gone bankrupt, the students themselves will have credits which are not valuable to them any more. It's nice to mention the fact that we're opening up more options—unless it folds—and that we're excited about private institutions, that we can compete.

I remember very well the funding formula that was instituted by governments over the years where the universities and the colleges there were trying to be creative in how to get funding from government. Sometimes the creative way of getting funding from government would put students aside. This was causing tremendous hardship on students. I know there are going to be very creative things that these private institutions will do in order to be certified in this province. That's why I am very deeply concerned that the sort of consultation that went on was inadequate and insufficient.

I know that this government is very impatient about any process that takes a democratic flow, where we have to wait for input, where we have to hear it over and over again. They are rather annoyed that people want to tell them in which direction they want to go, because they have an agenda, they say. They know it all. They already know exactly where the people want to go without asking them. Or they could ask two students from their constituency, "Sit down and tell me all about students across this province, and tell me what students are feeling," and because they've heard from two students they feel they have heard from all the students.

That's a shortcut to democracy that is rather dangerous. That is why we have legislation that is so inadequate; that is why we have people protesting. Students are coming here today very upset, and maybe some of the members here are concerned that they are demonstrating. They are demonstrating because they have a deep concern about where they are going, where they are going to go with their education and the opportunities that the government is affording them.

I would emphasize to this government that before you rush this bill through and before you take the applause and before you get the accolades, you should make sure you have the kind of input that is necessary to have good, sound legislation.

We also know that with this double-cohort situation we have created in the province, most of the grade 13s and grade 12s who are clustering and hustling in to go into university are finding that there are no spaces. We're going to find further down the road that when they are

about to graduate, too, there are going to be a lot more people seeking jobs because a lot more people are graduating in that way.

I don't think they have planned it at all. I think this is more or less a strategy to say, "We are doing something to accommodate all those double cohorts who want to go to university or post-secondary institutions." They are saying, "Here we are making opportunities." They created the crisis. I agree it looks rather good, that if we are responding to a crisis in this way, people will applaud it. But the fact is, they saw it coming, and when the crisis wasn't there, they created it and are today taking applause for the things they have done. This is really just a Band-Aid remedy. I can see this. It's a Band-Aid remedy for a crisis that really has been created by Mike Harris and his government.

I again emphasize that the affordability aspect of it is of great concern to me. I don't think it will be one bit more affordable. I think the situation here, if it's not carefully managed and monitored, will deplete the sort of funding we have going to other universities that are being publicly funded, and this concerns me a lot.

I remember a strategy that was implemented by this government, saying they will match any funds that any other university gets. Therefore, here is a matching-fund process that people are encouraged by. Take, for instance, the University of Toronto against Laurentian University. There's no doubt that the University of Toronto can command a lot more attention from many prominent individuals who will fund and give money to the University of Toronto much easier than Laurentian University. The University of Toronto of course in their wonderful way, which is a tremendous university, one of the best in the world, would get a lot of money in order to carry on their budgetary expenses, but Laurentian itself, being located in a smaller city, in a smaller town, is not able to command that kind of money.

The funding formula is short-sighted, inadequate and discriminatory, because those who live in those areas will not be able to get the kind of research funding they need. I think that's where government comes into play to make things more equitable, to see that it's fair, because sometimes when we start thinking of it as a business, as we have seen it here, that they must survive and create their own business, getting their own funding is much more difficult because it's not a level playing field. In Toronto where the University of Toronto is established, it's easier for that university to get money, but for Laurentian and other universities outside of Toronto it's not that easy.

So while it looks rather good, it's not created. You know who could have told them all that? Consultation with students, consultation with business people within that community could do that. But when we have a very short consultative process, what happens is that we get very short-sighted legislation and then we have to be dealing with it and amending it later on.

The university in my area, which is Scarborough College, a part of the University of Toronto—there were

comments made by the new president of the University of Toronto when he was inaugurated the other day. He spoke about the fact that when he went to that university, he found that most of the students—well, as you know, the majority of students are visible minorities. As a matter of fact, over 50% of those individuals were people whose parents were not even born in this country. He made a rather interesting comment here, and I'm trying to find it. When he went to the Scarborough campus of that university, there were about 255 parents present at the orientation, and he said that only five of the 255 parents had previously sent a child to college or university.

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Things have changed now. Many of the individuals coming in are students whose parents have never been to university. The opportunity for a post-secondary education is tremendous for those individuals. We must be sensitive to them. The ones who are going to flock to these private universities are those who did not get into the traditional universities here. I say to the minister, as an individual whom I can appeal to and be sensitive to, that these private universities and private institutions that are coming in should be monitored carefully. The fact is that most of the people who will be attracted to that are individuals who may be denied entrance to other universities and will be flocking to that university. If they go bankrupt, then the dreams and aspirations of those individuals are gone entirely. The people there are trying pretty hard. As you know, new immigrants here are the ones who are struggling through the process, trying to identify and deal with the challenges of a new country.

The Scarborough campus is only one of the universities that are like that, but many other universities are in the same predicament or the same situation. The community colleges attract a lot of visible minorities and immigrants who are looking for courses in order to advance themselves and to be good citizens in our community and in our country.

In the last few minutes I have, I want to address the brain drain. I am one of those who don't believe there is a brain drain. Our country, Canada, depends on all these immigrants coming here. We get the best and sometimes the brightest coming into this country. We get more people from outside our country with brains and intelligence coming here. So the brain drain game is not quite as real as you see. Yes, there are people who will go across the border, and I think we should say "Wonderful," because it encourages better trade, a better expansion of all the things we have.

There is another debate: those who are professionally trained who are still not accepted here in this country, who are not given the opportunity to get certification for the qualifications they have. Of course, you are quite familiar with the access to trades and professions that I have always touted—that has been around a very long time; you may say it's from our time—but it has not been implemented. Those are some of the resources and some of the training that I'd like to see you focus on.

If the private institutions are coming here, they can assist in delivering those professionals to their trades and let them be certified here. I know the challenge you have is not quite legislation; it is those associations and institutions that hold the bag and the power and dictate to government. I want to see you very firmly do that and challenge those associations to accept those qualified individuals, and you, the government, make sure they do that.

While I do welcome the direction in which you are going, I am very cautious that it is going to be successful.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions? The Chair recognizes the member for Dufferin-Grey-Wellington.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I'd like to respond to the member from Scarborough-Rouge River. I must say I always admire this member when he stands in his place because, generally speaking, I can never figure out whether he's for the bill or against the bill. At this particular point, I'm going to assume that he's against the bill, but he may wish to correct that in his response.

There seems to be some resistance that is being put forward against the private university. The history of the private university goes back to medieval times. The origins of the university come from a private institution, from the church, and gradually worked through time until universities became dependent upon governments to operate. We've spent a lot of time in public accounts. The auditor can only audit certain portions of university accounts. They can't audit the portions that come from bequests or donations from alumni or others, and that has given some great consternation.

The private school—I'm talking about the private elementary school or the private secondary school—has existed for many years in this province. They are very reputable schools. People go to them. They go on and become well-known. There are probably people in this House who have attended those schools.

I think the real issue is choice. What's wrong with expanding the option of choice? There are examples of choice in other universities around the world. There is a program at the Central Michigan University which offers a master's of education in community college. You can't get that anywhere else but you can get it there. Charles Sturt University in Australia, a private institution, offers a program in medical imaging. You can't get it anywhere else. We're for choice, and I hope you are too.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. Comments and questions?

Mr Agostino: I'm certainly pleased to follow the comments of my colleague from Scarborough-Rouge River.

I listened earlier with great interest to comments by the minister and her parliamentary assistant, and as I look at this piece of legislation I really see it as a missed opportunity for this government. I'm surprised because I know this minister. I know how this minister normally thinks and functions within the realm of our public

colleges and universities, and this is somewhat of a departure from that.

I really believe this would have been an opportunity for the government of Ontario to invest some of the \$400 million that was cut out of colleges and universities in 1996. You're still \$200 million short from the funding in 1996 for our colleges and universities across this country. We're still one of the lowest per capita funded university systems in Canada. Ontario, which prides itself to be the leader, where the Premier goes out of this province and tells everyone how wonderful our university system is, how wonderful our students are, still fails to fund universities and colleges anywhere near what most other provinces in Canada fund per capita.

And now the introduction of private universities, the expansion of private universities. It really is nothing more than a smokescreen to cover up the failures of this government to address the real issues facing university students. Skyrocketing tuition fees—out of control. You look at the promises made by Mike Harris when he was Leader of the Opposition about what he would do with university tuition fees. You've seen now university tuition go through the roof; students on average \$40,000 to \$50,000 in debt. It has become already, under the current system, not whether or not you have the ability or the drive to go to university and graduate from university; it's become a question of, does your family have the money?

That is not the Canadian way. That certainly is not the Ontario way of the university and college system we have built. I'm disappointed that the government didn't use this as an opportunity to enhance our system rather than bringing in private sector companies.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to stand here this evening on the second reading of Bill 132, the post-secondary excellence act. I'd like to thank Minister Cunningham and the parliamentary assistant, Tina Molinari, for bringing forth this legislation. It's brought some very interesting facts out that I wasn't 100% aware of earlier. I know the act deals with the use of private universities, but in my particular community, the riding of Simcoe North, we don't have a university. The nearest university we would have access to would be York.

In working with the private sector and working in partnership—which is what our government is all about, and we are very proud of that—Minister Cunningham announced earlier this year a \$17-million program at Georgian College in partnership with York University that will eventually allow Georgian College to have university degrees at that particular college.

I'm really pleased because tomorrow I can't be here in the morning; I'm going to Georgian College for another partnership arrangement. It's with Georgian College, the Ontario Provincial Police Association and the OPP. We're going to announce a program dealing with the Georgian College facility in Orillia. That particular facility will be dealing with law enforcement programs. We're very proud of that because included in that will

eventually be a huge gymnasium for training courses that the Ontario Provincial Police will be using.

In summary, I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forth this legislation. I really believe in a partnership, working with the private sector. I believe working in partnerships is a smart way to do business as we enter the 21st century.

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Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I think when you look at the foundation that's been built in this province between our university and our community college system, it's been a good foundation and we've offered our students a good opportunity for a higher level of education. Unfortunately, we've seen that foundation eroded by the attitudes and the direction of this government. We've seen \$400 million taken out of the post-secondary education system. We've seen our post-secondary education across this province fall to 59th out of 60. And now what do they want to do? They want to further erode the system and destroy the very foundations of post-secondary education in this province by bringing in private universities.

At a time when we should be looking at further support for the post-secondary and community college system in this province and using and building on that existing system, no, this government doesn't want to do that. They want to change the rules and add another dimension to it. They should be investing in a system that has supported me. I look back with pride at the time I spent at the University of Western Ontario and the opportunity it gave me. But what a change from \$1,300 tuition first year in 1982 to what it is today, because this government has betrayed the students of this province today and watched these tuitions skyrocket. This isn't going to be giving new opportunity. It's going to hurt the existing system that we have in this province.

I think we need to and I would encourage the minister to talk to the students, listen to the students in this province, listen to the Ontario branch of the Canadian Federation of Students and what they're saying. The federation of students is saying, "Students are not going to stand by while they erode and destroy access to public education."

The Ontario Confederation of Faculty Associations: "The system is already starved." How can you further starve, how can you further destroy, the system of post-secondary education in this province?

Minister, do the honourable thing: repeal.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Rouge River has two minutes to respond.

Mr Curling: Let me just thank the members from Elgin-Middlesex-London, Simcoe North, Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey and Hamilton East for their comments.

I think he hit it right on when he said he's not quite sure. What he heard from me was that I want so much to support access and more viable opportunities for students. I was right there to support that, but I continue to be concerned about the cutbacks, the \$200-million dollar shortfall. I continue to be concerned about the 60% increase in tuition fees since this government has taken

power. I continue to be concerned too about the indebtedness of students, who are averaging almost \$25,000. I continue to be concerned that you are moving into the direction of education as a business.

What you heard from me was, yes, I want to support it. I would not be able to support this legislation unless those areas are resolved very clearly and students have more viable opportunities in which to have access to post-secondary institutions.

I'm concerned about the double cohorts who are coming out and really not having a real opportunity to access the universities or post-secondary institutions.

I continue to be concerned about the access to trades and professions, where many, many of our people of Canada here are not able to exercise the potential which they have, and the lack of movement in regard to the government doing that.

Therefore, member from Dufferin-Peel, yes. What you heard is that anxiety to do so, but what you also heard is that I would not be able to support this legislation under these conditions.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I have two things. I want to tell the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey that I am sorry I missed part of his riding when I introduced him.

The other thing I want to do—I can't because I'm prohibited by the rules of the House, but if I could have, I would want to point out to the members the guests in the east gallery from the Canadian Automobile Association, particularly Dave Jarrett and Don Mann, and others from the Canadian Automobile Association. If I could have, I would like to have done that.

Further debate?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I am quite anxious to have an opportunity tonight to put some thoughts on the record re this piece of legislation. Right off the bat, I just want everybody out there to know, and everybody in this place to know, that we will definitely—I forgot to ask for permission to put off for this evening our leadoff until another time.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie has asked for unanimous consent to put off their leadoff debate. Is it agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Martin: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I want to put on the record right off the bat that we fundamentally and absolutely oppose this piece of legislation, this approach to the provision of post-secondary education in this province. I think it is absolutely the wrong way to go, totally the wrong way to go. It is not in keeping in any way, shape or form with the traditions of this country and this province and the things we've been doing over quite a long time to try to find ways to include people in our society, to give them the education they need so they can participate in a fulsome and wholesome way and, at the end of the day, realize the rewards of that contribution.

To be heading down this road indicates to me a continuing infatuation by this government with all things

American. Everything the US does, you'll note by some comments I will make later, driven by the North American free trade agreement that the Americans, under Brian Mulroney—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We'll not have these conversations back and forth. Take my word for it: if you want to have them, have them somewhere else. Take my word for it. The Chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: I was saying that this legislation, like so much of the legislation this government brings forward day after day, is driven by an infatuation with everything American, almost an obsession with the American way. There's no recognition at all that there is in place in this country a Canadian way, a Canadian approach to delivering public goods, to putting out opportunity for people to participate and to encourage people to participate in the public life of the communities in which they live. This piece of legislation belies the contribution government has made over a long period of time to the public good in this province. This government will, with one stroke of a pen, and seemingly without too much thought, move us in a direction, as the students who were here earlier this evening and others around this province, I'm sure, will tell the government over the next few weeks as we discuss this piece of legislation, that will cost people more than ever before and in fact will close the door on more and more students as we move more and more toward the private delivery of post-secondary education.

To listen to the minister and the parliamentary assistant, you would think this piece of legislation is about improving education, about improving access, about improving quality of education in this province. I'm here tonight to tell you that it's not, it's absolutely not. It is about nothing more than taking money out. It's a new angle on spending less money on post-secondary education in this province. It's a new angle on providing access to those who already have enough access, who can already afford, as the minister has said, to buy private education outside this province if they want. It's another angle on this government's putting more and more of the load, the cost of education, on the backs of students and their families.

As a matter of fact, there's a piece in this legislation which speaks about a more punitive attack on students who are already finding it difficult. Any of you here who spend any time at all in your constituencies on Friday or between sessions of this House will understand that one of the biggest caseloads we have these days is students who have OSAP loans who cannot get relief, who cannot see a light at the end of the tunnel, who are having a difficult time having any hope whatsoever about their future because they have this terrible debt. This piece of legislation is going to go another distance to creating more anxiety in the lives of those students. They now hear, in very inappropriate ways, from collection agencies phoning them at night, harassing and threatening them. Now they will have over their heads the spectre of

a huge possible fine, adding to the money they already owe, or the possibility that they might end up in jail. Students in this province facing average debt loads of \$25,000 will now face \$25,000 fines and a possible prison term for receiving OSAP to which they are not entitled.

2020

How does this government define entitlement? The ministry is now doing audits that compare a student's T4 with income reported in his or her OSAP application. This is part of Management Board's announcement last November that the Conservatives will be cutting student aid by \$16.3 million. This isn't about helping students. This isn't about relieving students of the load, of the cost of education. This isn't about access. This isn't about improving quality of education. This is about cutting student aid in this province by \$16.3 million. That's what this is about, and let there be no bones about it.

What does this mean? Students who have to work, in addition to collecting OSAP, can be liable. Many students are unaware of this change and thus will be in jeopardy of receiving a jail term or a \$25,000 fine. Low- and middle-income students will be targeted under this unfair bill—another group of people in this province already marginalized, already finding it difficult, already out there struggling to make ends meet to try to put together an education and pay for it, another targeted group. That's what this government is good at. At the end of the day, I think that's all they'll be known for being good at: targeting people, creating division, abusing people and setting people aside.

Ironically, given the bill's title, students who are awarded scholarships for excellence may also be caught by this bill. Scholarships are considered income. If a student does not know to report a change of income to OSAP, he or she may be guilty of an offence—creating another offence. You'll remember, Mr Speaker, that we had a group of young people out there struggling to put a few pennies in their pockets to pay for some food who came up with the unique and, I think, rather enterprising way of getting a few bucks by going out and washing people's windshields with their squeegees. What did this government do? Instead of sitting down and talking with them about programs that might get them back into school and give them some other opportunities, what did they do? They created a new piece of legislation that made it an offence. They're going to throw them all in jail. This is their answer to everything that confronts them, that presents to them as a challenge. Now we're going to target low- and middle-income students in this province and make it possible that they might be guilty of an offence and have to pay a \$25,000 fine or go to jail.

Minister Cunningham said today in the House that our federal trade minister has assured the provinces that education is not on the table at the next World Trade Organization general agreement on trade and services negotiations. This was in response to a Conservative question. This sounds like Liberal permission for the Conservatives to privatize at will. The minister, however,

didn't say anything about a NAFTA challenge following the privatization of universities.

The legal opinion given to both CUPE and the Canadian Health Coalition on Bill 11 clearly shows that once a government throws away a NAFTA reservation—for example, protection of the education or health sector—the reservation is gone forever. This means that any corporation has to be given national treatment; that is, either public and private institutions get government funding or none get government funding. Education services are covered as investments under NAFTA. NAFTA permitted provincial governments to exempt government measures that would otherwise be inconsistent with certain NAFTA investment chapter obligations as long as these measures, such as private universities, were already in force when NAFTA came into effect on January 1, 1994.

NAFTA requires that all future changes be more consistent with NAFTA. A province that changes its old practices loses the protection of the public service in question. In this case, lifting a ban on private universities is a change of practice. Once the protection is spent, it can never be renewed. If a future government ever wanted, for the public good, to renew the protection or return the service to the public domain, it would be considered expropriation under NAFTA. This means the government would have to compensate the private corporations for present and future losses.

I would suggest to you that what's going to happen in this province is that more and more of our post-secondary education will be privatized because that's where the corporate money will go, and that's where a lot of the students in this province who are better off will go. The focus will be on those institutions. The rest of us will have to take whatever is left, whatever falls off the table.

It will deny for the first time in this province the government's ability and responsibility to go across this province and provide to every community opportunities for people at whatever level to get trained, to get re-trained and to get into the workforce. Lifelong learning: we've heard that from the folks across the way; I don't think they understand it.

We know, Mr Speaker, and you know, that there was a time in this province when it was deemed that to get into the workforce you needed a grade 8 education. The government rightly decided that it would pay for elementary school for all students, because it knew it was in the best interests of the communities in which they lived to make sure that everybody who called Ontario home had an elementary school education.

Then, as life unfolded and things evolved, we discovered you needed a secondary education. Entry level for most jobs in this country became at least a secondary education: grade 12 or grade 13. The government in its wisdom, and I agreed with the government, decided that should be available to all students at no cost, publicly delivered, publicly funded.

I suggest that in the world we live in today—we hear a lot about this from across the way—times are changing,

times are evolving and we have to stay with it. Rather than moving in this American-obsessed way of privatizing and setting up private universities, so that those who can afford to go to those kinds of institutions can have free access and perhaps, in their thinking, free up spaces in the more publicly funded institutions for the rest of us, we should be moving to providing education at the post-secondary level to all students in this province free of charge, because that now is the entry level for any job that is available in this province.

I suggest to the government, if they are interested, that they might want to look at some other jurisdictions and see what they're doing around this world.

Mr Tilson: We are.

Mr Martin: No, you're not. You're obsessed and fixated on the US, on the American way. Look at Ireland, for example. I was there twice this summer. When they decided to change their economy, when they decided they needed to do something different to improve their economy, to improve their lot in life, to give the people who considered Ireland home a better shot at making a living and getting on with their lives economically, they looked at education. They decided that's where they needed to start.

Instead of moving holus-bolus and looking at the Americans and being totally taken in by the American experience and example, they looked at other places in the world like Scandinavia and some of the European countries. They decided that what would be in their best interests wasn't to privatize universities and colleges, but to give universities and colleges more money so they could expand to offer the kinds of opportunities the people of Ireland needed to participate in the new economy, and they decided to make tuition absolutely free in those institutions.

Anybody in Ireland who qualifies—I have to say that it is a challenge to qualify and I agree with that—and has the potential to go on to college or university in Ireland today gets to do that absolutely tuition-free. They're one of the leading economies in the world today, not riding on the shirt-tails of the United States economy, not riding on the shirt-tails of the European economy but leading the European economy.

Just this last spring and early summer Ireland became the number one exporter of software in the whole world, a country that 10 or 15 years ago was struggling to make ends meet with a very stagnant economy, with a very so-called narrow, old economy. Very much driven by their belief in public education, by their belief that education was essential and fundamental to any success they would have, very much based on the fact they've now made education available to everybody and anybody who has the potential over there, and because they've done away with tuition fees and decided to invest in education in a major and big way, now they're leading the world. Their economy is one of the best.

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I was going to share with you some of the objectives the Irish government has put out. The Irish government is

very much into central planning, very much into being involved, being an activist participant in the changing economy over there. They put out a three- and five-year program every so often that includes everybody in its development. Their fingerprints are all over it and they will participate in it as it moves forward and moves ahead.

There's a program they put together that I picked up on when I was over there in June called program for prosperity and fairness. These folks here might understand the concept of prosperity but I don't think they understand the concept of fairness, because this bill certainly doesn't speak to fairness; it doesn't speak to fairness at all. As a matter of fact, it's as far away from fairness as anything I've seen yet that they've brought forward to put before this House.

I'm absolutely shocked by and I abhor what I see in this bill and what we're looking at doing here tonight in this province, and the road it will take us down when you consider NAFTA and what that then forces us to do as we move forward and as subsequent governments try to do the right thing and make the changes that are required, if and when subsequent governments get that opportunity.

I need to talk for a couple of seconds while I have a little bit of time left tonight about my experience of how colleges and universities worked in this province back in the 1960s and 1970s under Bill Davis, and then under David Peterson and Bob Rae. Colleges and universities were expanding, providing opportunities to people in every part of this province to participate in an exciting and hopeful and cost-effective way.

When I first got out of university, having had a combination of grants and loans, I remember arriving at my first job with a student loan of about \$3,000. I was able to pay that off over a period of a couple of years by working and taking advantage of the education I was provided with at some cost to the people of this province. I feel I've returned that investment in me probably 10 or 20 times over in the last 30 or 40 years, as will my children, I suggest, given the same opportunity.

I know that in small communities across Algoma in the 1970s, Sault College, for example, was one of the leading vehicles leading economic renewal and diversification. In places like Wawa and Chapleau, I worked for the college. Those of us who worked for the college in those days felt like we were missionaries. We were driving here and driving there and passing each other on the road, setting up programs, talking to people about what they needed to do to get back into the workforce if they lost their jobs, if the economy changed.

You know the cyclical nature of a resource-based economy. That's what we've been in this province and I suggest to you that, when the virtual economy that's happening out there right now comes back down to earth, we will return again to dependence on the resources that we have and that we are.

Colleges need to be out there helping us to adjust and take advantage, and to roll with and move along, helping

us to protect the communities we've all invested in so that they don't simply dry up because some big, multi-national corporation in New York decides it wants to move its money from here to there overnight and we're left holding the bag.

It's colleges and universities, able to move in and out of communities, able to provide a variety of opportunity to students, that will be the fundamental underpinning of any future we have together in this province, any creative and exciting and civilized involvement of all the people who call Ontario home.

We shouldn't be doing that by bringing in legislation that simply focuses on people who can't pay back their student loans, and making it so punitive that by not paying back a student loan, you could actually end up in jail. That's not the way to go in this province in the year 2000, to be taking baseball bats to students who work hard, who want to participate, who want to advance, who perhaps for who knows what reason make a mistake or misjudgement.

This government wants to throw them in jail. You want to throw welfare people in jail, you want to throw unions in jail, you want to throw teachers in jail, you want to throw the poor in jail and now you want to throw students in jail. Who's next?

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Tilson: I must say, I always enjoy the member. He never veers from his party politics whether in opposition or whether in government, and that is a philosophy that there's only one way to do things, and that's by fully government-operated institutions. That's the only way. We saw what the former government, the Bob Rae government, did with housing and how they destroyed housing in this province. Their philosophy is, "Our way is the only way. Big government is the only way to do it."

I guess that disappoints me because we on this side, on the contrary—and you know that; we're perfectly clear to you as well—believe in choice. We believe there's more than one way to do things, that government can't do everything. That's why we believe in encouraging private institutions to operate facilities.

It's not a new idea. It's done, as I indicated earlier in the evening, with respect to private elementary schools and private secondary schools. It goes on all around the world, and they work. Those systems provide programs that aren't offered by these government-run institutions. They're not quite government-run institutions, I appreciate that, but certainly the private institution is, contrary to what you're saying, not funded by the government. The comments that you made to the member were that the government would be taking money out of the system. That's simply not true.

We believe there is a need for independence, we believe there is a need for choice, and we certainly believe that government isn't the only way in which to educate the people of this province.

Mrs Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): I wish to congratulate the member for Sault Ste Marie for having so clearly stated his opposition to the bill.

My colleague from Dufferin-Peel has said that it's everywhere around the world and that it's a good thing to do. Maybe we don't have the courses or what we want, but maybe if this government would put more money in our public universities and colleges, we could do it. I'm talking about more.

My leader—

Interjections.

Interjection: I can't even hear her.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I can't either. There's no need of that. If you insist to do that, go way, way down the street and do it. Don't do it in here.

Mrs Boyer: My leader Dalton McGuinty and my Liberal colleagues of course support and demand increased investment in our public colleges and universities. We support Ontario colleges in their efforts to offer new programs to Ontario students.

C'est vraiment grâce à mes collègues de Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke et de Thunder Bay si dans mon comté d'Ottawa-Vanier, dans la province de l'Ontario, on a eu notre premier collègue francophone, la Cité collégiale.

But let me tell you that we surely do not support the introduction of private universities that will draw precious funds away from our public institutions.

Isn't it Mike Harris who promised every motivated and qualified student a space in our universities and colleges across the province? Yes. But not at a cost of \$40,000.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Obviously, one wants to have a response to the legislation, but we also want to have facts.

I would ask the member for Sault Ste Marie, if he really wants free tuition for our students to go on to post-secondary like they apparently have in Ireland—I didn't know that—why then, during the tenure of the NDP, would university tuition increase by 50%? Why, during the tenure of the NDP, would college tuition increase by 36%?

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Again, the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, who paid \$1,300 when he was a student at the University of Western Ontario—I'm looking at my colleague and friend. I think it's very important for everyone to understand that there have been large increases in tuition, but during his government's tenure, university tuition increased by 35%; college tuition increased by 29%. Let me just say this. We really feel, for accessibility, that in fact young people need a plan. That's why we have capped increases for five years at 2%. I gave the numbers for parents so that they could save money and plan for the future, because the culture in North America and Europe is that parents do need to know so they can plan.

Now, if we're all so concerned about this government and everything is so bad, why, in fact, under the NDP in 1990-91 were 25% of young people enrolled in our post-secondary? During the Liberals, before that, fewer: 23%. At this time we have 35% of 18- to 24-year-olds. These

young people want to come to our colleges and universities, and we're making them accessible.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. Comments and questions?

Mr Agostino: I congratulate my colleague from Sault Ste Marie for putting the case very well as to the way this government approaches university funding. I guess the difference between that and what we as Liberals and Dalton McGuinty and our caucus believe is that you believe university funding is an expenditure. We believe university funding is an investment, an investment in young people, an investment in the future.

When the Minister of Colleges and Universities went on about the facts about the other governments, I wish she would also have included the fact that under your watch, tuition fees have increased by a whopping 60% across the province. Those are the real facts. You cut \$400 million in 1996; you only put \$200 million back.

Now you say, "Trust us: no public funding for universities," just like you said, "Trust us: we're not going to close any hospitals across Ontario," just like you said, "Trust us: we're not going to cut any funding out of public education across Ontario," just like you said, "Trust us," I say with all due respect to my good friend the Minister of Citizenship and Culture here, "we're going to bring in an ODA." None of that has happened.

You've cut hospitals, you've cut education funding, you've cut health care, no ODA, and now you want us to believe you when you tell us that there is no public funding for universities. Your track record is atrocious when it comes to that area, when it comes to trust. The reality is that even at outstanding American schools like Harvard, 17% of their funding comes from public funding.

Mr Dunlop: Tax and spend. Tax and spend. Tax and spend.

Mr Agostino: My friend says, "Tax and spend," but I can tell you, my friend, I'll be happy to spend money on university students and universities across this province to ensure that our students have an opportunity, to ensure it's not only rich kids—

Mr Dunlop: Tax and spend.

The Deputy Speaker: Come to order.

Mr Agostino: —but also kids of average and low income and poor families across this province. That's the difference. You think it's a school of privilege for rich kids; we believe it should be accessible to all. You should be ashamed of yourself for advocating that position.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The Speaker doesn't rule on the background or the words or the phrases, or the truthfulness even, of anything anybody says. But what I do rule on is that member's right to be able to stand up here uninterrupted, unimpeded, to say it. I must say that some of you are trying my patience. It's getting late at night and it's the end of a long day, and my patience is getting thin, so don't tempt me. I don't want to enforce those rules that you have asked me to do. I don't want to do it, but if you insist, I will.

The member for Sault Ste Marie has two minutes to respond.

Hon Mrs Johns: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member opposite suggested to me that I had not implemented the ODA. I just wanted to clarify that Bill 83 was introduced in the last session. We have tried—

The Deputy Speaker: It isn't question period, so you cannot ask me questions nor can you ask anybody on the other side of the House questions. If I had to answer it, it would be very close, short and concise, and it would be no.

The Chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie, two minutes to respond.

Mr Martin: This bill isn't about access and improving equality. This is another example of this government's fixation on everything American, public dollars for private gain and reduction of access. The legislation explicitly states that public dollars will not go to private, for-profit universities, but this is in fact a lie. Where private institutions rely on public dollars to operate—

The Deputy Speaker: I'll ask the member to withdraw that remark.

Mr Martin: I wasn't calling them liars; I was saying the bill—

The Deputy Speaker: No, let me be very clear.

Mr Martin: I withdraw. For-profit public institutions rely on public dollars to operate—

Hon Mrs Cunningham: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker—

Mr Martin: She's wasting my time, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I don't have to be reminded about what is going on in here. It's my job to know. I know that the clock of life goes on, but let me assure everyone in the House that I will be fair.

I will recognize the minister from London on a point of privilege.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: If the member wants the private colleges and universities to get private funding, he should say so.

The Deputy Speaker: If I were answering that question, I think it would be no, as well.

Mr Curling: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member had two minutes, and the clock wasn't stopped. I think out of courtesy he should be given the two minutes to respond.

Mr Agostino: Unanimous consent.

Mr Curling: Unanimous consent.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Agostino: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: May I ask for unanimous consent that the member for Sault Ste Marie be given the two minutes to wrap up his response.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton East has requested unanimous consent that the member for Sault Ste Marie be given two minutes to respond. Those are the rules of debate in this House. My ruling is that the member for Sault Ste Marie was interrupted when he had about half his time gone. I told you before, I will be fair. I will restore that time. I would like the member for Sault

Ste Marie to feel he has the next minute to finish his comments and his response.

Mr Martin: There was unanimous agreement to give me two minutes, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: It certainly was unanimous that you would be given two minutes. My ruling, though, is that one minute of that has already elapsed.

Mr Martin: For-profit public institutions rely on public dollars to operate. In the United States, 30% of operating revenue for private universities comes from direct or indirect government subsidies. In Ontario, they will get public dollars through OSAP, tax credits and tax incentives, while our public institutions are starved for funds.

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Tuition fees will skyrocket if private universities are allowed to operate. At Phoenix university's BC campus, tuition for a four-year degree program is more than \$40,000. In Ontario's public system, a four-year degree costs \$16,000. Student debts will also go through the roof. Ontario's average student debt is already \$25,000.

We were better off under an NDP government than we are today. Tuition was 60% lower, student debt was half today's average. Even during Ontario's worst recession since the Depression, the NDP gave university operations almost twice as much as the Conservatives. Operating support measured per student was \$1,300 higher. That represents a drop of 70% since the Conservatives came to power. This bill is a continuation of this government's fixation on everything American.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I am really pleased tonight to stand in support of Bill 132, An Act to enact the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000.

Before I get into the main text of what I want to say, I do want to say to the member for Sault Ste Marie that when he read that—

The Deputy Speaker: Fine, but do it through me.

Mr Wettlaufer: Mr Speaker, I will say, through you to the member for Sault Ste Marie, that when he said we were better off under an NDP government, even the Liberals raised their eyebrows, so that's a different sign.

On Friday night this past week, a group of individuals and I went out for supper. We walked into the restaurant, and one of the individuals had a badge or pin denoting himself as a PC supporter. With that, the manager, Angela Baker, of the Armadillo Steak House—that little, middle-class steak house downtown on Front Street here in Toronto, most of you will know it; it's not an elite place by any stretch of the imagination—said, "Oh, congratulations." I looked at her and I said, "For what?" She said, "For introducing the bill on post-secondary education choice and excellence." I said, "Congratulations? You like it, do you?" She said, "Yes, this is what students need."

I would just like to mention that there are some differences of viewpoints between the Liberals and ourselves, of course, insofar as the quality of education is con-

cerned. I think I would like to point out that last Thursday, October 19, the Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty, in a question to the Honourable Dianne Cunningham, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, said in his view universities should be centres of excellence. This is very important, because I think the foundation of the Liberals' belief is that universities should be centres of excellence, whereas the people on this side of the House already believe that universities are centres of excellence—not should be, but are.

But there is something else here. While we believe the quality of education in Ontario is at least equal to any other part of the world, that's not the issue. The issue is making the necessary fundamental changes to the post-secondary system which will set the conditions to meet the growing needs for the years to come. That could be the near future. It could also be 10, 15 or 20 years from now.

A major component of Mr McGuinty's opposition to Bill 132 is that component in relation to private universities. We've heard the members of the Liberal caucus and the NDP caucus say tonight what they feel about private universities. However, Mr McGuinty and Mr Hampton, the leader of the NDP, have not offered their views insofar as applied degree programs are concerned. Applied degree programs are an element in this bill. I'm sure that when Dalton McGuinty tests the political winds, he'll make up his mind on which way he should go insofar as applied degrees are concerned. He may even express his views on student indebtedness when he finds which way the political winds are blowing.

I do feel that we should be addressing the issue of student indebtedness. I think it is unfortunate that any student anywhere should have to go into debt to pay for a post-secondary education. But there is a world of reality in which we live. It is unrealistic to expect the taxpayers of Ontario to cover the entire cost of a post-secondary education for students when not all students go to university. Also, those students who go to university are substantially rewarded in an economic sense for their efforts. It is realistic that, given the economic advantages that a student gains from a post-secondary level of education, the student would pay some of his or her education.

Mr McGuinty does not appear to be against the concept of students being provided student loans. That's going into debt. We assume that the difference between the government position and Mr McGuinty's and the Liberal's position is the degree of student indebtedness. Mr McGuinty and other members of the Liberal caucus have emphatically stated that our students are averaging debt levels of \$25,000. That's what they're saying. Maybe in McGuinty land students have an average debt of \$25,000, but in the province of Ontario the student debt level is \$13,000. The average student debt level is not \$25,000 as the Liberals state; it is \$13,000. Do you know where that figure came from? It came from one of their own sources, the Canadian Federation of Students. Now they're shaking their heads.

Mr Agostino: Why don't you tell the whole story?

Mr Wettlaufer: I guess you didn't read. If \$25,000 is too high, as I'm sure Mr McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal party, thinks it is, then I would like to ask him: what debt level is satisfactory? Would 50% to 53% of that \$25,000 be acceptable? If it is acceptable to the Liberals and to McGuinty, then guess what, guys? We're there—according to the Canadian Federation of Students, of course, and we do assume that they're telling the truth. The Liberals wouldn't question that.

Instead of Mr McGuinty standing up during question period to lambaste this government for supposedly high student debt loads, he should be on his feet applauding us.

Mr Agostino: Who should be?

Mr Wettlaufer: Your leader, Dalton McGuinty. Wouldn't it be refreshing just once to have the Leader of the Opposition stand up and praise us for our efforts?

Mr Agostino: If you ever did something right, we would.

Mr Wettlaufer: I doubt very much that he will. I'd like to see him come clean. Oh well, it won't happen. Wouldn't it be refreshing for him to say that he was wrong? Wouldn't it be refreshing for him to say that the average debt load of students is not \$25,000 as he had said, that it's only \$13,000? Wouldn't it be refreshing? Wouldn't it be refreshing for him to say that he apologizes for not having done his homework on the issue?

According to the 1996 census, the average income for a graduate with a university degree was nearly \$45,000—\$44,990—compared to an average annual income of a high school graduate earner of \$24,103. The university graduate's income therefore is \$20,887 a year more than a high school graduate's. So are we not looking at the cost of education to that student as an investment—an investment that would return to him significant dollars?

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I'm not sure if the Leader of the Opposition considers this unfair or unreasonable. He hasn't said. He hasn't said whether any student willing to work hard enough to obtain a university degree should be well compensated for their efforts. Maybe he is letting his emotions get in the way of facts. The facts are that our university system is excellent, that our universities are world-class and can successfully compete with any post-secondary system in the world, and in fact they do.

The Liberals have very conveniently ignored this topic tonight, and so did the NDP. Any student in the province of Ontario can today choose from over 10,000 university courses offered over the Internet. And guess what? They're not all from Ontario universities. They're from private universities from all over the world. Pick any subject, and our students can find a college or university somewhere on the Internet in which they can enrol—the United States, France, England, Germany, Scotland, anywhere at all.

So there is a proliferation of these courses. Do we accept that? What protection is there for the student? They're opposed to having private universities in

Ontario. Bill 132 provides the protection for those students in the province of Ontario who want to obtain their education through a private university. Presently, if they get that education on the Internet, they do not have the protection. Do you not care about those students?

I've got ahead of myself. I don't even know what my notes are any more.

There is no intent on the part of this government to interfere with the autonomy of the universities. There is no intent by this government to flow monies to private universities at the expense of the publicly funded universities. There is no intent on the part of this government through this act to penalize any student.

I want to say that when I ran in 1995, I did so out of a profound belief that the young people in our province were not being served and I felt they had to have a future, a future with choice. That's why I ran. I still believe that today. I talk to a lot of young people, I talk to them daily, and I'm convinced more than ever. In talking to these students, I'm finding out exactly what they want out of life. They do want the choice. I know there were a few rabble-rousers, misguided people, here tonight in the gallery, but they represent a very tiny minority of students. They are very concerned, and they have a right to be concerned, but they listen to the Liberals and the NDP themselves rabble-rousing. They listen to the Liberals and the NDP, and instead of giving those students assurance, they fearmonger. How dare you fearmonger? This is not a political game we're playing. These are children's lives.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: I know that the Liberal member for Elgin-Middlesex-London doesn't believe what he says. He realizes that this is a theatre, and he wants to go on and on. Unfortunately, we're competing against The West Wing and the World Series. I say to the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London that—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The Leafs are also playing. But I just wanted to say that if you will address your comments through me, we'll ask the rest of you to be patient for a little while, and we'll get this debate cleared up tonight.

Mr Wettlaufer: I would like to reassert what the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities earlier said, that under the Liberal watch—and the leader of the Liberal opposition party was a member of that government—23.3% of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 attended post-secondary institutions. Under the NDP watch that increased to 25.5%. Under our leadership that has increased to 35.5%. Fully 35.5% of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 are now attending university or college. That should be celebrated.

The upsurge in this number is a great indicator of how successful our post-secondary system is, how they are treating our students. But it also says something about the prestige they have within the communities in our province and in our country. More students are enrolling in post-secondary programs than at any previous time in our history.

The higher the educational level, the higher the quality of life. Our goal in this government is to ensure that Ontario is the best place on earth in which to live, to raise a family and to prosper—prosper. That can only be done as the result of a post-secondary education, and students want choice. They've told me they want choice. I'm sure they've told you too, but you're not listening.

We are very aware that the primary purpose of an educational system is to challenge the intellectual ability of students. We realize that. But we also believe that one of the goals of any education system—the students certainly believe this—is to provide them with the necessary tools to prosper in our economy. If we are going to continue to open more doors of educational opportunities to meet the demands of the new millennium, then we must increase the diversity of the types of courses offered and increase the diversity of institutions through which those courses can be offered.

It's a difficult task, but this government is up to it. It is easy for the opposition parties to categorically reject new ideas, new concepts put forward by the government. It is easy for them to try to maintain the status quo, because politically, maintaining the status quo is the easiest route. But we have not necessarily accepted the status quo. We are not afraid to take on challenges, which is probably the reason we were re-elected a year ago. Our leader, the Premier, Mike Harris, has definitely shown leadership, contrary to the Leader of the Opposition, who isn't up to the job.

We are committed to ensuring the quality of existing degree programs, but we are going to ensure that future degree programs offered by either colleges or universities will meet or exceed standards of excellence. These standards of excellence will be determined by a quality assurance board, an independent, arm's-length body. Is there something wrong with that? I don't think so, because the world of academia, the presidents of the community colleges, doesn't think there's anything wrong with that. Any students I've asked think it's wonderful that an independent body would set standards of excellence. Those standards of excellence, the quality assurance board, are determined right here.

Interjections.

Mr Wettlaufer: Oh, you haven't read it. They haven't read this. That's the problem. They didn't know it was in there. Well, I guess that's not a surprise.

We think that in the province of Ontario we should have a list of private universities that would include competitors on the world-scale level of Yale, Duke, Harvard and MIT. I think it's wonderful that private universities are going to be allowed, as will applied degree programs.

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The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Peters: There's an interesting musical artist by the name of Lou Reed. A line in one of his songs talks about the smarts that you learn out on the streets that a college education can't buy. That's what this government is doing: they're forcing students not to be able to have a college education. They're forcing students out on to the

streets. What they are creating with this legislation and what they continue to do with the Americanization of the education system in this province is an elitist system, a system where we've seen over the past four years tuition increases in the neighbourhood of 60%, which are added to a 35% increase in the cost of a post-secondary education in Ontario; a decrease in provincial funding, with no signs, no indications that we're going to see increases. But the worst part is the debt, the unprecedented debt they're leaving on students in this province.

This government likes to talk about consulting and listening to people. Why don't you listen to the Canadian Federation of Students and the issues they continue to raise? Why don't you listen to the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, which represents 11,000 faculty members at universities across this province? Listen to them and what they're saying about what you're doing to education, and more particularly to the post-secondary education system in this province.

The member asked, why not invest in existing students? I ask the question: why don't you invest in existing students? You're not investing in existing students. What you're doing is adding a burden to those existing students.

Look back to 1991. The now Minister of Education, the Honourable Dianne Cunningham, then said, "The university community, including students, is losing confidence in a government that promised to be better." Those very words ring very true today.

Mr Martin: If the students who were here earlier tonight had a voice, they would tell you that the minister has refused to hold a consultation process before bringing in these private universities. She has set up an assessment process that allows for no stakeholder or public input and permits no public scrutiny of her decisions. There is no way to appeal a decision made by the minister, no matter how outrageous or harmful to public education. Before this bill, the right to operate a university was created by an act of the Legislature. Now only the minister has to consent.

They would also say that the Conservatives have cut \$500 million from post-secondary education. OCUFA calculates, however, that \$1.4 billion is the cumulative operational funding that has been taken out of the university sector alone. Compared with other Canadian provinces, Ontario remains in last place when measuring post-secondary operating grants per capita.

Students were indeed better off under an NDP government. Tuition was 60% lower on average. Student debt was half today's average. Even during Ontario's worst recession since the Depression, the NDP gave university operations almost twice as much as the Conservatives. Operating support measured per student was \$1,300 higher. That represents a drop of 17% since the Conservatives came to power.

This legislation is to allow private, for-profit universities to divert public dollars for private gain. Universities will only be for the rich if this bill is passed.

The quality of post-secondary education will be compromised by Wal-Mart universities opening up shop in Ontario. Our entire public system could be in jeopardy if there is a challenge under NAFTA.

This bill slams the door on government accountability for post-secondary education and is really a decoy for cuts and chronic underfunding.

Mrs Molinari: I want to comment on some of the points made by the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, where he says that we're forcing students out on the street and leaving debt on students—

The Deputy Speaker: I'm sorry. Your comments and questions are addressed to and about the member for Kitchener Centre.

Mrs Molinari: I'm getting there, Mr Speaker. Thank you.

I want to put for the record that we as a government have increased OSAP to an estimated \$556 million this year, an increase of \$326.5 million over 1995-96 levels.

We're increasing the number of Ontario graduate scholarship awards by more than 50% and increasing the value of scholarships to \$15,000.

We've introduced the Ontario student opportunity trust fund, in which the government matches private sector contributions raised by colleges and universities to a current \$600 million—\$300 million from the province and \$300 million from the private sector.

We're committing \$35 million to our Aiming for the Top tuition scholarships, which will reward students with top marks and will help top students who have financial need. At maturity, more than 10,000 students will benefit with over 4,000 in receipt of scholarships this fall.

We've introduced the Ontario student opportunity grant program, which will give students who borrow more than \$7,000 a grant for the portion of their loan above this amount. It's a grant.

We're doing more to help students than any another government has ever done. It needs to be put on the record because the opposition obviously doesn't have the facts and they just don't get it, as they don't get any of the facts that are presented here because they make up all kinds of facts that have come out. We keep hearing all the things that you put out which are totally non-true.

M^{me} Boyer : Vraiment, dans tout ce que j'ai entendu et ce que j'entends ce soir sur les universités privées on parle d'excellence; on parle de donner tout ce qu'on peut aux étudiants. Je me demande vraiment où on s'en va avec tout ça quand on pourrait le donner avec nos collèges et universités qui sont présentement en oeuvre.

This government is claiming that private universities will be fully funded by private money with no taxpayer dollars, will enhance quality through competition. In reality, private universities draw on public funds via students loans, grants, tax incentives to students, to donors, research grants.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has stated that students at private universities in Ontario would be eligible for student loans. That is publicly funded money.

Competition already exists in the Ontario public system. As budgets have been slashed, public universities have been forced to compete for private donors, research or industry grants.

In reality, tuition at private institutions could be at least double that of the public system. So if students cannot afford current tuition fees, then I'm sure there will be little incentive to attend private institutions.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Kitchener Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr Wettlaufer: I would like to thank the members from Elgin-Middlesex-London, Sault Ste Marie, Thornhill and Ottawa-Vanier for adding to this discussion.

In response to the member from Sault Ste Marie, I want to say, however, that he restated that students were better off under an NDP government. I guess he thinks that when classes of an entire university went without jobs upon graduation, they were better off. My daughter was one of those students who graduated with very good degrees in about 1993, under your government, and guess what? Half of her class, top students at the University of Western Ontario, didn't have jobs thanks to your government.

Interjection: Are they working now?

Mr Wettlaufer: I would just like to say here that Paul Davenport, chair of the Council of Ontario Universities and president of the University of Western Ontario, said that the introduction of some small, niche-based private universities—and I think that's what they'll be; they'll be very specific—will not be seen as a substitute by most parents and students for institutions like Western, Queens or Toronto. I personally can live with that.

Howard Rundle, president of ACAATO, said, "This significant and visionary action by government recognizes the quality of Ontario college programming, the needs of Ontario students and the job market. Applied degrees will give students greater choice in the knowledge economy."

John Ibbitson, *Globe and Mail*, said in March of this year, "Liberals Just Don't Get It When It Comes to Schools."

"It means more jobs here. It means more prosperity here. It means more opportunity here.'...

"The Liberal stance is dumb on so many levels that it's hard to know where to start, except perhaps by observing that the poverty of policy imagination within the official opposition has reached alarming depths."

Private universities "will fill a niche, answer a demand, and provide a service."

And guess what? Yes, those students who didn't have a job in 1993 do have good jobs now under our government.

The Deputy Speaker: There have been several references tonight to the galleries. I wasn't here, so I won't comment on it, but I would like to comment on the visitor we have in the gallery. Your deportment and interest in our proceedings is profound to us, and I would like to compliment you for being here and for your interest. I hope your evening has been as informative to you as we have enjoyed hosting you.

It being almost 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2123.

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