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Monday 3 April 2006

Lundi 3 avril 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 3 April 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 3 avril 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO BY-ELECTIONS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I stand to congratulate each citizen who put their name forward in the recent by-elections in Whitby–Ajax, Nepean–Carleton and Toronto–Danforth. In fact this House, I'm sure, congratulates the three successful candidates: Christine Elliott, PC member for Whitby–Ajax; Lisa MacLeod, PC member for Nepean–Carleton; and of course Peter Tabuns, NDP for the Toronto–Danforth riding.

Clearly this is springtime in Ontario, and indeed it's the beginning of a rather cool fall and winter for the current government. Yes, the people of Ontario are looking for new beginnings, and that can easily be seen in the fact that the Liberal government was shut out in the recent by-elections held last Thursday.

Ontarians have sent a clear message to Dalton McGuinty's government: The people of Ontario are tired of paying more and getting less; they are tired of the growing McGuinty bureaucracy; they are tired of the broken promises; they are tired of a government without a plan to reduce wait times at hospitals, stop the loss of Ontario jobs and halt gridlock on our roads, and the list goes on.

But our party's success in the by-elections is not just a mid-term verdict on the McGuinty government; it is also a reflection of the quality of the candidates who are now joining the John Tory team. I'm proud to say that with the election of Christine Elliott and Lisa MacLeod, the Progressive Conservatives have almost doubled the number of women in our caucus. They offer integrity—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): The 2006 budget is good news for London. The budget is getting a positive response in London. The president of the London Chamber of Commerce is quoted as saying, "We're getting a fairly good chunk of change ourselves." London city hall's director of roads is excited about the significant increase in funding for roads and bridges.

In addition to more money for roads and bridges, the budget includes funding to expand the facilities at the London Health Sciences Centre and St. Joseph's Health

Care to increase the number of patient beds at both hospitals. There is also funding for the announced investment of \$1.2 million to increase the number of family residency positions by 47% at Western's Schulich School of Medicine.

There are also several province-wide initiatives that will benefit my constituents in London, including school boards getting more money—\$424 million more—in 2006–07, an increase in social assistance allowances by an additional 2%, and 14,000 additional child care spaces funded under Best Start.

The investments being made by our government are welcome changes after years of cuts to health care and education by the previous government. The 2006 budget is good news for my constituents of London–Fanshawe. I am proud to be part of a government that has been focused on making Ontario a stronger province by investing in infrastructure, health care and education.

HOCKEY

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): Last Friday, I had the pleasure of watching the Owen Sound Attack beat the Kitchener Rangers in game five of the Ontario Hockey League western conference quarter-final. The Attack now moves into the semi-finals of this conference, and all hockey fans, including myself, couldn't be more proud and excited.

The credit goes to a hard-working team of young men who have helped bring more and more fans to the Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre. We are also grateful to the current owners of the Attack: area business people who rallied together when the threat of losing the former Platers franchise occurred in March 2000. The new owners include Brian Johnson, Bob Severs, Frank Coulter, Peter and Paul MacDermid and Faye Harshman.

The team, coached by Mike Stothers and managed by Michael Futa, includes Neil Conway, Andrej Sekera, Trevor Koverko, Jeff Moor, Scott Giles, Colin Hanley, Bobby Ryan, Igor Gongalsky, Derek Brochu, Scott Tregunna, Jeff Kyrzakos, Zach McCullough, Joshua Bailey, Marcus Carroll, Bob Sanguinetti, Marek Bartanus, Theo Peckham, Mike Angelidis, Michael Ouzas, Josh Catto, Matthew Kang, Miles Cope, Payton Liske and Russ Brownell.

As we move into the next round, we will be playing either Guelph or London, and we fully expect to defeat them like we beat the Kitchener Rangers.

Of course, a team is nothing without its fans, and kudos go to Helen Lewis, the Attack Pak Fan Club presi-

dent, who, joined by many volunteers, works tirelessly arranging buses for road games, team functions with fans and many other events.

Nothing builds community spirit better than cheering for a winning team, and I'm pleased to be part of that success story.

ON YOUR MARK TUTORING PROGRAM

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): Today I would like to recognize the On Your Mark tutoring program for children of Portuguese-Canadian descent. It's a program that runs out of the Working Women Community Centre in Toronto.

This program is a partnership with the Portuguese Coalition for Better Education and the Portuguese Inter-agency Network. The tutoring/mentoring program is set up to reach at-risk Portuguese students in public and Catholic schools. By "at risk" we mean students who, in the early grades—primary division—lag behind in literacy and numeracy standards for their grades, and students at crucial points in high school—at the transition years and toward the end—to prevent dropping out and encourage the pursuit of post-secondary education.

Parents note that the greatest improvement in their children is self-esteem in their academic abilities since participating in the program. In most cases, children more regularly complete homework, and their grades improve.

On Your Mark has successfully engaged 352 students from 27 schools across the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board. There is currently a list of 31 students waiting to be matched with tutors. If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering a minimum of one hour a week to help make a difference in a child's future, please contact project coordinator Sonya Neves at the Working Women Community Centre at 416-532-2824.

1340

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): In February, Premier McGuinty announced that our government would spend \$300 million over the next three years to achieve a 50-50 cost sharing with municipalities for land ambulance services. He indicated that our government would increase annual funding for such services to \$280 million this year, \$333 million in 2007 and \$285 million in 2008.

Responsibilities for land ambulances were down-loaded to municipalities under the previous government with a never-fulfilled promise of splitting the costs. Since then, regions like Peel have invested millions of dollars trying to put more ambulances on the road and reduce emergency response times. In 2005, the region of Peel invested \$3.2 million in 16 new paramedics and three new ambulances, attempting to improve response times to emergencies. The region of Peel invested resources to add service hours, train more advance-care paramedics

and bring on new equipment. We know that for heart attacks and other serious emergencies, every minute counts. That's why I'm delighted that the region of Peel will receive over \$5 million as part of our government's plan to strengthen cost sharing with municipalities for land ambulance services. This funding will allow the region of Peel to address such issues as population growth and rising labour costs while continuing to improve services and decrease response times.

Our government is working with municipalities to narrow the gap and is committed to helping municipalities provide quality ambulance services.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Members know that on Friday beleaguered Liberal Transportation Minister Harinder Takhar and the McGuinty government finally threw in the towel in the ongoing battle with the 407 ETR. After seven straight court losses, the McGuinty government realized that their win-loss record closely resembled that of the Washington Generals, the perennial punching bag of the Harlem Globetrotters.

The fact of the matter is that Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal MPPs intentionally made a promise they knew they could not and would not keep. Folks know that the 407 contract had not only been obtained by the Liberals through a freedom of information request while in opposition, but the contract had also been fully in the public realm before Dalton made his promise to roll back tolls.

Let's face it. In order to get votes, Dalton looked into the camera and made a promise that he knew he could not and would not keep. Instead of admitting this from day one, Dalton chose instead—

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the standing orders—I read from page 18, section 23—"In debate, a member shall be called to order ... if he or she....

"Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member."

I find it highly improper that these motivations are being used.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): On the same point of order?

Mr. Bisson: On the same point of order: I agree with the whip of the Liberal Party but it was—never mind.

The Speaker: The member for Erie–Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: Instead of admitting this, Dalton chose to engage in a very expensive legal battle for one purpose and one purpose only: to try to save face. The problem is, after two and a half years in the courts, the taxpayer is about \$2 million to \$5 million worse off.

What makes matter worse is that by losing seven consecutive court cases, the government had next to nothing to offer in negotiations and the result is worse today than if it had begun the process from day one. The Liberals hid behind expensive lawyers for two years instead of

admitting they made a promise they knew full well they weren't going to keep.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I rise today to commend the Ministers of Finance and Transportation for the timely inclusion in the recent budget of \$32 million for transportation infrastructure in Ottawa. Through the initiative Move Ontario our government is putting a total of \$1.2 billion into transportation, roads and bridges, a portion of which will be spent in our nation's capital.

As Ottawa Mayor Bob Chiarelli said, "Ottawa needs to maintain and expand its key infrastructure to meet its expected growth—whether that's roads, transit, housing, water, or arts and culture. For this reason, I'm pleased that Ottawa will receive \$32 million for transportation infrastructure from the province" in this budget. "This unexpected and much-needed funding will serve to enhance road safety, reduce traffic gridlock and help beautify our streets."

This new money is coupled with the government's previous commitment to modification improvements on the Queensway, as well as a \$200-million investment in the north-south light rail transit that we call the O-Train.

In addition to this, in this particular budget three major cultural projects received provincial support as well. I haven't got the time today to elaborate on these, but I'll take another day to explain this to viewers, especially from Ottawa, who will be so pleased to know about what has happened as a result of this budget in terms of what it means to Ottawa.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): One of the biggest problems in getting around Toronto and commuting is gridlock, which costs the Toronto region over \$2 billion annually. Gridlock produces lost time and wasted fuel, and it certainly harms the environment. In order to deal with this gridlock, the McGuinty government has budgeted \$1.2 billion in new infrastructure, spending much of it on the GTA.

Our Minister of Finance has said, "These investments are the beginning of a new era in public transit." He's right. After decades of inaction, we finally have a firm commitment to build the most important project which will lessen GTA gridlock; that is, the subway extension to York University. The subway will carry 100,000 riders, eliminate 83,000 car trips and take pressure off the over-packed Yonge Street line. It will become a critical transportation link between downtown and the 905, and will create a new transportation hub in Vaughan.

The residents of my riding of Davenport are delighted, since this subway will directly affect their ability to attend classes at York University and to see their relatives along the route to Vaughan. Since the Mississauga and Brampton transit lines will also see improvements, the incentives to leave their cars at home will be even

stronger. This is a win-win project, and I congratulate the McGuinty government on its foresight.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's with great honour that I rise in the House today to share some good news with my colleagues, particularly my good friend the member from Leeds-Grenville, who has shown a great interest in my riding of Northumberland. Our recent budget has been so well received in the riding of Northumberland that I want to share with you the reaction of some of the mayors from Northumberland.

Mayor Hector Macmillan from Trent Hills describes the funds to be received in this budget as "terrific." I quote Mayor Peter Delanty of the town of Cobourg in the Northumberland News as saying: "This provincial budget appears to have taken the plight of cash-strapped municipalities seriously." It then goes on to say, "Certainly, it's the first in a very long time that he has listened to a budget that reflects the province's reaching out to help municipalities: 'I tip my hat to the province.'" The mayor of Quinte West is quoted in the Trentonian as stating that the infrastructure funding is "welcome news." In the Brighton Independent, Mayor Bill Finlay of Alnwick/Haldimand states, "The funds are needed, and we do appreciate it."

I could go on and on with the thanks and praise that I've personally received from the mayors of my riding of Northumberland in response to the recent budget.

So to you, my good friend the member from Leeds-Grenville, I thank you for showing interest in my constituents in the riding of Northumberland.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that on March 31, 2006, in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 82, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006 / Projet de loi 82, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2006.

Bill 85, An Act to amend the Assessment Act / Projet de loi 85, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House

Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, April 3, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

The Speaker: Order. Members please take their seats.

Mr. Bradley moved government notice of motion number 88. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Racco, Mario G.
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Ramsay, David
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Rinaldi, Lou
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hudak, Tim	Ruprecht, Tony
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jackson, Cameron	Sandals, Liz
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Smith, Monique
Broten, Laurel C.	Klees, Frank	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Van Bommel, Maria
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Watson, Jim
Caplan, David	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Colle, Mike	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilson, Jim
Craitor, Kim	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Crozier, Bruce	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Di Cocco, Caroline	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Peters, Steve	
Duncan, Dwight	Peterson, Tim	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Murdoch, Bill
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Hardeman, Ernie	Martel, Shelley	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 55; the nays are 9.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

RENT BANK PROGRAM

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): The strength of Ontario depends on the strength of our communities. Our government is committed to strong and safe communities. We are aware that affordable and secure housing is fundamental to the vitality of our communities. During the past two years, our government has worked with municipalities in a new spirit of co-operation to give them the tools to develop

housing solutions that are responsive to the needs of their individual local communities.

With that in mind, I'm pleased to inform members of the House today that our government has allocated the sum of \$4 million to our provincial rent bank program. This amount has been divided among the rent banks operated by all of our 47 municipal service managers in Ontario.

As members will recall, our government began the provincial rent bank program two years ago with a funding commitment of \$10 million. That amount represented a tenfold increase in funding for rent banks in Ontario. At the time, about half of Ontario's municipal service managers had rent banks in their jurisdictions. After the creation of our program, rent banks were established by all 47 municipal service managers in this province.

Since then, our provincial rent bank program has helped literally thousands of low-income households with short-term arrears to keep their homes. Short-term arrears are often the most common reasons why low-income tenants lose their housing and are forced into shelters. The provincial rent bank program helps to ensure housing stability for those who face eviction due to short-term arrears caused by an emergency or some other unforeseen circumstance.

Under our program, tenants with lower incomes may apply to their local rent bank through their municipality to receive financial assistance to address short-term emergency rent arrears. If a tenant's application to the rent bank is approved, the outstanding rent is paid directly to the landlord on behalf of the tenant. Rent bank funding can be used to cover up the two months' rent arrears.

1400

The results of this program have been excellent. To date, in less than two years, a total of 4,177 households in municipalities across Ontario have received assistance from our provincial rent bank program. They have avoided eviction due to short-term rent arrears and they have been able to remain in their homes due to the existence of this program. It is a program that has made a very real difference in the quality of life for many vulnerable families across the province. It is one more step in creating a caring and compassionate society of which we all can be proud.

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION FUND FONDS COLLECTIVITÉS ACTIVES

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Our government is committed to providing all Ontarians with access to sport and recreation activities regardless of their age, ability or income. The communities in action fund, or CIAF, grants are a part of our Active 2010 strategy, which aims to increase the level of physical activity amongst Ontarians so that by the year 2010, when Canada welcomes the world through the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, 55% of Ontarians are going to be physically active enough to benefit their health. It's

estimated that physical inactivity costs our health care system billions.

Part of the CIAF mandate is to support at-risk youth and to support them where it matters most—in their own home communities. We are working to keep kids safe and ensure that positive options are available after school. This year's \$5 million fund, which was part of Minister Duncan's budget, aims to increase the level of physical activity and sport participation rates in Ontario by assisting both local and provincial not-for-profit organizations to create and enhance opportunities for physical activity and community sport and recreation.

Monsieur le Président, pendant la période de subventions 2005-2006, nous avons attribué un total de 5,8 \$ millions à plus de 150 organismes à but non lucratif provinciaux et locaux.

In North Bay, for instance—and I thank the member for North Bay, Ms. Smith, who is a very active promoter of CIAF—a CIAF grant allowed the North Bay Canoe Club to introduce 565 children and youth to war canoeing. In Ottawa, a CIAF grant assisted with the development and delivery of recreational programs for four community houses in southeast Ottawa. The initiative has allowed 620 low-income children, youth and adults to gain access to 12 new recreation programs. A CIAF grant has enabled the Kapuskasing Indian Friendship Centre to create new fitness programming and also to enhance existing programs through the purchase of new fitness equipment for aboriginal elders and seniors in the Kapuskasing area. This project also helps to provide recreation for youth and younger adults, and will help to reduce obesity and diabetes rates in this First Nations community.

Dans la région du nord de l'Ontario, la proportion de financement par habitant est 10 fois plus élevée que dans les autres régions. En fait, la région du nord de l'Ontario a reçu 44 des 145 subventions régionales du FCA pour 2005-2006.

I should point out a big thank you to the northern Ontario caucus, who have been very insistent that the north get its fair share of grants. I'm pleased to see that 44 of the 145 regional grants for the communities in action fund went to the north, and I thank those members of provincial Parliament.

Last December, I met with several grant recipient organizations at the Metro-Central YMCA, including the Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario, the Toronto Dragon Boats, and Native Children and Family Services of Toronto. In Mississauga, the Erinoak Children's Treatment Centre is developing sport and physical activity programs for up to 300 children and youth with disabilities in the Halton and Peel regions. In partnership with a wheelchair sports association and the Paralympics association, Erinoak has established an ongoing group for 10 participants and three volunteers to develop wheelchair sports skills. Last week, I attended the KidSport Funzone event, which is funded by a CIAF grant and provided an opportunity for 500 youth in the Cabbagetown area to test their skills at eight different sport activities. This KidSport

Funzone actually travels the province, so I would encourage members to look into this to try to get it to a school in their riding.

Notre investissement dans ces organismes aide ces derniers à offrir des programmes d'activités sportives essentielles aux gens défavorisés ainsi qu'à diverses collectivités. Nous voulons garantir que les enfants ontariens puissent disposer d'endroits où ils peuvent jouer, apprendre et faire de l'exercice en toute sécurité.

I'd like to commend the not-for-profit organizations for their dedication, for the countless hours they put into designing programs, and particularly for the hundreds of volunteers they recruit and for the key role they play in breaking down barriers to healthy, active living.

We must continue our commitment to working alongside these organizations through programs like the communities in action fund. I am pleased to announce that the McGuinty government has committed to a third year of this great program, and to inform all members that new applications are now being accepted and there are additional groups that are now eligible for funding. So I'd ask members to look at those packages that we sent around last week, including conservation authorities and colleges and universities.

Our investment in community organizations like the CIAF will enable the Ontario government to achieve our goal of building a healthy Ontario for healthy Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

RENT BANK PROGRAM

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I'm responding to the announcement by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I want to say that it does follow the mantra of the present Liberal government: "Pay more, get less." I want to point out that since this program was started two years ago, the cost of hydro has gone up almost 25%. The cost of property taxation on rental units has gone up three times as fast as it has on residential, single-family dwellings. Of course, all the people who are eligible for this program are the same people who have to pay the McGuinty health tax. For that, what we see in this announcement is that it was a \$10-million, two-year program and it's now going to be a \$4-million, one-year program, which is I think 20% less, as I figured it out. So it definitely is "Pay more, get less."

When the program was introduced, there was a recommendation that went from the staff at the largest partner in this program, the city of Toronto, that the provincial rent bank program, beyond 2006—that any future funding allocation take into consideration the greater need for such assistance in communities where there is a larger tenant population, and that the cap on administrative funding be increased to collect the actual cost. That's not what the minister does in this announcement. He reduces it by 20%, as opposed to taking those things into consideration.

I also quickly wanted to point out—and it's not necessarily part of the program the minister announced—that I

met with the people of the Co-operative Housing Association, who had great concern about these same people that this program looks after: people living in co-op housing who find themselves unable to meet the requirements of paying full rent. But because of the legislation and the Social Housing Reform Act, they cannot change them to a rent-geared-to-income unit within the same complex. So they have to move out of their community.

I would point out that in this program, those same people are not eligible for this funding, and I think it's very important that the minister take a look at that. The minister did promise to do a review of the act to look after the shortcomings that the act presently has. But so far, in the past two years, he hasn't seen fit to do it, though he did announce it to the people who were involved with it, and they were looking forward to the minister moving on that fairly soon so we could look at people in co-op housing and they could move from one type of unit to the other without having to leave their community.

The other thing I just wanted to point out is that the announcement the minister made refers to seniors, but if we look at the criteria of the program, it excludes a lot of people. In fact, it is only for people who are working and earning remuneration. The two that I think are really important that are not covered, and one wonders why not, are people on social assistance, who cannot avail themselves of this program, which seems kind of strange—because of the level of social assistance, I would think that they would be among the first to need funding for that—and it doesn't apply to people who live in subsidized housing. I'm sure that subsidized housing is based on the amount of income they have. So it is every bit as probable that people with subsidized housing have as great a difficulty paying their rent as people paying full rent. So I would suggest that the minister look at that and make sure all people can avail themselves of this program.

1410

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION FUND

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I'd like to respond to the minister for Liberal promotion. We have yet another announcement by the minister who calls himself the Minister of Health Promotion. This ministry continues to do the work of other agencies that were created before it was in place. We have now a partisan Liberal government ministry handing out money piecemeal to many non-profit recreational groups across the province. Before this minister was involved in this very, very partisan exercise we had the Trillium Foundation, which handed out money to non-partisan, community-based-decision organizations.

This ministry's charade, as it announces piecemeal grants on a very partisan basis, on a Liberal government basis, to put the best foot forward that it possibly can in a failing government, is a charade and it should be stopped. The administration is a useless cost that could be transferred into real action.

RENT BANK PROGRAM

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I will be responding to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He has spoken today about a rent bank. He's spoken today about a \$4-million allocation. What he has not spoken about is his government's failure to institute rent controls. What he has not talked about today is the very serious issue of building affordable housing, and he has not talked about the 65,000 people on the waiting list in the city of Toronto alone who are looking for affordable housing, and there is none for them.

I remember some three years ago in the lead-up to the election—we all remember—all of the promises that were being made. One of the promises I remember most clearly and dearly in my heart was when the Premier, at that time the opposition leader, stood up and said, "A McGuinty government will pass a new Tenant Protection Act within one year of coming to office."

In eager anticipation, we all waited as that year came and went. Then we were into year two and we started to ask, "When can we expect it this year?" But year two came and went, and now year three is mostly gone. In fact, today is day 913, and you still haven't done what you were supposed to do by day 365. You are nearly 600 days in arrears. Can you imagine if a tenant were 600 days in arrears? He or she wouldn't be in their apartment, but you sit there smugly on that side and announce that you have \$4 million of allocation.

I have to tell you, we know what that means. It means almost nothing. The Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations in Toronto has documented growing evidence of the number of people who are being evicted in this city. Evictions have gone up markedly under the McGuinty government because what you are doing is not sufficient for those people who are renters.

I juxtapose the \$4 million today with what I think has been a failure and why so many people are finding themselves in arrears. The minimum wage has gone up only tiny bits at a time, so that a person on minimum wage today in the province of Ontario, working 40 hours a week, makes \$14,000 a year. That's all they make. When average rents for a one-bedroom apartment are closing in on \$1,000, you know there's not much for anything else.

We know that the government has come down with a 3%, a 0% and a 2% rate for welfare and ODSP, and these people aren't even eligible. We know that—

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): They're not?

Mr. Prue: No, they're not even eligible. I'm going to get to that in a minute.

We know that with the clawback continuing to exist, the families who would have had \$1,450, who have had it clawed back, can't use that for very important things like the rent.

Now we have this \$4 million, as if we're all supposed to stand here and applaud. I know some of your backbenchers did, but did your backbenchers know that most

of that \$4 million is just topping up the \$10-million fund because you've spent \$4 million, which is out there in the system and which has yet to be repaid? All this is is topping up your bank; it's nothing more than that. You're trying to keep your \$10-million fund.

The wording is very strange. You're not talking about this being an expenditure, because it's not. You're not talking about it being new money, because it's not. What it is is an allocation to top up the fund. This is hardly an announcement that you should be proud of.

You've helped 4,177 people. I think all Ontarians would be truly grateful that these people have been helped. I know I am, because 4,177 people are not on the street. But it's clear that the reason you're topping it up is because they have not yet been able to afford to pay the money back. This is nothing more than a replenishing fund.

You promised to help the vulnerable due to unforeseen circumstances. But I have to tell you that the most vulnerable are not even eligible. ODSP recipients and welfare recipients are not eligible and, in most communities, single employable people are not eligible. Who gets the money is some of the families, not even seniors, because you have to have a job. You can't be on a pension, and that's according to your own government guidelines that you read out here two years ago.

What we need is a Tenant Protection Act. Today is day 913. You're nearly 600 days late. What we need as well is the building of affordable housing so that people don't find themselves in these circumstances, so that 65,000 families are off the waiting lists in Toronto and 100,000 are off the waiting lists in Ontario. That's what we need, not announcements—

The Speaker: Thank you.

WEARING OF PINS AND RIBBONS

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: April marks the beginning of Daffodil Month. The Canadian Cancer Society is doing their fundraising campaign with more than 40,000 volunteers. To bring attention to this, I'm seeking unanimous consent to wear either the daffodil pin or the ribbon, or both, to commemorate Daffodil Month for the Canadian Cancer Society.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member for Brant has asked for unanimous consent to wear either a daffodil pin or a ribbon commemorating cancer month. Agreed? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Minister, could you please explain how on earth the bureaucracy of

your government has swelled by more than 7,200 employees since your party took power less than three years ago?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): To the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Actually, in terms of the number of people in the Ontario public service, I think it's up by about 1,800. I would just say to the public that at least 600 of them are jobs that were outside consulting jobs that we have brought back into the public service and have saved over \$20 million. Two hundred of these people are health and safety inspectors, and I think about 100 of them are meat inspectors: all good investments of taxpayers' dollars to ensure that the health and safety of the people of Ontario are protected. So we're saving money on repatriating jobs and we're protecting the safety of the public with both the health and safety inspectors and the meat inspectors.

Mr. Runciman: The truth is, they're operating in true Liberal style, ballooning the bureaucracy, increasing taxes and spending dollars like there's no tomorrow. Of course, after taxpayers get their say in 2007, there will be no tomorrow for Liberals.

The government phone book is thicker and heavier than it has ever been—100 pages thicker, to be exact—and it has all happened under your watch. We knew you were on a tax-and-spend spree, and now we know you're also on a hiring spree. Considering how your broken promises on basics such as affordable electricity and no tax hikes are helping drive employers and highly skilled workers—is this your substitute for a job creation policy: 7,200 new bureaucrats?

1420

Hon. Mr. Phillips: You're just factually incorrect. Although that may not bother you, I think the public wants to know what the facts are: 1,800 new jobs, 600 of them consultants, on which you spent \$25 million more than you should have. We brought them back inside the public service. Secondly, I repeat: We have brought 100 meat inspectors back in.

He's counting up the people in the phone book, but we found a way to have more people listed in the phone book, not more jobs. Eighteen hundred more jobs, 600 of them consultants that you spent \$25 million more than you should have to hire. We brought them back in at that savings. Two hundred health and safety inspectors are protecting our workers in the field. We brought back in 100 meat inspectors that you had taken out of the public service, to ensure that the health and safety of the people of Ontario is protected. Those are good investments for the taxpayers, including the \$25 million we saved that you were wasting every single day.

Mr. Runciman: A lot of your backbenchers could hurt themselves lifting this.

Minister, according to your own records, this year your government has spent approximately \$340 million more in ministry and bureaucratic salaries than it did last year. That's money that could have been used for more

police officers or for shortening waiting lists in the health care sector. Taxpayers are paying to satisfy your government's appetite for more and more government, while we're getting less and less in return.

How can you justify an increase of roughly \$340 million in big government salaries? How can you justify the significant increase in government bureaucrats? How can you justify these big, big numbers in this big, big government that you're growing at the expense of taxpayers of the province of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: You're just making the numbers up again. I would say to the people of Ontario: 1,800 more jobs, 600 of them consultants on whom you were spending \$25 million a year more than you needed to spend.

You mentioned our police, security and probation and parole officers: Two hundred and thirty of that 1,800 are those people; 130 are people designed to fix the challenges of getting our birth certificates out on time; 120 are for safe drinking water and nutrient management, a good investment; 200 are health and safety inspectors; and 100 are meat inspectors. These are good investments for the people of Ontario.

I would say it takes a little bit of nerve, when you spent \$25 million a year more than you should have to hire high-priced consultants when our talented public service can save \$25 million and do that job. That, I think, is a good investment of taxpayers' dollars.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question?

Mr. Runciman: Again, to the Minister of Finance: In addition to your addiction to a larger and larger bureaucracy, we saw last week that you and your government have also taken it upon yourselves to dramatically increase the size of everyone's bank account as well. Under the McGuinty Liberal watch, the number of people on the provincial payroll making more than \$100,000 has increased by a whopping 20% in just one year. The number of ministry staff making more than \$100,000 is up a giant 17%, again, in just one year. Minister, how can you justify such huge increases in such a very short period of time?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: To the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Again, I say to the public, recognize that for two years many of our senior people had their salaries frozen from the time we came in; that is part of the reason. I would say also that you should recognize that there are fewer people making over \$100,000 as a percentage of our workforce than in 2002, the last full year that you had in office. As I say, many of these people are those who have had their salaries frozen for the last two years. They got a reasonable increase, roughly 4% to 5%, and that is what has brought them over \$100,000.

The last thing I would say is that the average salary paid to people making more than \$100,000 has actually dropped slightly. So I would just say to the member that in 2002, the last year you were fully in office, a larger

percentage of the public service was actually making more than \$100,000 than in the year we are seeing reported here.

Mr. Runciman: That's scary. We have a minister in a financial portfolio using that as justification, when they're putting more people onto the \$100,000 list and then saying, "The average dropped a little bit."

Minister, it doesn't take stats 101 to realize that your big fat government is getting richer and richer on the backs of ordinary Ontarians, with no results to show for it. I point out to the minister that the average wage in Toronto, our richest city, is only \$35,000 a year. Now what you've done here is boosted the \$100,000 club by 20%. People truly deserve to be making three times the average Toronto salary? Within the ministries alone, you've added more than 400 people to the \$100,000 club. What results can you display for us here today that would justify these huge increases? Stand up and justify them, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I would say that we are looking at peace and stability in our education system, and we're looking at smaller classes and marks going up. In terms of health care, we're looking at shorter waiting lists. A dramatic number of our hospitals—140 hospitals, I think—are now in with their plans for balancing their budgets. We are making significant improvements in health care, education, the environment and our economy. Those are the results the province of Ontario is looking for, and those are the results we're achieving. We're achieving them with a very dedicated public service, and I'm very proud of them.

Mr. Runciman: I hope the minister's writers are not in the \$100,000 club, because they're not earning their salary.

Only the McGuinty Liberal government would allow a 50-cent TTC fare increase in one year and, at the same time, watch over a 41% increase in the number of TTC employees making more than \$100,000 a year. That's McGuinty Liberal results for you. Only the McGuinty Liberals would charge taxpayers almost \$700 million for a subway that won't be built for years and then sit back and watch while the fares go through the roof again. That's McGuinty results. This is the way the McGuinty government operates: You take more and more from Ontarians and deliver less and less in return. That's a fact.

Minister, why is your fat and bloated government adding to the \$100,000 club so rapidly and delivering so little in the way of results?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Again, I repeat to the public what I said earlier—you have to deal with some facts here, I say to the official opposition. Again, 1,800 additional people—I've already enumerated for you where the bulk of them come from, including 600 consultants' jobs that were brought in-house at a saving of \$25 million.

I would just say again that if you look at managing the finances, the Premier's chief of staff is paid 20% less than the former government's chief of staff; the policy director, 14% less than the previous government's. We're not spending \$300,000 a year on a communications

consultant for the Ministry of Health. We are looking after the taxpayers' dollar, making sure that every cent of it is accounted for, and finding ways to deliver quality service in the most cost-effective manner, including, I repeat to the public, \$25 million a year for outside consultants brought back in-house—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

HYDRO ONE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. In the last election, Dalton McGuinty promised people across Ontario that he was going to freeze hydro rates, but in your first two years, the Premier told working families to bite the bullet and pay more for electricity. Very soon, the McGuinty government is going to tell working families to bite the bullet again and face another double-digit increase in hydro rates.

My question is, when people are having a tough time paying the bills, how does the McGuinty government, the sole owner and shareholder of Hydro One, justify a \$500,000-a-year pay increase for Hydro One's boss?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I would like to thank the member for the question. The member is well aware that salary rates for employees are actually made by the boards themselves and not by the government. Having said that, I think it's reasonable to have a conversation with those boards to understand fully how they arrived at those salaries. I am sure that's exactly the same conversation that the leader of the third party had when he was in cabinet when the chairman of the board back in 1993 made \$500,000 and certainly spent a great deal on his travel and relaxation, vacations, cars and any number of things.

I'm quite prepared to have that conversation, and I will. I have made the calls to the various boards, and I will sit down with them around how they make their salary determinations.

1430

Mr. Hampton: Minister, I want to recite some of Mr. Parkinson's achievements over the last year. He managed to lock out Hydro One's engineers at a time when the transmission system was under stress—for three months they were locked out; he managed to drive up hydro rates; and he managed to get caught using the Hydro One helicopter for personal joyrides to and from his cottage.

We believe Mr. Parkinson's pay package should be reviewed and reduced, so my direct question to you, Minister, is, are you prepared to order a review and reduction, or does the McGuinty government stand behind Mr. Parkinson's outrageous \$500,000-a-year pay increase?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I really do understand where the leader of the third party comes from. For example, I know that when he had that particular Ontario Hydro CEO, he alone spent something like \$1,000 just on a chauffeur when Clinton was there, for his inauguration. He had \$94,000 worth of expenses. So I'm well aware of exactly where he is coming from.

I indicated that I will sit down with the chairs and the boards who have the responsibility. I also would like to remind the member that in fact it was this government who extended the salary disclosures to the electrical sector, because the previous government had a provision where they did not have to disclose. So I'm quite prepared to sit down and have a conversation with the board who is charged with the responsibility of determining those salary remunerations. I indicated I will do it, and I will do it.

Mr. Hampton: Unlike the McGuinty government, I'm interested in more than just talk. When a certain Dalton McGuinty was over here, this is what he used to say: He used to question the pay increases for Eleanor Clitheroe. He used to question, for example, the \$172,000 for vacation pay or \$175,000 for a car allowance. But apparently, now that Dalton McGuinty is over there, these kinds of pay hikes are okay.

My question, again: Were you and Dalton McGuinty just insincere? Didn't you mean any of the things you said when you were over here? Or are you going to review and reduce this outrageous \$500,000-a-year pay increase when literally hundreds of thousands of Ontarians are having trouble paying their hydro bills?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: As I indicated, I'm well aware that the leader of the third party is concerned, because in fact he approved \$94,000 worth of expenses for Mr. Strong when he was CEO, for that car and the chauffeur and, I think, \$58,000 in airline tickets. So I'm well aware of where he comes from.

I have indicated that I'm quite prepared to sit down with the board who's been charged with the responsibility and have that conversation with them. I don't think there's any difficulty in ensuring that there is some transparency around the process. That's why we did open that up through legislation, so it wasn't hidden anymore. Because for so many years it was hidden, and now it's open and transparent.

I repeat, I am quite prepared to sit down with the board. I will sit down with the board, and I will do it. When it comes to others within that sector, I would like to remind the member that many of those salaries at the level above \$100,000 that are reported are actually negotiated salaries that I'm sure he wouldn't want—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question?

Mr. Hampton: To the Minister of Energy again: Minister, maybe you need another briefing, but we were always able to find out the salaries of people at Hydro One and OPG because they had to file them with the Ontario Securities Commission. That's how Dalton McGuinty got the information, right? So you can blah blah blah about that all you want.

The question is this: At a time, for example, when the McGuinty government says you don't have any money for poor kids, at a time when you say you have to continue to claw back \$1,500 a year from the poorest families in this province, how do you justify a \$500,000-a-year pay increase for somebody who got caught using

the government Hydro One helicopter to fly back and forth to his cottage?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I'm quite prepared to sit and have the conversation. Actually, I believe Mr. Bob Rae is on that board of Hydro One. I'm quite prepared to have the conversation as to how he made those determinations.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: We did in fact enable that there would be full disclosure so that somebody didn't have to file for it, that in fact anybody over the \$100,000 salary in the electricity sector was automatically put on. So although the member would like to suggest that it's otherwise, the fact of the matter is, we made it far easier for people to have full disclosure.

I think I have said this three times, but I'll repeat it again in case the member didn't quite understand it: I will sit down with the boards and chairs of the various entities and agencies and have a conversation as to how their compensation committee actually came to the remuneration policies that they have in place.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, I'm not interested in your personal conversations; I'm interested in what the position is of the McGuinty government.

Here's the reality: For the poorest kids in Ontario, they've had their incomes cut by over 40% over the last 10 years, and the McGuinty government is complicit in that.

Meanwhile, this is what the McGuinty government has had for Mr. Parkinson: \$780,000 a year in base pay, \$702,000 in bonus pay, \$129,630 a year in undisclosed perks—I guess maybe those are the golf memberships—and a \$125,000-a-year subsidy of his mortgage on his home.

Minister, when you have that kind of largesse for a Hydro One boss who hasn't been doing a very good job, who got caught using the company helicopter to take him back and forth to his cottage, why don't you have just a little bit of money for the poorest kids in Ontario?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Although I have not been in this House long, trust me; I was around for the social contract, so don't talk to me about what that member of the third party did for kids in this province, for the public employees in this province and for the teachers in this province.

The folks across the way like to take a lot of credit, but those things came out of your government, all of the problems that we've suffered in that education sector. So don't go huffing and puffing to me about poor families; you wouldn't know one.

I'm telling you that in fact we will sit down with the boards, the chairs, and have that discussion. He's well aware that it's the same process that Maurice Strong had for compensation when he was in government; there is no difference. We will do it exactly, we will make it transparent and we will talk about how they got to where they are.

Mr. Hampton: Except, Minister, I remember Dalton McGuinty over here, so holier-than-thou, so earnest in

his denunciation of these kinds of pay increases. Now what do we see under the McGuinty government? Huge pay increases for someone who was found literally using public equipment at the private trough. We see a Hydro One executive who frankly is getting a gargantuan pay increase. Meanwhile, the McGuinty government says to the poorest kids in the province, "We're going to continue to take \$1,500 a year out of your pockets."

Don't tell me about more of your personal conversations. I want to know this: How does the McGuinty government justify this shameful double standard—outrageous pay and perk increases for the Hydro One executive, and broken promises and empty words for Ontario's poorest kids?

1440

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I thank the member for the question. When you think back over the number of years and the lack of policy, the lack of generation, the lack of virtually anything when it came to electricity in this province—no planning, no strategy, no generation, no transmission, 40% increases in rates, social contracts—he actually has the audacity to suggest that everything was wonderful under his regime and has not listened to what I have said. I am quite prepared to sit down and talk to the boards. The boards have the responsibility, the same as they did under the third party or as they did under the previous government, with the salary compensation. They have a compensation committee. They have put it together and they make good decisions. Based on that, I will have the discussion with the agencies and with the chairs. I have said it now five times. I am quite prepared to sit down and have those conversations, and I have every intention of doing so.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Acting Premier. On September 16, 2003, your Premier said, "When it comes to our seniors, we're not putting out some gimmick or bogus promise. We've got a genuine commitment.... It's all about improving ... home care and ... nursing home care." He promised \$6,000 in personal care for every resident in a long-term-care facility. You have now broken that promise, according to the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors and the Ontario Long Term Care Association. When are you going to keep that promise?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Seniors are obviously crucial to this government and, I think, to all members of the Legislature. I would just remind ourselves that since we did get elected in 2003, we have been making some very good progress. We have increased funding for staffing by \$191 million. We've increased funding for this upcoming fiscal year, the one that starts right now, by \$155 million. We've increased funding for long-term-care beds by \$340 million. We've given residents' councils much greater say in long-term-care homes.

We have been making significant investments in this area. I've just outlined for you \$191 million, \$155 million and \$340 million. So I guess the response to the member of the official opposition is, we have been making significant progress with significant investments in this crucial area.

Mrs. Witmer: It is the residents, it is the family council members, it is the staff who are saying that there is an ever-increasing need for additional financing. In fact, of the commitment you made—\$6,000 extra—you've only provided \$2,000. They need 20 minutes of additional care in order to meet these complex needs. Many of these people have dementia. They are demanding that you provide more money in order that they can have 20 minutes of additional personal care time for each resident. I ask you today, are you prepared to help these residents who need help getting up, shaving, toileting and getting to the dining room in order that they can have a quality of life and the dignity that they deserve? Or are these people simply paying more, like everybody else, and getting less?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: You can say that, but it doesn't make it fact. The fact of the matter is that as a result of the \$191 million I just talked about, there are 2,000 more staff performing services for our valued seniors, including, I might say, 600 nurses. That's by March 31, 2006, which was just a few days ago. So we are making investments and we are doing more with these investments.

Finally, I would just say to the public: Recognize that the party that's asking this question has committed to cutting \$2.4 billion out of our health care budget. It can't be done. You can't say, "Increase services. Do more for our seniors," and then cut \$2.4 billion out. I must say, it's the same party that raised fees on long-term-care residents by 15% on Canada Day long weekend. We won't do that. We will value our seniors and make the necessary investments to ensure they have dignity and care in their age.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): To the Acting Premier: Your Minister of Education bragged in this House that funding for students with ESL has increased. Can you explain why an unprecedented number of Ontario students with ESL needs have no English-as-a-second-language teacher?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Again, this is related. The agreement that my colleague Mr. Colle reached with the federal government to ensure that there was additional funding for people who arrive here in this province, I think, will be very helpful in the English-as-a-second-language program. We have, as I think the member knows, put substantial additional resources into education. We do rely on the school boards to make sure that they provide the necessary services. We work co-operatively with the school boards in the province of Ontario.

So there are two things I've talked about: substantial increased funding and the agreement that my colleague

reached with the federal government on new services for our newcomers. Both of those things, we hope, are providing those services. If they're not, my colleague—who, by the way, is not here today because there's an illness in the family—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Well, typical of the leader of the third party.

He was scheduled to arrive here and left just a little while ago to go home to an illness in the family. Both of those things—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, I would say this: If the Minister of Education were not so distracted by his national aspirations, he would know, and you would know, that 71% of Ontario's ESL students live within the GTA, yet half of these schools have no ESL teachers. In fact, People for Education reports that the number of students forced to do without ESL teachers has increased since he became a minister.

I know that you don't want to hear it—and many other people don't want to hear it, because the Tories did not have a great record on anything—but children with ESL needs were doing better under the Conservatives, and the charts by People for Education over the last seven, eight, nine years prove it. When will you fix the funding formula so that these struggling children will get the support they need?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: It is an important area. Again, just so the public is aware of the facts in the case, since we came into office, we have increased funding for ESL, the English-as-a-second-language program, by \$64 million. Overall funding for the ESL program is projected to be \$220 million, which is an increase of 20% in ESL funding, English-as-a-second-language funding, since we took office. We've expanded our support for these programs by increasing the funding generated for eligible students to cover four years instead of three.

It's an important area, and because it's important, we have made that 20% increase in funding since we took office less than three years ago. It's up by \$64 million. These are not insignificant amounts of taxpayers' money designed to make sure that we provide the necessary English-as-a-second-language services. So I'm proud of the investment we have made. Obviously, we'll continue to look at ways we can do it even better, but a 20% increase in funding is not insignificant. I think it will be very helpful in that program.

TOURISM

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): My question is directed to the Minister of Tourism. Minister, as you know, tourism is of vital importance to Ontario and, in particular, to my riding of Niagara Falls. It is for this reason I've been following the US government's western hemisphere travel initiative quite closely. If it comes into effect, this proposal would make it mandatory for any persons entering or re-entering the United States to carry

a passport or, potentially, a single-purpose travel card. Business owners and tourism industry partners in my riding have serious concerns about the implementation of this policy by the US government.

I understand that Prime Minister Harper met with President Bush last week in Mexico. According to newspapers over the weekend and today, the Prime Minister has acquiesced to the passport proposal. In fact, the mayor of Niagara Falls, Mayor Salci, and the mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake have expressed their concerns. Minister, my question is, what is the impact of the Prime Minister's statement in Cancun on Ontario's tourism industry?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Thank you very much to the member. I understand his concern, and I think all members from the Niagara region, where I'm from, for instance—I was astounded and dismayed that the Prime Minister would capitulate so quickly, would run up the white flag on this issue. This province, this Premier, myself, I'm sure all members of this Legislature, have been fighting to avoid this particular devastating effect on our tourism industry.

1450 According to the Canadian Tourism Commission, Canada could stand to lose 7.7 million US visitors between 2005 and 2008, and \$1.8 billion in tourism revenues, should this policy be implemented. I thought the Prime Minister had a special relationship with President Bush. I thought that, as his campaign slogan said, he was going to stand up for Canada. Instead, we see the complete acquiescence, not to the United States' position but to the position of the President of the United States. You and I both know that, all along the border, there are people on both sides of the border who are adamantly opposed to this particular stance that the Prime Minister has taken. I'm sure they will—

The Speaker: Order. The supplementary.

Mr. Craiton: Minister, this is obviously an important issue, not only to my riding but to every riding in Ontario. In fact, you and I have had the pleasure of meeting with a number of the politicians on the American side to express our concerns about this proposal.

As you pointed out, in my riding we have a large number of Americans coming for day or overnight stays. People come into Ontario not only for an extended vacation but also for events such as festivals, sporting events or shopping. Minister, according to the US Department of State, only approximately 25% of American citizens have a valid passport. Having to incur the cost of a passport or other singular travel card would be a huge deterrent for overnight tourists to Ontario. Given the Prime Minister's misstep in Cancun, what can we do in Ontario to protect our tourism industry?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: You can be assured that one of the things that we'll be doing is drawing to the attention of the federal minister responsible for tourism under the Prime Minister that this is a misstep, as you have characterized it.

You know, I thought we were making some considerable progress. I met with Governor Taft of Ohio a couple of weeks ago here in Toronto. He was certainly on-side with Ontario. The Great Lakes governors are concerned about this. I was just informed that there was a meeting in the United States of governors of all the bordering states who are taking the same stance that Ontario is taking.

I know this doesn't affect Alberta, the home province of the Prime Minister, as much, but it certainly has a devastating effect in Ontario. I'm sure that the federal finance minister and the federal Treasury Board president, both of whom sat in a previous cabinet, and the Minister of Health nationally will be giving a spanking to the Prime Minister for totally capitulating to the US president on an issue which is so important to the people of the province of Ontario.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Acting Premier: I've raised this issue with the Minister of Health by letter, verbally and in this House before. As you would be well aware, members of the military and RCMP are specifically excluded in the Canada Health Act from the definition of "insured person" with respect to provincial health care. Yet your government, since instituting its punitive health tax in May 2004, continues to charge members of the military a premium for health services that they are categorically not eligible to receive. The federal government provides all health care for the military. Will you commit today to stop punishing the members of our armed forces and our RCMP with this punishing health tax just to bloat your government more?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Certainly I can speak on behalf of the Minister of Health that we want to make certain we treat everyone fairly and equitably. I am aware that the Minister of Health is looking into this matter. I believe it's probably not a totally simple matter in terms of the solution. I will undertake what I think he has undertaken here in the House, and that is to make sure that we treat everyone fairly and equitably, all people, but our armed forces in particular. I can assure you he's looking into it and I can assure you that when he's completed his look at it, he'll be back to the Legislature with a response.

Mr. Yakabuski: May 2004 to April 2006: It's just about two years. How much more looking does he have to do? In Alberta and British Columbia, where they also charge health premiums, RCMP personnel and military personnel are exempt. It doesn't take much looking into.

You talk about being equitable. When will you treat the people of our military and the RCMP with some fairness and stop this pay more, get less? For the military, it's pay more, get nothing.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Again, I would say it's extremely important that we treat all people fairly and equitably. I repeat, the Minister of Health has agreed to look into this

matter. Some of these matters are not quite as simple as they sometimes appear here in the Legislature.

I will do what I undertook to do in the first part of this question, and that is to ensure that the Minister of Health is looking into it, that we find a fair and equitable solution and that we report that back to the Legislature. I undertake to do that, and I'm sure the Minister of Health will look after that.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. On Saturday, I joined families and friends of autistic children to mark the one-year anniversary of Justice Kiteley's decision. In that decision, she found that your government had violated the charter rights of autistic children on the bases of disability and age, that your Minister of Education had violated the Education Act by failing to have appropriate services in place for autistic children and that it had also failed to direct school boards to provide IBI in schools.

One year later, there are hundreds of autistic children who languish on waiting lists, waiting for treatment. There are hundreds more who can't get IBI in the classroom because your government refuses to direct school boards to provide this. In light of the \$3-billion windfall that your government had this past fiscal year, how is it that even one autistic child is on a waiting list, desperate for treatment?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to address this issue. There is no question that there are wait lists for autism therapy, for IBI. I should tell you, however, that we have made significant progress. In April 2004, there were about 530 kids receiving IBI; by December 2005, there were over 700 kids receiving IBI therapy. Is there more to be done? There certainly is more to be done.

We have also stepped up the pace in terms of assessments. We are assessing kids much more quickly than we used to. Again, is there more to be done? Yes, there is more to be done. I'm very pleased that since we have been elected to govern, we have more than doubled spending on autism-related services.

I look forward to the supplementary.

Ms. Martel: Here's the reality: At the end of March 2005, there were 399 autistic children who qualified for treatment and who were on a waiting list. There were over 200 more who were still waiting for assessment to determine if they were qualified. Between those waiting for an assessment and those waiting for treatment, more children were not receiving treatment than were. In the face of that, this minister diverted \$2 million to children's protection services instead of putting that money into IBI treatment. Now we have a scenario, a year later, of hundreds more children on a waiting list who qualify for treatment and can't get it, hundreds who are waiting for an assessment and hundreds more who were cut off

by your government from IBI when they turned six, despite your election promise, and are still waiting to get their treatment reinstated.

Minister, your government had a \$3-billion windfall. How is it that any autistic child in this province is waiting for treatment either in or out of school?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: The member, as unfortunately often is the case, is somewhat less than accurate in her accusations. It really doesn't matter how much she pretends to be sincere about this, her sincerity pales when we compare it to what we have been doing as a government. We have more than doubled spending. In the past year, we have spent approximately \$95 million on autism-related services. We are positioned to spend even more than that this year.

The reason why the wait lists are longer now is because no child is being denied services because of their age. The message that she is giving is misleading and very, very unfortunate, because—

1500

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I need you to withdraw that.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker. But you know—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Martel: Why don't you tell the truth, Minister?

The Speaker: The member for Nickel Belt needs to withdraw that comment.

Ms. Martel: I withdraw the comment.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: As you know, I am the chairman of the public accounts committee, and I can say that the member from Nickel Belt has more knowledge on this than any MPP in this Legislature.

The Speaker: New question.

ENERGY RATES

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Energy. There's speculation that Ontario's energy rates will be rising, as they are in North America and across the world. Energy keeps the lights on and it heats our homes. It's not something we can choose to live without; it's a necessity. My constituents are concerned about the rising energy costs and what they could mean to their monthly energy bill. Minister, can you explain these rising energy costs in the context of other jurisdictions in North America?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I thank the member for the question. I also would like to thank the member for the work that she does on behalf of her constituency and working with me around energy-related issues in particular.

There's no question that energy prices are going up. They're going up right across North America. We saw the increase in natural gas: \$14 US in September, \$15 US in December. We know that the price caps have come off in the United States. On April 1, they had increases that were virtually anywhere from 10%—in one case in one

of the states, they were anticipating as high as 117%. So we know. In terms of our competition, places like Massachusetts are at 32%. We have 40% in another, and they are rising.

However, what we've done is put in place the Ontario Energy Board, which looks at regulated price plans on a year-to-year basis. We took off the cap that was artificial at 4.3 cents, and we—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Di Cocco: The Ontario Energy Board is not a household name. When people get their energy bills, they'll see the name of the local distribution company, not that of the Ontario Energy Board. Yet I understand it's the Ontario Energy Board that sets the energy price in the province. With all this talk of energy prices increasing, could you explain how the Ontario Energy Board determines the price of power?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: The Ontario Energy Board is the regulatory board charged with the responsibility of determining the price for the next year. They look at all of the sources of generation over the period of the year, forecast what that price will be, and then they set the prices. As you recall, last year it was 5.0 cents and 5.8 cents for 750 kilowatts and 1,000 kilowatts, and then reversed in the winter months.

So the Ontario Energy Board has the opportunity to work with the local distribution companies to reflect the needs in that community. They have to apply to the energy board for a rate increase or, in some cases, a decrease. It is the Ontario Energy Board that then looks at what supply is in the generation and how all the generation is mixed, and then forecasts that out for the next year. They in fact have been charged with that responsibility and will be coming out with their forecast by May 1.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: Minister, in estimates you said that CAIS is not working and that long-term dollars were needed. That was six months ago. Last week you cut the ag budget 21%; this week you've increased the ag ministry staff, the \$100,000-a-year club, by 11%. Minister, you've given your staff long-term funding. When will you be giving farmers long-term funding?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Wrong information.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'm happy to have this opportunity to state again that the budget at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has increased this year with respect to the support that has been requested by farmers and the support that has been given by this government. They have asked for a multi-year partnership with the federal government. The budget document makes it very clear that we are prepared to enter into that.

In the short term, it became clear as well that the federal government was not going to provide the support, so we provided \$125 million to farmers as a show of good faith, which they asked for. They asked the Premier and myself. So that is the commitment to date. I have said to farmers that we are at the ready when the federal government is ready to come to the table to establish a multi-year partnership, which is exactly what they need to inspire stability and sustainability in this industry.

Mr. Barrett: Minister, my point was that staff in your ministry making over \$100,000 a year have gone up 11%, funding for grain and oilseeds is going down 52%, and you've just told us and the farmers to go to the federal government. We are going to Ottawa. We're going to Ottawa this week. One question: Minister, are you going to Ottawa to be with the farmers? I know that you have been at the table with other ag ministers.

Another question: Specifically how many \$100,000-a-year bureaucrats does it take to draw up a risk management program, or are we simply paying more and getting less?

Minister, my question: Do you now have a plan for risk management, a plan for a program for us to take to Ottawa this week?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: What I have committed to the agriculture community is a response to what they've asked for. They've asked for a multi-year partnership with the federal government. In terms of what that plan is going to look like, I expect that the stakeholders are going to have a lot to say, a lot of advice for us, when we meet together with our federal colleague. I heartily say that you can invite partnership when you go with a deal and say, "This is what it's going to look like."

The province of Ontario has made it very clear. I believe we've taken a leadership role, when you consider where other provinces are in Canada, in that we have come to the table. There is money there. We made it very clear that we believe there needs to be a multi-year strategy, that the stakeholders have a very key role to play in helping us shape that strategy and that it must have the participation of the federal government if it's going to be viable at all. That is the consistent message we've had time and time again. Our government is—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question, the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Farmers are going broke every day.

COLLÈGE BORÉAL

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–Baie James): Ma question est pour le ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités. Vous savez que le Collège Boréal à Timmins a fait une soumission avec votre ministère pour construire un édifice permanent afin de situer le Collège Boréal. Vous savez que, présentement, le Collège Boréal à Timmins est situé dans un édifice où ils louent, et que c'est complètement inadéquat, comme certains de vos ministres le savent—M. Ramsay, M. Bartolucci et

d'autres qui l'ont visité—que cet édifice n'est pas bon pour les étudiants de ce collège et pas bon pour l'expansion nécessaire pour offrir les programmes nécessaires dans ce collège.

On a une question très simple. La communauté est là. Le collège a fait son ouvrage. La communauté vous a envoyé 600 lettres. On vous demande aujourd'hui, quand est-ce qu'on peut s'attendre à une annonce positive pour commencer la construction du Collège Boréal à Timmins?

1510

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I thank the member for the question. With respect to the suggestion about a new campus in Timmins, I've spoken to quite a few people about that, including the present president of the Collège Boréal, the previous president of the college, my colleagues such as Minister Ramsay and of course the minister responsible for francophone affairs, Madeleine Meilleur, and about the present state of facilities up there.

We've done a couple of things. First of all, I've had discussions with respect to Collège Boréal's ideas throughout the province and its plans for the province, which include a larger platform in the greater Toronto area as well as improved facilities throughout Ontario.

We've also had discussions with the president of La Cité in order to figure out how we can offer more francophone education to students throughout Ontario in our college system. So we've got several discussion going on, one about the operating strength of the two colleges—we want to ensure an even stronger future; we're having those discussions at the moment—and the second about new capital plans for the colleges. The capital plans need to follow the operating discussion. I'll have more to say about the two after I hear the supplementary.

M. Bisson: Monsieur le ministre, ce qui est clair est que l'ancienne présidente, Gisèle, et le présent président vous ont parlé. Oui, ils vous ont parlé, vous avez parlé, mais ce que les autres attendent est une réponse.

Ce qui est clair est que la situation à Timmins est inadéquate. On est dans une situation où c'est très difficile pour le collège d'être capable d'opérer, numéro un, mais numéro deux, d'être capable d'offrir les programmes nécessaires aux étudiants, d'être capable de renforcer ce collège et faire le succès qu'on sait ce collège peut avoir.

Donc, monsieur le ministre, très simplement, nous autres avons fait notre ouvrage. Le collège a fait sa soumission. C'est le seul projet qui a été mis en avant par le Collège Boréal. Le seul que vous avez situé au sud de la province était fait à travers Glendon. Le collège a fait son ouvrage. La communauté a fait son ouvrage. Vous savez que c'est un bon projet. C'est supporté par la communauté francophone et la ville de Timmins. Ma question : quand est-ce qu'on peut s'attendre à une annonce financière pour assurer la survie de ce collège?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Once again, I look forward to going up to Timmins and speaking to the local com-

munity. We're working on several fronts to improve francophone education at the college level in Timmins, the surrounding area and throughout Ontario.

The first step is to have the discussion about the operating dollars and about how to ensure that students have access throughout the province. We're having those discussions right now with the presidents of both Boréal and La Cité.

It's important to ensure that we have a strong future for college education in French throughout Ontario. It follows from that discussion that we will have a conversation about capital plans and capital projects. There are a number, not simply in one community, and we want to ensure that the capital discussion follows the operating discussion.

This government, the McGuinty government, has committed more operating dollars for colleges. That means more opportunities for students in every language. We also have a separate access committee for French-language education that has already had some meetings and will have more. The future for French-language college education in Ontario looks very bright in Timmins and elsewhere.

SMOKING CESSATION PROGRAMS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. It is often said that quitting smoking is one of the most difficult tasks someone will ever undertake, but many smokers feel that they lack the resources to properly embark on a cessation program.

Many feel that nicotine replacement therapy is the best way of weaning themselves off cigarettes, but it's often too expensive a method for your average smoker. Having lived with a woman who quit smoking at least 10 times, I would have to agree that it is the worst habit to stop. But she has been off cigarettes for 20 years now and her health is good.

Certainly our government has recognized, through the smoke-free Ontario legislation and related programs, that funds directed towards helping people to quit is money well spent, saving lives while protecting workers and preventing serious illness. Minister, are you considering adding nicotine replacement therapy to the government's cessation programs?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I want to begin by thanking the honourable member for Ottawa–Orléans, because he has taken a real interest in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. As a result of his intervention in committee, power walls will soon be a thing of the past across Ontario. I thank the honourable member.

In January, I was pleased to help launch the STOP study, which is Smoking Treatment for Ontario Patients, with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. We've committed \$3 million from the smoke-free Ontario fund. In January, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health used part of these funds to provide nicotine replacement therapy for 14,000 Ontarians.

The response was overwhelming. When the program was announced, their 1-800 toll-free number received over 100 calls a minute. So the vast majority of people who smoke in this province do in fact want to quit. We believe there is a role for the government of Ontario to provide the kinds of tools, such as nicotine replacement therapy, to help these individuals with their addiction.

Mr. McNeely: Minister, it is good to hear that the Ministry of Health Promotion is leaving no stone unturned when it comes to different approaches to smoking cessation, because every smoker will have different needs but many have the common goal of trying to quit. In terms of other methods of cessation, what programs does your ministry offer today to help smokers quit?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I'm very pleased to report that of the \$50 million, \$14 million is going to smoking cessation programs. I'm also very pleased to announce that we have a website. I'd encourage individuals who smoke and want help to quit smoking to go on to www.smokershelpline.ca.

I'm also pleased to be part of a caucus and a government under the leadership of Premier McGuinty which is, quite frankly, doing more to help people who are smoking, to encourage young people not to smoke in the first place and to ensure that the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which comes into effect on May 31, is going to be properly advertised and enforced.

It's regrettable that the Conservative Party—exactly half of their caucus either voted against the legislation or were not even here to vote for the legislation. I will side with the medical community, the Canadian Cancer Society, Heart and Stroke, and the Lung Association. I'll allow the Conservative Party to cozy up to big tobacco and the front people for the tobacco industry—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question?

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A question for the Deputy Premier. This weekend, headlines across the province screamed about the incredible bloat of government payrolls. One I can understand is John Corcoran, a polygraph examiner, who was paid over \$100,000. I can understand, because he is probably run off his feet with double overtime, keeping track of the Premier and his cabinet ministers. I can understand that one. But otherwise, Deputy Premier, there is great concern among taxpayers, who, I remind you, are paying over \$2,000 more per family in taxes, fees and costs than they did before Dalton McGuinty was elected.

Given this 23% bloat in government payrolls, specifically what controls are you going to bring in this year to make sure it doesn't happen again?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I'd just say to the public, when they use the 23% figure, recognize this: In 2001, when they were in government, the increase in people earning \$100,000 was 60%. Did you bring these great controls you're talking

about now? No. The following year, what was the increase? It was 60% before; it was 65%. Did you bring in these great controls? I just say to the public, recognize what we're dealing with here: a kind of bitter opposition that says, "Do some things we would never do."

What we are doing is making sure we manage the public service in a responsible way. We brought in roughly 600 consulting jobs that you were spending \$25 million a year more on than you should have.

I think the public expects us to manage things well. You had a 60% increase and a 65% increase in these numbers. You did nothing. We are managing the public service in a responsible way.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): This completes the time allocated for oral questions.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): On a point of order, the member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): With 7,200 more bureaucrats, you'd think the government could answer its order paper questions on time. We have a question to the Ministry of Natural Resources, standing in the name of Mr. Miller, that should have been answered weeks and months ago; there are four questions to the Ministry of the Attorney General, standing in the name of Mr. Runciman, that are overdue; and there are five questions to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, standing in the name of Mrs. Witmer, that have not been dealt with. Talk about getting less for more.

1520

The Speaker: I'm sorry. I did have some difficulty following which questions hadn't been responded to. I'm informed that many questions—or some questions, anyway—were responded to today. I can tell you that, from the list that I'm aware of, there are four questions that haven't been responded to, standing in the name of Mrs. Witmer, if that's satisfactory. I would like to remind the Minister of Health that you're required, under standing order 97(d), to provide answers to written questions within 24 sitting days, and the responses are now overdue. I would ask that you give the House some indication as to when the answer might be forthcoming, and I suspect it needs to come from the Acting Premier.

I'm wondering when we can expect the responses from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I'll undertake, Mr. Speaker, to get back to you as quickly as possible, like today.

VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask members of the Legislature to join me in welcoming five leaders of our faith community seated in the west gallery today: Pastor Douglas Sargeant, Reverend Don Meredith, Reverend Steve Chu, Mr. Matthew Gibbins and Pastor Albert Wai.

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): On Wednesday, March 29, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, Mr. Barrett, provided me with written notice of his intention to raise a point of privilege, as required by standing order 21(c). I would like to thank the member for giving me sufficient time to review this matter.

The member's point of privilege concerns security in and around the legislative precinct.

I wish to advise that I will be deciding on this matter without further hearing directly from the member at this time, as standing order 21(d) permits me to do.

I have carefully reviewed the member's written submission and cannot find that he has made out a prima facie case of privilege.

I want to note that the member and I have met personally to discuss this matter, and I've written to the member to provide clarification on certain points related to the issues he has raised. As this is a matter that lies within the administrative jurisdiction of the Speaker, I believe that this is an appropriate way to deal with this issue, and I want to thank the member for providing this opportunity to do so.

PETITIONS

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas" over "1,920 Ontarians are currently on a waiting list for an organ transplant; and

"Whereas the number of Ontarians waiting for an organ transplant has virtually doubled since 1994; and

"Whereas hundreds die every year waiting for an organ transplant; and

"Whereas greater public education and awareness will increase the number of people who sign their organ donor cards and increase the availability of organ transplants for Ontarians; and

"Whereas the private member's bill proposed by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees will require every resident 16 years of age and older to complete an organ donation question when applying for or renewing a driver's licence or provincial health card, thereby increasing public awareness of the importance of organ donation while respecting the right of every person to make a personal decision regarding the important issue of organ donation;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 67, the Organ and Tissue Donation Mandatory Declaration Act, 2006."

I affix my name in support.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I have a petition. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

"Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents, who are residents of long-term-care homes, need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

"Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

"Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

"We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007)."

This has been signed by a number of residents of the Kenora and Keewatin area, and I affix my signature as well.

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to introduce this petition on behalf of Chateau Gardens in Niagara-on-the-Lake, a long-term-care facility. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents, who are residents of long-term-care homes, need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

"Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

"Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

"We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007)."

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of this petition.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Last week, I was pleased to visit the Strathaven Lifecare Centre. I met with Patrick Brown, the administrator, Stella Jackson and Sharon Courts. They presented me with a number of petitions.

"We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007)."

I am pleased to sign and endorse that on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly regarding community mediation. I'd like to thank especially Darcy MacCallum, Sara Syeed and Tarzia Ahmed for collecting some signatures for this petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers who work with the parties in the dispute; and

"Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

"Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

"Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

"Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services."

I am pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Olga to carry it for me.

LANDFILL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is currently a proposal to more than double the size of the Carp landfill in west Ottawa; and

"Whereas this site has been in operation for some 30 years and had been expected to close in 2010; and

"Whereas the surrounding community has grown rapidly for the past 10 years and is continuing to grow; and

"Whereas other options to an expanded landfill have yet to be considered; and

"Whereas the municipal councillors representing this area, Eli El-Chantiry, Janet Stavinga and Peggy Feltmate, and the MPP, Norm Sterling, all oppose this expansion;

"We, the undersigned, support our local representatives and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the Minister of the Environment does not approve the expansion of the Carp landfill and instead to find other waste management alternatives."

I would like to thank Barbara Keith for sending in many names of petitioners with whom I agree.

1530

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents, who are residents of long-term-care homes, need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

"Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

"Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

"We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007)."

I've signed the petition.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have this petition that was presented to me last Friday by the president of the resident council of the Sara Vista Nursing Centre in Elmvale—I know they're watching right now—Andrew Dalrymple, who's the president, and Karen Locke, who's the administrator, and I thank them greatly.

"To the Legislative Assembly the Ontario:

"Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents, who are residents of long-term-care homes, need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

"Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still

not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

Again, I thank the good people of Sara Vista Nursing Centre in Elmvale, and I agree with the petition.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River):

In support of my colleagues from Peel region, I present the following petition to the Ontario Legislature:

“Support Community Mediation

“Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers working with the parties in the dispute; and

“Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

“Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

“Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

“Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services.”

In support this petition, I’m glad to add my name to the list and have page Elyse present this to you.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I have petition from the Country Lane long-term care residence in Chatsworth. Barbara Stott is their program man-

ager. It’s a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents, who are residents of long-term-care homes, need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years....”

I’ve also signed this.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): I have a petition I’d like to present on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I’m pleased to support this and give it to Mark, one of the legislative pages. Where are you from, Mark?

Interjection: Sudbury.

Mr. O’Toole: From Sudbury.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): It’s a great pleasure to stand and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the population of the region of Peel has been experiencing significant growth for the past 15 years, and it now has the ... highest growth rate in the province;

“Whereas demand for social services in Peel has exploded as a result of the population and other social changes; and

“Whereas provincial social services funding has not responded to the increases in population, and therefore, the people of the region of Peel receive 50% less funding on a per capita basis than the average provincial per capita funding for social programs;

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

“That the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services correct the funding inequity in all of its social programs with new funding formulas that address population and needs.”

I'm pleased to sign this petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time for petitions has expired.

MEMBERS' EXPENSES

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wanted to raise a fairly simple point of privilege. As I understand, under standing order 21, you require an hour's notice. I gave you notice of the point of privilege about five minutes ago. I'd ask for unanimous consent to be able to raise it now, rather than an hour from now when we're in the middle of a debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member has asked for unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Sterling: This past weekend, I travelled about 500 or 600 kilometres in the area that I represent, Lanark–Carleton. Lanark–Carleton, the riding that I represent, takes in the west part of the city of Ottawa and all of Lanark county. If you look at the total size of the riding, it's about 200 kilometres by 200 kilometres. Therefore, it's necessary for me to travel a considerable distance to go from Carp to Smiths Falls to Perth to Fitzroy Harbour. These are distances that are quite significant.

I'm finding it increasingly difficult to make those trips in my automobile at the present level of compensation of 34.5 cents per kilometre. This relates to the fact that rural members are being dealt with, in some ways, in a different manner than those who represent urban areas, where their constituents are fairly closely aggregated in one smaller geographic area.

1540

My point of privilege is this: I believe that all members of this Legislature are supposed to be given the same kind of resources in order for them to be able to represent their people. Because of the fact that the recovery of costs, at 34.5 cents per kilometre, was struck about five

years ago, when gas costs were about half of what they are at the present time, and there have been increased insurance costs, I think rural members on all sides in this Legislature are finding it increasingly difficult to afford a car, to make the payments on the car, to make their insurance payments and to buy the fuel necessary for that particular car.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you, as Chair of the Board of Internal Economy, to raise this issue with the board. I would also like to ask for your ruling as to whether or not adequate compensation to pay costs—and I might add that I have asked the Canadian Automobile Association what the actual cost of driving per kilometre is, and they have told me that it's somewhere in the neighbourhood of 45 cents to 55 cents per kilometre.

I raise this as a serious point of privilege, so that many members, particularly in the rural areas, where you're required to put on 250 kilometres in order to attend a particular event, may be properly compensated for their costs. All we're asking for are the costs associated with operating vehicles while doing legislative business.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for Lanark–Carleton. I don't find this to be a prima facie case of privilege, but I will undertake to relay this message to the Speaker and have it brought to the Board of Internal Economy.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (STUDENT PERFORMANCE), 2006 LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'ÉDUCATION (RENDEMENT DES ÉLÈVES)

Mr. Bradley, on behalf of Mr. Kennedy, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to amend the Education Act, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 and certain other statutes relating to education / Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation, la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario et certaines autres lois se rapportant à l'éducation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The leadoff speaker will be Mr. Bradley.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I will be sharing my time with the members from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot and Don Valley West.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Where's the minister?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: The member shouldn't be asking that. You should always know where somebody is before you ask that question.

I must say that I once asked that of a former education minister, and he politely said to me, "I was at my father's funeral." I just about crawled under the desk when he said that. It was Tom Wells at the time; he was very kind. I was up on some question of some kind, and I preambled it with, "He wasn't here yesterday. Why wasn't he here yesterday?" I must say he was very gentle about that when he said it. So I learned that you should always know where the person actually was before you say anything. I just caution my good friend the member for Oak Ridges on that particular matter.

There will be other speakers on this. The members for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot and Don Valley West are both eager to proceed with their comments on this particular piece of legislation as the government leadoff. As with all members of the Ontario Legislature they have a deep and abiding interest in this legislation, which is designed to bring even further improvement to the field of education.

As members of the House would know, education has advanced considerably in the last two and a half years in terms of its impact in the province of Ontario, on its students who are within the system. I think that when you talk to people directly involved in the system—to students, to parents—many have found some impressive improvements that have taken place. When teachers walk into the classroom, there's a new bounce in their step as they bounce in, because they've had taken away from them the cloud that was there before, the constant tension which was within the classroom. You get from principals and vice-principals and teachers and secretaries and caretakers—just everybody in the system—and the students themselves, the renewed morale which is in the education system.

We try with legislation of this kind to consult widely, of course, both before the legislation is introduced and subsequent to the introduction of legislation, when there are committee hearings, when those are necessary, and simply receiving input from the public. There's always an interest in education bills, and the minister has developed legislation which he believes and the government believes, and I think many in the province will believe, will have a positive impact on the education system. It is ever evolving, it is ever endeavouring to improve itself, and with the guidance and assistance of the government, it is bound to do so. So I think this is the kind of legislation which will be subject to debate, as it should in this House, and will ultimately bring some further positive change to the field of education in our province.

The Premier has stated, the minister has stated and the government has stated that education is of great importance to this government. Quite obviously, the Premier has shown through investments that have taken place in education—and there have been significant increases in the investments in education over the past two and a half years by the Liberal government in Ontario—has demonstrated at the preschool level, the pre-formal school level in terms of child care and early childhood education,

within the elementary school system and the secondary school system, and then, of course, the post-secondary system, some pretty dramatic increases that have been forthcoming and will be forthcoming in the future to the field of education.

It is not the funding alone that will make the difference, but also some policy changes which we hope will be very positive. I look forward to hearing all members of the House, particularly my colleagues on the government side, because I know they're enthusiastic about the legislation, but I'm also interested in hearing, as I will, by either being in the House or reading Hansard, what members of the opposition will have to say and what the general community will have to say about this legislation.

So I'm now going to permit my colleagues from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot and from Don Valley West to continue this debate, providing the government lead on this important piece of educational legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair will also permit the member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot to take the floor.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I rise to add some brief comments to the wonderfully articulated comments by the honourable member from St. Catharines, who has a deep and abiding lifetime interest in education and its advancement. I also rise, obviously, today for second reading of some very important legislation for the direction of education in Ontario.

If passed, this legislation would be a tremendous boost for improved student performance. In March, the McGuinty government, for the first time, set provincial outcomes to maximize our educational initiatives and remove barriers to greater student achievement. The one-size-fits-all approach in education adopted by the previous government is ineffective. This bill is a significant tune-up that will modernize education as a condition for success for our students.

1550

The student performance bill contains several limited but substantive amendments to the Education Act and the Ontario College of Teachers Act. These amendments provide the legal support necessary to enable our most important objective in education in this province: improved student performance. This legislation proposes to achieve this with four main drives. They are: initiatives to support teaching excellence, new responsibilities for boards and the ministry, a real partnership in education based on respect, and openness to the public.

This legislation proposes some critical changes to enhance teaching excellence. For example, it would revoke the pen-and-paper test, which didn't evaluate a teacher's actual classroom experience and effectiveness, in favour of a new teacher induction program. It would also repeal legislation that limits teachers' professional activity days to four days per year. This legislation would also facilitate the extension of teacher collective agreements from two- to four-year terms. These are all

significant ways of supporting improved teaching excellence. My colleague Kathleen Wynne, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education—

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Great member.

Mr. McMeekin:—a great member—will speak more about these key components of the bill.

The proposed legislation also contains measures that would support the government's ability to build confidence in public education with new responsibilities for school boards and the ministry itself. The ministry has identified areas of key provincial interest, such as class size, fiscal responsibility, improvements in literacy and numeracy, and safe schools. This legislation, if passed, would clarify ministry and board responsibilities as they relate to these interests, and particularly as they relate to student performance.

What I'd like to do now is talk a bit more about how this proposed legislation would help to facilitate two important objectives: partnerships in education based on respect and increased openness to the public.

All of the amendments being proposed hinge on our ability to create and sustain lasting partnerships in education, partnerships based on respect. Achieving excellence in education demands a genuine partnership in which there is shared respect, mutual responsibility-taking and agreement about results at every level of the educational system. This legislation, if passed, would help build on the new era of respect and partnership that has become evident in the system.

It would respect school board trustees for the important work they do by giving them realistic supports, removing penalties in the act related to trustee compliance, and strengthening and clarifying their role in stewarding education. This legislation would help us to respect student trustees by empowering and recognizing them through new scholarships, non-binding votes, procedural rights and increased resources. As my colleague Kathleen Wynne will outline in more detail, this legislation would enhance respect for teachers through a revitalized Ontario College of Teachers.

First, let's reflect on the important role of school board trustees. They are in fact—and I didn't know this until recently—the oldest form of elected representation in the province of Ontario. Since 1807, generations of community-minded citizens have made decisions on behalf of local publicly funded schools, building the foundation of the system that we have today.

Despite this longevity and contribution, the trustee role is widely underappreciated and seriously misunderstood. Some of this condition stems from the late 1990s, when the previous government removed local taxing authority, centralized curriculum, amalgamated school boards and reduced school board grants. Provincial laws established a standard and generally much lower limit on honoraria, as well as personal penalties for non-compliance with provincial requirements. All of these factors contributed to a devaluation and, at minimum, confusion concerning the role of trustees.

Interjection: Sad but true.

Mr. McMeekin: Sad but true.

The McGuinty government views the needs of education differently. We believe that sound local decision-making by local representatives is essential to student success. We see a new role for local school board trustees, a role based on respect. Their valuable contribution can be summarized, I suspect, as providing five key elements of educational oversight: effectiveness, efficiency, community engagement, ethics and representation.

Effectiveness means the insightful allocation of funds, sound policies and innovations that fit the needs of local students and a strong evaluation of outcomes at the local level.

Efficiency means an informed stewardship that reinforces the best value for dollars provided through good board budgeting and meaningful expenditure controls.

Community engagement is, of course, important to sustain and support the participation necessary from parents and all members of the community to ensure a school's success.

Ethics almost defines the trustee, since there is an essential trust agreement with parents and communities around the education and care of children, with policies and practices that keep them safe and develop them as responsible citizens.

Representation of the unique local needs of school boards to the provincial government is also a key component to the role of trustee.

Given these critical contributions, I think we can all agree that trustees deserve to be treated, and to be seen to be treated, with greater respect if the public is to understand their role appropriately—and that includes the topic of remuneration. Trustees work hard and contribute toward increased student success. This hard work has resulted in a productive environment of peace and stability and school progress through improved student achievement and improved services.

Trustees' capacity to undertake their role is an important ingredient in successful educational improvement. But by adopting a one-size-fits-all approach to governance, the previous government ignored the varying challenges that our school trustees face. With boards ranging in size from 10 to 250,000 students, with budgets from almost \$500,000 to \$2.3 billion, and massive geographic variances, there is clearly a need for a different consideration. The ministry views the role of trustee as essentially a part-time position, but how much time is minimally required varies according to the complexity of the board. While many trustees volunteer considerable amounts of their time, the importance of informed participation requires a more realistic alternative to ensure sufficient time is available.

1600

If passed, the bill would permit school boards to set trustee compensation up to provincial limits that would be set out in regulation and in line with remuneration of school boards elsewhere in Canada. It would also grant

authority for regulations to provide a retroactive increase to trustees' honoraria for the current school year and provide a process for community input into what the appropriate levels of a trustee honorarium ought to be. It would also eliminate the arbitrary and paternalistic personal penalties for trustees enacted by the previous government. Everything else included, it would also provide some very important clarification about respective roles in stewarding education.

Establishing and enhancing partnerships based on respect means giving more flexibility to boards so they can make decisions locally. While much has been made of the loss of taxing powers of trustees, less is said about the considerable potential related to spending powers. This is partly because in the previous era of cutbacks, the only choices available were about money savings and reductions.

We are now two years into an extraordinary four-year investment in education, an investment which is providing school boards with more funding to address local needs. The current period of much-needed educational investment opens up some much-needed additional possibilities. Currently across the province, school boards have total control over some \$3.9 billion without strict requirements to address local needs. We intend to create a new era of local flexibility and autonomy by empowering trustees in local funding and policy decision-making. If passed, this bill would introduce the authority for government to make regulations to promote the provincial interest in education.

In addition, it would permit regulations to clarify ministry and board responsibilities related to significant goals such as: effective use of resources; student outcomes, including elementary literacy and numeracy and high school graduation rates; parental engagement; special education needs; the health of pupils; the safety of pupils and staff; as well as the publication of occasional reports.

Our government plans to embark on a special consultation with trustees and other educational partners around the nature of provincial outcomes and which areas of increased flexibility should be opened up. This consultation will look at the way in which provincial outcomes and flexibility will vary across the province according to the unique local needs and challenges that our school boards face. Paramount to each of these discussions is the shared desire to sustain momentum and progress in publicly funded education.

A standing committee will be established in a reciprocal effort to ensure a true partnership, an enhanced way for trustees' needs to be heard and the government to be held to its responsibilities. The committee will review and provide input on education policy and programming matters in Ontario. In addition to discussions about provincial outcomes and increased local flexibility, a central topic will be the clarifying of the roles and responsibilities of schools, boards and the ministry itself.

A trustee's role is distinct from the rest of board administration, so discussions will seek to clarify the role

and the responsibilities of trustees as well as the critical link between trustees, schools, board officials and the ministry.

I want to talk about student trustees for a moment, because they're an equally critical component, in our view, to enhancing partnerships in education based on respect. As a first step in ongoing student trustee development, the legislation, if passed, would provide student trustees with a variety of rights, including a scholarship at the completion of their term, equal access to all board resources, and the same right to attend trustee training opportunities as board members. This supports our commitment to address the recommendation of the Ontario Student Trustees' Association to empower student representatives on school boards.

Our government will also be making a new proposal for discussion on student engagement, touching on character education and citizenship values, the ability for students to influence their school environment, and new models for student trustees. Several options on how to achieve more relevance for student trustees will be provided, including potential future voting privileges.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't talk about the topic of openness. This legislation, if passed, would open up education to the public and foster real and greater accountability. It would give the ministry the ability to require school boards to publish reports respecting their compliance with specific operational requirements that will be set out in regulation.

If passed, the bill would expand the minister's authority to make ministry grants available to enhance community use of schools. Giving the ministry the ability to direct school boards to offer school facilities for community use at a nominal fee would certainly allow increased access for the not-for-profit groups so frequently debilitated by the previous policy that certainly didn't enhance and ensure their access.

By ensuring public reporting of board and provincial initiatives, this act, if passed, would provide greater accountability and public transparency, something we all like to talk about in this place.

Access to education and opening up our schools can only foster better community involvement for the future success of all our students. In recent years, community groups in some parts of the province have been forced to pay excessive costs in order to use school facilities for their weeknight and weekend programs. Many groups have had no option at all but to pass the cost of user fees along to their members. This has effectively excluded many lower-income families and individuals from opportunities to participate in community programs and activities.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Terrible.

Mr. McMeekin: It is terrible, as the honourable member notes. How do you build strong, effective, wonderful communities—

Hon. Mr. Watson: Healthy communities.

Mr. McMeekin: —healthy communities, as the Minister of Health Promotion notes, without providing the physical space for groups to meet?

1610

The Deputy Speaker: The Speaker feels just a little left out. Perhaps you could direct your speech through the chair.

Mr. McMeekin: Speaker, I lament that you feel left out, so I'll certainly address these few final remarks directly to you. Speaker, Speaker, Speaker: It is appalling that the former government's changes to the educational funding formula have made people pay to use school facilities that they've already paid to build and operate with their hard-earned tax dollars. Speaker, when our schools are welcoming and accessible places where local residents can come together for leisure or lifelong learning, they contribute to building safe, clean, livable, healthy communities. After-school activities for children, youth and older adults, as well as programs for pre-schoolers and their parents, help to foster success for students.

Speaker, the McGuinty government is continuing to allocate funds to boards to allow them to substantially lower fees for community groups.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Twenty million this year.

Mr. McMeekin: Twenty million, as pointed out, and that's just a start.

We will work closely with district school boards, municipalities and community groups to help reduce the financial barriers that exist to accessing school facilities. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because we want to ensure that our schools fulfill one of their most fundamental and, it seems, oft-forgotten roles in our society as the heart and soul of community and neighbourhood life in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, this government is taking responsibility for education in Ontario and giving our partners in education the respect they deserve. I hope this bill finds the support of my colleagues in this Legislative Assembly because, ultimately, this bill represents what we all desire to accomplish in education: openness, partnership and success based on respect and improved student performance.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I rise happily today to speak to second reading of Bill 78, the student performance bill. As my colleague has outlined, this bill proposes some very important legislation concerning the general direction of education in Ontario, and some specific issues around student performance and, I would suggest, good governance as well. As a government, we've staked out a very ambitious agenda. I can tell you, as a former school trustee and a parent activist, that it's one I'm very proud of, and I'm happy to be here to support it.

The student performance bill will, if passed, lay the foundation to build back the climate that should always exist in schools, I would suggest. That climate is one of peace and stability and respect for the educators, the students and the school community around each of the schools in the province.

I want to make a general comment before I talk specifically about some of the initiatives in the bill. This government is attempting to do no less than re-create and

build back a public institution that I would suggest was eviscerated under the previous government. When we were first elected, one of my colleagues—I think it was the member for Stoney Creek—talked about our task as being to put back the pieces. If we think about a Rolex watch, the Rolex watch was smashed during the previous regime. Now, we're in the process of trying to put back the pieces and, in fact, improve on the mechanism while we do that.

But the organic and visceral necessity of a healthy and supportive climate in a school is not just one that can be legislated and that is technical; it's something that has to be nurtured and supported and worked with. That's why the substance of this bill is critical—and I'm going to talk about that—but the way this bill came about, and the processes we've used, as a government, to rebuild are just as important. What those processes do is bring back into the discussion about education the people for whom it is critical: the students, the teachers, the parents—the people who were frozen out of the discussion, who only found out about what was going on in education when they read it in the newspaper the morning after the Tory government made a decision.

What we're trying to do is rebuild a process that makes everyone feel that they're a part of education and, at the same time, put the structures back in place that will allow the system to work as that well-oiled Rolex would work.

While my colleague Mr. McMeekin, the member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, has already spoken about some of the important topics around flexibility and trustees and so on, I'd like to talk about teacher excellence for a moment. This government recognizes that to improve student performance, we must support the very people who deliver education every day, and that means our teachers. It includes our teachers, and our teachers are at the core. Teachers are the single most important influence, apart from family, in shaping the future of our children in our province. I don't think anyone would argue with that. Every day, teachers across Ontario inspire students and colleagues with their innovation and passion for teaching.

Les enseignantes et enseignants exercent le plus d'influence, après la famille, sur l'avenir de nos enfants et de notre province. Chaque jour, les enseignantes et enseignants de tout l'Ontario inspirent les élèves et leurs collègues en faisant preuve d'innovation et de passion pour l'enseignement.

They play a vital role in ensuring that our children get the skills and knowledge they need to achieve excellence. As the government, we're committed to supporting them—not punishing them, not undermining them, not demeaning them, but supporting them. We believe that teaching is more than a profession; it's a high calling and a matter of public service. Anyone who has been in a school recently at any point knows that the teachers in this province are dedicated to that calling and to that profession. That's why we've put into effect a policy of respect for teachers and an attitude of respect for teachers and have made it our responsibility to ensure that our

teachers have what they need to help our students succeed. That means providing support and recognition for what teachers and educators do on behalf of students every day.

Support means revoking the ineffective pen-and-paper teacher qualifying test that didn't evaluate actual classroom experience or expertise. It amounted to a vexatious irritant rather than a meaningful support, and meaningful support is what teachers need. So, subject to the approval of the Legislature, the requirement for teacher candidates to pass the qualifying test as a condition of teacher certification would be revoked because we all understand that in its place we need to put a positive second step for beginning teachers. A beginning teacher is going to be the first person to tell you that they need some support in that classroom, and we're going to give them valuable in-class support during that first challenging year of practice which would complement that formal one year of pre-service university training.

The new teacher induction program—and you'll hear that acronym now, NTIP—would address the retention and development of new teachers by providing valuable mentoring by experienced teachers and on-the-job training. We all know there is only so much you can learn in the classroom. You have to have that person standing beside you and helping you to integrate what you've learned in the classroom. These are the real supports that teachers have told us they need. So, if approved by the Legislature, successful completion of the new teacher induction program would require two satisfactory ratings on teacher performance appraisals. All publicly funded boards would be required to have this program in place by September 2006-07, so this is an immediately effective piece if the legislation is passed. All teachers new to Ontario's public schools would be required to participate in the program. A notation of a successful completion would be placed on the teacher's certificate of qualification and on the public register of the Ontario College of Teachers. This notation would signify to the public that a teacher has successfully completed that meaningful program, including proven successful teaching in an Ontario classroom. This is a real certification and a real indication that the teacher has had the mentoring and the classroom teaching they needed. The teacher performance appraisal system for new teachers would also be streamlined to use as a part of the new teacher induction program.

The overall result of this change is that teachers would be better prepared and more confident, and that's a good thing for the students in our classrooms. It's also a good thing for our system, because if a teacher is feeling confident and he or she feels that he or she is on top of material and is on top of classroom discipline and so on, then those teachers are going to feel that they want to stay in the system. We need that young energy. We need those people in our schools.

1620

The new teacher induction program is based on recommendations of the teacher development working table, which is a subcommittee of the education part-

nership roundtable. That refers to the issue I noted earlier: that not only is the substance of this bill important, but the way we got here is important. The recommendations from the working table that have come from all segments of the education sector have been integrated into the legislation that you see before you now.

The working table includes all education partners, and this dialogue with our education partners is characteristic of the way we're doing business. This is the way we're running government, in the sense that we are opening up the discussion to the people who are most interested, rather than freezing them out. I believe that open dialogue and input from people who are on the ground and who understand how policy works means that our policies are going to take hold, that they're going to take root in the classroom, which is where we need them to be. It's fine that we pass the legislation here, but if they don't take root in the system, if they don't take root in every classroom across the province, then the passage of the legislation is for naught.

The previous government didn't support teacher training in this way. In fact, I would suggest that the previous government didn't support teachers. They didn't treat teachers as professionals. As an example of this kind of disdain, the previous government reduced the number of professional activity days from nine to four, even though the average across other provinces is nine. If we are to support our students, we must provide professional development for our teachers.

Le gouvernement précédent n'a pas soutenu la formation des enseignantes et des enseignants. Il a réduit le nombre de journées pédagogiques de neuf à quatre, même si la moyenne des autres provinces est de neuf. Si nous voulons appuyer nos élèves, nous devons faire bénéficier nos enseignantes et enseignants d'un perfectionnement professionnel.

We need to provide them with more opportunities for shared problem-solving and give them access to new cutting-edge teaching techniques to improve student achievement. As I said before, anyone who spent time in a school knows how important these opportunities are and knows how rarely teachers have an opportunity to share their ideas because of the demands of their classroom work.

Legislation would be repealed that allows for only four PA days per school year and would allow for additional ministry-directed professional activity days to support the government's education priorities, priorities that focus on student success. That's a recognition that teachers need that professional support.

If the Legislature approves the proposed amendment, we intend to amend the regulation to provide for an increase in the number of professional activity days. I'm sure that no one on the other side of the House will be able to oppose the idea that our teachers should have the professional development that they need, so I expect that there will be unanimous support for that.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Frank Klees supports that.

Ms. Wynne: I'm sure Mr. Klees will support that, and I'm sure Mr. Marchese will support that, because they

believe in teachers. Better-trained teachers obviously mean better-prepared students.

I should also point out that the Education Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005, repealed previous legislation and provided for the negotiation of two- or four-year teacher collective agreements. The government also announced measures to encourage longer-term contracts. This is in the spirit of creating peace and stability in the system, which we've managed to do. If passed, this bill would allow the extension of those teacher collective agreements. Some of the boards had two two-year teacher collective agreements, and this legislation would allow those two-year agreements to become four-year agreements. So two two-year agreements could become a four-year agreement.

This new climate of peace and stability, which has characterized our time in government, is an important building block, and it speaks to that issue of the organic nature of the climate in a school. Without that peace and stability and the opportunity for reflection and harmony, then it's very hard to move forward.

I also want to point out that it's in times of peace that we often work our hardest to continue to achieve our goals. When there's conflict and instability, people rush together in opposition, but when there's peace and stability, there's actually an opportunity to build and grow and move forward, and that's the environment that we're creating.

These venues, such as the education partnership table, which I referenced earlier, are contributing to what I would suggest is the good government aspect of what this bill brings forward. What good government should be about is dialogue, partnership and respect. Those things are exemplified in this bill.

There are some housekeeping matters that have to be dealt with as a matter of course in any legislative agenda, but on the whole this is a progressive bill which, if passed, will engender academic excellence and democratic openness with new measures for input and active engagement for citizens; for example, the establishment of the public interest committee of the Ontario College of Teachers and the new measures for student trustees. All of these things allow for input from outside of the education sector and democratize the process.

I want to address one final aspect of this bill as it relates to teachers: the proposed revisions to the Ontario College of Teachers. The McGuinty government believes it's time to revitalize and depoliticize the Ontario College of Teachers. It should become a truly professional body, and teachers deserve the privilege of self-regulation and the respect that would come with it. Again, I'm sure that our colleagues in the third party will agree with this. The benefits of a successful college for Ontario students should be obvious. A highly skilled, motivated body of teachers which is held in high regard by the public at large should be seen as a positive aspect of the education community. So I'm sure that this depoliticization of the Ontario College of Teachers, by having a majority of classroom teachers on the council to carry out its mandate, will be supported by the members opposite.

If passed, the legislation would change the governance structure of the college to depoliticize it, and it would have a majority of classroom teachers on its council. With the proposed addition of six elected classroom teachers to the college council, there would be 19 elected teacher positions on the council, giving teachers a clear majority. Again, these aspects of the legislation have been talked about with the sector, there's agreement that this is the way to go, and there's a partnership with teachers that has led to this statute being brought in. Our government is committed to ensuring that the classroom teachers who sit on the council serve the public interests, not the interests of a specific organization, and there's agreement among teachers that that is a good thing.

Our government is strongly committed to teaching excellence. We're committed to teaching excellence because we know that teaching excellence is at the core of a successful education system. We believe that giving our teachers the respect they deserve is a key way of working toward obtaining that teaching excellence and restoring the organic, healthy climate in our schools.

Notre gouvernement a pris un ferme engagement envers l'excellence en enseignement, et nous croyons que témoigner à nos enseignantes et enseignants le respect qu'ils méritent est un moyen clé de parvenir à cette excellence en enseignement.

We're taking these steps to support our teachers because we know that it's critical for student achievement. By supporting a partnership with teachers, we're creating an environment that'll help us to achieve our shared goal, because I believe it is a shared goal of all the members in this House to make sure that our students reach their potential, that every student in Ontario reaches his or her potential and has the aspiration that he or she deserves. I look forward to supporting this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I'm pleased to add some comments to the speeches from the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot and the member from Don Valley West, who were speaking on Bill 78, An Act to amend the Education Act, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 and certain other statutes relating to education.

In the short time that I have available, I would like to go to the amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996. That's part II of the bill, which amends the Ontario College of Teachers Act to change the number, duties and term of office of members of the council established under the act. What that really means is that the government is handing over control and a majority vote on the Ontario College of Teachers to the teacher unions. So I say that this is very different from what the member from Don Valley West was saying, where she was talking about depoliticizing the college of teachers. In fact, I would say that this is politicizing the Ontario College of Teachers. I would ask, how is the public interest served by giving majority control of the college of teachers to the teachers' union?

1630

I would be completely in favour of having more teacher representation on the college of teachers, but I think most teachers would agree too that it should be a democratic, free vote amongst all teachers to allow any teacher who wants to sit on the college of teachers to run for that position, and not to represent the union but to represent all teachers. That would certainly benefit students. You almost have to listen to what they say and take the opposite, because when she says “depoliticize” I think this would in fact politicize it.

This bill would eliminate the teacher qualifying tests as well. I might point out in the nine seconds I have left that the government eliminated a lot of the training and assistance that was put in by the past government. I'm out of time and will look forward to the member for Oak Ridges to talk more about this bill.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I will have an opportunity to begin my leadoff debate on this bill around more or less a quarter to 6, possibly 10 to 6. I have a fair amount to say. The Liberal members might find me a bit positive on some elements of this so-called student performance bill as it relates to trustees, the college of teachers, the teacher induction program, but will find me critical in many other areas of this particular bill. I will find the opportunity to comment on many of the failures of this government—and there are many, in spite of the claims made by the three speakers who have already spoken on this education bill.

We will find the time to talk about the capital programs, because as much as this government is proud of its achievements on this front, I will be able to point out many of the weaknesses of this program. We'll have plenty of time to talk about the funding formula. The Liberal government continues to use the Conservative funding formula of 1997-98; it hasn't changed. The Liberal government may be proud of it, but we progressive people on this side are not. We know that People for Education are not happy about that. We know that most boards are not happy about the flawed funding formula that has not changed.

I'm going to have an opportunity to talk about the Safe Schools Act, an opportunity to talk about autism, the Education Quality and Accountability Office, otherwise known as EQAO, and what the government has done vis-à-vis that, to talk about special ed., ESL and more at about 10 to 6.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 78 and to respond to the comments of my colleagues from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot and Don Valley West.

One of the things that we have been able to do and, I might say, quite successfully, is to bring back to public education an atmosphere of calm and co-operation, something that was sadly lacking during the previous government. One of the ways in which we have been able to do that is by recognizing that in fact teachers are our partners, not our enemies. There are a couple of elements in this bill that go to that partnership and the recognition

that students perform well when teachers perform well; that is, when teachers are able to teach well.

The previous government had the attitude that you can test everything and that's the end of it. That's not our attitude. For that reason, we are removing the teacher qualifying test and introducing in its place something for which the education sector has fought for years: that when teachers complete teachers' college, we recognize that in fact they're not experienced teachers, they haven't learned everything they need to know. And for that reason, we're introducing a teacher induction program where beginning teachers will be supported in a mentoring program and an internship program by experienced teachers. They will be able to learn on the job, in the classroom, improved teaching practice.

We are also going to increase the number of PA days because we understand that professional development days are necessary to keep every teacher on top of their game and up to date on the latest teaching techniques so that our children can succeed.

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I too would like to comment on the comments from the government members so far on this bill. Let's be clear: The teachers' union very much has an interest in managing any provincial government as it relates to their relations with their school boards, and this government has done a very good job in terms of responding to their list.

I can tell you from my experience—I served for 10 years as a public school trustee in this province—it was not an easy job trying to reconcile between the needs of children, the needs of taxpayers and the needs of teachers, the pivotal part of the equation. I remember, when we first became the government back in 1985, there were 28 different committees that the Minister of Education of the day, regardless of what their political stripe was, was required to interact in with the teachers' union. It seems that every time there was a challenge in education, the teachers' federations would come forward and say, “Let's make a committee and let's sit and discuss it.” This had morphed itself into 28 different committees and so there were no real reforms going on.

The government has its reasons and they're defending them. I'm not here to argue about that, but we are moving the college of teachers and we're changing, in effect, how it advocates for teachers and we're changing how it advocates for children. The area of concern greatest to me—and I hope this finds its way into the debate—is the whole issue around oversight when teachers have run into those problems of supervision. We have cases where teachers are pedophiles and they find their way into the system, where they have broken the law, where they have harmed children. To put an organization entirely run by teachers in charge sometimes doesn't get the best outcomes in the safety of children, and I want that on the record.

The Deputy Speaker: Response, the member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot.

Mr. McMeekin: We're all given a gift at birth that we often fail to recognize, but need to recognize and need to

acknowledge, and that's the ability to start over again every single day. That doesn't just apply to individuals. That applies to institutions and governments as well, if they're creative enough to reach out and grasp the concept.

There are a lot of good things that have happened in the past, and some not-so-good things. We're committed to a new day. We're committed to a new era. We're committed to an enhanced sense of partnership, ownership, opportunity, openness, consultation and participation. We talk about the three Rs. We can talk about respect. We can talk about responsibility. We can talk about results. That's what we're really committed to.

As for active teachers—and I can't think of a profession that's more a calling, is more wonderful for those who want to engage our young people in the task of equipping themselves with the skills to be good citizens, let alone compete. As for the college of teachers having more teacher input, I think that's a good thing. Like any professional regulatory body, you have to have people there who are active and know what's going on.

We're committed to enhanced success. We're putting the pieces together. I would hope that members in this House will be supportive.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

1640

Mr. Klees: I have about an hour to speak about this bill. I look forward to taking this bill, section by section, and contrasting the content of the bill with some of the rhetoric we've heard from members of the government who have spoken to it. I watched very carefully to see whether members were in fact referring to the legislation or whether they were reading from their notes, which clearly had been presented to them by the minister's office.

Speaker, I would ask for a show of hands from members of the government bench as to who has read this legislation from cover to cover. I would very much now like to put that to the test, because when you look at what this legislation in fact does, it does the opposite of what members said it would do and is going to do, which is confounding to me as someone who has read this legislation, who has spoken with stakeholders, who has heard from stakeholders, be they trustees, be they individuals who have been engaged with the College of Teachers, be they parents, be they the media, the education writers in the media—everyone.

I will be bringing forward all these stakeholders and all these third-party references. I will read that information into the record, and I will allow the public to decide for themselves what the rhetoric of this legislation is, according to government members, and what the facts are. I don't believe it's intentional on any member's part, as I've listened to them, but I do believe that they have somehow consumed the Kool-Aid that was poured for them by the minister's office, that somehow they actually believe what they say. And so, we'll proceed.

Whatever the reason—and I'm sorry; I heard that it may well be as a result of some illness, perhaps in the

family, that the minister has had others represent him here today. I wish him and his family well. I also know that unless the rumours are not correct, there may well be a press conference, if not tomorrow, at some point very soon, in which the Minister of Education will announce that he is leaving, that he will be seeking the leadership of the federal Liberal Party. To that end, I publicly stated that I'm happy to endorse his leaving here and running for the Liberal leadership, because if he can do for the federal Liberal Party what he has done for the provincial Liberal Party, then that will serve the Conservative Party federally very well.

Here is this man's rhetoric, the Minister of Education for the province of Ontario. Here is the legacy he is leaving us after some two and a half years. This is a Liberal Minister of Education who, together with his Premier, when they were scratching for votes out there, looking to be elected, made a promise to autistic children and their parents across this province that they as a government would extend support services and educational services to children with autism beyond the age of six. After the minister was sworn in, not only did he not keep that promise but he, together with his government, chose to challenge and appeal a court order that directed them and made it very clear that by not doing so, they were discriminating against these children. To this day, they are appealing that decision. That's the legacy of this minister.

This minister also made a promise that they would commit \$177 million to education to keep rural schools and small schools open. He said that that \$177 million was going to come from cancelling the independent school tax credit and the property tax credit to senior citizens. It's interesting that he did exactly that. Not only did he cancel the education tax credit for working families whose children go to faith-based schools, but he did so retroactively, which he didn't have to do, and as a result caused significant hardship to many families in this province. Yes, he did cancel the property tax credit for senior citizens in this province to help with their property taxes; he did that. But what he did not do was honour the \$177 million to rural schools and small schools. That's the legacy of this minister.

This minister promised a new funding formula for transportation in this province. He failed to deliver on that, despite rising costs for transportation, maintenance and insurance. School boards across this province are scratching and robbing Peter to pay Paul to look after their transportation costs.

This is a minister who promised to cap class sizes. He is nowhere near completing that commitment, but what he is doing is filling schoolyards across this province with portables because of his class size cap. Schools across this province have no idea what to do with those kids who now have to be in additional classes, so we're getting a proliferation of portables throughout this province. That, if anything, is not conducive to a quality school environment. There is yet anyone to come forward and confirm that the class size cap policy of this gov-

ernment will in any way enhance the quality of education in schools in this province. This is the legacy of this minister.

This is the Minister of Education who encouraged trustees to enter into four-year agreements with teachers and support staff. But the same minister has failed to deliver the funding necessary to support those four-year contracts and the increase in salaries and, as a result, is forcing trustees and school boards across the province once again to rob Peter to pay Paul, to take money from textbooks, take money from special education and move it into the salary portion of their budgets so they can honour those obligations.

In this past budget, the greatest concern of school board trustees across this province was that the only amount in additional commitment for school boards was the \$450 million that the minister had been promising for the last year and a half. It is going to leave school boards across the province \$1 billion short of meeting those contractual obligations.

The minister himself, in speaking with school boards across the province, has advised them that, in his mind, they have sufficient money. Why? Because he has proposed and given them handouts, one-time funding for various programs. This is the minister who has travelled the province making one-time funding announcements for new programs in schools within the educational system. That makes a wonderful announcement. He is applauded when he goes to these various schools and makes the announcements. What they don't know is that it's the expectation of this minister that those funds are somehow shuffled throughout the budgetary process to look after their obligations in those four-year contracts. That's the legacy of this minister, and yet we hear today the rhetoric about all of the good things that this bill before us will do.

1650

I want to take, one at a time, these commitments.

I want to talk about the Ontario College of Teachers, and I want to start off the discussion about the college of teachers by reading from the OTF report. This is an article written by Hilda Watkins, and it reads as follows. This is directly from their newsletter, and it sets the context for this legislation and the changes made to the college.

"OTF and the teacher federation affiliates have continuously lobbied the government to make teachers truly self-governing. Indeed, a change in college structure was a Liberal campaign promise.

"No changes have yet been made." That was at the time of the article. "The teacher federations and the minister do not agree on a number of basic issues. OTF and the affiliates have adopted the following positions regarding the governing council:"

First: "Classroom teachers representatives must hold a clear majority of seats."

Today, this bill is a fulfillment of that campaign promise, and I want to leave it there so that people understand why we have this incredible change now taking

place in this legislation. I want to first of all help people to understand what the purpose of the college of teachers is. It was first recommend not by our government, the previous government; it was in fact recommended, initially implemented and proposed by the former NDP government. But it came out of the Royal Commission on Learning. If you recall, that was a unanimous report that was entitled *For the Love of Learning*. It made some 167 recommendations to reform Ontario's education system.

The Royal Commission on Learning recommended at the time, and I quote from the report, that "An Ontario College of Teachers should be established as an independent professional body to determine professional standards and be responsible for certifying teachers and for accrediting teacher education programs." The operative word here was "independent." There was a reason for that independence being recommended by the Royal Commission on Learning.

So it was established, and here is the mandate of the Ontario College of Teachers: "The college is responsible for setting the qualifications required to teach in Ontario, licensing teachers, and disciplining teachers found guilty of misconduct and incompetence, as well as accrediting teacher training programs." That is the mandate of the Ontario College of Teachers.

Today, the governing council of the college of teachers has 31 members. Seventeen are elected by members of the college, and 14 are appointed by the government to represent the public. Of the 17 elected councillors, six represent regions, seven represent facets of the different school systems, and one each represents principals and vice-principals, supervisory officers, faculties of education, and teachers in independent private schools. That's appropriate, because what we want in this college of teachers is broad representation to ensure that the business of education in this province is done in a professional way.

The current Minister of Education has said that he wants to add more classroom teachers to the governing council. Here's what members of the public have to understand: What does that mean? What is the definition of a classroom teacher? I know what most of us think that means, and quite frankly that's good. "Classroom teacher" should mean that these are people who are working in the classroom, day-to-day classroom teachers engaged in the business of teaching, and so they would understand what the business of teaching entails, what the challenges are, what the problems are and what needs to be done to improve it. The teachers' unions say that this will allow union activists elected on their slates to control the licensing and disciplinary body for teachers because, you see, another term for "classroom teachers" is "members of the union"; that's what it is. Wherever you hear "classroom teachers" in the context of this legislation, you can substitute, "members of the teachers' unions." It's important that we keep that in mind.

I want to refer to some general public information when this bill was first tabled. I'd like to read an article.

This is from the Toronto Star on March 11, 2006: "Education Minister Gerard Kennedy is continuing his relentless campaign to reverse the initiatives of the previous Conservative government.

"The problem is that he is throwing out some good with the bad."

Folks, this is the Toronto Star; this isn't me and this is not the Fraser report. I continue:

"Take, for example, Bill 78, the so-called 'Student Performance Act,' which was virtually ignored by the Toronto media when it was introduced by Kennedy last week.

"It is an omnibus bill with a wide range of measures, including:

"Giving 'working teachers' a majority on the governing council of the College of Teachers, the regulatory body for the profession.

"The college grew up under the Conservative government, although it was actually conceived by the preceding NDP regime.

"The New Democrats, in turn, were following the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Learning, which said that the teaching profession needed its own regulatory body, one that is not dominated by the teachers' unions.

"But the Liberals, lobbied by those same unions, made an election promise to give 'working teachers' a majority on the college's governing council. Bill 78 delivers on that promise.

"Critics fear this would hand control of the college to the unions and fatally weaken its ability to regulate the profession and discipline wayward teachers.

"Kennedy says he is appealing to the unions to 'stay out of it' and is hopeful they will."

Well, you know that this is in fact a capitulation. It is a departure from the very purpose of the college of teachers, and it is regrettable.

I'd like you to consider this scenario; I'd like the public, those listening, to consider this scenario. A child has witnessed and been subjected to verbal abuse and invective from a teacher who is reputed to frighten not only his students but his colleagues as well. Eventually, the parent takes the huge step of reporting him to his professional licensing body in the expectation that he will be made to either amend his ways or leave the profession. The day of the hearing arrives, and you go to the Ontario College of Teachers to see that justice is done. That's the expectation of the parent.

As you would expect, the teacher is there with his union representative, his union-paid lawyer. But imagine, to your surprise, when you find that two members of the three-person panel established to hear the case are indeed union officials. One of them is in the same union as the member whose case is being heard; in fact, he's the president of a local of the union that's paying the lawyer. That's how they do things at the Ontario College of Teachers, which licenses and disciplines teachers.

The legislative changes that Mr. Kennedy has just introduced into this Legislature are designed to reinforce

and to strengthen those practices that already being practised by this college of teachers. I am deeply concerned that we have taken something that is to serve the public interest, where parents have a responsibility and the right to believe that their students, the classroom, the education system in this province, are being guarded by a professional body with public oversight, and we have just handed that over to the unions. Not that we believe that anyone who is a union member is inherently bad; of course not. But this shouldn't be. That is not what is happening in other self-regulatory bodies. You don't have the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario with a majority of the people on that body also members of their union. There is a majority of public interest represented by government appointees. That is how this started. It was what was recommended by the Royal Commission on Learning. It is the right thing to do, and this government is reversing that.

1700

I'd like members of the government who have bought this line from their minister to listen one of their own colleagues. This is a member of the current cabinet. I wonder where this cabinet minister was sitting when this legislation was discussed at the cabinet table. I have here a letter addressed to the Honourable Gerard Kennedy on December 2, 2004. It is a letter from the current Minister of Energy, Donna Cansfield. I'm going to read this letter into the record, because I believe it's extremely important for the public to understand that the minister does not have the support of his own colleagues, some of whom fully understand the import of this. As an honourable member, she was prepared to go public by writing a letter to the then and current Minister of Education. Here is the letter:

"Dear Minister Kennedy:

"I am writing to you to express my support for the issues raised concerning the governance of the Ontario College of Teachers. As you know, I have had a long affiliation with the Ontario Principals' Council and have a good knowledge of its background and its *raison d'être*. I met with representatives of the Ontario Principals' Council on December 1, 2004, and agreed to write to you in support of the concerns which they expressed.

"No professional college can act in the public interest when its governing council is controlled by one union whose own mandate it is to defend its members against public charges. This issue must be addressed, as a council controlled by the Ontario Teachers' Federation will further increase the widespread perception that the college is controlled by the teachers' unions and does not adequately protect or represent the public interest."

The letter goes on:

"A further concern expressed by the" Ontario Principals' Council "surrounds the issue of peer review. I share the belief that there must be a mechanism put in place to ensure peer review for principals and vice-principals. Allowing teachers with limited understanding of these roles to judge school leaders is neither self-regulation nor peer review.

"I also support the" Ontario Principals' Council's "concerns about those conflict-of-interest guidelines which presently allow union leaders to be members of the OPC. They may have to defend the interests of their respective bargaining unit members, while, at the same time investigating, disciplining or judging the fitness to practise of these same individuals. One person cannot be a defender and a judge at the same time.

"I urge you to give serious consideration to finding a resolution to concerns affecting the 5,000 principals and vice-principals who are represented by the Ontario Principals' Council.

"Yours very truly,

"Donna Cansfield

"MPP Etobicoke Centre."

So I say to members opposite—who were jeering me when I was suggesting that this council should not be overborne by the teachers' federation, that somehow this was a remnant of the previous government, which has it in for teachers—no. A member of your own cabinet, who fully understands the teaching profession and what the focus and the purpose of the Ontario College of Teachers should be, has expressed her opinion and appealed to your own minister, as I am appealing. I am saying nothing different than Donna Cansfield, the Minister of Energy, who sits with the minister in cabinet. I'm saying, listen to her, if not to me, if not to members of the opposition and if not to members of the public.

I'm going to move on to another issue, which deals with teacher qualification. The legacy of this Minister of Education is that he has dismantled all of the professional development initiatives that were put in place by previous governments.

Interjections.

Mr. Klees: Once again, I hear the jeering.

I want to point out again that it wasn't the machinations of the previous government, by the way, that dreamt up the important need for mandatory professional development for teachers. Oh, no; let's remember where it came from. Do you recall, members of the Liberal government, the Royal Commission on Learning? Do you remember it? It was the Royal Commission on Learning that made, as its number one recommendation, teacher professionalization and development.

I quote: "No serious reform of schools is possible without the enthusiastic participation of teachers. Teachers are the heroes of education, but they must have greater support in playing their vital and difficult roles. The commission recommends that teacher preparation be extended from one year to two years, and, in recognition of the need to continually update knowledge and skill, that professional development be mandatory"—that all educators receive it. "Mandatory." That was not something that the previous government dreamt up; that was the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Learning, which has been dismantled by this government.

This government goes on to eliminate not only the mandatory professional development of teachers; they've gone one step further now and eliminated the teacher qualification tests. For the members of the public, here's

what that means. It means that we have teachers who go through the college of teachers—teacher training—and, when they leave their college, they've gone through the academic process of learning how to become teachers. And at one time there used to be a test to determine whether or not these teachers had in fact achieved the level of knowledge and qualification they should have to enter a classroom. That now is no longer there. They have eliminated the teacher qualification test. This is obviously in contradiction to the Premier himself.

1710

It's interesting that, on the issue of the college of teachers, the Minister of Education didn't listen to his cabinet colleague. On this issue of a teacher qualification test, he clearly hasn't listened to the Premier either, because here is what the Premier said on May 22, 1999. He said this in a very public forum. He said this on Focus Ontario, and I quote the transcript. For members opposite who may want to see it, it will be in Hansard and I'll give you the original.

"I agree that teachers should be tested. New teachers should be tested. I think that teachers should be tested as nothing more and nothing less than professionals. So I think they should have the same responsibilities when it comes to testing as lawyers and doctors and accountants and architects and so on. They're all tested at the beginning of their professional careers in order to be admitted to the profession."

That is the Premier. This legislation that's before us, Bill 78, eliminates that. In a jurisdiction where we are graduating literally thousands of students every year and we say that we have as our objective to have the best-qualified students so that when they graduate they can be competitive with students from other jurisdictions and other countries, doesn't it make sense that we would have the best-qualified teachers entering our classrooms? The Premier of the province agreed with that, and the legacy of this Minister of Education is that he will eliminate the teacher qualifying test and replace it with something that is called a teacher induction process, a mentoring process. Very interesting. The fact is that there is teacher mentoring going on now. There is an induction—

Interjections.

Mr. Klees: Absolutely there is, and there has been. The problem is that now we're going to have the mentoring taking place but without the initial qualifying test. Sad. I can tell you, this is very much contrary to the verbiage that we heard from members opposite coming to us when they were speaking on this issue.

I want to point something out as well, just as an aside. Let's talk about the qualification of teachers. Much is said about the performance of our students in math, for example. The objective that has been set by this government is that they want 75% of all students to have a passing grade in mathematics and literacy. That's great. But here is the legacy of this minister: Instead of providing the supports to those students and helping them to achieve the standards so that they can be competitive with students from other jurisdictions and other provinces

and other countries, the legacy of this minister is to say, "We'll achieve our pass rate by dummifying down the curriculum." And now we're dummifying down the teachers; now we're going to take away the qualifying test.

With regard to grade 9 math, I would suggest that what we need are teachers who are truly qualified to teach mathematics at that very important entry level. We have in many schools across this province today teachers teaching mathematics in grade 9 who are not qualified to teach mathematics. I would have applauded an initiative by this minister to say, "In order to raise the quality of our students, we will insist from this point forward that any mathematics teacher in grade 9 must have a mathematics degree." There are jurisdictions where in fact that is a requirement. I hear members of the government jeering and howling. Why is that such a bad idea? What is wrong with requiring qualified teachers to teach our students some of the building blocks of education?

Instead, the legacy of this minister is to dummy down the curriculum, dummy down the requirements for teachers. Not only that; this is the same education minister who announced a few months ago that he was going to remove calculus from the mathematics courses in our high schools.

Mr. McMeekin: Have you ever used your calculus?

Mr. Klees: The member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot said, "Have you used your calculus?" Let me tell you, sir, that every engineer and every person in the high-tech business, every leader of business, has in fact not only used it but has based his entire career on that. That is why professional engineers have lobbied this government and have tried to talk some sense into them, and that's why this minister has backed away from that. He has backed away and said, "Well, let's think about it." Thank God he's leaving, because hopefully someone else who's going to be Minister of Education will understand that you have to build up our students. You have to educate them, help them to become the best they can be, not through a watered-down piece of legislation that undermines the very foundations of our education system, and that is exactly what is happening here.

I'd like to move on and speak, if I could, about another aspect of this bill, and that has to do with trustees. My friend spoke at length about how this bill is going to build confidence in trustees and allow for more local decision-making. That's why I said at the outset that I wonder if the member has even read the bill, and I don't mean that in an insulting way. I simply mean it from the standpoint that I know what the bill does. I know it undermines trustees and their decision-making. I have had trustees and trustees' associations in my office, face to face, discussing these issues with me. I would like to read into the record some of the public record on this. Here is a newspaper article, the Guelph Mercury dated March 21, 2006, and I quote:

"It's not surprising some local school board officials smell two things when they get close to Bill 78: Paper and politics.

"Take a whiff of Bill 78, unveiled this month by Education Minister Gerard Kennedy, and you'll see why the leaders of your school district are concerned about this proposed law that would limit their role in educating Guelph's children.

"Facing an election in 2007, the Liberals need to prove to voters they're spending their money well—and they've spend a lot of it on education. That's why the word 'accountability' gets tossed around like a beach ball every time the education minister speaks.

"Where is the local decision-making?" asks Borden, chairperson of the Upper Grand District School Board. His counterpart, Wellington Catholic board chairperson Marino Gazzola, says, 'Bill 78 takes away the autonomy and authority of local school boards,'" contrary to the rhetoric of the members who were given their speaking notes by the minister.

You see, the people who have read the legislation and understand it understand what it means to them. "To me, it's overkill," Borden says. "Bill 78 also proposes to give unionized teachers the majority on the Ontario College of Teachers"—interesting—"which is supposed to protect the public interest by adding six elected teacher positions. Critics worry that handing control of the college to the unions will weaken its ability to discipline bad teachers and regulate the profession." That's not me saying this. These are education stakeholders. These are people who understand the import of this legislation. So once we get beyond the rhetoric of this legislation, we start to see what is really happening.

1720

I want to refer to a speech that was given by the minister to the College of Teachers on June 3, 2005. This goes back to the issue of integrity and some of the doublespeak that we're hearing. Here is what the Minister of Education said at that time: "You are the body to look after the public interest in teaching—not the teacher interest of teaching, not the government interest of teaching—the public interest of teaching. And therefore I think it is essential that you as a group strive in various ways, unaided by me or by the government, to understand where the public is coming from, what information they need to reconcile their view of what's happening in education. There is obviously a role for myself as an elected official, as a politician, to do that, and certainly that is what I feel my job as minister is, but I think you're in a unique position to contribute to that"—to contribute to the public interest. My question is, if the minister believed that as he spoke to the college of teachers, why did he come forward with Bill 78, which is such a counterproductive measure?

In the same speech I also refer to, and I'm going to quote the minister for the record; from the transcript, the minister, in speaking about teacher testing, says the following: "Here is where the public role comes in. The public needs to know that there are systems in place, because when you say to the public, 'Should you test teachers?' 85% of them say yes. Now, part of that is just the psychology that says, 'They tested us, and sure, we

test them right back,' but there is another part of that which is just to say that they appreciate and understand there should be some basis by which teachers—not denigration of teachers, that they do believe that that's a trust position. They want to know who gets to assume it and how."

He goes on here to say that, on the one hand, he acknowledges that 85% of the people want teachers to be tested, but then goes on to suggest to them that perhaps there's a way to equivocate around that. I don't believe that the public is going to be satisfied with the minister's intention here, with the minister's desire, on the one hand, to meet his campaign obligations and, on the other hand, that he is prepared to compromise what he knows is right, what he knows is the right thing to do, but he still refuses to do it.

I want to refer as well to the issue of the professional development days. Do we believe that teachers should have professional development? Yes. It's interesting that this very government is the government that eliminated the mandatory professional development program for teachers, which was very structured, which required a very specific curriculum, which provided all kinds of latitude for teachers to improve themselves. They eliminated that by repealing the previous government's legislation. But now we have them coming forward and saying, "Well, we really do believe in professional development, so what we're going to do is add some additional professional development days into the school year."

We know what that means. Here's what it means to students: It means a day off. Here's what it means to parents: It means a day off school for their kids, which means another day for which they have to find daycare, for which they have to take time off work, for which they have to be inconvenienced within their own lives to accommodate this additional time for teachers.

Again, I know what members of the government are going to say, and I know what members of the teachers' unions are going to say about me as I even dare to raise this issue, because somehow this is teacher-bashing.

This is an article from the Star, March 4, 2006:

"Ontarians may well question the need for adding extra development days during the existing school year. They can legitimately argue that if such days are indeed needed, then they should be held during the many weeks when teachers are not in the classroom.

"Currently, most teachers are not in the classroom during the two-month summer school break, during the Christmas holiday period and during March break.

"At the same time, thousands of parents will be forced either to take time off work to look after their children on the additional professional development days, or find other arrangements for their children.

"Kennedy will try to ensure the value of the additional time by retaining the 'authority to determine the purpose of PA days.'

"Teachers argue such training makes them better at their jobs.

"But in this case, they should not expect parents and taxpayers to greet this news with much enthusiasm."

These are an education writer's words, not mine. But I can tell you that I have heard from a number of parents who are somewhat familiar with this legislation, who have said to me, "Isn't enough, enough? If we require additional training of teachers, is that not something that can be done at the time when other professions do their professional development, whether it's for the last two days or the first two days of the school year?"

Why don't we add another week? I think that's wonderful. Let's do that. Why do we have to encroach on the school year when it's going to take kids out of the classroom for the additional two days and it's going to inconvenience parents for the additional two days? Isn't there a contradiction when we talk about this in terms of being in the best interests of our students? How can it be in the best interests of our students to remove them from the classroom for an additional number of hours?

Once again, Bill 78: I just do not understand, frankly, how members of the government can buy in to what has been told them in their speaking notes. All it takes is reading the legislation.

1730

I have a few minutes left, and I'd like to refer to some very specific aspects of this legislation. The bill makes reference to another aspect that I would think trustees are very concerned about, that every classroom teacher would also be concerned about, and I'm surprised that we haven't heard much about it. Maybe it's because they're not aware that it's here. I'm surprised that members of the government, in their rhetoric, failed to mention that section 8 of the Education Act is being amended by adding the following subsection. The subsection is entitled "Collection of personal information." Subsection (2) reads:

"The minister may collect, directly or indirectly, such personal information as is reasonably necessary for purposes related to,

"(a) administering this act and the regulations, and implementing the policies and guidelines made under this act;

"(b) ensuring compliance with this act, the regulations, and the policies and guidelines made under this act;

"(c) planning or delivering programs or services that the ministry provides or funds, in whole or in part, allocating resources to any of them, evaluating or monitoring any of them or detecting, monitoring and preventing fraud or any unauthorized receipt of services or benefits related to any of them;

"(d) risk management, error management or activities to improve or maintain the quality of the programs or services that the ministry provides or funds, in whole or in part; and

"(e) research and statistical activities conducted by or on behalf of the ministry."

This is a very frightening piece of legislation. Had the previous government introduced something like this, there would have been screams. There would have been

headlines. For some reason, this goes unnoticed: “The minister may collect, directly or indirectly, such personal information as is reasonably necessary” for all those purposes. That’s about as broad—you can drive a Mack truck through all those purposes.

I want to know, and at some point we’re going to demand of the minister—first of all, we’re going to ask that that be removed, because it is unconscionable that any minister of the crown should be given the authority to collect personal information, directly or indirectly, without narrowing down about whom that is to be collected, for what specific purposes. I know they’re going to say, “Well, we’ll deal with all of that in regulation. We’ll narrow it down.”

This is legislation. I don’t trust this government. I don’t believe the general public will trust this government. I don’t believe the teachers should trust this government to be allowed to have this kind of personal information gathered about them, either directly or indirectly. Certainly the trustees shouldn’t be given that kind of information. Nobody should trust this government when it comes to this section of the legislation, and I believe that the minister’s legacy in Bill 78, as he leaves this place, will be something that will haunt him, because we won’t accept his written notes that tell us how wonderful a piece of legislation this is. The third party won’t accept it, because we can see—we’ve actually read it. It will follow him. Not only have we read it; I think we understand what the implications are, contrary to members of his own caucus, obviously; perhaps contrary to members of his own cabinet.

This bill will find its way, no doubt, to the standing committee. In the standing committee, we will ask the questions, and we would expect that there will be major amendments to this legislation that will make it respectful—the terminology they use, saying that they want to introduce respect through this legislation. Well, there is no greater piece of legislation that has seen the halls of this place that disrespects its stakeholders more than Bill 78, whether that be teachers or trustees, and certainly whether that be the public. Because what this bill does in various sections is it absolutely transfers the authority of decision-making within local school boards on everything. The catch-all phrases that are in this legislation mean simply that those trustees who are elected by the public to represent the public interest are essentially powerless as a result of Bill 78.

Those members of the government caucus who are shaking their head today—I tell you, folks, read the legislation. Allow one or two trustees who understand this to have a meeting with you so that they can explain it to you. You’ll stop shaking your head about what I’m saying and you’ll start shaking it about your former Minister of Education, because you won’t believe what he’s tried to do here.

In closing, I would say that there is one section of this bill that I support, and that’s the section of the bill that allows for more public use of school facilities. That actually suggests that there will be resources provided by

the government to ensure that the community has access to the schools for which they paid through their tax dollars and to which their children should have access.

It is a shame that we have young people who are spending their spare time on the streets and in malls doing things that they shouldn’t be doing but often do because there’s nothing positive to do. I believe that every school in every community should be seen as a community centre. I applaud the government for taking this initiative. I will support them, regardless of what the financial resources are, regardless of what it takes to implement that part of the bill. It’s the right thing to do and I support it wholeheartedly. Our young people should be in those schools in the afternoons, after school and on weekends, taking advantage of the facilities that the taxpayers have put there. I believe that that is a very positive step in this bill.

With regard to the rest, as I said before, this Minister of Education is leaving a legacy through Bill 78 that I believe will haunt him and will in fact do a great deal of harm to our education system if it is not amended and if this government does not see the wisdom of making those changes.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Marchese: I was very pleased to find two areas of agreement with the member from Oak Ridges, and they are significant, I must admit. One of them was the matter of the funding formula, and the other one was the latest comment that he made around the extraordinary powers that the Liberal government has given itself through section 11.1.

On the issue of the funding formula, the member from Oak Ridges is quite knowledgeable about this. He would know that when they reformed education financing in 1998, they deliberately cut back funds by centralizing funds, disallowing boards of education to be able to raise money to pay for their education needs, and gave themselves the power to distribute funds according to what they saw fit. The problem with the Conservative funding formula of 1997-98 was that it set the benchmarks too low, which means that many of the programs today, in 2005-06, are not getting the money they should be getting, and that’s what the member from Oak Ridges was speaking to.

1740

So I say to him, he’s knowledgeable about this because they had a hand in putting together that Conservative funding formula that they now, in opposition, see as being a flawed one. He quite correctly is saying that the Liberal government is continuing with that Conservative funding formula, which was inadequate and continues to be inadequate and does not and cannot pay for the programs of 2005-06 in an adequate manner. He’s right.

The other matter, which is too long and which I will have to tackle in my own speech when I have time, has to do with section 11.1, where the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations prescribing—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Marchese: Time flies. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia–Lambton): It's a pleasure to rise and respond to some of the comments that have been made.

It's important that we return to the essence of what this bill is about. Again, this bill enables a number of policy changes as substantive housekeeping that support the goal of increasing student achievement—and it is about the student. This bill does enable that lowering of class sizes; long-term collective teacher agreements; formal on-the-job learning as the second step in teachers' professional development; teacher performance appraisals that improve teacher development; a revitalized college of teachers that has the confidence of its members and the public and allows professional development days to be added as needed; and trustee respect. And it recognizes child care spaces.

I just want to add one comment in regard to the member from Oak Ridges, who agrees with the section on public use of spaces in schools. I hope that he remembers and recalls the history over the last 10 years of why the public use of schools was eroded. I hope he understands the impact that has had on many of those organizations, including Boys and Girls Clubs and other entities that used those schools after hours to support many, many young people who would otherwise have no other place to go.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I found the presentation by the member from Oak Ridges captivating. I say that as a former secondary school teacher and a former member of OSSTF.

I really feel that the actions of this present Minister of Education fly in the face of any legacy he may wish to have from Bill 78. This particular minister promised a new transportation funding formula to keep the buses running, and he failed to deliver. He promised a new rural funding formula to keep our schools open. Again, he failed to deliver. As a former teacher, granted, I will give this minister an A for announcement, but I give him a D for delivery.

As the member for Oak Ridges explained, what we see here is a shuffling of money, a robbing of Peter to pay Paul, if you will. Obviously, Peter is not happy, and even Paul begins to question what's going on with this kind of shuffling of the deck.

As their education critic will know, schools are closing across Ontario, northern Ontario, and in particular rural Ontario. This bill ignores the promise, the commitment, to bring forward that new funding formula to keep the schools open. Many people in small-town Ontario voted for the McGuinty government specifically around the commitment to keep schools open. That promise has not been kept.

There's certainly been much discussion about teacher testing. Again, as a former secondary school teacher, I do agree with Premier McGuinty's statement that he agrees that teachers should be tested. My question now is, who got to McGuinty? What happened?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): One of the problems that I think needs to be understood—and it was outlined by the member for Oak Ridges—is the whole concept of what the college of teachers, the college of physicians, the Law Society of Upper Canada, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers and all of those different bodies' actual *raison d'être* is. Their reason for existence is to protect the public.

I'm a member of two different regulatory bodies: the professional engineers and the Law Society of Upper Canada. While their work is important, I feel that the work of the college of teachers is even more important, because they are put in charge of the people to whom we entrust our children and our grandchildren. Often those kids don't have the opportunity to speak up for themselves. Therefore, I feel that the college of teachers, above all other colleges, above all other self-management, self-regulating professional bodies, has to be the squeakiest-clean, has to be the most vigilant in seeking out wrongs with regard to their profession in terms of what they do. Therefore, I commend the member here for bringing these issues to the fore.

We cannot allow a union, which represents perhaps the other side of the argument when a discipline matter is brought forward, to appoint or to indicate whom the profession should put on this very important body. That vigilance is so important.

The Deputy Speaker: Response, the member for Oak Ridges.

Mr. Klees: I want to just make reference to a comment made by the member for Sarnia–Lambton. I believe, with all due respect, that members have not taken the time to review this legislation, because in her remarks she made reference to the fact that this legislation supports the class size limitations. In fact, it does the very opposite. What this legislation does is actually allow for an averaging of class sizes. It's another reversal on the part of this government on the whole issue of class size.

This minister has performed with excellence when it comes to making announcements week in and week out. He has had the applause of stakeholders because of those announcements.

Once again I challenge education stakeholders and I challenge the public to look at the performance and the outcomes under this minister's responsibility. When you look at what Bill 78 actually says and what it does and what the practical implications are to our education system, it is everything but what this minister would have us believe. Anyone who does not go beyond the headlines and any member of this Legislature who does not go beyond the speaking notes will not understand fully the implication of the undermining of education that Bill 78 represents.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Marchese: I, first of all, want to welcome the citizens to this parliamentary channel, where we're still on live. We've got another 10 minutes before 6 o'clock comes about, and that ends today's session, at least until

a quarter to 7 this evening. So I tell you, this is one of the best programs you could be watching because you learn so much from the government and opposition members. You've got to stay tuned; don't leave us.

1750

I begin on Bill 78 by saying that the Liberal government calls it the student performance bill. Even the member from Sarnia-Lambton said, "This is about student performance," and made it really appear that that's what it's about. It reminds me of the former Conservative government when it used to introduce its bills such as—just one example of so many—the Tenant Protection Act. Do you recall, Speaker? Were you around then? They called it the tenant protection package before it became the Tenant Protection Act. Tenants must have thought, "This is great. This is about me; it's about tenants. It's going to help me." There was nothing in that bill that was about tenants. It was about whacking tenants. It was really about landlords, with whom the Conservatives have a very, very close relationship. The Liberal government introduces this bill today and says it's the student performance bill.

What I'm trying to suggest is that the Liberal government has learned a great deal from the Tories; they mimic very well what the Tories used to do. They have the Tories as an example, as great leaders from whom to learn. Rather than call the bill what it is, an education statute law amendment act, which is an omnibus bill, something Liberals used to detest when they were in opposition, but it's okay once you're in government—why couldn't they just call it the Education Statute Law Amendment Act and say, "There are a lot of amendments here, some good, some bad. We're going to be debating it"? But they label it a student performance bill, which it is not.

You understand what I'm saying, Speaker. I raise it with you, because the others are engaged in other matters. I like engaging you, because you are a very attentive person in this Legislature, and besides, you've got to be.

I wanted to begin by talking about this bill and unmasking—exfoliating—the bill a little bit, and I wanted to begin with the title. Then I want to get into some of the areas where I have some agreement, because sometimes we get labelled as simply being too negative all the time, something that Mr. Bradley, the Minister of Tourism, understands, or at least understood when he was in opposition. I don't want to appear too negative all the time, so I desperately tried to find some areas of agreement.

One of them has to do with trustee salaries—I think one of the Liberal members mentioned trustee salaries. I forget who it was, whether it was Don Valley West—

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. You talked about trustees' salaries, I think. It wasn't long, but at least you mentioned it. I think it's a very useful thing, because I have to tell you—and I agree—

Mr. McMeekin: It's the right thing to do.

Mr. Marchese: It's the right thing to do. I have negatives there as well, and I want to show you how.

The Conservative government beat up on trustees unlike any other government before; it's a fact. Trustees used to earn a decent salary, in recognition of the fact that many trustees were doing the job full-time. The member from Don Valley West understands this, because she spent a great deal of time as a school trustee; I would venture to say close to full-time.

When I was a trustee, many of us made a full-time job of it because we believed in it; we believed it was full-time and we believed it was as valuable as anything former city councillors did. We believed that education is political; yes. Education is politics; you can't deny it or hide it. Many of us felt that those who devoted much of their lives to the job of being a trustee full-time deserved a decent salary.

Some people gave up their jobs. I quit as a teacher to be a full-time trustee. Some people might say, "Well, that was your option," and I understand that. But many of us believed that to do the job well required trustees to be there on a regular basis. If you require that, and you believe in it, you should pay them a decent wage.

The Tories didn't believe that. They didn't like trustees. They wanted to make politics of the issue of trustees, as if somehow only trustees were political and only MPPs could become political or could be political, but trustees could not, as if somehow to be a trustee was a neutral job, as if somehow to be an MPP was a neutral job. Politics is not neutral. When you're a trustee, city councillor or MPP, it's politics, and the Tories wanted to beat up on trustees to make politics of it. It was a highly political issue. To accuse trustees of being political is highly political. They knew it and they made hay of it, I can tell you that.

Their salaries were capped at 5,000 bucks. That reduced their level of interest, I can tell you, but not for all trustees because some trustees still did the job full-time. In Toronto, where I have much experience, the parents here demand that you are reachable. They demand that you are there when they call you. They expect you to return their calls, and that kind of expectation means that trustees ought to be there, and not just possibly at night and not just possibly being reached on Saturdays or Sundays.

This is a positive thing that I'm raising here with respect to this bill, and I wanted to say that what the Liberals are doing is a very useful, practical thing. Since the Tories, it recognizes that trustees play an important role in education, and it's going to increase their salaries. Not they, but boards, after some process, will be able to have an increase in salary, up to, I'm told—and we don't know this—\$20,000. With some boards, that's not a lot; for some boards, it may be a lot. But \$20,000 is better than \$5,000, and it begins to recognize the hard work that many trustees do.

But as it recognizes that trustees are important, it still keeps something that the Tories introduced while they

were in government, and that is this section under "Personal liability of members of the board":

"(3) If a board that is subject to an order made under subsection 257.31 (2) or (3) applies any of its funds otherwise than as the minister orders or authorizes, the members of the board who voted for the application are jointly and severally liable for the amount so applied, which may be recovered in a court of competent jurisdiction."

I'm just wondering whether the member from Don Valley West and the member from Guelph-Wellington, who have a great deal of experience in this field, agree with that section, and I'm wondering whether in the debates with the minister they raise this as a particular matter of concern, because I believe it is. I believe when you're talking about a partnership with yourselves and boards and teachers, this section says, "Obey or else. Obey and/or you will be punished politically and financially and, yes, we'll take you to court if need be." I wonder how that sets the tone for a partnership in education. I'm wondering whether the member from Don Valley West has an opinion on this when she has a two-minute response next Wednesday, or my good friend

from Guelph-Wellington, because what I think this particular section does is say to boards, "We don't trust you." It's to say to trustees, "We don't trust you." It's to say to them, "By the way, you better do as you were told," even though the funding formula may be inadequate and you don't have enough money to deal with all of the funding pressures you have in the board of education. Even though that may be the case, should you decide, as the Peel board did about a month ago, that they would not make the \$14-million cuts in order to balance the budget, even though the funding formula is inadequate and they couldn't make do, boards could be punished and trustees are individually liable." So much for the trust that you have for boards of education and for trustees.

Speaker, are you hinting that we may have come to the time? Just for your benefit and the benefit of the citizens of Ontario, this debate will continue Wednesday night at 6:45. I hope they join us then.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
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Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Hudak, Tim (PC)	Erie–Lincoln	
Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Burlington	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Kennedy, Hon. / L'hon. Gerard (L)	Parkdale–High Park	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Klees, Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Énergie
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	Chief government whip / whip en chef du gouvernement
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Marsales, Judy (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade (Small Business) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce (Petites entreprises)
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services and minister responsible for women's issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires et ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Aldershot	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Éducation
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Transports
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	Chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Milloy, John (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjointe parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)	Stoney Creek	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture and minister responsible for francophone affairs / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture et ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / York-Nord	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and minister responsible for aboriginal affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles et ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services (Disabilities) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires (Personnes handicapées)
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Peterson, Tim (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York / Beaches–York-Est	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Racco, Mario G. (L)	Thornhill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London–Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Rural Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Affaires rurales)
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House leader / leader parlementaire de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph–Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government Services / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Victoria–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Housing) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Logement)
Smith, Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Lanark–Carleton	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford	Second Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Tory, John (PC)	Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Agriculture and Food) / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Agriculture et Alimentation)
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Wilkinson, John (L)	Perth–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Deputy opposition House leader / leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wong, Tony C. (L)	Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Research and Innovation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général
Vacant	Nepean–Carleton	
Vacant	Toronto–Danforth	
Vacant	Whitby–Ajax	

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Ted McMeekin, Norm Miller, Jennifer F. Mossop,
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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Kuldip Kular, Jeff Leal, Rosario Marchese,
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal, Kathleen O.Wynne
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Kuldip Kular, Norm Miller, Richard Patten,
Michael Prue, Monique M. Smith,
Norman W. Sterling, Kathleen O.Wynne
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These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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