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Monday 1 March 2010

Lundi 1^{er} mars 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Monday 1 March 2010

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Lundi 1^{er} mars 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

**WEARING OF TEAM CANADA
HOCKEY JERSEY**

Mr. Paul Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Due to the wonderful results yesterday for our Canadian athletes, I ask unanimous consent to be able to wear the Team Canada jersey in the House today for our national women's and men's teams that won the gold medals.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to welcome some very special guests to the members' gallery who are visiting us today in honour of Epilepsy Awareness Month. Their delegation is led by Margaret Maye, of the Epilepsy Cure Initiative, who has been a tireless advocate around epilepsy. Also here championing this important cause are various branches of Epilepsy Ontario, including Toronto, York, Durham and Halton-Peel, and most importantly, Margaret's son Thomas and her spouse, Gary Neumann, are here with her today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of the member from Mississauga South to welcome members of the Probus Club of Mississauga South. There are 29 of them here at Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

JOE THORNTON AND JIM WAITE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think all members want to congratulate Canada for its fine showing at the Olympics, and we're especially proud of the Ontario representatives.

I just want to take this opportunity to recognize Joe Thornton, from my hometown of St. Thomas, for his efforts in winning the gold medal for men's hockey, and Jim Waite, also from St. Thomas, who is the coach of the Canadian curling team.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Acting Premier: What Dalton McGuinty says in his throne speeches simply cannot be trusted. On page 9 of the 2007 throne speech, Dalton McGuinty said that Ontario families will get the health care they need when they need it, but the number of Ontario patients you are sending to the United States for cancer and cardiac care has increased by a shocking 450%.

Acting Premier, why didn't you tell Ontario patients they would have to drive to the United States to get the care they need when they need it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Fewer Ontarians than ever have to do that because of the investments this government has made, investments that that member and his party voted against. Let me just remind him: We have funded 1.69 million new procedures, which have resulted in a 63% decrease in the angiography wait time, a 50% decrease in the wait time for angioplasty, a 67% decrease in the wait time for cataract surgery, a 56% decrease in the wait time for hip replacement, a 60% decrease in the wait time for knee replacement and a 48% reduction in the wait time for CT scans.

This government has more to do; I acknowledge that. We will continue to make the investments in health care that are vital to a vibrant and efficient system. I invite that member and his party to quit voting against them and tell us what they would do to improve them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: These are your own numbers: a startling 450% increase in the number of Ontario families going across the border for health care treatment.

On page 9 of your last throne speech, you said you would expand emergency rooms, but in fact, you've closed emergency rooms in communities like Fort Erie and Port Colborne, with more to come.

The number of Ontario families who have crossed the border for health treatment has grown so much that a new industry of Dalton McGuinty health brokers has been developed. If you don't want to wait in a line of 140,000 people for an MRI for 110 days, you can pay a Dalton McGuinty health broker \$700 to get an MRI in Michigan tonight, and chances are he'll take you right to the front door.

Acting Premier, it could have been stated in your throne speech under "Health" or "Economic Develop-

ment,” but why did your throne speech not mention that you are going to rely on Dalton McGuinty US health brokers?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government has increased funding for hospitals by 42%, but we acknowledge that there are enormous challenges. In their SCFEA report today, they talk about holding expenses to last year’s level. That speaks of a decrease to hospitals. That member and his party ought to tell us what their secret agenda is. When they say to cut expenditures, they’re talking about health care. They’re all over the map. One day they want to spend more, and the next day they want to cut more.

That member and his party have no plan; they have no idea how to get us back to balance, but they certainly have a record. They have a record of closing hospitals, of firing nurses, of insulting health care professionals, teachers and others. This government and its Premier have a plan; that party and that leader have no plan and no idea how to get back to balance. The people of Ontario know who they can trust: It’s Dalton McGuinty.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister is probably well aware that EcuMedical is a Dalton McGuinty US health broker in your own riding of Windsor. Companies like EcuMedical—these new McGuinty health brokers—have taken some 12,000 Ontario patients and families across the border into the United States because they can’t get the service in Dalton McGuinty’s Ontario.

While the LHINs are fattening up in the bureaucracy, 12,000 Ontario families have been forced to use Dalton McGuinty health brokers to seek service in the United States—up a startling 450% since these guys took office. Even the Ombudsman said, “It’s as if” the McGuinty Liberals “hand a dying cancer patient a Rubik’s cube and they’ve got to figure it out themselves. It’s a real cruel game.” Of course, they’re going to fire the Ombudsman.

If you can’t keep your promises in the 2007 throne speech, why should we believe a word that you’re going to say this coming Monday?

1040

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The people of Ontario know they can trust Dalton McGuinty with their health care system.

Laughter.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite laughs, but let’s take a trip down memory lane. Let’s go down memory lane and look at what he did to our province’s health care system. If we did what—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let’s look at the record. If we did what that member said, that is, hold the rate of spending in inflation in health care, we would have 10,000 fewer nurses. We don’t agree with you, Mr. Hudak. We don’t want 10,000 fewer nurses. It would mean 1,795 fewer doctors. We don’t agree with that member. We believe in investing in health care. This government, this

party, this leader have laid out a plan for health care that doesn’t involve closing hospitals like he did—39 of them. It doesn’t matter—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question—and I will remind members that we use the riding names.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, I can’t believe you said that people expect Dalton McGuinty to keep his word. Give me a break. What they can expect from Dalton McGuinty is for him to break his promises, to say one thing and to do another, and to promise not to increase taxes but then to hit Ontario families with two of the biggest tax increases in the history of the province, while running up the debt and sending some 450% more Ontario patients across the border to try to seek critical care. Clearly, what Dalton McGuinty says cannot be trusted.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Deputy Premier: On page 6 of your previous throne speech, you said you would support innovation and create high-paying jobs through a new \$165-million Ontario venture capital fund. Could you inform the House, in the last three years exactly how many entrepreneurs and start-up firms have actually received any cash from this fund?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have, through a variety of initiatives, invested not only in the forestry sector and the manufacturing sector, but in a variety of high-tech industries that are part of the growth industry.

There is no doubt that there have been challenges in the economy; we acknowledge that. Far too many jobs have been lost, as have been lost around the world.

This government has done things like investing in high-tech industry, like setting up Second Career, like making investments in our existing industries to keep them alive—

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Auto.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —the auto sector, which that member and his party voted against.

There’s no doubt that difficult choices have to be made. This leader, Premier McGuinty, has laid out a plan, and his government is implementing that. That leader, that party, have no plan, no idea how they’ll get us back to balance and no idea about how the future of this economy can grow. That’s why this party will continue to put forward the positive public policy initiatives that we have up until now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Hudak: No surprise the minister did not say one word about his failed Ontario venture capital fund. The answer to my question is, despite the announcement three years ago, they have announced a total of one single investment, and to date no money has flowed to that company, so you have not created a single job yet. However, Liberal insiders, Bay Street bankers and lawyers are collecting millions of dollars in commissions and fees for managing your failed fund. As of October 2008, some \$4

million had flowed to the bankers and lawyers, and not a single dime went to an entrepreneur or an innovator.

So I ask the Deputy Premier, were Liberal insiders, Bay Street backers and lawyers the jobs you were talking about in your throne speech?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Research and Innovation.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very pleased to correct the record of the Leader of the Opposition in terms of the Ontario venture capital fund. To date, the OVCF fund manager, Northleaf Capital, has publicly announced three funding commitments and made two direct investments totalling almost \$60 million. I'd like to share:

—up to \$15 million in Georgian Partners growth fund I. Georgian Partners is an Ontario-based venture capital firm investing in companies in the information technology, aggregation and enterprise software firms;

—up to \$20 million in EdgeStone Capital venture fund III. EdgeStone is an Ontario-based venture capital firm investing in early- and growth-stage Canadian information technology companies; and

—\$2 million to I Love Rewards, a direct company co-investment.

If the leader would like, I can also talk about the Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The only people benefiting from your failed venture capital fund are Liberal insiders, bankers and lawyers who have made millions of dollars in management fees from running your failed fund. You know, between 2000 and 2003, the Ontario PC government I was proud to be part of saw over \$7 billion of venture capital investment that helped to create hundreds of thousands of jobs for hard-working Ontario families in our province. Since Dalton McGuinty came into office, that has dried up completely—to the back of the pack in this entire country.

So I ask the Deputy Premier, when you made your throne speech promise, did you intend for Ontario entrepreneurs and innovators to still be searching for venture capital while only Liberal insiders on Bay Street got fat and rich on those insider funds?

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to talk about the emerging technology fund, which was set up with the support and the encouragement of those in the financial community. What it does is, it reaches out to venture capitalists and partners with them. We pre-approve them and they come forward with deals which we look at and partner with them.

I'd like to talk about Ecobee Inc., a Toronto-based company that helps homeowners conserve energy, save money and reduce their environmental impact with smart thermostats they can access from their home computers, smartphones or via any web browser. Ecobee is an award-winning company, and thanks to Ontario's emerging technologies fund they were able to raise \$6.73 million venture capital financing.

Bering Media Inc.: Their investment will help expand their engineering and marketing teams. Bering Media's technology allows online ads to be targeted geographically, right down to the neighbourhood level that doesn't compromise privacy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Across Ontario, people are seeing clinics closing, surgery cancelled and nurses laid off. The Queensway Carleton Hospital cancelled nine of their 14 surgeries last Friday. Their emergency room is backed up, and they are at 113% occupancy rate. What is the government plan to improve patient care at Queensway Carleton Hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite is talking about the things that hospitals are doing right across this province to get their spending under control. We have expanded hospital funding by 42% over the last six years. That kind of spending growth simply cannot continue. The hospitals are working as partners with government to look very closely at their budgets, to look at other opportunities in the health care system so that they can bring their spending under a reasonable rate of growth. But we are committed to maintaining the very highest quality of care for patients in this province. We publicly report on important indicators of quality for patients. We will continue to do that. As we move forward, we will work in partnership with hospitals and others in the health care sector to ensure the highest possible quality of care for patients.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The government announced 9,000 new nursing positions. Yet, in the latest in a slew of nursing cuts, late last week the Ottawa Hospital announced they are cutting 190 nursing positions. What does the minister think these cuts will do to occupancy rates, emergency room backup, cancelled surgeries and quality care in general in the hospitals in the Ottawa region?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the first question, we are working very closely with the hospitals through the LHINs, which have responsibility for the full spectrum of health care. It's critically important that we make the right investments to improve quality of care for patients.

We publicly report on several indicators of quality of care. We publicly report on how long it takes to get surgeries. We publicly report on infection rates. We're working very hard now to bring down the wait times in our emergency departments. Those to me are the indicators that are meaningful for the public. We can talk about how many dollars. We can talk about jobs. The issue is, are we delivering the highest possible quality of care to the public? The answer is yes.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France G elinas: The stories of long delays in emergency rooms, of occupancy overcrowding, of cancelled surgery, are being repeated in communities across this province.

Ontarians deserve better than this. They expect to see a solution from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care that can ensure access to quality care across the system, not the stopgap, politically motivated measures that we have seen.

When will the people of Ottawa and communities across the province see a plan from this government to maintain access and to stop the loss of health care services across this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I simply would urge the member opposite to look at the facts. We are bringing down wait times in emergency departments across the province. I would urge the member opposite, or the members of the public maybe, without having to go through that process, to go directly to the Ministry of Health website. You can check the hospital in your neighbourhood and you can track improvements in wait times over time.

We have gone from a system where we knew through anecdotal information that there were problems but we didn't actually have measures. We now measure, we publicly report and we are seeing improvements in those wait times. That is better health care for Ontarians.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. According to a survey released on Friday, half of Canadians over 50 years old are not confident they'll be able to retire comfortably, and two thirds say the current pension system is inadequate. Where is the McGuinty government Liberal plan for a secure retirement for every Ontarian?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have laid out a series of reforms on the administration of our pension system, which is an important first step. We have called for a national summit on pension reform, which will begin with the Council of the Federation meeting this summer. We have dealt with the first part of a pension reform bill, which will be an important part of defined benefit plans going forward. But I concur with those, and this government concurs with those who are concerned around the adequacy of savings. It's less about pensions and more about post-retirement income, because less than 30% of us have a pension here in Ontario.

These are important issues. They require a thorough provincial and national dialogue. Ontario has been leading that. We will continue to do that. As we do that, we will make the changes necessary to help ensure a better future for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The minister knows that two thirds of Ontario families do not have a workplace pension. That's four million people who will be robbed of the

security and dignity they deserve in the retirement years. That's simply not good enough.

The NDP has proposed an Ontario retirement plan to make sure all Ontarians who have worked hard their entire lives can retire with some dignity. When is this government going to stop defending a status quo that isn't working and take decisive action like implementing our Ontario retirement plan?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite will know that in my first answer, I did acknowledge that very few of us actually have a pension. I will say this—and I did congratulate the NDP on putting out a proposal. That proposal has challenges to it, as, by the way, do any proposals you're looking at. There is no silver bullet to fix this challenge. It involves a variety of policy initiatives at the federal and provincial level, and it's more about post-retirement income than it is about pensions, because the member is right: Less than 30% of us have a pension.

We will continue to amend the Pension Benefits Act. We will continue to work with our colleagues across the country as we explore ways of helping to ensure that the enormous progress we've made in the last 40 years on the pension front continues for the next 40 years. I concur with the member: It's an enormous challenge. It requires a thorough debate both here in Ontario and across Canada, and I can assure you the government of Ontario will continue to be at the front of that debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: This government talks a lot about bold action. Apparently that means arrogantly ramming through policies that nobody wants or are just administrative while staying quiet on the things that matter most to us. Our Ontario retirement plan would provide people with \$600 to \$700 per month; it has been reviewed by your experts—your own experts—who say it's solid and exactly what Ontario needs.

Will this government support our plan that will provide four million Ontarians with the security and dignity they deserve in their retirement years, or will they carry on showing no leadership and leave two out of three people without a plan?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, the experts have raised some legitimate concerns around the plan they put forward.

Again, there is no silver bullet to this. In the last year, for instance, the NDP government said there were five plans that were too big to fail 12 years ago. All five of them failed, and we spent our time trying to address those. We did that. They didn't support us in that.

I think Ontarians understand the complexity of this, and I think they understand the importance of getting this right. Our pension and post-retirement system has taken some 40 years to evolve. It involved changes from a range of governments across jurisdictions.

There's no doubt that there's more to do. There's no doubt we have difficult choices ahead. This government will continue to lead on that file, both here in Ontario and

across Canada, to ensure that our seniors have a better future.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also for the Acting Premier. Why did the total investment in Ontario venture capital funds fall from \$1.5 billion in 2000 to just \$88 million in 2008?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Research and Innovation.

Hon. John Milloy: I've been very proud of the leadership our government has taken in terms of access to venture capital due to the downturn to the economy; it has been one part of the investment equation. The government has come to the table with two major funds. One is the Ontario venture capital fund. It was launched in 2008 as a fund of funds whereby investors pool their capital, investments are made in a range of venture capital and other private equity funds, and these underlying funds, in turn, make investments in companies. We went out and partnered with the private sector in order to put together this fund of funds, and, as I shared with the Leader of the Opposition, right now we have publicly announced three fund commitments and made two direct investments totalling almost \$60 million.

I'm pleased to say that the fund manager is currently conducting due diligence on a number of potential investments—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The minister really has to start listening to these questions.

Things have gotten worse since 2008. Reports for the first three quarters of 2009 reveal that Ontario has fallen even further, to just \$29 million in investment for venture capital funds. Dalton McGuinty's initial plan to cancel Ontario PC tax credits is not the answer; it is hurting us. His next plan of reverse-Reagan investments and multi-billion dollar sweetheart deals with a foreign company isn't working either. Some \$29 million in total is proof that homegrown investors and homegrown companies have given up.

Why did you scrap an Ontario PC plan that worked for McGuinty Liberal plans that don't?

Hon. John Milloy: As Minister of Research and Innovation, I have the privilege to meet with the investment community on a regular basis, and I hear nothing but praise from the venture capital community and from the investment community in our province for the two funds we put together: the fund of funds and the emerging technologies fund.

Let me share with the honourable member a quote from the National Post, a paper he probably enjoys reading. Rick Segal, founder and CEO of Fixmo, had this to say: "Canada is the best place on the planet to start a business.... The government programs available to entrepreneurs in Canada are amazing, and give us a competitive advantage...." He was speaking about the type of

programming that has come forward: the Ontario emerging technologies fund and the Ontario venture capital fund, which right now, as I've shared, has announced a number of investments and is in the process of meeting with other potential investors as we move forward.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last week, the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal affirmed what we have known since your government took office: that our most vulnerable Ontarians still cannot put healthy food on their tables. The meagre special diet allowance has never supported an adequate, healthy diet for those who need it the most. It was made even worse after your so-called reforms. For example, people living with high blood pressure receive only one eighth the support they need for a healthy diet.

Will this minister confirm today that she intends to uphold the tribunal's ruling and give every needy citizen the resources they need to have a healthy diet, or do you intend to go off and appeal this too?

1100

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's a very good question, and thank you very much for asking this question. We have just received, yes, a decision from the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal with regard to the special diets. This issue is a complex issue, and, yes, the decision is about three special diet allowance test cases. We are reviewing this decision. It's a complex decision that could have a significant fiscal, policy and regulatory impact.

But something that I can say is this government has a priority to reduce poverty in Ontario. We have this strategy we are working on, and since we came to power, we gave an 11% increase in social assistance—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: It seems to me from the minister's words that she intends to reduce poverty on the backs of the poor. I am speaking on behalf of tens of thousands of Ontarians with health problems which can be managed by eating healthy foods on a daily basis. Each and every day they need to eat healthily. A small investment is what it will take to ensure that people won't become sicker while they depend on the very government that should be assisting them, not standing in their way. This is a no-brainer.

Will this government commit today to obey the ruling and help those people manage their health conditions by providing an adequate special diet allowance, or are you going to appeal it again?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Fighting poverty is a priority for this government. I just want to remind the member of the opposite party that when we came into power, the budget for a special diet was around \$6 million; today it's over \$200 million.

We have received good advice from the Auditor General. We've received good advice about a special diet.

We put forward a team to review it. We are going to review the decision and will make a decision later on if we are appealing it or not.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Labour. In my riding of York South–Weston, we have residents who work in the construction sector, on factory lines, others in retail and many responsible for administrative duties in offices. They are a vital part of Ontario's professional workforce and make a significant contribution to our province. Workers in many of these jobs are at risk of and develop repetitive strain injuries which happen because of the constant use and strain on the same body parts. These types of injuries may not be life-threatening, but they can be very painful and certainly do have a significant impact on a person's quality of life. Yesterday, February 28, marked the 11th annual International Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day.

Minister, can you please tell us what is being done to curb these types of injuries?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member, and I want to thank her for her advocacy on behalf of her constituents. I am so pleased to announce in this House that we've added yet another resource to our arsenal in our fight against musculoskeletal disorders. The Ministry of Labour has launched a new interactive tool on our website on our Pains and Strains in the Workplace page. The tool features a musculoskeletal figure, and with a click on the various body parts of that figure, you can get information on the common types of MSDs and how to avoid them.

The member is right that these injuries can cause a tremendous amount of pain and suffering for workers afflicted by MSDs. However, with the use of this tool and with precautions and by taking preventive measures, many of these—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Minister. These types of injuries often start as minor injuries, but they can quickly turn into something more serious. They are taking a tremendous human and financial toll on our workforce, and this is evident in the statistics. In 2008, 33,000 workers were affected, and 43% of all lost-time injuries involved these types of injuries. In Ontario it cost the economy more than \$2 billion between 2003 and 2008. Can the minister please tell us what kinds of tools and resources his ministry has made available to employers and employees to help prevent these injuries?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again I thank the member for the question on MSD, musculoskeletal disorder. This tool that we have will help those workers to avoid MSDs. As well, we have an enforcement blitz that will be launched in the province to attack MSDs. This is part of our Safe at Work Ontario strategy, which focuses on enforcement, on compliance and on partnership.

Our government is committed to ensuring that workers in this province are protected from injuries and major health hazards while on the job, and we continue to work closely with our health and safety partners, with employers and workers, to prevent MSDs and other injuries in the workplace. Ontario is one of the safest places in the world to work; we want to keep it that way.

I thank the member for the question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Acting Premier. I listened to the first NDP question about the Queensway Carleton Hospital and the Ottawa Hospital and I was completely and utterly dissatisfied with the answer given by the Minister of Health. I want to know, on behalf of my residents, what Dalton McGuinty is going to do to recover the \$1 billion wasted in the eHealth boondoggle so that it can be redirected to the Ottawa Hospital and the Queensway Carleton Hospital.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I actually welcome the question from this member because it gives me an opportunity to ask them to set the record straight. I have a press release here from the party opposite saying that they are going to freeze spending, that their plan is to freeze spending across the province. This is recent, by the way; this is from just a month ago. Earlier, we've heard that they want to cut spending on health care; now we're hearing that they want to increase spending. So I'm confused about the Tory math on this one. Is it a cut, is it a freeze or is it a spend?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Her answer is a joke and it is an insult to the people of Ottawa West–Nepean, Nepean–Carleton and the entire city of Ottawa.

I can tell you something: Beth Graham, our candidate, wrote earlier today to Dalton McGuinty asking him to use every tool at his disposal, every tool in the Premier's office, to recover the money that your party wasted on eHealth. I realize this means that you're going to have to ask some very tough and uncomfortable questions of George Smitherman, Karli Farrow and John Ronson, who are part of your Liberal family, but the reality is that the money handed out in sweetheart deals at eHealth came at a cost to Ontario families, Ottawa families, the Ottawa Hospital and Queensway Carleton Hospital.

My hospitals are seeing cuts to nurses. They have seen cancellations in their surgeries. So I want to know from you, Minister, if you have the guts to stand up and tell us that you will go out to the Liberal family and get that money for Ontario families.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, I certainly give the member opposite an A-plus for bluster.

This is a debate that we want to have in this province. We are working with the hospitals. We are working with the LHINs and the broader health care sector on a plan to bring hospital spending to a sustainable level. We are working hard and achieving that.

When it comes to the Ottawa Hospital, the member opposite might be interested to know that there are actually 30 nursing jobs online today at the Ottawa Hospital. We are continuing to improve health care. We have had this debate.

I would like the member opposite perhaps to explain this: This morning on CBC Radio in Ottawa there was a debate on health care. The Liberal candidate, Bob Chiarelli, was there; the NDP candidate was there. The Conservative candidate wasn't able to get there to have this debate that we need to have in this province.

1110

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Midland area residents have been fighting to stop the construction of a dump on site 41. Experts from across Canada have shown that the dump threatens a world-renowned watershed. Simcoe council has halted construction, but the possibility lives on that this dump will open because the certificate of approval has not been revoked.

Why won't the minister act once and for all and protect the Georgian Bay watershed by revoking the outdated certificate of approval?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I thank the member for the question because it gives us once again an opportunity to state unequivocally that if the county of Simcoe were to ask us to basically revoke that certificate, we would do that. But they've applied for a certificate that we looked at at the time and over the last 20 years, and we feel that site 41, from a scientific viewpoint, is an appropriate site. However, if they—Simcoe county—don't want to go ahead with it, it's entirely up to them. It's basically a local decision. They're the people who applied for the certificate and we approved the certificate using the best scientific information that's available. If they now want us to revoke that certificate, all they have to do is write us a letter asking for the revocation of that certificate, and we will comply with that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Frankly, the site is not appropriate, and if this minister was exercising his responsibilities he would withdraw that certificate of approval.

There is a private member's bill, Bill 32, which calls for the withdrawal of the certificate of approval; it passed second reading. But just as the Liberal Peterson cabinet undermined democratic process by overturning the Environmental Review Tribunal's decision against the dump, the McGuinty government is killing the debate on dump 41 by proroguing the House and ending the discussion of Bill 32.

Why won't the government allow continued debate on Bill 32 and the future of dump site 41 by passing a motion to bring Bill 32 forward to the next session of the Legislature? Give us that answer.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Look, it is up to Simcoe county to basically decide as to what they want to do

there. All we can do is look at all of the available science that has been made there over the last number years. If Simcoe council were to ask us for a revocation of that certificate, we would do so. Within the Ministry of the Environment, we're only concerned about three things: number one, to have the cleanest air possible in the province of Ontario; to have the cleanest water possible in the province of Ontario; and to have the cleanest land possible. We are working on it on a day-to-day basis and we will continue to do so because environmental protection for the health and safety of Ontarians is paramount. We will continue to do that as time goes along.

GREENBELT

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This past Sunday marked the fifth anniversary of the greenbelt, which protects 1.8 million acres of land set aside by our government. This is truly something to celebrate. On behalf of all greenbelt advocates and supporters, I rise today to express how pleased we are with the progress made so far in conserving Ontario's natural capital.

In my riding of Ajax-Pickering, residents enjoy the recreational and aesthetic beauty of the greenbelt, along with local fresh fruits provided by the greenbelt farmers.

Minister, the population in Ontario, especially in the greater Golden Horseshoe, is growing steadily, with four million new residents expected over the next two decades. As you know, the Greenbelt Act was created to work in unison with Places to Grow. Minister, can you explain what effect these two acts will have on the urban environment in the province of Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thank the member very much for asking the question. The member for Ajax-Pickering is very knowledgeable in this matter. I want to say that at the time before the greenbelt was brought into effect, we had acres upon acres of prime farmland and environmentally sensitive areas being gobbled up through development. Because of the vision that the Premier of this province had that was put into effect through two pieces of legislation, the greenbelt legislation and Places to Grow, the growth is managed in a much better way so that environmentally sensitive areas and, of course, agricultural land that was being paved over, are now protected throughout the greenbelt. I know our many friends in the House who are from agriculture know how valuable that is. This legislation allowed us to protect that, and it's renowned around the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Minister, it is clear that the hard work of your ministry has paid off and that residents of the greater Golden Horseshoe have been provided with a smart approach to managing growth and preserving our farmlands and natural heritage in this province that we call home. Greenbelt expansion is another sign of the government's commitment, one which I welcome warmly.

I understand a study is being released today by the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy comparing greenbelts worldwide. This study shows that Ontario's greenbelt ranks first for overall legal protection. This award reinforces that the present formula that this government is using has been working, but we need to look forward together and have a protective approach to improving the greenbelt for our children, the future of Ontario.

Minister, can you explain the next steps for the greenbelt?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, I want to say that the institute, I note, says our greenbelt legislation is the strongest in the world for supporting laws and policies.

But I want to say to the member that my ministry, along with our partner ministries, are pleased to assist municipalities in considering growing the greenbelt. We won't act alone; any request to amend the greenbelt plan will be carefully considered with input from municipalities, the public, the Greenbelt Council and aboriginal communities. And there is, clearly, interest at the municipal level in growing the greenbelt.

Only last Friday I had the opportunity, along with the mayor of Toronto, to announce that Toronto is proposing to add public lands—the Don and Humber River Valleys—to the greenbelt. This is a fitting way to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the greenbelt.

I understand that Halton regional council will soon be considering whether they wish to propose adding lands in the area of the greenbelt. Municipalities are clearly jumping on board, and because—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Education. Your government says that it's important to be transparent and accountable; however, last year, 2009, I tabled 10 order paper questions to your ministry, and I've not received any responses yet. Now, with the House proroguing this Thursday, these questions, which seek information on topics such as bullying and special education needs, could go unanswered.

Minister, can you assure me that these 10 questions will be answered before the House prorogues on Thursday?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to have the opportunity to say to the honourable member that we do take order paper questions very seriously.

The honourable member has talked about the importance of transparency; I also think it's important that we are accurate. So what I can say to the honourable member is that we are working on those, and we are going to do everything that we can to get the answers and make sure that we have all of the information that we need to provide the most accurate information to the member.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, again through you to the minister: That doesn't provide much comfort to the people in the province of Ontario, because they're starting to take a look at this government and seeing that, in reality, they're only paying lip service to transparency and accountability. In fact, last week, we saw one of the ministers trivialize the whole issue of transparency.

Minister, it has now been 90 days and the questions remain unanswered. They are important. They relate to bullying and special education needs, to name but a few. Will you provide answers by Thursday, before the House prorogues? Or else, as you know, they will be lost.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I agree that we want to ensure that the people of Ontario have the very best, most accurate information available to them. And I have committed to the honourable member and to this Legislature that when we have that information, we will make it available.

Now, with respect to the procedural issue of prorogation, because we are proroguing on Thursday—

Hon. James J. Bradley: And coming back Monday.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:—and because we are coming back the next Monday, if those questions are lost on the paper, next week, the member can pose those questions again.

I commit that we will bring the same commitment to being accurate and accountable to the people of this province that we are bringing right now, today. That is what I'm able to say. We are working very hard to get the best answers for the honourable member. I've been on that side of the House; I know how important these questions—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1120

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Acting Premier. Premier, we learned last Friday that your government, with some \$81 million of assistance, helped to save some 700 jobs in Essex at the Ford plant.

You will know that Xstrata has announced that 700 people are to lose their jobs in Timmins. When can we expect similar help?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government has made a range of investments over a number of programs. The program that the Ford money came out of was announced some years ago. A number of operations around the province have come to take advantage of assistance from this government, including many in the north.

The situation in Timmins is very difficult; I understand that. It is one that requires a full range of responses across governments, federally and provincially. The Premier spoke last week about the need to have a whole northern package in the upcoming budget and our desire to work with the north, not just in this particular circumstance, but in a range of circumstances that we find particularly challenging.

To the member opposite, and to the people of Timmins, we will continue to work with that community as we work through this difficult time. There are a range of things—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Acting Premier, the situation in Timmins is this: Xstrata is making money with the refinery smelter. They're not losing money. The reason that they're picking up and moving and consolidating to one operation is because you're allowing them to do it.

The people of northern Ontario are not asking for a large handout. What we want is your government to be engaged with us in discussions with Xstrata to put the pressure on them that needs to be put for them to keep that plant open. Should it shut, it's 700 direct jobs in the city of Timmins and region and probably 3,000 jobs overall, not to mention the loss of energy sold to that place as the largest customer for Ontario Hydro, as well as what it means to the revenue of the province of Ontario.

So I say again, are you prepared to engage in discussions with Xstrata so they don't shut this place down come May 14?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our government has been very active in those discussions with the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. This is a challenging circumstance. We will continue to work with the community. I remind the member opposite that we're now building the new Matagami waste water treatment plant, a \$20-million investment; the Barbers Bay bridge, another \$1.9 million; and a variety of school capital projects.

The challenges are real. I don't want to underestimate the importance of them. We will continue to work with the north, and we'll have more to say about these issues in the coming days. We look forward to continuing to build a stronger northern economy for all Ontarians.

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East is a quickly growing group of vibrant communities. In fact, Pickering was identified as one of two urban growth centres in Durham region under the government's growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe.

My constituents rely on a variety of forms of travel to get to where they need to go. They use our network of roads and public transit to get to work, school and doctor's appointments or to visit family and friends, whether it's in Durham, the city of Toronto or other parts of the GTA.

Can the minister tell us what the government is doing to improve transit so my constituents and people across the region can get to where they need to go in the GTA as efficiently as possible?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member from Pickering–Scarborough East for the question. I think, in

this House and beyond, we can all recognize that this is a critically important time to develop the next era of transportation in our most populous region in Ontario. That's why we've committed over \$7.3 billion for transit, highway infrastructure, municipal roads and bridges and other municipal capital projects in the GTA, including the cities of Toronto and Hamilton and the regions of Halton, Peel, York and Durham.

We're also looking at the bigger picture in terms of developing the transportation network that the member spoke about. That's why we've committed \$11.5 billion to the Move Ontario 2020 plan, which forms the foundation investment for transit projects identified by the Metrolinx regional transportation plan in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas. Last year, in fact, the Premier announced that we're moving ahead with \$9 billion for priority transit projects identified in the Metrolinx plan, including the Scarborough rapid transit line.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thank you, Minister, for that particular response. I'm pleased to hear of the work the government and Metrolinx are doing to strengthen public transit in the region, particularly the Scarborough line, of importance to my constituents in Scarborough. I know many of my constituents rely on transit to get to downtown Toronto and other parts of the GTA for work each and every day. In fact, the GO train is becoming an increasingly popular option for riders in my communities. They can avoid sitting in gridlock and help the environment by reducing emissions.

As the GO train becomes an increasingly popular option for commuters, would the minister tell us what the government and GO Transit are planning in regard to the pressures for more riders on the network's trains?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We know it's very important that GO make smart investments as ridership increases. In January 2009, GO added a new weekday east-bound train trip, operating an express from Union Station to Pickering GO station and making all the regular stops to Oshawa GO station. That means 1,400 more people will be riding public transit instead of driving their cars.

But beyond just the trains, there's also a need for those parking spaces so that people can get to the hub and then get on public transit. GO is working on expanding parking spaces at GO stations so we have enough spaces to accommodate all those new travellers. Last year, we made a \$500-million commitment with the federal government for GO Transit revitalization, and with this funding GO was able to add 4,950 new parking spaces at stations like Aurora, Maple, Bronte, Rouge Hill and Unionville. Most recently, GO announced the opening of a four-level parking lot at the Whitby GO station. So—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Dalton McGuinty's throne speech promises simply can't be trusted. The first

point in your five-point economic plan from 2007 promised to invest in education and skills. You did this by investing in your program called Second Career. However, graduates in my riding, and I'm sure across Ontario, can't find jobs. What they are finding is an increased number of graduates competing for a limited number of jobs.

Minister, what percentage of students who enrol in the Second Career program have found jobs in the fields in which they have been trained?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to report to the House, notwithstanding the calls from the honourable member's party to scrap the program, that since its introduction we have welcomed over 26,000 people to Second Career.

The honourable member raises a very important point as to what's happening to people who are in the Second Career program following the completion of their training. I would point out to the honourable member that, as members are familiar with from questions and discussion here in the Legislature, the great bulk of the people who entered Second Career happened last fall, which means that the vast majority of Second Career students are currently pursuing their training opportunities. We are working very, very closely as a ministry to follow these students through their courses, and I'll be able to report to the House as they begin to graduate as to their—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's great that you've trained 26,000, Minister, but how many have found jobs? That's the question.

What are the graduates saying? I'm going to read a letter from one of my constituents, and I quote: "Since many of us were partially funded through this retraining, more monitoring should be done to make sure students have a chance to work in the field they studied in."

You said you have a plan. Ontarians enrolled in retraining should have some expectations of finding a job. Students need the best information and advice before they choose a career, along with help to enter the workforce. Minister, is it your plan that needs fixing, or how you have executed the plan?

Hon. John Milloy: Once again, I'm very proud that, despite the calls by the honourable member's party for the plan to be scrapped, we proceeded.

One of the key aspects of Second Career is that we make people go through a rather rigorous application process in which they must identify where there are potential job openings in their community and match them up with the training programs that they wish to pursue.

1130

As I say, it's still a little bit early in the game to come forward with statistics, but let me tell the honourable member about Barbara, a 46-year-old mother of two who was laid off from her job at a call centre. She began her studies in December at a private business college, in an office administration professional diploma program. Barbara is employed now at a local chiropractic centre. She is thrilled to be employed and said Second Career was "an opportunity of a lifetime." Let me tell him about

Robert, a 45-year-old London area general labourer. He was laid off from a job he had with a painting company in London. Through Second Career—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A question to the Minister of Finance: Some of the lowest-paid workers at the Woodbine Racetrack have been locked out and told to stay home. The company made an offer on Saturday at about 1:30 a.m., said it was the final offer, and then told the workers that if they didn't accept immediately, they would be locked out at 6 a.m.

Minister, provincially owned OLG is responsible for racing and gaming operations in Ontario. Will the minister get on the phone immediately with the Woodbine Entertainment Group and tell them that this kind of bullying has no place in industrial relations in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I understand that a final offer vote is being conducted today, so it would be inappropriate for any of us to make any comment about that vote. Let's allow that vote to take place, which is happening today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, most of these locked-out employees earn about \$15 an hour or less, and some of them have been there for 25 years. Almost all of these employees work in the kitchen or as servers.

Woodbine recently got approval for 1,000 new slot machines and was very generous with your party, making the maximum donation in the two current by-elections.

Will the minister ask Woodbine Entertainment Group, who clearly like you, to stop bullying these loyal workers and make amends to them by paying their wages for the time they have been locked out?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: As I mentioned in the first question, there is a vote being conducted today, and it would be inappropriate for me to make comment on those proceedings. What I can say is that our mediators have been there assisting the parties all along, and they will continue to do so. We all know that a collective agreement, one reached by the parties, is the most stable, most productive agreement that we can have. We will continue to assist those parties with our mediation team at the Ministry of Labour.

But again, today there is a final offer vote that is being conducted. We will allow that to take place, and I can't comment further.

CONDOMINIUM RESERVE FUNDS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Consumer Services. Minister, in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South there are many condominium buildings. As such, my office receives inquiries from condo owners on various issues.

As you may know, condo buildings set aside a reserve fund that is used to pay for major repairs and replacements in the building. The Condominium Act, 1998, introduced a 10-year deadline for condominiums Registered before May 2001 to meet a reserve fund requirement. As the deadline approaches, some buildings have not been able to meet their reserve fund requirements. Minister, what can we offer condos that will not be able to meet the deadline?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Brampton South for her continued advocacy when it comes to condominiums.

I am delighted to tell the member and also the House that our government is giving condo corporations and owners more breathing room when it comes to the reserve fund requirements. This means that condominium corporations registered before 2001 will have an additional five years to ensure that their reserve funds are adequately funded. We're working with our sector partners. The government has determined that it will extend the reserve fund from the deadline of 10 years to 15 years, and this change will come into effect on July 1, 2010.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm glad to hear that the ministry is providing an extension to condominium boards to meet their reserve fund needs. In the context of the current economic climate, many sectors have been unable to reach their financial goals. Giving the boards an extension will allow them to adjust their strategies to raise the funds and meet their reserve fund requirements.

Can the minister tell this House what the extension means for condo owners, many of whom may fear that there will be an increase in the maintenance fees to meet the reserve fund requirement within the new deadline?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thanks again to the member. This is really a significant step to respond to the needs of condominium boards. It will give them increased budget flexibility while protecting the essential rights of consumers. That's what this ministry is all about.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to recognize Wojciech Dzięgiel, the vice-consul for the Republic of Poland, and his wife, Agnieszka, who are visiting us here today in the Ontario Legislature. Welcome.

Also, today there's a celebration occurring here at the Legislature for epilepsy awareness. I will be making a statement on that. I'd like to welcome Margaret Maye and Gary Neumann, who are here with us in the Legislature, as well as Mary Secco from London and Dianne McKenzie from my riding of Durham. Welcome. I'd encourage all members to attend the education and awareness session they're having in room 228.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BECKY KELLAR

Mr. Toby Barrett: Congratulations to our Canadian Olympians. From Alexandre Bilodeau's gold medal at the outset to the overtime period between Canada and the US, we have so much to feel good about—and of course, the third straight Olympic gold medal win for our women's hockey team. Haldimand–Norfolk is especially proud, as Hagersville native Becky Kellar is the senior veteran on the team and is a member of the three-peat Canadian club as one of a handful of players who have represented Canada at all four Olympics since women's hockey debuted in 1998.

Kellar was just fresh out of university when Canada lost to the US 3-1 in the gold medal game in Nagano. Four years later, on the Americans' home soil in Salt Lake City, Kellar was instrumental in the 3-2 gold medal win. In Turin, Kellar and her teammates celebrated a 4-1 win over Sweden to win their second straight Olympic gold medal in 2006.

Recently, it was touching to see Becky's children join her on the ice after the game. Sadly for Kellar fans, this will be her last Olympics.

Congratulations to Becky Kellar. I look forward to seeing those players she has inspired fill her skates on Olympic ice someday.

Thank you to all the athletes for helping us believe in the Olympic spirit once again.

FRYDERYK CHOPIN

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm reading this statement on behalf of my colleague Cheri DiNovo from Parkdale–High Park. I want to welcome the vice-consul of Poland, Mr. Dzięgiel, and many other members of the Polish community as I read this statement.

On March 1, 1810, the great composer Fryderyk Chopin was born to a Polish mother and a French father. Chopin was a child prodigy by the time he was six. Born near Warsaw, Chopin was inspired by Poland's lore and folk tunes. He lived in Poland until he was 19, when he was forced to flee after the failed uprising of 1830 against the Russian occupiers. Having settled in France, he soon became famous all over Europe as a distinguished composer, piano virtuoso and leading representative of the music of the Romantic period.

Chopin's music is rare, unique and tinged with a remarkable sense of beauty. He was an innovator whose work influenced composers of the French, German and Russian schools, and stimulated radical changes of the 20th-century sound language. He is a legend whose music enjoys universal appeal.

The great Polish poet Cyprian Kamil Norwid describes Chopin as "Warsawer by birth, Pole by heart and world citizen by his talent."

In recognition of Chopin's 200th birthday, Poland's Parliament has formally declared 2010 to be the year of

Fryderyk Chopin. Chopin's birth is also being celebrated all over the world. Here in Canada, we celebrate his immortal music. The Canadian Chopin Festival 2010 continues at Jean Paul II Polish Cultural Centre, in Mississauga, Ontario, until March 7.

It's with great honour that we remember the legacy of Polish composer Fryderyk Chopin. Happy birthday, Mr. Chopin.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Ontario produces more cars than any other state or province in North America. In fact, we're a world leader, and our government is working with our auto industry partners to keep this a strong sector.

Approximately 400,000 Ontarians are employed in the auto industry. Now we can add 757 more to that number. Our government is supporting the next phase of the transformation of the Ford Essex engine plant in Windsor, which is expected to create and retain up to 757 new jobs over the next five years.

The province will contribute up to \$81.2 million towards the project, building on a \$17-million provincial investment announced in March 2008. That helped reopen the plant. Ford plans to invest up to \$736.4 million. That's almost a billion dollars right here in Ontario.

Our investment has allowed this plant to stay open and provide more jobs for Ontarians. We will continue to work with our auto sector partners to create jobs and protect the livelihoods of Ontarians working in this industry.

We know that we need to be part of a solution to help the Ontario auto industry through these difficult economic times. These 750 jobs are proof that our strategy is working.

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. Norm Miller: On October 22, 2009, the McGuinty government announced its record-shattering \$24.7-billion deficit, larger than the deficits of every other provincial and territorial government combined. Every hour, 24 hours a day, the McGuinty government spends \$2.8 million more than it receives in revenue. At this current rate of spending, Dalton McGuinty is on course to double Ontario's debt by 2012-13.

For seven days, more than 140 groups made presentations to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Dozens more made written submissions. The issue of deficit and debt reduction was a common theme among presenters at the pre-budget consultations this year. These groups included the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario, Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Warren Jestin of Scotiabank, and Canadian Independent Federation of Business, among others.

Gerry Macartney, CEO of the London Chamber of Commerce, commented, "Our members are chiefly concerned about the size of the debt, the size of the

deficit and the lack of an articulated plan to eliminate that deficit."

A significant number of presenters commented on the broad themes of deficit reduction through strategic spending, job creation and economic growth via sound tax policies and thwarting excessive red tape and regulation.

The time has come for Dalton McGuinty to heed this advice and take action to implement meaningful policy changes that will propel Ontario from worst to first.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Glen R. Murray: Our government has made significant strides in health care over the past six years. One of our key priorities is investing in our hospitals. Since 2003, we've increased hospital funding by 42%, raising it to \$15.5 billion a year. We've also invested in reducing wait times in key surgeries. For example, the wait times for cancer surgeries have dropped by 17 days.

We know how important it is that Ontarians have access to primary care in their communities. That's why, for the first time in 40 years, throughout Canada we've opened a new medical school in northern Ontario. We've also increased medical school spaces and created family health teams to provide more complete local health care. As a result of those measures, almost 900,000 more Ontarians now have access to a family doctor. On top of that, we've hired 10,000 nurses and we're moving forward with nurse practitioner clinics to provide more points of access for quality care.

It is clear that our government has strengthened our public health care system considerably over the past six years. We've come a long way, and we're committed to making even more progress in the future.

1310

EPILEPSY AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. John O'Toole: First of all, I seek unanimous consent from all members to wear a purple ribbon with respect to the epilepsy purple ribbon campaign.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

March is Epilepsy Awareness Month. I would like to remind the House again of the epilepsy information session being held today in room 228 until 6 p.m.

Up to two in 100 students in Ontario have epilepsy and other neurological disorders. In Ontario alone there are 120,000 people with epilepsy. That's more than the number of people with multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, Parkinson's disease and muscular dystrophy combined.

Living with epilepsy brings many challenges. We hope you will join us on Purple Day, March 26, in showing your support by wearing something purple.

Dianne McKenzie, executive director of Epilepsy Durham, urges the House to learn more about how we can provide a more accommodating environment that gives people with epilepsy encouragement and hope.

Dianne also informs me that Durham region receives no core funding from the province or from the United Way. I would ask the House to lend its support so that individuals in your community living with epilepsy know that they are not alone or ignored.

In a special way, I ask the Minister of Community and Social Services to ensure that those with epilepsy are not ignored when they're applying for ODSP. Try to support persons with special needs in your community, whoever they are. This is Epilepsy Awareness Month. Work with us, please.

TAXATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: Our government has introduced a tax reform package that does three important things for our province.

First of all, it cuts taxes for Ontarians. For example, 93% of Ontarians will receive a tax cut and 90,000 low-income earners will be removed from the tax rolls altogether. In addition to that, Ontarians will receive sales tax credits and property tax credits, and we have enhanced the Ontario senior homeowners' property tax grant.

Secondly, this tax package cuts taxes for businesses, reducing the corporate income tax rate and the small business rate and eliminating the capital tax. These reforms will make Ontario businesses stronger and more competitive.

Thirdly, these tax reforms will create almost 600,000 new jobs over the next 10 years. Ultimately, more jobs and strong businesses mean that we're able to support vital services, such as hospitals and schools, that we all rely on and that improve the quality of life for the people in our province.

These tax reforms are the foundation we need for a more prosperous Ontario and a brighter future for our children. Now is exactly the right time for a modern tax system that benefits Ontarians and businesses alike.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Challenging economic times require governments to act. That's what our government is doing when it comes to creating jobs for Ontario citizens.

We're investing \$34 billion over the next two years that's going to stimulate economic growth and help Ontario families. That includes an investment of \$32.5 billion for the infrastructure we know is really needed, such as roads, public transit, energy and the retrofit for our public schools. That investment is expected to create and support more than 300,000 jobs for Ontarians.

On top of that, we're helping over 26,000 unemployed Ontarians to go back to school to train for a second career. This program prepares these workers to get back into the workforce.

Our green energy program is going to create 50,000 new Ontario jobs, producing clean energy like wind

turbines and solar panels. Clean energy is an important economic opportunity for our province, and that's going to continue to grow and grow in the years to come.

These are just a few examples of how this government continues to move forward with a strong plan that helps families and businesses affected by the global economic crisis. We're taking action to make sure that Ontario is stronger, more competitive and has a prosperous future. We know that Ontarians support us as we continue to move forward in this regard. On the heels of the great news about the GDP in the last quarter of last year, I think this is exactly the strategy that this province needs.

EPILEPSY AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Helena Jaczek: As we've already heard, today is epilepsy awareness day in Queen's Park, and March is in fact Epilepsy Awareness Month in Canada.

Many people mistakenly believe epilepsy is a disease or a psychological disorder. In fact, epilepsy is a neurological disorder. It causes seizures as a result of sudden bursts of electrical energy in the brain. In about 60% to 75% of cases there is no known cause of why people develop this disorder. It is estimated that between 120,000 and 245,000 people in Ontario live with a seizure disorder, and while there are treatments, there is no known cure.

What can help is raising awareness about epilepsy and the needs of those who live with it. This month, and especially on international epilepsy awareness day on March 26, I hope that all of the members of this Legislature will join that effort and wear a purple ribbon to help raise awareness.

I would like to thank all of the hard-working, dedicated and caring volunteers, advocates and medical professionals who work with Ontarians who suffer from epilepsy. I applaud their efforts and encourage anyone wanting more information on epilepsy to visit the website of Epilepsy Ontario.

PETITIONS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to read my petition from constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is conducting a review of the province's underserviced area program," often referred to as UAP, "that may result in numerous communities across rural and small-town Ontario losing financial incentives to recruit and retain much-needed doctors; and

"Whereas financial incentives to attract and keep doctors are essential to providing quality front-line health care services, particularly in small communities; and

"Whereas people across Ontario have been forced to pay Dalton McGuinty's now-forgotten health tax since

2004, expecting health care services to be improved rather than cut; and

“Whereas taxpayers deserve good value for their hard-earned money that goes into health care, unlike the wasteful and abusive spending under the McGuinty Liberals’ watch at eHealth Ontario;

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

“That the McGuinty government not reduce or eliminate financial incentives rural communities and small towns need” to attract and retain much-needed doctors.

I’m pleased to sign and support this in support of my community in Durham.

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has taken an important step in its decision to implement full-day kindergarten; and

“Whereas children between the ages of six and 12 years continue to suffer from a lack of accessible, quality programs; and

“Whereas unlike youth and children in their early years, more than one million children six to 12 years old across Ontario are being left behind because of a lack of dedicated funding for accessible, quality middle childhood programs; and

“Whereas failure to increase middle childhood programming threatens a child’s safety, education, and social development as they prepare to face the challenges of the approaching teen years; and

“Whereas implementing effective middle childhood programs increases self-esteem, improves school performance, and enhances quality of life for both children and their families; and

“Whereas Charles Pascal, in his 2009 report *With Our Best Future in Mind*, provides a framework and strategy for implementing a provincial structure for middle childhood programs across Ontario; and

“Whereas investing in middle childhood programs is part of Ontario’s economic stimulus strategy;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest now in children six to 12 years old across Ontario and implement the recommendations made in the *With Our Best Future in Mind* report.”

I’m in agreement and would sign my signature thereto and send it down with page Max.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I’ve got a petition signed by some residents from east Oakville that says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario ... has selected a location for a gas-fired electrical generating power station within three kilometres of 16 schools and more than 11,000 homes; and

“Whereas the Oakville-Clarkson airshed is already one of the most polluted in Canada; and

“Whereas no independent environmental assessment has been completed for this proposed building location; and

“Whereas Ontario has experienced a significant reduction in demand for electrical power; and

“Whereas a recent accident at a power plant in Connecticut demonstrated the dangers that nearby residents face;

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“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to immediately rescind the existing plan to build a power plant at or near the current planned location on lands owned by the Ford Motor Co. on Royal Windsor Drive in Oakville and initiate a complete review of area power needs and potential building sites, including environmental assessments and a realistic assessment of required danger zone buffer areas.”

I agree with this and will sign it.

TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn’t raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario’s history; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas at the pumps; home heating oil and electricity; postage stamps; haircuts; dry cleaning; home renovations; real estate transactions; veterinary care; and arena ice and soccer field rentals;

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

“That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario’s current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

I affix my name in full support.

CLAYTON BROWN PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a petition here signed by a number of parents and various citizens from the town of Hearst, and it reads as follows:

“English-language residents and students are in a minority in Hearst;

“Clayton Brown Public School is currently one of the last remaining institutions in the community where English culture and language is predominant;

“Elementary students at this school have the opportunity to benefit from the atmosphere and secondary students should be provided the same benefit; and

“The conversion of Clayton Brown Public School to a JK-to-12 would provide secondary students with an opportunity to enjoy the climate, as well as providing them with the chance to learn in an environment where administrative control of the buildings lies with their own principal;

“This would guarantee their organization’s decision would be made with their best interests at heart.”

I sign the petition and submit it to my friend Christopher.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It has been signed by a number of people in my riding. I especially want to recognize Bart Wassmansdorf and Prakash Bansod of Meadowvale, wish a happy 70th birthday to Hans Hoeppler of Lisgar and thank them all for signing the petition. It reads as follows:

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could better be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

I’m very pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Brady to carry it for me.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the province of Ontario, through the Ontario Energy Board, has selected a location for a gas-fired electrical generating power station within three kilometres of 16 schools and more than 11,000 homes; and

“Whereas the Oakville-Clarkson airshed is already one of the most polluted in Canada; and

“Whereas no independent environmental assessment has been completed for this proposed building location; and

“Whereas Ontario has experienced a significant reduction in demand for electrical power; and

“Whereas a recent accident at a power plant in Connecticut demonstrated the dangers that nearby residents face;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to immediately rescind the existing plan to build a power plant at or near the current planned location on lands owned by the Ford Motor Co. on Royal Windsor Drive in Oakville and initiate a complete review of area power needs and potential building sites, including environmental assessments and a realistic assessment of required danger zone buffer areas.”

I’m pleased to sign this petition and pass it to page Colin to take to the table.

TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I’ve had this petition sent in from individuals in Campbellford and Warkworth, and it reads:

“Whereas the hard-working residents of Ontario do not want the new harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air-conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

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

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes and that the McGuinty Liberal government not bring into effect the harmonized sales tax/value-added tax/blended sales tax/any combination of the provincial retail sales tax with the GST for Ontario consumers.”

I affix my name in full support.

TAXATION

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m going to be reading one here from the member from Sarnia-Lambton, who is urging me to read this petition. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

“Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty’s new tax will increase the cost of goods and services” that families and

businesses buy and use every day. Just a few examples are as follows—a long list: “coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements,” and the list goes on.

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn’t raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the” dreaded “health tax, which costs up to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

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

“That Dalton McGuinty’s government wake up to Ontario’s current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this and hand it to Brady, one of the new pages here.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: I’d like to present a petition as well. This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax,” at a time when families can ill afford it, and businesses can least afford it as well;

“Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty’s new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day.” A few examples—just a few—include “gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes and funeral arrangements;

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn’t raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the” dreaded “health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

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

“That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario’s current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

I agree with this petition and I’ll affix my name to it and send it with Max.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes the May 2009 Ipperwash Provincial Park transfer process agreement between the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Ontario, and endorses

the proposed transfer of the land and revocation of the part of Ontario regulation 316/07 that sets aside the area of Ipperwash Provincial Park as a provincial park of Ontario, pursuant to subsection 9(4) of the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Jeffrey has moved government notice of motion number 173. Debate?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I appreciate the chance to address the Legislature today and speak to this historic motion. I’m also pleased to be joined on this important occasion by my colleagues the members from Peterborough and Sarnia-Kent-Lambton. Each of their contributions should be recognized today, and I’m pleased they are here to speak to the motion.

Today we are here to debate a unique motion of historical importance. I recognize that this is an extraordinary measure and would like to share with the members of this Legislature how this motion came to be before us today. The release of the report of the Ipperwash inquiry in May 2007 was a significant milestone. This report has served as the road map for the McGuinty government partnership with First Nations and Metis to improve the quality of life for aboriginal communities in Ontario.

Today we are looking to take another important step forward. One of the 100 recommendations of the report of the Ipperwash inquiry was that the province of Ontario transfer Ipperwash Provincial Park to the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. In December 2007, our Premier announced that the province intended to make that transfer. Since that time, we have been working hard to deliver on that commitment. In May 2009, then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs Brad Duguid signed a transfer agreement with Chief Elizabeth Cloud. That agreement set out the next steps for the transfer of the parkland.

As a ministry, we’ve co-operated with Kettle and Stony Point First Nation, local communities and the federal government to make sure that the transfer is executed properly. At the same time, I believe we have been able to build the strong relationship necessary to move forward. I want to recognize and acknowledge all the hard work many dedicated public servants have done to get us to this point. I also want to acknowledge the many Ontario Parks staff who have worked at Ipperwash park over the years.

As the members also know, the deregulation of the park is an essential first step in the process of transferring parkland. Ontario’s parks are established by regulation under the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act. Today we are moving to rescind the park boundary by regulation, in order to remove the provincial park designation. In order to rescind the park boundary, we need to remove Ipperwash Provincial Park from the schedule for the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act by changing an associated regulation. This action will allow us to transfer the land to the government of Canada for the use and benefit of the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation.

It is important to note that it is the First Nation's desire to have the land transferred to Canada under the addition to reserve policy. The federal government has the constitutional authority to transfer land to an existing reserve; the provincial government does not.

Ipperwash Provincial Park was the fourth provincial park to be established in Ontario's park system. The park itself covers a total area of about 56 hectares. One provision of the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act is that the disposition of an area that is 1% of the protected area or 50 hectares or more must be reported to the Legislative Assembly, tabled and endorsed by the assembly. Our proposal for Ipperwash falls under that provision. That is the purpose of the government's motion here today.

The members may be interested to know that this is the first time that my ministry has ever made this kind of request since the act came into effect in 2007. The act provides that this matter come before the Legislature because the intent of the legislation was to ensure that it was not easy to deregulate a park. But there is precedent for making changes of this nature.

Under previous parks and protected areas legislation, parks have been deregulated for transfer to Canada for the benefit of First Nations. Such was the case for Sand Point First Nation, near the community of Nipigon. As well, parkland was deregulated to benefit the Big Grassy and Onigaming First Nation on the east side of Lake of the Woods.

That being said, however, the deregulation of a park is not a decision that we take lightly. The case of Ipperwash is extraordinary. We are doing our part to help right an historic wrong. At the end of this process, the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation will be able to use the property to benefit from the economic development opportunities, employment and revenue generation. Our goal is to help the community thrive and continue to improve the local quality of life. My ministry will continue to provide advice and work with the First Nation to help the community develop long-term planning goals for Ipperwash park.

I should also point out that this transfer is another step in the healing process and will ultimately contribute to a better quality of life for the First Nation. The government remains committed to making this a reality.

Economic development opportunities for the First Nation will also, over the long term, contribute to the local economy and to area municipalities. Along with the economic benefits, there will be chances for relationship building and co-operation between aboriginal, non-aboriginal people and the related communities.

Ontario is the home to parks that are world-renowned, and Ipperwash Park is one of those jewels in one of the world's biggest and best parks systems. Our parks will continue to enjoy over 10 million visits each and every year, and these Ontario landmarks will continue to provide amazing recreational opportunities while also protecting our significant natural and cultural heritage.

Our parks are an even more important feature this year as we mark the International Year of Biodiversity.

Deregulating Ipperwash park is the right thing to do for the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. It's the right thing to do as a province in our efforts to contribute to the necessary healing, reconciliation, and ultimately to building a better future for all Ontarians.

I urge the members of this Legislature to support this important proposal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I rise to speak on behalf of the official opposition to today's government resolution that reads as follows: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes the May 2009 Ipperwash Provincial Park transfer process agreement between the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Ontario, and endorses the proposed transfer of the land and revocation of the part of Ontario regulation 316/07 that sets aside the area of Ipperwash Provincial Park as a provincial park of Ontario, pursuant to subsection 9(4) of the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006."

This motion was first tabled in this House last week. In fact, it first appeared in our orders and notices last Thursday. Given the fact that our caucus meets on Tuesdays, we have not had the opportunity to discuss it, nor to be formally briefed on it by ministry staff. One would have thought that the government would have been interested and willing to give all parties in this House these basic legislative courtesies.

Amongst other responsibilities, I serve as our party's critic to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I am honoured to have this role. To begin, I understand that this motion is required to carry out the government's plan to transfer Ipperwash Provincial Park to the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point. Our party is not going to challenge or take issue with this specific motion today, or more broadly, the government's decision to transfer the park in this instance. The motion is simply the logical extension of a policy that the government has already announced. In this case, it was reported in the National Post in December 2007, based on an announcement by the then-aboriginal affairs minister, Michael Bryant. Further, we understand that this motion is a technical requirement set out in subsection 9(4) of the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006.

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On this side of the House, we recognize that each outstanding aboriginal land claim is unique and that each set of circumstances is unique. Therefore, the approach of government must take this into account, considering and evaluating each claim on its own individual merits. I want to stress this point to ensure that it is clearly understood by all in this House.

As we seek principled solutions to these issues, of course, we must strive for fairness to all concerned while articulating a clear and accurate representation of history. No one, I submit, would reasonably dispute this point.

Further, the province must work co-operatively and productively with affected First Nations as well as the government of Canada, respecting its legitimate jurisdiction, to achieve lasting solutions.

With so many considerations and with such complexity of the issues involved, the pace at which progress is made can often be slow—in some cases, exceedingly slow. With respect to the particular issues Commissioner Linden outlined in the Ipperwash inquiry in his report, the government has a great deal of work to do. My colleague the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka pointed out in his remarks in June of last year that at that time most of the 100 recommendations in Justice Linden’s report had yet to be acted upon.

In this instance, having made the announcement in December 2007 that Ipperwash would be transferred, the government took until today, more than 26 months later, for this motion to come forward. This is not meant as a criticism, but merely as a factual observation, for we know that patience in these matters is a virtue, as are tolerance, honesty and understanding.

The government has been clear in its intention to proceed with the transfer. The process, I think we would all agree, must be transparent and must be done right. Upon learning of the government’s intention to proceed today with this motion, I was skeptical, I think quite justifiably, of its timing and, by extension, of its motives. This government has demonstrated a pattern of raising diversionary issues as a way to deflect attention from its lackadaisical response to our economic challenges. On its one apparently significant so-called emergency debate on the economy back in 2008, the government still has not yet bothered to bring it to a vote. In fact, it appears they have forgotten about that so-called emergency debate.

To be clear, I understand that the government’s motion today is necessary in order to carry out its policy with respect to the transfer of Ipperwash. We don’t dispute that today. It is, however, highly unfortunate that this government has taken such an irresponsible course with the province’s finances, such that we find ourselves with a nearly \$25-billion deficit without the means to respond to the social and economic challenges facing Ontario’s aboriginal communities. For example, the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point want to make a significant contribution to Ontario’s economy and society. They have done so in the past, and will do even more in the future with the right support from the government of Ontario.

I want to mention a few facts about this community. It has, I understand, 1,000 members who live on the reserve and another 900 who live off-reserve. It is part of a much larger nation of nearly 78,000 throughout North America. No doubt, they have felt the economic downturn as acutely as anyone. Without a doubt, in many cases our First Nations peoples have endured some of the worst poverty in the province, and the current economic downturn serves only to worsen their circumstances.

Our First Nations are saying that the best way to improve their lives is to create significant and lasting

economic opportunities in which they can participate. They need jobs, they need better health care services, they need improved education opportunities. We support those things, and we believe they should be the government’s focus.

To conclude, the official opposition will not be proposing amendments to this resolution, nor will we impede its passage in this House today. We extend our best wishes to the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation and look forward to a shared future of hope and opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I’m going to take some time on this, because I think a few things need to be said in regard to the Ipperwash inquiry and what came of it.

First of all, I want to say up front that obviously we’re going to support the motion. It was one of the recommendations that came out of the Ipperwash inquiry and, as such, I think has the support of all the parties in this Legislature—I’d be very surprised to see anybody vote against it—and certainly has the support of First Nations as one of the things that needs to be done in order to deal with the fallout from what happened, unfortunately, at Ipperwash park. I want to spend my time and talk about what this means and what still needs to be done, and that will be the thrust of what I have to say today.

First of all, as I say, we’re in support. We think this is a good step forward. It is something that was recommended in the Ipperwash inquiry, as I said, but I think a couple of questions have to be asked.

First, I was really surprised when I got a copy of this motion on Thursday. I decided to call Chief Angus Toulouse and Chief Cloud and Murray Klippenstein, who is the lawyer who acted on behalf of the George family, expecting to get some feedback from them that they knew about this and what their comments were, because I knew they were going to be in favour. I just wanted to know: Was there anything I should know about it that I was missing? Nobody knew about it.

I thought, “Isn’t that weird?” Isn’t it strange that the very people the government is trying to speak to didn’t even know this was being brought to the Legislature? I thought, “Either I’m not reading this motion right and there’s something in there that I’ve missed and that they must be trying to sneak through, or there’s a communications problem within the government.” Or there might be a third reason: This is more of the same that we’ve seen from the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, where he’s looking for things to say about First Nations that are positive and being seen as doing positive things while not doing a heck of a lot. I think it falls into the last category, with all respect to my good friend Madam Jeffrey on the other side, who’s the Minister of Natural Resources.

You have to ask yourself—this is a good recommendation, but there are a few things that have to go with it—if we deregulate the park, as will be done as a result of this motion, where is the federal government when it comes to creation of the reserve land? I think that’s a

really fair question; that's the thing we need to know. Has the provincial government engaged in discussions with the federal government to make sure that, once that part of Ipperwash Provincial Park is deregulated and allowed to become a reserve again, has the discussion happened with the federal government?

It was a little bit telling today, when the minister was being asked in scrums after question period, that those conversations have yet to take place in a meaningful way. I would imagine there must have been some discussion, but there hasn't been any commitment from the federal government and any kind of push from the provincial government to get the government on the federal side to move on this.

The other part of it is, once it's deregulated, who is going to deal with the cleanup costs at the old military base? That's a pretty simple question. There are some environmental issues on the old military base that is part of these lands. What commitment do we have from the federal government that they will actually take the responsibility for footing the bill when it comes to doing the cleanup?

I have some experience with the federal government in dealing with cleanups, because we had the old radar bases—the DEW line bases—that were basically in my riding. We had radar bases at Moosonee, Fort Albany and Winisk, and in Howard's riding up at Fort Severn and various points where they had repeaters. It was a whole environmental disaster having to do with the equipment the American and Canadian military left on those bases when they withdrew and shut down the radar bases on the James Bay coast. Here's what happened. We were trying to get it cleaned up, because the First Nations had these eyesores inside their communities, and the first one to come up for cleanup, other than Moosonee, was Fort Albany. I remember having a discussion then—I think Mr. Ouellette was the minister on the Conservative side of the House, if I remember correctly. We were having discussions with the minister and the ministry, and we finally decided as a province and said, "If we wait for the federal government to foot the bill to clean up Fort Albany, we're going to wait a long time and it's still going to be an environmental disaster." The government of the day said, "Listen, clean the site and send the bill to the federal government." What that did was force the federal government to the table to deal not only with the cost of the Fort Albany cleanup, but it also forced the federal government to come to the table and engage in discussions with the province about how we were going to clean up the other sites, because there were other sites to be cleaned up.

It was a bit of a risk on the part of the province, because the feds could have said, "You guys went ahead without our authorization, so you're stuck with the bill." But we recognized, on the provincial side, that if we waited for the feds to do anything, we'd be waiting for a long time. As it relates to Ipperwash Provincial Park, I think we need to be prepared to move on the cleanup in some kind of way that forces the feds to the table, even if

that means we have to start doing some of that ourselves. But again, there's no indication, as a result of this particular motion, who's going to deal with the cleanup at the Ipperwash military base that has been closed for some time.

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The other issue is that of treaty rights in regard to how it affects this particular motion. There are discussions that have to ensue between the federal and provincial governments and the First Nations to deal with the treaty issues that fall out of this. Again, what commitment do we have from the provincial government that they're actually going to deal with that? But more importantly, where the heck is the federal government on this? I don't want to engage in a discussion—because I know the Liberals love it. Mr. McGuinty—any time that we can shift the responsibility to the feds, it's something they love to do. The point is, we need to put some pressure on the federal government. I would think, at the very least, we should have some kind of indication at this point today, prior to debate, where the federal government is on converting those lands to reserve, dealing with treaty rights and dealing with the cleanup on the old military base. If we at least knew the answers, then we could make some decisions here in Ontario about how we proceed once we deregulate that park in order to allow it to become a reserve land. What are we prepared to do, as a province, in order to make those things happen? Those are all questions that are not being answered.

Like I said, the whole issue of this coming up for debate today, on Monday, and the people who are most affected haven't been contacted, leads me to believe that this is more of a communications problem on their side, but more importantly, this is more of an opportunity for the government to say, "Look at all the great things we're doing when it comes to First Nations in this province." I just want to take this opportunity to say, well, this is a great thing, but what about all of the other recommendations that came out of the Ipperwash inquiry?

In 2007, the Honourable Sidney B. Linden, the commissioner, came out with his report. The report had a number of recommendations in it, and I just want to go through some of those recommendations that have yet to be acted on since 2007, and that are, I would argue, equally if not more important not only to the Kettle and Stony Point people but to all First Nations people in this province.

If you look at what has been recommended, there are a whole number of recommendations in the Ipperwash inquiry, the first being, "The Treaty Commission of Ontario should be established in a provincial statute as an independent agency reporting directly to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario." What that means, simply put, is that the Legislature should pass legislation that enacts a piece of law that allows a treaty commission to be set up and that that treaty commission report back, just as our Environmental Commissioner and other commissioners do, directly back to the Legislature. Has that been done? I haven't seen the legislation. I haven't seen a draft of the

legislation. I haven't even heard a rumour about the legislation. So one of the most important recommendations that the Ipperwash inquiry gave was the creation of this treaty commission, and nowhere is there any indication that the treaty commission is actually something the government is going to bring forward any time soon.

So why do you cherry-pick and decide to take this piece of the Ipperwash inquiry and not take the other? I think it's a question of commitment. I think the provincial government wants to be seen as being positive toward First Nations issues and wants to be able to communicate to the public through the media, "Look at the great things we're doing to take our responsibilities as a provincial government vis-à-vis our First Nations." But when it comes to actually taking concrete steps, the government is a little bit slower, if not missing in action.

The other recommendation that flows out of the treaty commission recommendation is, "The governments of Ontario, Canada, and First Nations should jointly select the head of the Treaty Commission of Ontario." Well, we haven't even got the legislation, so we know we haven't got to that. But there was an understanding and an acknowledgment on the part of the Ipperwash inquiry that the treaty commission, once established, should have a head and that head should be somebody that everybody agrees on—not just the federal or provincial governments appointing their friend or their political operative to be the head of the commission, but somebody that First Nations, the feds and the provincial government could live with.

It goes on to say, "The Treaty Commission of Ontario should be given a four-part, strategic mandate," and that mandate is that the Treaty Commission of Ontario "should be given the authority to assist governments and First Nations, independently and impartially, in developing and applying a wide range of tools and processes to clarify and settle issues in an expeditious and cooperative way."

We still have, after all of these years, a whole raft of unresolved treaties. Where are we at trying to get those resolved? It's certainly not to the advantage of First Nations that these treaties sit out there, yet to be negotiated and resolved, and I would argue that it's certainly not to the advantage of the provincial government, because the province doesn't benefit by having this in limbo. Certainly, the residents in the area don't gain by not having this resolved one way or another. The treaty commission was all about making sure that we're able to advance and expedite, in a way that would work for the First Nations, the crown and the public, a resolution to long-standing treaties, and we've yet to move on any of the recommendations that deal with that.

The other part of their four-part strategic plan was that "the Treaty Commission of Ontario should be given the mandate to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the land claims process in Ontario" and "establish and publish benchmarks for processing claims" and have "dispute resolution, binding as well as non-binding, when the benchmarks are not met."

Simply put, the commission, along with the others who are involved—First Nations and others—should be able to set a benchmark and say, "Treaty whatever of this particular piece of land is currently at this stage of the process. Let's set, as a benchmark, the following things that need—not the following things that need to happen, but by when we expect to have this resolved." So you say, "Okay, we'll give this a time frame of 16 months, 18 months or 24 months, and here are the things that need to happen within that time period to get their resolution. But if no resolution is sought, we have some mechanisms to resolve disputes." In some cases, they'd be binding arbitration and, in some cases, they would not be, depending on the circumstance. Why has that recommendation not been acted on? We've strictly dealt with, at this point, the issue of the Ipperwash park.

The third part of the Ipperwash inquiry in regard to the benchmarks was that "the Treaty Commission of Ontario should be given the mandate to make the claims process accountable and transparent to all Ontarians." I think, man, is that important for everybody—for First Nations and non-First Nations people. We need to have a transparency of how this works, what it means, how it's going to be resolved in the end and what the resolution should be.

First Nations people obviously need to know because unlike our communities, they operate very differently, in the sense that decisions aren't made at the band council unless the community has said, "Yes, you can go ahead and do it." It's not like a municipality. In a municipal structure, mayor and council make a decision. They have a vote at the table, and we trust that our elected officials will make the right decision. If we don't like it, every four years we turf them out and we get new ones.

In the aboriginal community, we've imposed on them a European method of governing where we have this thing called a band council. A band council works something like a municipality but, to First Nations, it's very alien to the way they actually do business, because the way that they've traditionally done business and the way they still do is that there has to be some discussion with the community and sufficient time for people to get their heads around it. Then families—because it is family politics on reserve big time—and individuals have to come to terms with what is being proposed by the leaders of the community or whoever it might be—the provincial or federal governments—and then a decision is made at the community level.

The process there is, you need to make sure that the community has an opportunity to have its say. That's why transparency and recommendation number 3 of transparency are so important: because First Nations, by tradition, operate very differently from us. I can give you examples of De Beers. When De Beers negotiated their impact benefit agreement with the community of Attawapiskat, the community that's closest to the mine and most affected, it took three to four years by the time the discussion completed its process in the community and people came to terms with the very issues around

environment, compensation, employment and business opportunities, till finally there was a consensus in the community and a referendum was taken at 85% in favour of the agreement that De Beers had negotiated with the First Nation. It takes longer, but that's the way they do business. There has to be a community consensus for them to move forward.

Transparency for First Nations is important in the sense that it respects the cultural differences and the political differences about how they operate, but on the non-aboriginal side, it's just as important. Look at what's going in Caledonia. I'm not going to pronounce this, that or the other on Caledonia, but the issue is, clearly there needs to be a process where it is very transparent for those people who are affected by whatever decision is made, because they're the neighbours, they're the people living in proximity to the community where the decision is being made about whatever affects the First Nation. It's not that we need to have the approval of fellow citizens and adjoining communities—because sometimes approval may never be gained, or approval would be given—but the point is, it's not about getting approval; it's about making sure the public understands what this is all about. Also, what the provincial and federal governments are doing has to be transparent for people to have sufficient comfort and understanding to accept decisions that are made.

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The fourth point that was made on that recommendation is that the Treaty Commission of Ontario “should be given a broad mandate to undertake public education about treaties, treaty relationships, and land claims in Ontario.” The Treaty Commission of Ontario “should be given the specific authority to develop programs about treaty history designed to be part of the Ontario school curriculum.”

Is that important? Let me give you my story, because I think it's typical of what we see in this province. I was born in the city of Timmins, in proximity to many First Nations, where many First Nations people live within an urban setting in the city of Timmins. What did I learn about First Nations when I went to school? About that much. I learned that there were some wars between the Brits and the French, and that the French befriended the First Nations to a degree for their own economic reasons, not because they were magnanimous. The French figured out that it was better to have them on our side fighting the English than to be fighting the English and the French at the same time. Then I learned by way of watching Saturday morning matinees. Remember those old cowboy and Indian movies? That was my education as to what goes on when it comes to the reality of First Nations communities who lived in my backyard. And why? Because there was nothing in the school curriculum to tell me, a non-aboriginal, what the history of the First Nations was in this nation for the thousands of years before the Europeans came and how it related and how they interrelated with us, as far as culture, about economics, about social exchanges that happened between our two peoples over all of these years.

So I think this recommendation of having the treaty commission set some recommendations as to what should go into the school curriculum is key. Ontarians know very little about First Nations, and I know that from my experience growing up in the city of Timmins, where I didn't know a heck of a lot about First Nations until much later in life when I got to know a lot more as I became elected as a provincial member of Parliament. I've got to tell you, it was an eye-opener, and I still learn every day.

I've got to tell you this story, because I'm just thinking of it now. It's a bit of a humorous story, but I think it makes the point. A good friend of mine, Gilbert Cheechoo—some of you might have dealt with him before; he was an economic development officer at the time, and I believe he's now the coordinator for the package that was settled between Moose Cree and De Beers. I remember him telling me a story that is actually pretty typical and pretty funny. We were talking about this very issue, and he said, “What did you know about First Nations as you were growing up?” I said, “Not a lot. The only thing I learned was by watching Saturday morning matinees.” He said, “Oh, we used to love those too.” I said, “Really? Why would you kids in Moose Factory be watching a Saturday morning matinee about cowboys and Indians?” He said, “We played cowboys and Indians all the time.” I said, “Gee, I feel kind of bad, because I used to play the cowboy.” He said, “Well, so did I.” I said, “Why would you be the cowboy?” He said, “They were spaghetti westerns. Those were bad Indians.” What a sense of humour. But it says a lot about our First Nations, about forgive and forget and seeing us for what we are and our foibles and all. I pass that story on, because I always thought it was quite an amusing story, but very true.

So I just say this recommendation on the part of the commission to instill in the education system, by a change of curriculum, what are First Nations, who are they, what do they do, what are their values, what are their aspirations—I think is really important to insert in the curriculum all across Ontario, so that we as citizens become much more knowledgeable about what First Nations face, so that we can together try to find a solution. I think that's one of the key recommendations.

One of the other recommendations in the Ipperwash inquiry is, “The provincial and federal governments should commit sufficient resources to the TCO to enable it to achieve its objectives.” I think that goes without saying: If you don't fund it properly, it's not going to succeed. Why has that not been acted on?

“The provincial government should commit sufficient funds to enable the Ontario land claims process to resolve claims within an acceptable period.” Again, it's quite something if you were to put the Treaty Commission of Ontario together, but you also have to have a commitment to settle those land claims, which means there will be lands exchanging hands and there will also be some compensation, in some cases, associated with that. We need to be prepared for that and commit that we're prepared to do what's needed.

Another recommendation that has not been acted upon: “The provincial government and the TCO should work together to develop a business and financial plan for the Ontario land claims process. The objective would be to estimate the resources needed to resolve claims and to meet reasonable benchmarks during the land claims process,” as said earlier.

“The federal government should co-operate fully with the provincial government and First Nations in Ontario to establish the Treaty Commission of Ontario and promote its effectiveness.” On this point, I have to say a couple of things. The federal government should actually be involved in First Nations issues? What a novel thought. Wow. I’ll say it here in the Legislature, and I’ll say it outside, where I can be sued: If the Department of Indian Affairs and the federal government actually took on their responsibility to deal adequately with the needs, aspirations and issues faced by our First Nations, we would have made a pretty big step up to this point. Instead, what do we have in our communities? Howard Hampton, my good friend and colleague, represents a number—how many First Nations, 40-odd?

Mr. Howard Hampton: It’s 55.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There are 55 First Nations in his riding. I have quite a few less than that. Mr. Gravelle has a few in his; Mr. Brown, Madame Gélinas. If you go into some of these reserves, especially reserves in the far north that Howard and I represent, you’re looking at some pretty difficult situations. You have families of 25 people in a house, which is not uncommon. How do you, as a child of five or 10, study and excel in school if you’re living in a house with 20 or 25 people, where you’re actually “hot bedding” the beds? Some people sleep in the day and some people sleep at night because there are not enough beds in the house to go around. Why? Because neither the federal nor provincial government provides the funding needed to build an adequate amount of housing for those communities.

If there’s one place in Canada where there is a huge rise in population, it’s within First Nations communities. I think something like 60% of the residents on First Nations are under age 30. Think about that—60%. So we’ve had a huge increase in population in First Nations, but we have not kept up with the amount of housing that was originally given to those communities when they formed reserves some 30, 40 or 50 years ago.

Remember that reserves in our communities haven’t been around for all that long. There were places where First Nations would congregate and would come at particular times of the year to do exchanges and trading with the Hudson’s Bay Co. and others, but the actual reserve system didn’t start until fairly recently. If you look on the James Bay coast, the communities of Fort Albany and Kashechewan were all formed within this last century. It wasn’t until the 1930s, 1940s and, really, the 1950s, that they started building anything there. They signed the treaty in 1904 or 1905, somewhere around there, and then we forgot about them for 50 years and didn’t do anything. Then 50 years later the federal gov-

ernment said, “Oh, let’s build a couple of houses, put in some diesel generators, and maybe later on we’ll get to the sewer system. They don’t need stores to buy food or anything like that.” So they created the reserves, and people came in because they said, “We recognize that the world is changing and our kids have to get to school.” And what did they get? They got residential school.

So these communities are facing huge problems. In our communities where Howard and I are, the majority of people of my generation were raised in a residential school, and how that manifests itself back into the community is pretty difficult at best.

Where are the federal and provincial governments in responding to the need for housing in our communities? Why should it be allowed, at this time, that the provincial or federal governments would allow insufficient housing to be the norm on reserves across this province, especially in northern Ontario?

I remember bringing the media up to Attawapiskat about four or five years ago. I won’t give the name, but in February there was a family where mom and dad and the younger children had moved into a tent in the backyard. Why did they do that? Because the two younger kids didn’t have what they needed as far as peace of mind and quiet to study to excel in school; because mom and dad recognized that if they stayed in the house they were in, with the rest of their kids and the extended family, which was 20-some-odd people, the kids would not be able to study and excel in school and move forward with their lives. What did mom and dad do? They basically pitched a tent in the backyard.

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Here was the band council—it might have been Chief Theresa at that time; yes, Chief Theresa Hall, working hard, along with her band council, trying to get housing so people don’t have to live in a tent in the middle of February in Attawapiskat, and federal and provincial governments not responding, the province saying, “It’s a federal responsibility, so let’s go talk to the feds,” and the federal government saying, “Don’t talk to us. We established a budget, and we’re following it.” As a result, the people in the community get mad at the chief and council, but the real culprits here are the senior levels of government that don’t provide the funding.

I remember, and Mr. Hampton would remember this, when I was first elected in 1990 going on a tour into the James Bay. We went into a number of communities. I remember that we had gone to Attawapiskat and I believe to Fort Albany. There was no sewer system in 50% of the houses. The toilets were basically outside toilets, in the middle of winter. They were sort of porches; they attached to the houses. I remember seeing green garbage bags in the wintertime out on the curb every morning, and I asked, “What’s that all about?” That was the bag that people defecated in, in their homes, on these makeshift toilets, and they would wrap them up, tie them up and put them on the road, and somebody would come by in the morning to pick it up.

We as a government—and Mr. Hampton at the time was Minister of Natural Resources—said, “Hang on.

There's something wrong here. This should not happen." Howard knew about it because he had been a member prior to that election. We went to the federal government, and the federal government said, "Oh, well, we'll get to it. Yeah, yeah, it's a priority." We said, as a government, "Listen, this is not right. These are Ontario citizens. People should at least be allowed to have a sewer system so they can go to the bathroom and take a shower and cook and clean do the things they've got to do."

Our government were the ones that funded the water and sewer in those communities. The water and sewer plants were put in at the time as a result of provincial dollars and embarrassing the federal government to jump in.

When they talk about getting the co-operation of the federal and provincial governments as a recommendation, my Lord, we would like to get their attention somewhat.

The other issue I want to talk about very briefly is the issue of policing. My good friend the critic for this issue, Mr. Kormos, has come up the coast with me a couple of times. You have situations where the police don't have the tools to do their job. They have a boat for rescue if a person should fall into the water, but it doesn't have a motor or paddle. Tell me what you're going to do with the boat. They ship the boat, but they don't ship the motor and the paddle because there is no money to buy them.

Police stations that are not police stations: They're houses converted into police stations where, tragically, we had two people die in a fire, in the jail in Kashechewan. My friend Mr. Kormos saw that particular jail at that time. In fact, I brought in the minister of the day, Mr. Kwinter, showed him this particular jail before it burned down and said, "Look what we've got. We've got a jail that's made of wood and a chain with a lock around the cells. There's an accident waiting to happen." I take no happiness in this, but unfortunately our predictions came through. What the community said, what the police said and what I said was the case: Eventually there would be a tragedy in one of these jails. In Kashechewan, we lost two people in a lock-up as a result of the fire in the jail because the jail guards couldn't open the doors in time to let them out when the fire came out. There were no smoke detectors in that jail. There were no fire detectors. There were no fire suppression systems. None of the code was being followed, and I would argue that still it's not being followed in—what, 60% or 70% of our communities, Howard?—I would say, on an average.

So we go and meet RoseAnne Archibald, who was deputy chief at the time, and other people from NAN. We went to meet with the minister, the Solicitor General, who was Rick Bartolucci. What did we get from him? "We're onside. We feel your pain. We're upset. We're with you. We want to fix that. Come and tell us when the federal government gives their 50%." Well, that's a stupid game. You know the federal government is not going to give their 50%. So I said, along with those present at that meeting, "Mr. Bartolucci, fund your 50%

and shame the federal government to do theirs, and in the end, if they don't, at the very least we're 50% closer to resolution of the problem.

Can I get some water here, page? Oh, there we go. My good friend Mr. Hampton comes to the rescue.

So when recommendation 12 is made about having some co-operation with the federal government, you can spend the debate just on that, but I just say that in a couple of examples it's pretty clear that is not happening.

Recommendation 13 is an interesting one: "The federal and provincial governments should work with" the treaty commission "and any equivalent federal agency to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and fairness of the federal and provincial land claims processes. Together, they should undertake the following:

"(a) Establish a common registry for federal and Ontario land claims."

Do you know there isn't one? Can you imagine that? We have no registry for federal and Ontario land claims. How are we supposed to deal with the issue of resolving them if we don't have some kind of registry to register which ones they are and prioritize which ones we're going to do first and in what order they're going to be done?

"(b) Establish a dispute resolution process that includes access to non-binding and binding resolution."

This is really important. It's part of a previous recommendation. We recognize that at times there's going to be some foot-dragging by the federal or provincial government or by the First Nations, and there needs to be a mechanism to have some sort of arbitration—in some cases it would have to be binding or non-binding—so we are able to move that forward. So in the event, let's say, that the federal government is dragging its heels as it normally does, we have a mechanism of binding arbitration to move that forward.

"(c) Use binding arbitration to determine the legal liabilities of the federal and provincial governments." What that means is fairly straightforward; I won't get into any discussion.

"(d) Develop common or consistent benchmarks and policies for federal and Ontario land claims," something that still doesn't exist.

Why is it that we have so many land claims that are yet unsettled? I would argue a lack of will on the part of the federal and provincial governments, not knowing and not really having a good handle on how many need to be settled, where they're at in the process and what needs to be done to settle them.

The last point, point (d), speaks to developing "common or consistent benchmarks and policies for federal and" provincial "land claims," because there are none. I think that's a recommendation that should be acted on. Unfortunately, it's not part of this motion today.

I spoke to this earlier, but recommendations 29 and 30 are around education and making sure that the Ministry of Education is part of the process of developing curriculum so that kids in our schools are able to learn

more about First Nations, for the reasons I mentioned earlier.

I just have to speak on recommendation 32, because it's one that originally was acted upon by the government, and then they decided not to act on it. Recommendation 32 says that the provincial government should create a Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs—that part has been done—and that the ministry should have a dedicated minister and its own deputy minister. We had our own minister, and for whatever reason—I will speak to that later—the Premier decided not to have a dedicated minister. Now we have the Attorney General who is also the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

I think that is a conflict of interest. I think that far too often the Attorney General finds himself—or herself, should it be a woman—in a position of having to both advocate the position of the provincial government in the court and be the defender of the First Nations' issues at the same court. In my view, you can't be the Attorney General and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs at the same time, because there are far too many times when you will be in conflict. I argue that is probably the same for the Ministry of Natural Resources. That is why we need a stand-alone minister. Unfortunately, the government decided to rescind on what was actually one of the recommendations that was followed through on.

Number 33: "The provincial government should create the appropriate cabinet structure to support the new ministry. The provincial government should consider establishing a new cabinet committee on aboriginal affairs and should consider including the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs on the priorities and planning board of cabinet," which has not been done.

If the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs was on P and P, I think that would be a step forward, because there are many unresolved issues that need to be dealt with that are not only important for First Nations but, I would argue, important for the economy of Ontario, and I speak of the Ring of Fire as an example.

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We have in northern Ontario, in my own riding, huge potential for mining that has now been identified. Those particular mines—at this point, we've got the De Beers diamond mine, but others that are potentially going to be coming online—will represent a huge economic stimulus for the province of Ontario, in the way of taxes that we get by way of royalties and income tax from these corporations, taxes we receive from the individuals working there and taxes we receive for the goods and services sold to these particular mining operations.

We know there's going to be a fair amount of economic activity taking place on traditional aboriginal treaty lands over the next number of years, so I think it is all the more important that we have the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs on P and P, and that we establish good land use planning processes so that First Nations feel comfortable about how development is going to take place, that it's consistent with their values and consistent with good ecological and environmental rules, so that we don't abuse that, and that at the end, they are able to

benefit from those projects by way of business opportunities, jobs and revenue sharing.

Until we do those things, I think it will be pretty difficult to allow those projects to go forward. I would imagine that if the government does not deal with these things adequately in the not-too-distant future, the Ring of Fire is going to be slowed in its development. If I was a First Nation and wasn't receiving any benefits from those particular economic activities, I think I would probably be willing to protest somewhat as well.

Imagine, if you will, if you lived in small-town Ontario and they were about to build a Ford plant right next to your community and they said, "We're not going to be hiring anybody from your town." Boy, oh boy, can you imagine what would happen in that small Ontario town? There would be people out manifesting; there would be people protesting. There would be people coming from whatever small town it was all the way to Queen's Park saying, "We want a stake in the economic activity that's going on with this car plant that's being built next to our community."

I'm not suggesting that the mining companies would say, "No, I will not hire First Nations people from this community." That's not what I'm suggesting. But unless we are prepared to identify ways to accommodate First Nations people in those communities to get jobs, they will be very limited in the jobs they can get.

For example, small-town Ontario gets a car plant, and they say, "We're looking for assemblers. There are no assemblers in this town, so we're going to go get assemblers from somewhere else." You can train assemblers. People in small-town Ontario would say, "We're prepared to do the training that's needed to be assemblers in the car plant." We need electricians, millwrights, mechanics—whatever—and there's training that might be needed to prepare these people for this economic activity. It's no different with a mine, and unless we're able to deal with those things effectively, First Nations will be shut out of those particular economic activities.

Those are a few of the things I wanted to put on the record. I just say again for the record that we will vote in favour of this motion because it deals with one part of the Ipperwash inquiry. But I want to remind you that the Ipperwash inquiry is a pretty large document and has quite a few recommendations. What we have now is that the government has cherry-picked one they can do that is not too difficult, but it is not moving on what I think are some of the key parts of the recommendations that were made.

I look forward to listening to other people in this debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the time today to address the Legislature on this very important matter; I remind members today that this building is located on the sacred lands of the Mississaugas of Port Credit.

I want to thank the Minister of Natural Resources for his part in moving this government forward in one of the

most important initiatives in aboriginal affairs. In my riding of Peterborough, I'm very proud to say that I have two First Nations communities: Hiawatha under the leadership of Chief Laurie Carr and Curve Lake under the leadership of Chief Keith Knott.

The transfer of the Ipperwash Provincial Park lands to the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point is a reflection of this government's continuing commitment to the people of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation and to all First Nations, Metis and Inuit in this great province. It's also representative of our commitment to building a stronger, more positive relationship with the aboriginal people in the province of Ontario. I'd like to acknowledge that the government of Canada is working very closely with us to facilitate this important transfer.

The park, as everyone in the House is aware, is a touchstone for aboriginal affairs in Ontario. On September 4, 1995, frustration over promises not kept resulted in a tragedy for the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point. One of the park's occupants lost his life. His name was Anthony O'Brien George, "Dudley" to his friends and family.

The loss was an unnecessary tragedy. We cannot undo it, but we can learn from it. Mr. George's death was our wake-up call. We knew we needed to build a new relationship between aboriginal people and the government of Ontario; we needed reconciliation and a new respect between us. This could only start with an official inquiry into how and why Anthony "Dudley" George died.

In November 2003, Premier Dalton McGuinty appointed Justice Sidney Linden to lead an independent public inquiry into the events of Ipperwash Provincial Park in 1995. The report of the Ipperwash inquiry was released on May 31, 2007. It quickly became our road map for working in partnership with the First Nations and Metis to improve the quality of life for aboriginal communities in this great province.

The report of the Ipperwash inquiry provided us with the guidance, not just to move forward, but to move forward in the right direction. The report discusses transferring Ipperwash Provincial Park to the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. It outlines the potential benefits for the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point and for the surrounding non-aboriginal communities.

In December 2007, this government committed to transfer Ipperwash Provincial Park to the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. A resolution table of both Ontario and First Nations representatives set out to work on an interim plan. This plan would outline how the park would be managed until the transfer of the land to the First Nation was complete.

In May 2009, the Ipperwash transfer process agreement was signed between the government of Ontario and the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. The agreement commits Ontario and the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation to a number of technical requirements, like environmental and archaeological assessments. It also ensures that the transfer of the park will go ahead as quickly as possible.

Maynard "Sam" George, brother of Anthony "Dudley" George, is one of the reasons we're here today and discussing the transfer of Ipperwash park. He is one of the reasons that Ontario has a stronger, more positive relationship with the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation, and with aboriginal communities all across Ontario. Sam's questions following the death of his brother launched the Ipperwash inquiry. Sadly, he had only just begun to work with the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs when he fell ill. But thankfully, Sam was still with us when the Ipperwash park transfer agreement was signed last May. Almost nine months after his passing, his legacy is still with us today.

His contributions ensured that, together, we would find a way to move forward into a new era of healing, reconciliation, and peace with the First Nations in Ontario. The Ipperwash Inquiry Priorities and Action Committee was established. This committee brings forward First Nation leadership and representatives from the provincial and the federal governments.

Ontario's Minister of Aboriginal Affairs co-chairs the Ipperwash Inquiry Priorities and Action Committee along with Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse. This committee helped create the new relationship fund, which helps First Nations and Metis communities more effectively engage with the government and the private sector on important land, resource and other development initiatives.

The committee is now working on a resource benefit-sharing plan along with aboriginal communities; the potential of a Treaty Commission of Ontario with First Nations and Canada; and clarification of the crown's duty to consult and how Ontario can best work with First Nations to meet this duty.

Our government and aboriginal leaders across the province are setting priorities and tracking progress on Justice Linden's recommendations. We're taking important steps and we're moving forward.

I want to thank other ministers—I had the privilege of being parliamentary assistant for aboriginal affairs for some two and a half years—Ministers Bryant, Duguid and, for a very short period of time, Minister Bentley.

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I want to thank those First Nations communities that I had the opportunity to visit in the last two and a half years for their very warm welcome when I went into their communities to experience what they have to offer. As I said, we're taking important steps and we're moving forward together. Meegwetch.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Quite frankly, a First Nations issue is not easy by any stretch of the imagination. We here in southern Ontario and a majority of the individuals in this room would certainly not gain an understanding of what actually takes place in a lot of the remote and northern communities, First Nation communities, in Ontario.

I can recall being in Fort Severn in February. It was minus 40 out. I was speaking there. At the restaurant, the

only restaurant in the entire community, the question wasn't, "Did you want a menu?" or "What would you like?" It was, "Are you eating tonight?" I'm just trying to set a bit of a tone so that people gain an understanding of the difference between a southern Ontario community that we take for granted as compared to a First Nations northern community, or even the Far North.

When my father eventually finished his working career, I set him up, prior to myself becoming an MPP, working as a camp manager in an outfitting camp in Inuvik, where the Lieutenant Governor wanted to meet my father. So she left one day on a clear day and went in an open boat 120 kilometres through open water to get across to meet my father, because the economic benefit to that community of the entire territory was so significant that she felt it necessary to cross 120 kilometres of open water in an open boat with twin engines on the back. We take such things for granted.

But some of the concerns I have here are, effectively, what is taking place or what has taken place. The issue of the First Nations is so complex that I can tell you about the posts on the Grassy River and the concern by the First Nations community there, or the ceremonial hunts that were requested to take place in Presqu'île Provincial Park, or the moose hunting agreement by the Gold Lake band First Nations community and the impacts that they have, and what has not taken place.

My concern is that the issue that is coming forward is more complex than what's being brought forward here. What I see is the Far North Act, when Grand Chief Stan Beardy—and you only need to talk to Stan Beardy to know the amount of work I've done with his community and still am doing with his community to make those depressed communities of the Far North that much more, well, livable to our standard that we take for granted here in southern Ontario. They were so upset when we were in Sioux Lookout and Chapleau that the individuals responding to that were saying that they were willing to go to war over issues like this.

So how do we resolve this issue as a government and how do we move forward?

We have to find an answer or a common ground in certain areas that we can deal with. Ipperwash may be one of the ones they look forward to and want to hear. Mr. Bisson talking about the fact that the First Nations who are directly involved with the entire process had no knowledge of it only leads me to believe that it is easier for the current government to pass the issue on rather than to deal with it.

You see, when I had the privilege and honour to be Minister of Natural Resources, within the first week I pulled into a First Nation community and I sat in the band office, because I knew there was an issue of concern there. I asked, "Is it possible to see the chief?" They said, "Well, he's kind of busy right now." I said, "I don't mind waiting." So I sat in there for an hour and a half, and I waited. Lo and behold, they said, "The chief can see you now." I walked into the council chambers and I said, "Chief, I know there's an issue both of us are concerned with, and I thought maybe we should talk

about it." I said, "Oh, by the way, I'm the new Minister of Natural Resources."

Well, the entire process stopped. They brought in all the council members and all the legal, and they made it very clear that it was not a consultation. You see, most members don't know that with the First Nations communities, three consultations have now been determined to allow the federal government—to allow to step in to resolve the issue and appoint an arbitrator to make a decision on that. So I clearly said, "Let me make it perfectly clear this is not a consultation process." But the end result was that we spoke about issues that they had concern with that went back to, quite frankly, 1812, when that community was upset about the transfer of land and other aspects. I sat and I sat and I met with my bureaucracy at the time. They came forward with a plan. I looked at the plan, and I said, "How is this going to resolve anything? Let me see. The end result of this particular issue is going to be that they're going to say they didn't participate and that it's not going to be applicable to them. Is that not right?" "Well, Minister, yes, that's right"; that is exactly what was going to happen. I looked and I said, "The problem with this issue is that the minister 50 years ago didn't deal with the issue, and I have to deal with it now. Let's resolve it now, so that 50 years from now, the minister sitting in this position does not have to deal with this issue." I don't necessarily believe that passing the issue on to the federal government is going to resolve it.

Mr. Bisson mentioned the mid-Canada radar sites. It was at site 13 where the PCB contamination was seeping into the environment. There were findings that it was contaminating rabbits and other game; they were being affected by the PCBs because it was getting into the ecosystem at that time. Eventually—guess what?—polar bears were going to be affected, and on and on. So we had to act. We had to move forward and make a decision at the time to try to deal with these issues.

My concern here is that we're not dealing with issues in a fashion that will resolve them or setting a precedent which allows the province to move forward in dealing with these complex issues. I've only mentioned a couple of them because I know there are other members who wish to speak. But what I see this as is making sure that the impacts of the far north legislation that the First Nation community was so upset about—that we may now look back and say, "Well, we took care of that issue." That may make us happy, but it doesn't set up what's necessary to ensure that the province moves forward and deals with these issues in the fashion that they deserve.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I certainly am very pleased to be able to rise and speak in support of this particular motion. I have the privilege of being the MPP for the communities of Lambton Shores and the Chippewa of Kettle Point and Stony Point, or as people often refer to the army camp, the Aazhoodena, which is the traditional name. This has a history—a long history—

in my area, and certainly with the events that happened in 1995, the community was torn apart. It had an impact on the community that—we're still healing in that area. That's why this motion is in place, because we have started that process.

I want to quote from Justice Linden's report, the Ipperwash report, in which he observes that "the land was the fundamental catalyst for the Ipperwash occupation and Dudley George's death. Therefore, resolution of the land issue must be part of the way forward and is key to the healing of those most affected by these events." I certainly agree with that. The land is symbolic. Anyone who understands First Nations and their relationship to the land understands that it's not about the money, it's not about the value or compensation; it's about what the land means to them in their traditions. This transfer of the park is very important to establishing that relationship. It certainly is very important in my area because, as I said, the community itself was torn apart.

Many of the people who live in that area have worked together in areas like Sarnia, Forest and Grand Bend. They have gone to school together at the high school in Forest. All of a sudden, with the events that happened and the death of Dudley George, there were a lot of rumours, a lot of mistrust, a lot of fear. People were in shock and horror about what had happened—and over time, embarrassment at the way the whole thing was handled. People didn't trust each other any more, and it became very important to have an opportunity to go through and try to work out how this had come about. That's why the inquiry was put in place.

When we were elected in 2003, Dalton McGuinty, as Premier, struck the inquiry. That inquiry spent over two years looking at the history of the community, looking at the First Nations history and at how this came about. As we went through that process, Justice Linden brought forward 100 recommendations. One of those recommendations was that the transfer of the park should take place; that it should go back to the First Nations. At that time, in December 2007, the then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the Honourable Michael Bryant, made the announcement that the park would be transferred back to the First Nations. I, as the MPP for the area, had the opportunity and the privilege of being there when that announcement was made at Kettle Point. Certainly, that was the beginning of a process that this particular motion is part of. What happened was, as a consequence of that, there was the establishment of a resolution table that would work out how the transfer would take place, and then there was a transfer process agreement.

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That agreement, as part of its preamble, makes the statement that "the First Nation and Ontario agree that the transfer of the parkland is an important step in the healing process of the First Nation." While I absolutely agree with that statement, I think it came a little bit short because it also needed to say that it was part of the healing process for the entire community. That is something that has started to happen now, and this motion is a very important part of that process.

Through the resolution table and as they came about to do the actual transfer, we had a signing at Ipperwash park that included the then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the Honourable Brad Duguid, and Chief Liz Cloud. Of course, both communities were there, everyone attended, and it was a beautiful reflection of the traditions of the First Nations. We started with a sunrise ceremony. We went through after that, and we had opportunities to see the photos and to hear about the history of what happened at the army camp and what happened when the federal government came and took the homes of these people off of the land so they could establish the camp. Then we went from there and we had the actual signing. We had traditional dance. From there we went and ate. Everybody shared food. It was just communities together, but it was an important part, again, of that healing process.

We need to do more to re-establish the trust and to move the healing forward, because that's a very, very important part of this whole process. We need to build the relationships, the trust and the healing.

The member for Timmins-James Bay talked about one of the other recommendations, which was the treaty commission and the establishment of a treaty commission for Ontario. I can tell you that last summer I attended the first conference that was held at Kettle Point at the public school there for this particular event. It was the exploration of how we will establish the treaty commission for Ontario. It was a two-day event, and it brought chiefs from all over the province together. But more importantly, it brought chiefs and First Nations people from across Canada, many of whom already have a provincial treaty commission. They came to share with everyone how their commissions worked, some of the best practices that they saw and, of course, some of the shortfalls and things that they felt needed to be improved.

For myself, as a member of the community there, I learned a lot about treaties and about why there is such mistrust by the First Nations of our government, because there is certainly a sad history there. I think that as a government here today, we have an opportunity to start that healing process. We have an opportunity to re-establish that trust. That's very, very important.

I also have the honour of chairing a committee between the municipality of Lambton Shores and the Chippewas of Kettle of Point and Stony Point. What that is also comes out of the Ipperwash inquiry. What we are doing there is trying to work out how we will co-manage the area of Ipperwash park and how we will move forward to develop economic opportunities for everyone.

One of the things that happened in that particular community was that after the Ipperwash events and after Dudley George was killed, the word "Ipperwash" had a very negative connotation. From an area where people would gather because of the beautiful beaches—we have pristine beaches there—suddenly customs people at the border would say to people, "Where are you going?" They'd say "We're going up into the Grand Bend area," and they would say, "Stay away from Ipperwash." That created a negative impact not just on Ipperwash but on

Forest, on Grand Bend and on the entire area, which just added more to the angst and the anger that was being experienced by the community.

We have needed to do this. We have needed to bring these people back together. What I can tell you about working as the chair of this particular committee is that, as the member from Timmins–James Bay talked about, we have different approaches to decision-making. While the municipal leadership wants a quick decision and says yes or no to a question, Chief Liz Cloud and her band councillors, of course, take it back to their community. They work on consensus, so things are slow, but we are moving forward and I'm really pleased. I want to thank all the parties in that community and in that committee for the work that they're doing, because we are talking about things that will re-establish that area as a tourist attraction, as a place to go, as a wonderful place to be where we can enjoy the water, the beaches, boating and, at the same time, also encourage tourism in that area.

One of the members of the committee actually talks about the days when everybody did that, when going to Ipperwash park was an enjoyable thing, when camping there was great, when they had a roller pad or park where roller skating was common and everybody enjoyed the summer evenings. Those were really enjoyable days. They want to see that return; they want to go back to that. At the same time, they also want to recognize what happened there, and so they want to establish a heritage building where they will have a memorial to Dudley George, where they will talk about the history and will talk about how this all came about.

The community around them, in Lambton Shores in particular, wants to be part of that. And so for all of us, this motion is critical to moving this forward, because we are moving in a direction that I think is exemplary in terms of how this government is dealing with the First Nations. I think we are creating a template for how it can be done for other communities in this province, and I think it's very important that we re-establish that trust, take time to do the healing that we need to do with our First Nations, because they are our First Nations. Meegwetch.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Mrs. Jeffrey has moved government notice of motion 173. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

FULL DAY EARLY LEARNING
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'APPRENTISSAGE
DES JEUNES ENFANTS À TEMPS PLEIN

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 25, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 242, An Act to amend the Education Act and certain other Acts in relation to early childhood educators, junior kindergarten

and kindergarten, extended day programs and certain other matters / *Projet de loi 242, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les éducateurs de la petite enfance, la maternelle et le jardin d'enfants, les programmes de jour prolongé et d'autres questions.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: This is another one of my bifurcated debates, where I do half of it one day and half the next, or a little less than half today.

On the last occasion, as I was leaving, the parliamentary assistant, the member from Guelph, came and tried to correct some of the things I was saying. We got into a little bit of a spirited, although friendly, debate on what I was trying to say. Just to reiterate that, because I'm hoping she has a two-minute comment on this, it is the feeling in my community that we have been left out of the process, the fact that of 120,000 people, numbers of schools, both a Catholic board and a public board, there is not a single educational facility that will offer all-day learning kindergarten in the first year of the program. The people who are living there feel, what is the matter with this? What is the government program?

I recognize that criteria were set out by the province, I recognize that the school boards followed those criteria, and I recognize that, given the criteria that were followed, there was not to be a space for 120,000 people. Although when I talk to the member from Guelph, she has five schools in her riding—three public board and two Catholic board schools—that are being accommodated. And so she has a great many spaces available, and good for her, in her riding.

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Over the weekend, I went and tried to search out whether people in my riding had said anything about this, and there was one very small quote that I found. That was in the Toronto Star of January 8, 2010. The story is entitled "Full-Day Kindergarten Plan Draws Fire," by Laurie Monsebraaten. The quote I'd like to use was from part of the same example that I had given, which was Crescent Town, a community or a neighbourhood of some 15,000 people, amongst the poorest people in Toronto, and one of the 13 communities that have been identified by the United Way as desperately in need of extra opportunity, particularly educational opportunity. It, too, has no school available to the people who are there for all-day learning and all-day kindergarten.

A quote from one of the people who lives there: "Lima Ahmed, 30, who has a 4-year-old daughter in junior kindergarten at Crescent Town Elementary School, is outraged no schools in her east-end neighbourhood are on the list.

"We are all very disappointed our schools aren't included. We are one of the poorest areas of Toronto."

On the last occasion, I said I also wanted to spend a few minutes talking about what is not in the bill, and I recognize that Charles Pascal has made a series of recommendations—some 20 of them. I recognize that not

everything is doable within the confines of this economic time frame and the budget year that is coming up and that the Liberal government is proceeding on all-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds and has not committed and probably cannot, given the economic circumstances, commit to the other 19 recommendations.

I had an opportunity to sit down with a group of women who come from across Toronto on Friday in my constituency office. They asked for an appointment, they showed up, and I started to speak to them. Four of the five women who came forward live in Toronto Community housing. They are poor women. They are single mothers. They are people who struggle at the edge. The fifth woman was supportive of their cause, and although she did not live in community housing, she was not a person who described herself as well-off.

They were there to talk about what they believe is a shortcoming, in the short term, of this all-day kindergarten and general learning. They were there to talk to me about six- to 12-year-olds, who they feel are the forgotten people in all of this. I promised them on Friday that I would raise the concerns that they talked to me about for about a half an hour in my constituency office, because I think they're very realistic. They are smart people. They are people who care passionately about their children. They want to make a difference; they want this government to make a difference. They know that next year, or come this next month when the budget comes down, they're likely to be left out, but they wanted me to convey, on their behalf, how they feel about the all-day learning program, particularly as it relates to those children who are six to 12 years old.

They told me, and they are correct, that this is a critical period of a child's life, the time between six and 12 years; that there are now programs in place to deal with children with daycare issues; that there are programs in place to take care of children who are four and five years old in all-day kindergarten that are about to unfold and will be a reality in four or five years; and that there are programs that deal with youth, those who are 13 to 18 years of age, across the city. But they believe that the critical period of children's development—when there are cognitive skills learned, when there are social skills, resilience skills and self-confidence that is instilled in young people between the ages of six and 12—is not being funded to the extent that it should.

They pointed out, quite correctly, that there are one million children in need of out-of-school programs that are not getting those programs in the province of Ontario. Having come from Toronto, all of them, they gave me the statistics of the city of Toronto, which were a little surprising to me but obviously should not have been shocking. Only 9.5% of children between the ages of six and 12 are enrolled in an after-school program or a program that will give them something to do to occupy their time and teach them skills. That goes to show that 90.5% of all of the children in Toronto do not have access to those programs. They do not have access either because they are not offered in a locale which is close to

them or, more importantly and probably more likely, those programs are just too expensive for families to afford.

They talked to me about the need for accessible, affordable and quality programs, and that that would make a great deal of difference to their children. One woman with a bit of a tear in her eye talked about the difficulty that she had with her children as a single mother and that she was very worried that they were going to find themselves in trouble. She was very worried that her son would grow up and that he might belong to a gang; he might cut short any opportunity he had education-wise if he started to get in trouble, if he started to skip school, if he didn't have decent programs to go to. She asked me to do whatever we could to help her. She talked about people in her neighbourhood—they all did—where children are looked after by older siblings, and she talked about how all they have to do is look at television, and when they get bored of the television, the only alternative is to hang out with their friends, hang out in the malls, and eventually, she was afraid, get into trouble. There was nothing that was constructive. There were no sporting activities, there were no cultural activities, and there were no artistic activities to which they could aspire.

There was one woman who originally was from Mexico, a delightful woman who talked about what she had hoped to get for her children, and that was an opportunity to expand their field in the arts: to learn how to paint, how to sing, how to act. She felt that this was something that was sadly lacking in their communities.

Charles Pascal set out in narrowing the gap and talked about children in programs, and I quote him in part: Children who are in programs “tend to read, use computers, complete homework assignments and interact with adults more often” than those children who are not.

I know the government is looking at dollars. I know the whole thing will come down to money at the end of March or the beginning of April. But I ask you to think very clearly about what we can do for these children ages six to 12 as well, even if it is only a first step. I'm asking you to look at it in terms of the creation of jobs for youth care workers. I'm asking you to look at it for the creation of confidence for all of these six- to 12-year-olds who simply aren't getting the kinds of services that they need. And I'm asking you to look at the fact that it will likely, in the long term, lower the costs, because if you pay today to give a child an opportunity, if you pay today to give a child a chance to learn some additional skills so that they are not hanging around, so that there is not the potential trouble, you're looking a long way in the future towards having a better society.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I close and await the comments, especially those of the member from Guelph.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member for Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: As advertised.

I do need to correct one thing, which is that I am no longer the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of

Education. However, I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, so I would be happy to comment on the speech from the member for Beaches–East York.

The thing that we were discussing the other day was the fact that there aren't actually in the first-year implementation any schools in his particular riding, so I think it's perhaps useful to explain the process that the boards were asked to use in identifying a school for the first-year phase-in.

It's important to understand that this is a huge project and that it is going to be phased in over several years. So what we said to the boards for the first year was, number one, there needs to be space in the school, because we don't have time to build any new space. We recognize that there are lots of schools where there may be some space but it's not outfitted for little JKs and SKs, so we are going to have to reno the space. There are other schools where there is just no space for anybody extra, so we are going to have to have additions. But in year one, first of all, choose schools where there is space.

Secondly, in year one, choose schools where you don't disrupt existing daycare arrangements, so if there is a daycare already in the school and kids are maybe going to JK half the day and to child care the other half of the day, we don't need to disrupt that in the first year. We'll work out those sorts of situations later.

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Finally, amongst those schools in which there is space and there isn't already existing daycare, then look at what the community needs are, which ones—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to make a few comments to the member from Beaches–East York on his comments. I was interested in the fact that he had listened to a number of his constituents on this bill, Bill 242, and some of the issues it raises.

I can tell you that some of my comments—I'll be able to speak after the next government speaker—are on the need at this time for this particular legislation and the impact it will have on other programs as well.

He says he has listened to his constituents. I've listened to my constituents very carefully—in fact, I think any of the members who listen carefully to their constituents often get re-elected—and one of the things I've found is that in this particular case, I haven't seen a screaming demand for this all-day kindergarten in any shape or form whatsoever. I've actually seen no one come forward in my office. I have had a number of people who have come forward opposing it, particularly when we have a \$25-billion deficit and this is going to be a very expensive program to implement.

I look forward to my own comments in a few minutes, and I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments to the member from Beaches–East York today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To my good friend the member from Beaches–East York, you touched on some of the issues that I think we need some action taken on if we're going to move to full-time SK.

First of all, I think it's fairly clear that the New Democratic Party is in support of extending SK to all kids. The government is not doing that in this case. They're doing only some of it on the basis of where they're at in their budget and what they feel they can afford.

I think there are a couple of questions that need to be asked, and I think Mr. Prue raised that quite well. One, what about the whole issue around daycare? There is going to be a certain adjustment in the daycare community with losing a whole bunch of kids who would normally go into the daycare system. A number of them now will be going into junior kindergarten, and that is going to have an effect on a lot of daycare operators around the province. What have we got planned to be able to deal with effectively trying to mitigate those losses in daycare so that they can continue to afford to operate?

I think one of the other issues is, how do you deal with those schools that have been doing junior kindergarten for some years? For example, le conseil des Grandes Rivières in the city of Timmins, which is the Catholic French board from Hearst all the way down south to Timiskaming, have been offering junior kindergarten to all kids and all communities for many years now and they've done that within their own budget. They've basically had to take from one part of their budget to the other to be able to afford to do this. Are they going to get some of this money back? They certainly should be put in the position of not having to lose further as a result of them being on the avant-garde of putting junior kindergarten in place. I think we need to make sure that they're dealt with in some way, shape or form so that they end up not losing fiscally for having done what was right in the first place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm really happy to enter into this debate and express my full support for Bill 242.

In fact, I well remember during the 2007 election campaign, when I was listening to my soon-to-be constituents, how enthusiastic they were about this part of our platform. Certainly the people in my riding, people who are often commuting to work, are the parents of young children—and anything we can do not only to improve the chances of those children in terms of full-day learning but also to assist those parents, particularly with the extended-day part of this bill.

Creating the school as a hub is a concept that the York Region District School Board and the York Catholic District School Board are embracing exceptionally enthusiastically. Of course there are issues; there are implementation, logistical issues. This is why we are going forward in the way we are, in terms of phasing in this program.

Assuming the bill is passed, it is transformative in terms of our system of education for our youngest

children. I certainly remember, as someone who had been recently widowed and left with two children of five and four, just how difficult it was juggling the movement of my children between day care, school and after-school programs. Anything that can assist parents in this regard is incredibly valuable, as well as, of course, as Dr. Charles Pascal has expressed so admirably, ensures the early learning of our children, leading to an excellent education for them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Beaches–East York, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank the members from Guelph, Simcoe North, Timmins–James Bay and Oak Ridges–Markham for their comments. Time will only permit me to reply to two of them.

The member from Guelph set out correctly what the government did, but this is precisely why there are no spaces available in Beaches–East York: The schools are filled. The school where it is most needed is Crescent Town school, which they have just built out. They have taken out all the portables, they've built, and it is still oversubscribed. It a huge community in a very tight and compact area.

Secondly, daycares in the city of Toronto: I'm proud to say that over the last number of years, the city of Toronto has done a fairly good job in trying to identify daycare spaces, many of which, as I said before, are at risk. Some 2,000 to 5,000 daycare spaces will be lost unless this government comes across with the money.

Last, but not least, the need: This is the third criteria and maybe should have been the first criteria, because after there is no space in the school, after the fact that there are daycares in places like Toronto in sufficient quantity, it doesn't matter whether there's a need for it. Quite frankly, I think a great many parents in parts of the city of Toronto will be hugely disappointed, in the first or second year, to find that their children have been excluded due to the locale in which they live.

The member from Simcoe North raised an interesting point. He talked about how some people are opposed to this because of the \$25-billion deficit. I fully understand the \$25-billion deficit, as do all members on all sides of the House, I'm sure, but the reality is that this is an idea whose time has come.

I commend the government because you're having to look into doing a new program in spite of the deficit. I know there are going to have to be cost-cutting measures somewhere, but this is the time and the program is the right one. Charles Pascal has said the right things; please do them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

M. Shafiq Qaadri: J'ai le plaisir maintenant de soutenir le projet de loi 242 concernant l'apprentissage à temps plein pour les enfants âgés de quatre à cinq ans.

Dans le cadre du plan de la province pour bâtir un système scolaire plus solide et pour former une main-d'œuvre bien instruite, l'Ontario offrira un programme

d'apprentissage à temps plein aux enfants âgés de quatre à cinq ans.

Le programme sera progressivement mis en place en plusieurs phases à partir de septembre 2010. Des éducatrices et éducateurs de la petite enfance travailleront ensemble pour aider les enfants de quatre à cinq ans à apprendre durant la journée de classe ordinaire. Les écoles offriront aussi des programmes de jour prolongé avant et après les heures normales de classe, animés par des éducatrices et éducateurs de la petite enfance accrédités.

Il faudra s'acquitter des frais raisonnables pour ces programmes, mais des subventions seront accordées à certaines familles en fonction de leurs besoins financiers. Les frais seront établis localement par les conseils scolaires.

En septembre 2010, jusqu'à 35 000 enfants âgés de quatre à cinq ans bénéficieront de la première phase de la mise en œuvre de l'apprentissage à temps plein. Le programme sera progressivement élargi, l'objectif étant de le mettre en œuvre intégralement d'ici 2015-2016.

L'Ontario investit dans l'éducation de ses plus jeunes élèves pour mieux les préparer à la réussite future. L'apprentissage des jeunes enfants à temps plein améliorera les aptitudes en lecture, en écriture et en mathématiques; favorisera une transition plus harmonieuse à la première année; aidera un plus grand nombre d'élèves à connaître la réussite scolaire; et contribuera à bâtir une économie plus vigoureuse pour l'avenir.

Pour en savoir plus, lisez la feuille de renseignements sur mon site Internet www.shafiqqaadri.com.

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It's a privilege, an honour, a duty and a responsibility, of course, to speak in support of our Minister of Education, the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, as well as the broader vision of the education Premier, Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty, with reference to full-day learning, Bill 242.

Of course, the phrase "full-day learning," I think, is resonant for those of us who are lifelong learners, because not only is full-day learning a direct application of lifelong learning, but I think it utilizes not only the capacity of our educational system more fully but also engages youth when they are particularly amenable to this sort of education.

In that respect, Speaker, I would, with your permission, like to share with you a couple of highlights from medical research which may at first glance appear to be a little bit, shall we say, beyond the usual standard deviation, or a little bit exotic. But they actually come from the realm of prenatal studies or the growing field of life before birth—actually, fetal studies. The ultimate goal to share with you in this particular research is to say that engaging kids at the ages of four and five may even be too late, because they're ready even before that.

The ear first appears in the third week of gestation and becomes fully functional by the 16th week. The fetus begins active listening by six months of gestational age.

We know from ultrasound observations that the fetus hears and responds to a sound pulse starting at 16 weeks of age. This is even before the ear construction is complete. The cochlear structures of the ear appear to function by about the 20th week, and mature synapses, meaning connections of nerves, have been found between six months and seven months of gestational age.

You will be interested to know that congenital malformations identified on ultrasound in infants in the United States are actually being treated before birth. For example, there are now formal programs of prenatal stimulation that are actually designed to begin in the third trimester.

The sense of hearing is the most developed of all senses before birth. In particular, some things that have actually risen to the attention of the lay press: The research of Michele Clements in London found that four- to five-month fetuses were soothed by the soft portions of the music of Handel, Vivaldi and Mozart but disturbed, as some of my colleagues are, by loud passages of Beethoven, Brahms and rock music. Newborns have shown a preference for melody that their mother actually speaks or sings, and they have a growing list of catalogued responses even within the fetus stage.

My point in sharing that admittedly somewhat exotic and perhaps not entirely clear information here is that the biology of our younger citizens in Ontario is ready not only at the age of four and five but, I would submit, with a growing body of medical research, even before. So I think it's especially appropriate and timely that we as a government are moving forward, yes, as some of our Conservative colleagues have pointed out, in a time of deficit. But I think that speaks even more strongly to the vision and commitment of the education Premier, Dalton McGuinty.

I would submit to you as well that this commitment for full-day learning is part of a broader program or an avenue of attack and approach with regard to lifelong learning that this government has been very skilled at and committed to. For example, as you will know, there are now several thousand people who have benefited from the Second Career program. There has been unprecedented multi-billion dollar support for our universities, colleges and training opportunities; for example, with the Second Career and apprenticeship programs.

Recently within my own riding, the great riding of Etobicoke North, I was pleased to be part of the ribbon-cutting ceremony at Humber College, north campus, to open the skilled trades centre, which had some award-winning individuals from across Canada as not only some of their teachers but also alumni—and, of course, the idea, as you'll hear more about during the throne speech on Monday, March 8, with regard to embracing digital technologies.

I am pleased to say that there are a number of schools within my own riding of Etobicoke North that have been flagged for the first phase in September 2010 for the full-day learning. They are, I'm pleased to announce, Albion Heights Junior Middle School, Elmbank Junior Middle

Academy, Greenholme Junior Middle School, Holy Child Catholic School, St. Angela Catholic School, and St. Maurice Separate School. According to my information, these will be up and ready with fully phased-in full-day learning as of September 2010.

I'm pleased to announce, as well, that the other schools, such as Beaumonde, Braeburn, Claireville, Dixon Grove, Elmlea, Highfield, Humberwood, John D. Parker, Kingsview, Melody Village, Monsignor John Corrigan, North Kipling, Rivercrest, St. Andrew, St. Benedict, St. Dorothy, St. John Vianney, St. Marcellus, St. Stephen, the Elms Junior Middle School, Transfiguration and West Humber Junior Middle School, are also now under active consideration. As was pointed out earlier during this debate, there are configuration issues, logistics, catchment area issues and so on.

I appreciate the remarks of my colleague from the NDP, the member for Beaches—East York, who did legitimately identify some of the growing pains, some of the, let's say, inequitable distribution during the first year of launch. Of course, we welcome the support of the NDP caucus and would simply state that as we've said clearly, this is really a phased-in program. Ultimately, what we're looking at doing is including into this program about 35,000 to 40,000 four- and five-year-olds across Ontario in approximately 1,400 classes in 600 schools. You can imagine that this is an Olympian task, if I can appropriately use that phrase, and that's why the government is devoting such extraordinary resources to it.

One of the things that also needs to be credited from the government's initiative, probably something that deserves more attention than it has had, is the fact that the government of Ontario has enabled our public and separate school boards to purchase one million new books for our elementary schools. I think that's an extraordinary and probably quiet victory: not something that gains headlines, not something the Toronto Sun will ask their usually very intelligent questions of regarding our caucus, but something that will have deep, long-lasting and impactful influence on the day-to-day, lived experience of many, many children. I share some qualities, in terms of our ridings, with the member from Beaches—East York. There are a number of newer and new Canadians in my own riding for whom, for example, the classics of literature or exposure to deep and well-stocked libraries in the English language may be something of a novelty. I'm pleased to say that our schools, and by extension our kids and therefore society in general and ultimately the province of Ontario and borders beyond, are going to benefit from such an extraordinary commitment.

I'll give you an example. One of my favourite books, which I happen to be reading at this moment—of course, I'm reading the adult version, and this is the children's version from one of my schools—is Gulliver's Travels. It's what is known as a Classic Starts; it's a kid's version. I think a lot of the very poignant and vicious political satire that is included in the original has been removed—

de-fumigated, as you might say—from this particular volume. I can only express delight to think that opportunities to read not only classic works of this nature are enabled and furthered by our commitment to have one million books purchased. The fact that four- and five-year-olds, and perhaps even kids on a much earlier basis than otherwise, adding perhaps a year's or even two years' exposure to these types of works of literature, and more broadly, of course, just engagement of the mind, whether it's of letters, of numbers, of socialization, of interacting with your peers, learning to behave, accepting the school routine—it is something that's really welcome and extraordinary, and part of the vision of the McGuinty government.

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What is important is that this is actually the fruit of some very deep and, I would say, vivid research by a well-known educator, Dr. Charles Pascal. Time and time again, we have identified, whether it's the Mustard report, which tended to be more towards the medical or biological or scientific aspects, or this particular report regarding engagement of kids, that the earlier the better. I think all of us in our own lived experience are, for example, very familiar with this idea that it is easier to pick up your first language, a second language, the rules of grammar and so on the earlier you engage as kids. To think that we will be introducing, welcoming, engaging a whole generation of schoolchildren a year, a year and a half, two years earlier than otherwise is something that I think will, once it reaches the level of history, be looked upon as a truly visionary moment in the government of Ontario. As we've mentioned earlier, ultimately what is it about? Engaging our children so that they will have a smoother transition to grade 1, and of course introducing this idea that life skills, socialization, math, letters, numbers, reading and so on are something very important and something that this government believes in very firmly.

With that, I would simply say that I'm delighted on many fronts: as a father, as a doctor, as the MPP for Etobicoke North, with a number of my more modest-income folks and new or newer Canadians, emerging Canadians. Everyone, in fact, will really be benefiting from this multi-pronged approach to education, whether it's our commitment to apprenticeship programs, our Second Career programs, our multi-billion dollar investment in colleges, training and university, the skills and trade centre at Humber College, our embrace of digital technologies, the one million new books, including *Gulliver's Travels*, and of course now the full-day learning program.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I wish to comment on the member's remarks. It certainly makes me question that we would have to have a politically correct version of *Gulliver's Travels*. The aspects in there that are so offending in that great classic—I mean, let's face it, that's what makes it a classic, the content in the original

place. We try to politically correct everything we do here to protect society and make it better. I quite frankly think that we're going down the wrong path. If individuals don't find out at earlier ages what the reality of life is really like when they come out—as my grade nine son wrote in there, it's why he should get a job, to find out what it's like in the real world; that's his own comment, uninfluenced by me in any way, shape or form. But when we have to politically correct *Gulliver's Travels* to ensure that we don't influence the minds of young children, what are we really saying? I certainly have some concerns regarding the influence that we would try to perceive that we are having in one fashion or another. I don't think it's the right way to move forward. I think the reason that *Gulliver's Travels* was a classic in the first place was because of the content, not the politically correct content.

As well, the member spoke about aspects of the Second Career program. There's a great concern with the educational component in the skilled trades sector that hasn't been straightened out, in that individuals are taking the classes directly from one ministry but being tested in another, and the two never meet. So what's taking place—and certainly I know the individuals within the auto sector are very concerned that they're writing a test five and six and seven times because the twain are never meeting in that particular area of concern where we are losing skilled individuals.

Yes, we need to move forward with correct aspects of things changing in the education area, but I don't necessarily believe that a politically correct *Gulliver's Travels* is something we should all be concerned with.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was just wondering about the reason that we need to have a more politically correct version of *Gulliver*; is it because we have to call him Guillaume? I don't know. Anyway, I thought that was an interesting comment.

I would say to the member across the way that I appreciate his comments. I also want to commend him on his French. I thought, "You've been taking lessons, sir, and it is showing." My sense was that it was pretty impeccable. I applaud anybody who takes the time to learn any other language, let alone French, Spanish or whatever it might be. I think that's something far too few of us do. I think the more we're able to speak languages, the better we are able to communicate with the world around us and understand some of the things that may be nuances that we don't catch otherwise.

I would also say that one of the issues that we really need to pay some mind to on this particular initiative—and I'll get a chance to speak to that a little bit later—is the issue of what's going to happen in the daycare sector. Is this a good idea? Obviously. Is this something I support? Of course. Full-time junior kindergarten is something we've been doing in the city of Timmins for years with the school boards in my area, because for years they've understood the benefit of doing this from the point of view of the children.

The point is, however, we are going to have some difficulty with some daycare operators who will lose a certain number of students—or clients, I guess they would be, children in their daycares—as a result of them moving into junior kindergarten. I think we need to have some kind of a strategy to deal with that, because in the end you don't want to—pardon the pun—throw out the baby with the bathwater, in the sense that we want to make sure we have a strong, vibrant daycare system that is able to absorb and properly deal with our children in the daycare sector, and then transition into junior kindergarten in a way that makes some sense, not only for the child but also for the daycare sector and for the schools themselves.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and to follow the speech by the member for Etobicoke North. I think he said, in my opinion, that he sees this as a great step forward for this province, and I'd agree with that. When it was first announced, it was a policy that I agreed with. I knew it would make my community a much better community and my school system a much better school system and mean great things for the young people who are just entering the education system.

At that point in time, I didn't realize that I would be the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and would actually have a role in the implementation of this program, so certainly I feel privileged in that regard for such a monumental move, because it makes our province a leader—a leader certainly in North America—in the way that we look at education of young people in their early years.

With the tough economic times we have right now in the province, there would be every reason for not doing this. You could come forward and say, "You know what? We'll give you a pass on this because times are tough." But we haven't said that. As a government, we realize that the global competitiveness of our economy, of the Canadian economy, depends in large part on how well-educated Ontario citizens are. That education takes place, obviously, starting with our young people, and the emphasis is on the education of our young people. What they're able to do in the early years really dictates what they're capable of in the years when they start to move into the workforce.

It's really heartening to watch the professionals as well in our society who are working together. Once again, there would be every reason to think that perhaps there would be a dispute on some of these issues, but I think the maturity that the early childhood educators and teaching profession have brought to this debate so far, and the co-operative nature with which they're approaching it is something which we should all be proud of. They should be proud of the work they do, and we should be proud of the work they do within our education system.

I'd like to thank Dr. Pascal for the work he's done in advising us and urge all members of the House to support this. It's time to move on. It's a great policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This program has its attributes; it also has some concerns. I have some concerns about it. One of those concerns is the lack of choice that it gives to parents. If a parent wants their child in a half-day program, I'm not sure that choice is going to be available to them. Having many, many parents in Ontario who are working in split shifts or working from home or at different times of day, it is very possible that they would want their children at home with them when they are there.

There's a huge learning curve when children are in that time of their life, the three-, four- and five-year-olds, a tremendous learning curve that they go through. It's said that they don't achieve that learning curve at any other time in their life. That's when they learn the quickest. I think it's extremely important that during that period of their life, they spend as much time as they can with their parents to learn the values and the way of life that their parents have led. I think their moral structure, their moral framework, is determined in those early years of life. Having their parents nearby as much as possible is a very positive thing.

This bill, I think, might very well limit that time and that flexibility of having a half day in junior kindergarten in particular and also in kindergarten. It would inhibit that ability for parents to spend time with their children, which I think is a very, very important part of their upbringing and their opportunities. It would be a shame if this bill went through without time in committee to hear from the many people who would want to have that flexibility in this bill.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Etobicoke North, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: As per protocol, I'd like to thank my honourable colleagues who spoke on this particular bill, the MPPs from Oakville, Oshawa, et Halton, et je veux vous remercier, monsieur Bisson, spécifiquement, pour vos remarques et le soutien de votre parti.

I can only agree with the MPP from Oshawa that we should get the original version of Gulliver's Travels into the hands of our Ontario schoolchildren as quickly as possible. But like Bill 242, that scenario is a phased approach. I would simply submit that material and literature selected for different age groups and determined to be appropriate is probably the way to go.

I am a little puzzled by some of the vocabulary or rhetoric choice by the MPP from Halton when he said that people should have a choice. It seemed to bring to mind the very noble Tory plan for the funding of religious and alternate schools, which I think has gone to a greater place from this Legislature.

Be that as it may, I think the government of Ontario is very firm in its commitment not only to education but, broadly speaking, to full-life or lifelong learning, of course, now beginning at the earliest ages. I'll quote, for

example, Mr. James Ryan, the president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, who said, "We applaud the government for its leadership in improving education opportunities and services to children and their families.... Teachers welcome [these services] as part of a full-time integrated team approach that will work together to meet the needs of every student."

Of course, there are implementation issues; there are locale issues. There are issues that we have to resolve as we bring this forward to the many, many different locales, ethnic groups and neighbourhoods, and, of course, the physical constraints of our schools. But this is a visionary moment in the province of Ontario and certainly from the Ministry of Education.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I am pleased to rise today and take part in this interesting debate on Bill 242, An Act to amend the Education Act and certain other Acts in relation to early childhood educators, junior kindergarten and kindergarten, extended day programs and certain other matters. The short title of the bill is the Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010.

I mentioned earlier in my comments—when I did a comment in response to the member from Beaches–East York about the need for the program, I did talk about the deficit, and I just want to zero in on that for a few moments. We understand that this program will cost somewhere around \$1.6 billion—that's my understanding—for this year, beginning in the fall. That will, in fact, cover around 600 schools in the province of Ontario, and we understand that not all the schools will have this at this time.

Why I was so concerned about the cost of it is that we've had a very difficult time with another issue around young people and children, and that's our children's aid societies. It all sort of blew up this winter—before the break, anyhow. In Simcoe county, the Children's Aid Society of Simcoe County actually had a deficit of just under \$5 million. We had to do a lot of lobbying and, of course, the minister came through with some of the money—\$2.9 million of that money—just prior to the House returning. I believe it was just on February 12.

I'm not sure where the government stands on children's aid societies when you compare it to the money going to the school boards, because there is this extra money available, apparently, to the school boards. We looked fairly carefully at our children's aid society, as a number of others have in the province, and seen there are some flaws in the funding formula. All I'm saying is that young people in the children's aid society, many who are kindergarten and junior kindergarten age, are actually the most challenged, disadvantaged, marginalized children in our society. I really want to make sure that there will be funding available for those organizations before we start a brand new program when we're holding a \$25-billion deficit.

I've got a number of things I wanted to read into the record. Some of it has to do with funding, some of it has

to do with some of the comments coming from our local teachers' unions, the local school board and some from our own education critic, Mrs. Witmer, who will be, I believe, speaking the next time the bill comes forward. But, really, the current status—well, we're at our second reading debate.

"The bill"—and I'll just put this into the record—"amends the Education Act to provide for: the operation of junior kindergarten and kindergarten on a full-day basis; the operation of extended day programs outside the hours of junior kindergarten and kindergarten; and the appointment of early childhood educators to positions in junior kindergarten and kindergarten extended day programs.

"Sections 1 to 9 of the bill amend various provisions of the act in relation to full-day junior kindergarten and kindergarten, extended day programs and early childhood educators.

"In particular, subsection 2(1) of the bill amends subsection 8(1) of the act by authorizing the minister to issue policies and guidelines respecting full-day junior kindergarten and kindergarten.... Subsection 6(1) of the bill amends subsection 170(1) of the act by requiring boards to operate full-day junior kindergarten and kindergarten in the board's elementary schools, to designate at least one position in each junior kindergarten and kindergarten class as requiring an early childhood educator, and to appoint early childhood educators to these positions. These requirements are subject to policies, guidelines and"—of course—"regulations.

"Section 10 of the bill adds part IX.1 to the act (sections 258 to 260.9 of the act) relating to extended day programs. Subsection 259(1) of the act requires boards to operate extended day programs in every elementary school of the board, outside the time when junior kindergarten and kindergarten are operated, for pupils of the board enrolled in junior kindergarten or kindergarten. Subsection 259(2) of the act permits boards to operate extended day programs for other pupils of the board. Subsections 259(3) and (4) of the act permit two or more boards to enter into agreements permitting one board to operate extended day programs for pupils of another board. Section 260 of the act requires boards to designate at least one position in each extended day program class as requiring an early childhood educator to lead the class, and to appoint early childhood educators to those positions. These requirements are subject to policies, guidelines and"—again—"regulations.

"Section 260.1"—and I'll be going over this in a moment when I get to some other issues—"of the act requires boards to charge the fees prescribed by regulation to parents of pupils enrolled in extended day programs operated by the board to recover the operating costs incurred by the board.

"Section 260.4 of the act authorizes the minister and, if authorized by the minister, a board, to enter into agreements respecting financial assistance to persons who are charged fees for extended day programs.

"Section 260.5 of the act authorizes the minister to issue policies and guidelines respecting the operation of

extended day programs. Section 260.6 of the act authorizes the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations respecting the operation of extended day programs. Section 260.7 of the act authorizes the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations respecting the provision of financial assistance to persons who are charged fees in respect of extended day programs.

“Section 260.9 of the act provides that it is an offence to knowingly furnish false information in any application, statement or report that relates to the provision, management or receipt of financial assistance under the new part IX.1.

“Sections 11 to 15, 17 to 19 and 22 of the bill make amendments to various provisions of the act in relation to early childhood educators.

“Section 16 of the bill amends the act by adding section 264.1. This section requires teachers and early childhood educators to co-operate with each other with respect to matters regarding the provision of junior kindergarten, kindergarten and extended day programs.

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“Section 21 of the bill adds part X.3 to the act (sections 277.46 to 277.51 of the act). Sections 277.46 to 277.49 provide for induction programs for early childhood educators and performance appraisals of early childhood educators. Section 277.50 requires boards, in certain circumstances, to make reports to the College of Early Childhood Educators. Section 277.51 requires the College of Early Childhood Educators, in certain circumstances, to provide information and documents to boards.

“Section 23 of the bill makes related amendments to the Child and Family Services Act.

“Sections 24 to 28 of the bill amend the Day Nurseries Act to allow agreements to be entered into for the provision of financial assistance to persons who are charged fees in respect of extended day programs, and to authorize the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations relating to the provision of such financial assistance.

“Sections 29 to 32 of the bill make related amendments to the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Immunization of School Pupils Act.”

Our message is really around this: The Premier is already admitting that the program will cost \$1.5 billion, and we can expect this number to grow, since no funding has been announced to build new physical space to accommodate the program; thus we do not know what the final cost will be.

This is a program that some trustees themselves are calling “one of the most ill-conceived and badly thought through programs the province has ever announced.” Finally, there is no detailed plan of implementation.

The Liberals ran on a promise to cap class sizes at 20 students per class. By the Premier’s own admission, this will increase class size to 26 students for our youngest learners. This program leaves little choice for parents who only want a half day program for their children.

Our position is that we support Dr. Pascal and we support in principle the idea of all-day kindergarten and

junior kindergarten. We know, as the member from Timmins–James Bay said earlier, that this is already part of the programs delivered by the French public board and the French Catholic board, and they’ve had it for many decades. However, we have some concern because of the cost.

I wanted to say that I had a couple of questions from our local school unions. As well, there were some concerns about the actual funding itself.

I want to read a little article from the local paper up in the Orillia area. It’s by Nathan Taylor, and it reads: “Daycare Funding Unclear: School Boards Concerned They’ll Have To Subsidize New Program

“There is concern that school boards will have to subsidize before- and after-school programs when the province’s all-day kindergarten initiative begins in the fall.

“All-day kindergarten will take place at 16 of the Simcoe County District School Board’s schools. School boards are also mandated to provide before- and after-school care.

“Individual boards will be determining how much to charge for that program, but some trustees fear they’ll have to subsidize it in order to make it affordable.

“‘We can’t afford to start subsidizing daycare for before and after school. We can’t do it at the expense of our programming,’ said Jodi Lloyd, trustee for Ramara, Severn and Tay townships. ‘It’s a wonderful service. However, it needs to be on a 100% cost-recovery basis.’

“The concern from staff is that 100% cost recovery might not be achievable while, at the same time, charging a reasonable fee.

“If the fee is higher than other daycare options in the community, ‘their likelihood is to leave the school and not take part in the extended-day program, and that kind of defeats the purpose of the extended-day program,’ associate director Carol McAulay said, noting the point is to maintain continuity for the children.

“The Ministry of Education is also strongly encouraging boards to offer the before- and after-school program at the schools that are hosting all-day kindergarten, she said.

“Trustees had similar concerns when the Best Start program was introduced, said Orillia trustee Debra Edwards.

“‘There are more questions than answers,’ she said.

“More clarity will come when the province announces its education grants for boards, she said.

“‘Once we see the colour of the money, we will see if there’s a shortfall, and if there is, there’s a problem,’ she said. ‘Short of a miracle, I’m not expecting a good-news announcement in the upcoming education grants.’

“All-day kindergarten will be offered at eight schools in the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board, including St. Bernard’s Catholic School in Orillia, and local trustee Jim Canning has some concerns, too.

“‘We don’t know very much detail about what those costs are going to be. Certainly, it’s a concern,’ he said.

"If the fees are too high for some families, they could still send their kids to the all-day kindergarten program, but before and after school, they'd be more apt to send them to daycare or a babysitter, he said.

"He also shared the concerns about funding.

"We need to be reimbursed by the ministry for whatever it is we do," Canning said, noting the ministry is the sole source of funding for boards. "Other than that, we'd have to cut into other programs, which we don't want to do."

"Staff at both boards are working with the province to determine the program requirements and costs.

"My concerns are the unknowns," said Michael O'Keefe, director of education with the Catholic board. "I don't know what the fee will end up being."

"But, he assured, the board supports the program.

"It's got great potential for providing a nice, seamless transition," he said.

"Lloyd feels the all-day kindergarten program—which is being phased in over the next five years, beginning this September—is being done very quickly," and added teachers, principals and boards across the province are concerned.

"It's coming out in bits and drabs here and there," she said.

"McAulay said the board has a 'pretty clear picture of what the program is to look like,' but there are still questions about what the board's role will be in some areas.

"We're not in the business, normally, of collecting fees," she said, noting there will be added administrative responsibility for billing and collecting.

"Some families receive government subsidies for day-care, also, and McAulay is unsure how or if that board will work with school boards.

"These are not insurmountable things," she said. "Early learning is a great program for kids."

I wanted to put that in the record because that was in our local media, the Osprey group, just a week ago.

I'm glad the minister is in the House today. I wanted to add this other letter I got today, and I'll just read it out. It says:

"Dear Mr. Dunlop:

"As the president of the Simcoe County Elementary Teachers' Federation, I am requesting that you demand that the Minister of Education and her government honour the collective agreement between the Simcoe County District School Board and the statutory members of the union of Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario—September 1, 2008 to August 31, 2012.... During question period, I urge you and your fellow MPPs to hold Minister Dombrowsky accountable for honourable all collective agreements negotiated in good faith.

"You need to vote against Bill 242 and specifically, section 260.5(2)(j).

"If Bill 242 with section 260.5(2)(j) is passed, the Minister of Education will be able to override our collective agreement and those rights that were negotiated in good faith and specifically, article 9.01(a), (d) and (e)

which deals with the class size of kindergarten classes. The members of Simcoe County Elementary Teachers' Federation and the Simcoe County District School Board have agreed to uphold our collective agreement, and we expect the government of Ontario to do this same. The passing of Bill 242 with section 260.5(2)(j) as currently written will enable the Minister of Education to staff full-day every day kindergarten classes with an average class size beyond those limits stated in our collective agreement.

"I look forward to question period when you question Minister Dombrowsky about Bill 242, which gives her the power to violate the collective agreement of the elementary teachers of Simcoe county.

"I am available to meet with you to discuss this issue."

It's signed by the president of the Simcoe County Elementary Teachers' Federation.

So we do have some very, very serious concerns about class size as we move this bill through the process. That's why we're in the House here today—to debate this.

I wanted to say to the members of the House that I think there are two things that are key to this right now. First of all is that I know there's going to be a throne speech next week. I'm assuming a few weeks after that we should see some kind of a budget. I think what's going to be very important in this process right now is the allocation of grants to the different school boards, and that usually comes sometime—I've seen it anywhere from early April, mid-April to mid-May.

I'm hoping that when we have our committee hearings—and we'll have our committee hearings, I expect, because it's such an important bill and it has such a huge impact financially on the province—these committee hearings will be held throughout the province, as we move forward in the spring months. I'm hoping that we can have a good debate and that a number of these people, like the president of the Simcoe county teachers' federation, people from the school boards, people from the media—that the opposition can have an opportunity to question the ministry on this particular bill and of course any amendments they may see, because a lot of it will be left to regulations.

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Finally, I think you've seen already that the school boards are very concerned with the funding that will be available to them to operate the boards. I know that just recently—I think it was last Friday—the Simcoe County District School Board announced that they may have to shave \$12 million or \$14 million out of their budget somehow to balance the books. That will have a huge impact on class size, on the number of people they hire and the number of schools that are built etc.

So I think there are two things here: the committee hearings and, of course, when the grants are rolled out. It would be nice to know, before we go into the committee hearings on this particular bill, what funding each board will get. I know that there's going to be some more debate on this and that we're going to have the throne speech and budget and all that, but it would be very

interesting if we could actually see the board allocation for 2010-11 before we go into committee hearings, in order to find out what those impacts will be on these particular school boards as we move through the process.

So those are really my concerns with it. As I said earlier, I still have a very serious concern about implementation at a time when we have a \$25-billion deficit. It wouldn't bother me at all to see this postponed a year or two, until we can maybe get into a better financial position. What I'm hearing across the province—or what I'm hearing in the room, at least—is that people seem to support Bill 242 but are quite reluctant at this time to give a strong voice of support until we see some of the things like committee hearings and what the funding allocation will be to each of the boards implementing all-day kindergarten and junior kindergarten.

Finally, I just wanted to say that we keep talking about four- and five-year-olds, who this is mainly affecting. The reality is that any of the children who are born between September and December 31 in a school year are actually three years old. The question has to be—whether the Pascal report is accurate or not—you have to look at whether a three-year-old should be in an institution the size of a school for all-day kindergarten and all-day junior kindergarten.

Thank you very much for the opportunity this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I hear the comments from the member from Simcoe whatever—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: North.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Simcoe North, okay. I knew I had the Simcoe right; I just wasn't sure which part of it. Where I come from, it's like you have it all or you have none, right? So anyway, Simcoe North.

I guess where I differ is that I think it's something that you can't afford to put off. I do believe that junior kindergarten is an integral part of our education system. I think moving to full-time JK ultimately is where we want to be; the question is how quickly we can do it and how we're going to pay for it. I think those are fair discussions for all of us to have, because it will mean that there will be some choices to be made.

We're also going to have to deal with the issue of how we put time on the clock, because I can keep on going for hours here.

Interjection: Go on, Gilles.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just noticed that the clock hasn't started yet. The other—very good. They're very good at adjusting the clock, I must say.

The other issue is how we're going to deal with what will be, I think, a problem for some—not all—of our daycare operators. We know that in all of our communities various daycare operators will have a lot of kids who would normally be in daycare ending up in junior kindergarten. I think that's going to tax, as they would say, some of these particular daycare operators.

I'll have a chance in a few minutes to have a few more words on that, but those would be my comments for now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to respond to the sharing of the member from Simcoe North, who spent some time talking about his concern about the deficit. We all have a concern about the deficit, but there's more than just a physical deficit we're talking about here. The simple truth of the matter is that studies have shown that some 28% of our children show up at grade 1—which, legally, is when they are required to start their education, emotionally, cognitively and linguistically not prepared to study. About 40% of those kids never catch up. It occurs to this government that in a world where the global economy is so strained, we need every advantage we can get.

Many years ago, the British did a 15-year quality study, known as the Bristol study, which indicated that the quality of oral language in a child's environment not only has a considerable effect on their learning development, it's the single most important predictor of childhood achievement in school. I think that's important.

My colleague referenced Gulliver's Travels; I'd like to reference Peter Pan if I can just for a minute. It's an enduring tale. Peter is drawn to the ledge by the stories. He loses his shadow, he meets Wendy, and he invites her to come to Neverland to read to the lost boys. It occurs to me that Peter might not have been afraid to grow up if his parents had read to him at an early age and if more parents would read to their kids at an early age, because in books, literature and language, imagination flourishes. So, too, do economies related to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise to respond to the member from Simcoe North. There were two issues in particular that he raised in his 20-minute debate, and I am happy to participate and have part of this discussion, because I don't want them to be overlooked.

The children's aid societies across Ontario, since the fall, have been struggling with some very serious deficits. We all know that; we've been back in our ridings for the last number of months. Our party raised it in question period in the fall.

To me, as we discuss early childhood education and full-day learning, I look at the dichotomy of trying to fund that when we aren't sufficiently funding the children's aid societies across Ontario. Our most vulnerable children and families are literally being cut off from the resources that they need to thrive and survive. Yet, instead of having the McGuinty Liberals actually deal with that issue and bring forward proactive solutions to it, what we have is, "Let's have an exciting new program."

I wish, instead, what we could discuss and debate here are some ways to actually solve some of the problems that we have in the children's aid societies across Ontario. Whether you're talking about the north, in Pikangi-

kum; in my own riding of Dufferin and Peel, we're struggling with high growth numbers and the children's aid society, quite frankly, has not been able to keep up. We've had a government that is ignoring that issue, ignoring that problem and instead wants to have the shiny new bauble of the full-day learning. I think it's a terrible shame that mandated programs are being ignored for new programs when we simply cannot afford them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Simcoe North, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Timmins–James Bay, Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale and Dufferin–Caledon for their responses. What I want to say is that in a perfect world this—with Dr. Pascal's recommendations—we'd completely understand it and we would like this to be able to take place. But, again, there are a few things I wanted to put on the record about before we move ahead and pass this.

I've read a letter into the record from the teachers' federation. After all the work we've done in trying to get class sizes down, are class sizes in fact going to increase to 25 or 26, the average class size for junior classes? If that's the case, that's kind of a step backwards in itself. As my colleague said, there doesn't seem to be the money for things like children's aid. We know that there's a flaw in the way children's aid societies are funded because, for example, in Simcoe county they get \$30 a day less per child than the GTA children's aid societies. That's what's causing these huge deficits. So we have to fix those sort of things as well. For the whole budget, that's only going to cost something like another—\$60 million will correct that. We haven't got \$60 million for that, but we've got \$1.6 billion to implement the all-day kindergarten. At the same time, I've talked to a lot of teachers, and they're really concerned about this. A lot of teachers don't have the basic supplies they need for their classrooms. They're actually going out and purchasing it themselves, so they're having a bake sale just to buy basic supplies for the classroom. Those types of things have to be addressed.

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I'm looking forward to the committee hearings and I'm looking forward to the budget, when we see the allocation for these boards.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

M. Gilles Bisson: C'est avec une certaine anticipation que je me trouve dans ce débat aujourd'hui, parce que c'est quelque chose qu'on a déjà fait il y a assez longtemps chez nous, comme dans d'autres comtés à travers la province de l'Ontario. Il y a certains conseils scolaires qui ont compris, droit au début, qu'il y a des bénéfices de donner à nos jeunes l'habileté de rentrer à l'école une année plus tôt. On sait, par exemple, avec toutes les études qui ont été faites jusqu'à date, que quand on prend le temps pour commencer l'instruction

avec nos jeunes le plus tôt possible, les jeunes vont bénéficier dans le plus long terme. C'est quelque chose sur lequel, étude après étude, sans question, tout le monde est d'accord.

L'initiative, je veux dire droit au début, est une initiative que, je pense, on peut tous accepter et qu'on peut tous dire est une bonne affaire. La question devient les détails. Comment est-ce que ça va marcher? Qui va payer ça? Comment s'organiser pour s'assurer que le plus de jeunes possible sont capables de bénéficier de certaines politiques de la prématernelle? Donc, je veux commencer par dire qu'il n'y a rien de nouveau pour chez nous. Le conseil des Grandes Rivières, tel que d'autres conseils dans notre comté, a déjà, depuis des années, offert ce programme aux parents, et les parents ont choisi avec leurs pieds. Les parents ont décidé d'envoyer leurs jeunes dans ces écoles-là et qu'ils entrent en prématernelle pour un cours à plein temps. Pourquoi? Parce que les parents aiment beaucoup ce choix. Ils réalisent, je pense, pour une couple de raisons, que c'est avantageux pour leurs jeunes de rentrer à l'école de bonne heure, de s'acclimater à l'école pour se préparer pour ce qui va être une assez longue interaction avec l'école de la prématernelle, aller au deuxième, puis, après ça, au postsecondaire, s'ils sont assez chanceux.

Donc, les parents chez nous ont choisi. Moi, quand on a eu nos deux filles, Julie et Natalie, il y a assez d'années, quand elles étaient plus jeunes, il y avait seulement la prématernelle à mi-temps. Nous, comme parents, avons choisi d'envoyer nos enfants à la prématernelle à mi-temps parce qu'on a réalisé que c'est un bénéfice. À l'autre bord, ça aide beaucoup les parents aussi, parce que certains parents, tels que mon épouse dans le temps, travaillent. Donc, ça aide beaucoup d'avoir quelque part où on peut amener nos enfants où ils sont en sécurité et, en même temps, ils sont en train d'apprendre.

Donc, du point de vue de donner un support pour les parents et, spécialement, pour les familles monoparentales qui se trouvent seules à élever les enfants et travailler en même temps, ou pour les familles où les deux parents travaillent, c'est une aide. On peut aider ces parents pour s'assurer que les jeunes ont quelque part où aller dont ils bénéficient. Je sais que dans le cas de nous autres, notre petit-fils Nathaniel, qui a maintenant un an et demi—ma fille et son mari, Chris et Julie, ont décidé de mettre Nathaniel dans la garderie. C'est quelque chose qui est assez dispendieux pour les parents. Donc, du point de vue de dépenses pour les parents, la prématernelle est assez, certainement.

La question devient seulement, pour les conseils scolaires tels que le conseil des Grandes Rivières, qui font affaire depuis des années, comment assurer que ces conseils-là, qui ont été à l'avant-garde, ne se trouvent pas dans une situation à être, comment dire, punis pour être à l'avant-garde; pour s'assurer, quand le financement déroule du gouvernement provincial aux conseils scolaires, que les conseils qui ont déjà mis en place ces programmes sont capables de bénéficier avec l'argent supplémentaire dans leur budget annuel.

Les conseils, tels les conseils chez nous et, j'imagine, les autres conseils dans la province qui ont fait le même, ont payé pour la prématernelle avec les fonds qu'ils avaient déjà dans leur conseil. Ils ont décidé, à la place de dépenser de l'argent dans l'enveloppe A ou B, de mettre une enveloppe à la prématernelle et payer pour les programmes de prématernelle.

On a besoin de s'assurer que ces conseils-là, qui ont été à l'avant-garde, ne se trouvent pas dans une situation à dire, « Écoute. C'est vraiment triste, mais à la fin de la journée on va commencer des nouveaux programmes prématernelles et on ne va pas assister directement les conseils qui ont déjà mis ça en place ». Je pense que c'est important.

Le deuxième point, et c'est le point, je pense, que le membre de Simcoe North a soulevé, c'est la question des enseignants et enseignantes. Je sais que dans mes rencontres avec les enseignants et enseignantes, justement mon gendre, Chris—that was funny, a slip of the tongue. Mon gendre, lui, enseigne au secondaire dans le système catholique anglais. J'ai eu l'occasion de parler à lui, mais j'ai parlé à d'autres éducateurs et éducatrices dans le comté, et ils me disent qu'ils ont un peu peur qu'à la fin de la journée, pour ceux qui ont déjà payé, ça veut dire que le nombre d'élèves dans une classe va possiblement augmenter.

C'est quoi le point? Est-ce qu'on ne veut pas s'assurer que les élèves ont une expérience positive à l'école? L'un des clés pour ça, c'est de s'assurer que les éducateurs et les éducatrices ne sont pas surchargés dans la salle de classe, et de s'assurer qu'on ne pénalise pas les jeunes et les profs par manque de financement en forçant des conseils scolaires, pour des raisons fiscales, à augmenter le nombre d'élèves dans les classes. Parce que si on va dans cette direction-là, ça va être un recul complet par rapport à ce qu'on a essayé de faire droit au début.

Donc, oui, c'est une bonne initiative, mais est-ce qu'on s'assure qu'on ne pénalise pas les profs, les jeunes, les conseils qui ont déjà eu ces programmes en place et ceux qui vont les avoir au futur?

The other point I want to make is on the issue of daycare. This is something that our critic, Rosario Marchese, raised, and I think it's something that the government, to date, has not seen fit to respond to in a meaningful way. There is going to be an effect on daycare operators. Let's be real about this. There are a whole bunch of communities across this province where junior kindergarten was not available and those children ended up in daycare centres. Those kids who would normally be in daycare, who next year and in the following years will go into junior kindergarten, are not going to be in daycare. It will represent a fiscal problem for certain daycare operators, because those kids might represent the numbers they need to make the difference between making a for-profit daycare centre profitable or not profitable; and in the case of not-for-profit, being able to stay without a deficit.

I believe the government needs to be a lot clearer when it comes to what their plan is vis-à-vis daycare operators. What is the overall approach of the govern-

ment to ensure that daycares are not penalized as a result of losing kids who would normally be in their daycare system when they end up going to junior kindergarten? Not to say that we shouldn't be going in this direction—I think we all agree—but we need to make sure that the government speaks to this particular issue insofar as what it means for daycare operators.

The other thing is something the member for Beaches—East York raised, and I think this is something that by and large has been overlooked; that is, there are a number of schools and a number of school boards that don't have space. In the case of the member from Beaches—East York, he has no expansion of junior kindergarten in the schools in his riding, and the reason for that is very simple: Those schools are at the max of their capacity. How do you ensure that they're not penalized in certain areas because there happens to be increasing enrolment in certain parts of the province and there isn't the amount of space needed within the schools to be able to afford space for a junior kindergarten program? Again, that's something we need to address, and we've not seen the government speak to it. Certainly, you don't want to put yourself in a position where you really have a disparaging way of implementing this particular program. You want to make sure, at the end of the day, that all kids in the province are able to benefit from what will be, I believe, a step in the right direction when it comes to full-time JK for all kids in the province of Ontario.

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I wonder how that's going to happen if, for example, there's a number of schools that don't have the space and we don't have the mechanism and the funding in order to ensure that the space is existent for those particular schools, and how we're going to deal with the issue of possible increased class sizes as a result of some schools not being able to afford it because they've already funded these types of programs before and are having to increase the student-teacher ratio in order to offset the cost if the province is not ready to move forward with the funding necessary.

Those are some of the concerns that I have. I would just say to the government, as I said at the beginning, it's a step in the right direction, but I think we need to speak to some of those other issues that are left to be dealt with. Unless you deal with them, I think we're going to be in a position where, quite frankly, we will certainly have difficulty being able to implement this program overall.

Being that this is an education debate, I want to raise another issue, and that is, what does this mean for kids in First Nations communities? The unfortunate truth is that, except for some of our isolate school boards, the large majority of aboriginal schools fall under INAC; they fall under the federal government. And of course the federal government is not in the business of providing full-time junior kindergarten, let alone providing good education, I would argue, in some cases.

I think it's high time that we do have the debate here in the Legislature and that the cabinet consider getting into discussions with First Nations and the federal gov-

ernment in order to figure out how we can transfer the education system on reserve over to the province. I think this is an important step towards making sure that we resolve some of the issues of capacity within our First Nations communities.

I'll tell you now, it would be shocking to some to know that the number of kids who graduate out of grade 12 on reserve is very small. It's nowhere near about 10% or 15% of kids who enrol in junior kindergarten and who end up making it all the way towards a grade 12 diploma. It's a very small percentage.

People will ask themselves the question, why is that? I think it's a number of reasons, having to do with poverty and how it affects those communities; overcrowding in houses where kids find themselves in a house with 20, 25 people, not having the time to be able to study or for peace of mind. But it's also the policies of the federal government vis-à-vis education.

I just want to say, while I've got the opportunity and the floor, that we should seriously start thinking about how we're able to move towards creating legislation that would allow First Nations local education authorities and band councils to opt into the provincial system under an aboriginal school board.

I've got to say, as a francophone, one of the reasons that I'm still able to speak French and understand and live the French language and culture is that a large part of it has to do with my ability as a child to go to a French school. A lot of the things that I learned over the years in regard to what it is to be a francophone were learned at school. Yes, my parents, both my mom and dad, are francophones. One is a Lehoux, the other one is a Bisson. Of course, the traditions were carried on as far as cuisine, music and many of the things that are important in my culture, but it was reinforced at the school. More importantly, I got to speak my language outside of the household. If I could have spoken French only at home, there would have been far less opportunity to be able to speak French. In communities where you're not a majority, you probably lose the language. If you live in Hearst, I'm not too worried; you're going to speak French at the end, even if you didn't have your school. I don't advocate they shouldn't have one. If you live in Timmins or Sudbury, you'll probably get by. But if you live in a lot of other communities around Ontario, if you don't have the French school, it's very hard to be able to maintain your language.

This brings me to the point of aboriginal people. First Nations—Crees, Ojibways, Mohawks, whoever—there are a multitude of languages within the First Nations communities that have been lost to the second and third generation since the time of residential schools, because the residential schools said, "You will not speak your own language." Many of the people of my generation didn't get an opportunity to speak Cree where I come from, being the James Bay and the Timmins area, either Wabun or Matawa or the Mushkegowuk people. A lot of them didn't get an opportunity to speak French at school, and as a result, because they were in residential school,

don't speak Cree today. Then, living in their own community, a First Nations community on reserve, a lot of their kids don't speak Cree as a result of not being able to speak it at home because the parents lost the language. One of the only links that they have, other than what's offered in the community, is the school. Yes, there have been great strides made on the part of normal local education authorities in each community to teach Cree in the classroom, but it's not a Cree school; it's an English school. So the child is subject to maybe 45 minutes of Cree per day rather than having Cree on an ongoing basis in the study of history, geography, mathematics and other things that are learned.

So I think that one of the things we need to do is to take a look at how we can create an aboriginal school board for the aboriginal community that is run by aboriginal people; one that follows provincial curriculum and that funds to the same level—and I would argue that you'd probably need a little bit more on the James Bay—as the provincial system. If you're able to do that, I think it would work itself towards finding some longer-term solutions to some of the problems we have when it comes to capacity development in those communities.

I want to give former Minister Wynne some credit here, because she actually was engaged in that discussion with some of us in Moosonee and with myself, as a provincial member of Parliament. She understood the argument, and I give former education minister Wynne some credit. She was trying to figure out how we were able to do that.

One of the things we looked at was that, in the isolate school boards in Moosonee and Moose Factory, where there are three schools on the English public side, there was an ability to merge those schools together to create the beginning of what could have been an aboriginal school board. If we could have got there—and I'm still trying to have some discussions with the current Minister of Education; I'm hoping it's the same with the new minister—that would allow us to create the board and, in the longer term, allow First Nations communities if they so choose to join what would be the James Bay aboriginal school board. We would then be able to have aboriginal people work towards developing their curriculum and making sure that kids are not taught strictly in English but also in Cree. More importantly, they would have some control over what happens in their school boards.

Another little-known fact around aboriginal schools that I think people should know about: If you're in a INAC school, a Department of Indian Affairs school, you get 50% of what a child would get in the provincial system. You ask yourself why aboriginal children have a hard time graduating from JK all the way to grade 12? Well, that is one of the reasons. We have a provincial system of education which provides I think about \$12,000 per pupil per annum in order to fund the school: to make sure that we've got proper classes and a facility that is in good repair, janitors, teachers, teaching books and all that kind of stuff. An aboriginal community gets

50% of what the province gets. You ask yourself why the children in Attawapiskat are in portables rather than being in their own schools. Why are kids in Fort Severn in a mouldy school that they've had to close and go into portables as well? Why is that the norm on a lot of our reserves?

Part of it is, yes, the federal government's unwillingness to advance the capital to fix it, but the other part is that the ongoing maintenance budgets aren't there. You are not able to hire the staff you would need to get a facility and maintain it on an ongoing basis in good repair. It costs a lot of money to maintain a building, as we all know. If you look at our school boards across Ontario, they have staff who not only clean the floors—that's one part of it—but make sure that boilers are maintained, that if there is humidity it is dealt with so it doesn't create mould etc.

I'll give you one quick little example of just how expensive it can be to not have proper maintenance. In Attawapiskat at the Father Vezina school, which was the high school prior to it being closed, the sprinkler system froze. When it finally blew, it flooded the school. Why was that? Because they did not have the money in their operational budget to have somebody blow the system out in the fall to make sure that there was no water in the system should the pipes freeze. The way that system is supposed to work, it should only charge with water in the event that there is a fire. What happened was that there was a faulty valve. The water got into the lines and nobody knew. Of course the lines are up in the attic, which is frozen because you don't heat attics; that's how you build buildings. The pipes froze and then they busted. I remember the story: People were saying, "Well, look at that. They didn't take care of their school. No wonder the pipes busted." Well, there was no money in the budget to have staff to even think about those issues.

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So I say, we really need to think about how we're better able to do a job in Ontario, treating Ontario citizens who live on First Nations, to provide a good education. I think part of that is that we need to take a look at the possibility of creating an aboriginal school board.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for this time to debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: J'ai écouté attentivement les points soulevés par mon collègue de James Bay—c'est bien ça, oui? Je peux vous dire qu'actuellement, il ne faut pas épeurer le public avec ce projet de loi 242 lorsqu'on est porté à dire combien vont être les coûts additionnels. Je dois dire qu'actuellement, je crois que la majorité, sinon tous les conseils scolaires de langue française publics, ont déjà ce service en place, ici même en Ontario. Je sais que dans l'Est ontarien, il existe dans toutes les écoles publiques françaises. Je peux dire aussi que j'ai un petit-fils, Joshua, qui fréquente les écoles catholiques françaises, et actuellement, il reçoit ce service-là qui est en place.

Mais la beauté de ce programme-là, il faut dire, est que nous allons avoir la chance d'avoir des programmes après les heures de classe. Il est très, très important, avec ce projet de loi-là, qui devrait être appuyé à 100 % par l'Assemblée ici même et par les trois partis.

Je dois dire qu'actuellement, on doit travailler avec différents ministères. Je dis avec différents ministères parce qu'après les heures de classe régulières, on doit avoir les programmes de santé, on doit avoir les programmes pour la petite enfance. Qu'est-ce que nous allons faire après les heures de classe? Je suis convaincu que le ministère de la petite enfance et le ministère de la Promotion de la santé vont travailler étroitement avec la ministre responsable, qui est M^{me} Dombrowsky.

Oui, c'est définitivement un bon programme, et j'espère que nous allons avoir de l'appui. Actuellement, il y a déjà des coûts à attacher pour la garde après les heures de classe, mais il ne sera pas nécessaire de prendre les enfants et les déménager dans une garderie à l'extérieur de l'école. Donc, c'est la beauté de ce programme, surtout pour le secteur rural. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Timmins—James Bay for his remarks, especially when he elaborated on a number of the concerns that are particular to northern communities with education funding, and on personal experiences; obviously, he always brings something to the debate.

On this side of the House, we support this bill in principle. We're going to speak to it later—a number of us have had an opportunity. I know that in my community there are four schools that are going to have the opportunity to advance this and be able to take part in it. I've heard from a number other parents who aren't as lucky. They live on the opposite side of the road and are not able to take part. That's something that I know a number of boards are faced with, and some of our offices are hearing that—a number of people see the merit in a program like this. I've had other people also call concerned about where the money to do something like this is coming from when we have a \$25-billion deficit. But that's something we'll talk about later on in our remarks.

Also, as I said, it creates unequal access. I've had some parents contact me about that. They would like to take part in it; they see the issues about that. The schools in my community that are going to be able to take part in this are Colonel Cameron Public School in Corunna, Johnston Memorial School and Queen Elizabeth II School in Sarnia, and St. Benedict Catholic School, also in Sarnia.

At minimum, all-day kindergarten is estimated to cost somewhere in the area of \$1.5 billion when it's fully implemented, and also increase class sizes. Those are concerns of a number of taxpayers and voters in my community.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak at this time and look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'd like to congratulate my colleague from Timmins–James Bay for his detailed exposé on this legislation and his even more detailed exposé on some of the challenges that need to be met and clearly are not going to be met. The fact is that for aboriginal children the gap, if anything, will grow, and the gap will widen, which will certainly create other social challenges in the future.

I think it's worth noting from his discussion that the issue is not about the what—what must be done. New Democrats recognize what must be done in terms of funding early childhood education. The question is going to be about the how. It's very easy to make an announcement, but then to determine where the funding is going to come from and if the funding is going to be equitable and if the funding is going to allow this without cutting other programs in the schools or without reducing child care resources elsewhere—those are the questions which need to be asked and questions which I think this government needs to answer. Because these are indeed the things which are troubling school boards; these are the things which are troubling municipalities, municipalities which are in fact having to close down child care centres because there's not adequate funding. These are some of the questions that need to be asked and answered, and I think my colleague from Timmins–James Bay did an admirable job of zeroing in on those questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to offer a quick couple of minutes on the remarks that have been made so far on Bill 242. I would begin by saying that in my time here, going on seven years now, there have been few pieces of legislation that have been before us that I think have received as much broad support from both sides of the House as has this one. I understand that the third party is very likely going to support this at third reading, and I think I learned just a little bit earlier here today that the official opposition, the Conservatives, were interested in supporting it, at least in principle, as well, so we'll see where that goes.

As with all legislation, there is always some criticism. Nobody ever just nails it perfectly. They have their role to play. But even that criticism, I would suggest, has been fairly muted. Some of it has been about the fact that perhaps we're not rolling this out fast enough. I think that people who are following the goings-on in the Legislature here in Ontario understand the economic situation that we find ourselves in. I think the fact that the Premier has continued this commitment—up to 35,000 three-, four- or five-year-olds, nearly 1,400 classes will be affected, and almost 600 schools. Some might characterize this as not following through, but this phase-in, I would suggest, given the economic circumstances that we find ourselves in, is a very clear signal that the Premier and our Liberal government here are going to

continue our commitment to education. I would also suggest the budget will reflect our continuing commitment in the health care field. The number attached to this is \$1.5 billion, and that is no small amount of money.

It's also important to mention to people that this is an entirely voluntary program. This is not mandated. Parents can voluntarily enrol their children or not, if they so choose. I can tell you that in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan I had two great events announcing this, one in Atikokan and one in Thunder Bay—very well received by everybody that I had an opportunity to speak with on this issue. We look forward to seeing this go forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Timmins–James Bay, you have up to two minutes to respond.

M. Gilles Bisson: J'aimerais remercier le député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell pour ses commentaires. Mais le point que j'essayais de faire est que oui, les conseils francophones, par la plus grande partie, ont mis en place la prématernelle il y a longtemps. Comment va-t-on s'assurer pour financer ces conseils-là, après qu'ils ont déjà mis en place ces programmes-là? C'est le point que je faisais.

To the members for Sarnia–Lambton, Kenora–Rainy River and Thunder Bay–Atikokan, thank you for your comments. As I said, it is a good thing. We in the city of Timmins and area have been benefiting by having full-time junior kindergarten offered to the kids of our community. We've been at the avant-garde of that and I think we very much benefited. We all understand the reasons why the earlier you get kids in school, the better it is. The issue becomes, number one, how do you make sure not to penalize those school boards who have offered it within their existing budgets, and that there's an offset so that they don't end up falling behind other school boards? And what are you going to do in year three, year four, year five of this program? That's going to be the bigger question, as reminded by my friend Mr. Hampton.

To the last point, in regard to aboriginal schools, there's a whole raft of kids, and the majority of them are aboriginal kids, who are not going to get the benefit of full-time junior kindergarten. Why? Because that system, by and large, is a federal system. I spoke to the need to be able to engage in discussions with First Nations and the first government, along with this province, in order to find a way to create provincial aboriginal school boards so we can take those kids and bring them into the provincial system, where I believe they'd be better served.

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As I pointed out, if you're a child in an aboriginal school, you get 50% of what any other kid gets in the province of Ontario. How do you ensure that that child is able to compete with any other child when their education is devalued by the amount that it is? I think that is a sad, sad point of the history of this country and something that, quite frankly, we should address with the briefest possible delay.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on second reading of Bill 242.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Mr. Speaker, we would like the debate to continue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Glen R. Murray: Nelson Mandela said, “Children are the rock on which our future will be built—the leaders of our country for good or ill, which is why the rich potential in each child must be developed into skills and knowledge that our society needs to enable to it prosper.”

If there was a foundational statement about why we are doing this, I don’t think it could have been better said. We sometimes lose perspective from generation to generation about the values that drove many of us to public service.

My grandmother came here at 18 years old. She arrived in the great city of Hamilton not speaking English or French, with no trainable skills, leaving a country where one of the older women in her village in Ukraine said to her, “Don’t go to Canada, Maria. It’s frozen there. You’ll starve. You can’t grow food.” This courageous young woman, through Italy, got onto a boat and came halfway around the world.

She found an extraordinary experience here. She raised seven children in a two-bedroom apartment in downtown Hamilton. Her husband in his 40s had a stroke. He worked for the railroad, and he wasn’t able to work. At that point, my grandmother was left with seven children at home to raise with a husband who was incapacitated and needed as much support as those children.

I can’t imagine what my grandmother would say to this Legislature about the choices that her family could have today if they had come to Ontario 100 years later or 50 years later. We are a most blessed and privileged generation. We are privileged as Ontarians to be able to have this discussion today, to be able to talk not only of the inheritance from our parents but to actually stop in our tracks and, for a silver moment, ask ourselves why we all sit in this House. As Nelson Mandela suggested, we sit in this House for one reason: We sit in this House for our children.

I joined the Liberal Party, and I ran predominantly because of our children. I was elected largely because of this policy and the values of the Liberal Party and the values that it expresses to my fellow Ontarians, whether they arrived here last week or whether they have lived here for 17 generations. I could not be prouder to stand up and argue and vote for a piece of legislation other than this piece of legislation, because we inherited this great province, this great educational system, our rights, our health care and the fundamental values that bind all of us, no matter what party has called us here or which party we have joined. That is a legacy from generations of Ontarians who came to this country or who grew up and

survived residential schools with so very little, so few resources, from people who survived holocaust, war, famine, displacement, governments, and grew up in communities where no education was even available to them. From so little they created this province and communities that have left us with so much.

How do we leave our children a legacy that is as generous and hopeful as the legacy we inherited from generations that had so little? What do we, the healthiest, most educated, most tech-savvy generation in Canadian history, leave our children?

Other countries—Japan and Germany—have already adopted early childhood education as a foundation of their economic development strategies. One might ask why most other progressive, knowledge-based economies and countries are making these kinds of investments and expanding them even when their governments face deficits and challenges.

Between Canada and the United States in the last 10 years, there have been over 130 studies done on the benefits of early childhood education. In a survey, Rutgers University came to one conclusion: “Overall, looking across the entire research of literature over four decades ... preschool has substantial impacts on cognitive development, on social and emotional development, and on schooling outcomes.”

It has been determined that this is one of the most important factors in the ability of children to succeed in elementary school and high school. It is one of biggest determinants of whether they will enter university.

So how can we not do this? How can we not do anything but this, unless we want to leave a very serious deficit for the future of our province and our country?

Right now in Ontario the manufacturing sector is shrinking, as it is across the entire industrial world. I’ve spent the last several years of my life working on economic development in many parts of the world. I cannot find a part of the world right now where high-value manufacturing jobs are not in decline. Right now, there is a collapse of the manufacturing economy in Poland. Why? Because in Bulgaria they’re building plants that use 25% as many workers, are more highly automated and people work for less money. In the old soviet economies of Ukraine and Georgia, there are even more automated plants with even lower salary levels, and that’s moving down the value chain. We’re lucky that we have advanced manufacturing in the auto sector in Ontario, with Linamar and Magna, which are innovation-based manufacturers. But those are precious and much competed for.

The service sector has been averaging about a 20% increase in jobs over the last 10 years, but because of the policies of the McGuinty government, 80% of the new jobs in Ontario are coming from the knowledge sector: people who imagine, perform, create, research, develop and invent. We have been in good times, and now, coming out of it with a 5% annualized increase in GDP in Canada, are competing way ahead of every other regional economy I can find in the world in generating knowledge

jobs, not only to replace manufacturing jobs in this globally fractured and changing economy but to offer higher value jobs that offer people increasing incomes and more security.

Where do we go from here? What are the real opportunities that this legislation presents for us? The National Research Council in the United States did a study in July of last year looking at mathematics learning in early childhood education as a pathway toward excellence and equity. Many of you, I hope, are familiar with the work of the National Research Council in the United States. It has been commissioned under the last three Presidents to try to look at how the United States maintains pre-eminence in the knowledge economy. Do you know what they found? Their biggest recommendations were around early childhood education. They expected that we would be talking about massive investments in post-secondary education and research, but what they found is that at three, four and five years old, children are more numeric than literate; that the best time for children to learn the math and science skills they need to learn is before they get into the formal educational system. We, on this side of the House, understand that. We understand, as they do in Japan, Germany and other advanced economies that our children will be better at any mathematical-based job, from engineering to science to medicine, if we create this. Even though we think this is an essential requirement for a successful career in a knowledge economy, that that early entry is one of the most productive and useful investments we could make in our children—and it is fundamental that children, before they can make those choices, have the right not to have diminished expectations and not to be compromised, which is what happens if the state does not produce that institutional capacity so they can get that education.

1640

We're saying parents are important. Families make these choices, and we, as members of provincial Parliament, each have a responsibility to share this knowledge and this research with parents so they can make informed choices, so that their children will have better choices as they grow older.

The fact that we are leading this in Canada and we are leading this in North America right now is an extraordinary commitment, but it becomes rather remarkable when you're facing a deficit. You don't get out of serious economic challenges in the near term; you get out of them by making strategic, long-term decisions that look at the sustainability of our economy, that solve problems not by building the tax burden but in fact by building the tax base. We know that while investments in roads, bridges and transit are important, there's nothing more important to our social sustainability and our economic sustainability than the investments we make in our children.

When this comes to committee, I am going to be advocating that the next step we take is that we try to get the federal government, and certainly Ontario, to have a provincial strategy on early mathematical- and science-

based education, and that we take the learning of the National Research Council, even though it's just recently been released—less than 12 months—and we try to become the first jurisdiction in Canada to advance mathematics-based learning.

In spite of what people say, I'm actually the member for Toronto Centre. But I'm very proud that I have not lived my whole life in Toronto Centre. I love Sudbury. I spent a great many years in Sudbury with my family. I even lived in Winnipeg when I was the mayor. But one of the most fun things was when my father invested in a farm in Alexandria, in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, one of the greatest communities in this province, and I learned how to milk a cow. I dare say there aren't too many MPPs, although I know there are a few others, who know how to milk a cow. I actually learned something.

One of these 130-odd studies was done in the states of Georgia, Oklahoma and Florida. These studies were done in pre-kindergarten and universal pre-K programs over 30 years after they were introduced. While we have a province-wide economic strategy and while we are working with school boards and local authorities to make sure this isn't a one-size-fits-all, that it's got to meet community needs, this is one of the most important investments we will make in rural and small-town Ontario. Why is this even more important to small and rural communities than it is to big cities? Well, I'd like to tell you. The research in the United States found the following: Universal pre-K availability of preschool enrolment increased by 12% to 15%, with the largest effect on children of women with less than a bachelor's degree in rural communities. Women residing in rural areas increased their children's preschool enrolment and their own employment by 22% and 20% respectively when universal pre-K programs were introduced.

We know, whether we are talking about small communities around Brockville or we're talking about remote and northern resource communities, that one of the most undervalued and underpaid group of women are farm women and women who manage and work on farms. Anyone who has spent any time on a farm knows that those women should be sainted for the family and personal responsibilities that they bring to this community.

This is one of great things about being a Liberal: I have to run in Toronto Centre and stand up for farm women, and my friends who are farm women from rural Ontario stood up in this House and fought for some fairly fundamental human rights that allowed me to stand here today. I'm indebted to those women who have never blinked at a controversy or a challenge, and they deserve this.

If we can see the same experience that the Americans had on the lives of farm children and farm women in small communities, this will be one of those legacies that our generation leaves our children's generation in small communities; so important. While those of us in Toronto have less of a challenge attracting a creative and dynamic knowledge workforce and have a huge muscle of large universities, smaller communities are challenged.

Women play a definitive role in those communities, in making them work and in providing the leadership in family, farm and business to do that, and this is a vote of confidence in those women.

I have to apologize to our federal finance minister, Mr. Flaherty. I did take a little shot at him once when he said that the federal government would get out of its deficit within five years based on 3% growth. Actually, I have to eat some humble pie here. The projections are even ahead of what some of the most brilliant researchers have said; we had annualized growth of 5%.

I have to give our Premier some incredible credit. Being an cyclist and environmentalist, I was a little nervous about the kind of investments we were making in the auto sector, but you'll like to see that the growth is led by 11% growth in the auto sector. The last time I looked, having lived in certain other parts of the country, which I think is an advantage, not a deficit in my experience that I bring to this, is that there isn't a lot of auto sector in Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Nova Scotia, which means that those investments are now paying dividends.

There was one concern that came up, because you can't just have only an education strategy. As the Premier often says somewhat gently, we have a plan and we're waiting for the other guys' plan.

One of the things that caused me a little concern was that business investment in plants and equipment all across Canada fell. When you look at the reasons why the HST has worked so well, there was an 11% increase in Nova Scotia—and the NDP there aren't even blinking about the HST—in investments in plants and production in Nova Scotia; an 11% jump. Darrell Dexter's government deserves some credit for that, and they're hanging on to that, even though they had to eat little humble pie and said maybe this HST thing wasn't quite what we thought it was.

The HST will de-layer taxation in the manufacturing sector. It will add \$8.5 billion to the capital available to small and large businesses in the auto sector. This is why people like Ken Lewenza have criticized some other parties in this House for anti-tax hysteria, because they understand, Jim Stafford understands, Jack Mintz understands, people who have looked at the economics.

This is important, because while we're making investments in mathematics, cultural-based, literary-based early education to improve skill sets, a lot of people are still going to want and need blue collar assembly jobs, and we aren't walking away from working people.

This tax reform is more important than subsidies or anything else, because it liberates private sector capital, which is why Mr. Flaherty, God bless him, supports the HST—because he represents the auto sector. You should talk to his cousins in Oshawa. This is the exact kind of tax reform, which is why 139 of 140 industrial and emerging industrial nations have already implemented this, because without it, we will never get the kind of liberated tax revenue in the private sector to get those kinds of capital investments if we maintain a tax system that is arcane, broken and for an economy of another day.

I want to sum up with this: If you start to look at the big picture, how do you liberate our young people's future? How do you make investments that are going to be transformational in the long term? You have to do early childhood education. You need Places to Grow. We've got to have better-quality urban environments that attract and retain a workforce. We've got to build transit and walkable neighbourhoods as we are with the Big Move. We've got to care about farm and rural communities and big cities and not play one against the other. We've got to invest in children in the longer term. We've got to make the tax reforms that liberate private capital to do the things that the public sector can't do, but if the public sector doesn't step up to the plate and take responsibility for the educational system, who will?

We're taking our responsibilities even in the face of a deficit because we agree with some of our friends in the federal Parliament that building the tax base is more important than building the tax burden. Building the tax base is a preferable way to get out of this challenge that we're facing on the deficit side, and we're doing that.

Thank you very much for the privilege of being able to speak here today.

1650

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I enjoyed listening to our new member from Ottawa Centre, I believe—

Interjections: Toronto Centre.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Toronto Centre; I'm sorry. I just came from Ottawa this morning. It is the centre of the universe; it's not Toronto or Winnipeg or anyplace else.

I listened with a great deal of concentration to the new member. He seems to have cottoned on to or adopted very quickly the government's mantra with regard to the HST. He drew an example of the province of Nova Scotia, telling how wonderful the story is in Nova Scotia. I might want to point out to him, though, that when Nova Scotia implemented the HST they took two points off their provincial sales tax, so that the net gain by the government was zero. In other words, the provincial government didn't receive any more cash or income from the combined tax as compared to when they had their own provincial sales tax.

This government is doing a very different formula. What they're going to end up with is \$3 billion-plus more out of the individuals' pockets in additional tax revenue in order to allay some of the concerns with business. There would be much less objection on my part if this was revenue-neutral to the consumer.

This member talked about the new education bill, which is going to benefit poor and moderate family income earners. This HST is going to act exactly in the opposite direction with regard to those very same people in our province. So on the one hand, he says the education bill is good for these people, but he then argues that the HST—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened with some care and attention to the member's speech, and I found it interesting that while we are supposed to be debating Bill 242, the Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, in fact a lot of the speech was dedicated to the HST. I found that very intriguing. I'm not sure what the connection is, but it seems to me that what people across Ontario want to know is how the government intends to pay for the implementation of full-day kindergarten.

It is one thing to announce full-day kindergarten in a few schools across the province where there are currently vacant classrooms, and therefore no capital costs associated with full-day kindergarten. It is quite another thing to add in full-day kindergarten where the physical facilities don't exist, where you don't have vacant classrooms and where you have to engage in rather substantial and significant capital costs in order to accommodate full-day kindergarten. I think these are some of the questions that school boards would like to have answered, that municipalities would like to have answered and that teachers and early childhood educators would like to have answered.

Frankly, I think all of us as members need to have answers to this; otherwise, we're going to end up in a situation where some communities have full-day kindergarten and other communities do without.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kuldip Kular: I'm pleased to participate in the debate on Bill 242. If passed, this bill is basically focusing on early development of our students. By doing that, we are giving them a better chance of finishing high school, going on to post-secondary education and getting better jobs.

In my own riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton, the following schools got to have this early learning program for four- and five-year-olds: Holy Cross Separate School, Brandon Gate Public School and Marvin Heights Public School. Even in Brampton some other schools got it; their names are Georges Vanier Catholic School, Hanover Public School, Massey Street Public School and Thorndale Public School.

Let me quote what the Peel region's school board chair said about this program. "We all know the value of early learning—the sooner we can have education play a key role in the life of a child, the greater the positive impact on that life. We applaud the move by the province to implement a program that not only parents in Peel want, but a program that children in Peel need," said Janet McDougald, chair of the Peel District School Board.

Obviously, this is going to help our students, our parents and our teachers, so I fully support this program and the bill which is going to bring our four- and five-year-olds early learning.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to reply to the member for Toronto Centre with respect to his presentation this afternoon on Bill 242. As has been pointed out already, he focused on a number other issues beyond the scope of Bill 242, talking about the HST and some of the other issues that he's interested in.

When I look at Bill 242 and I listen to the rhetoric of the government, it would appear that the government is endeavouring to demonstrate its commitment to children and children's services in the broadest sense. If you look at what's happening with our children's aid societies—and I know that this issue has been brought up in the Legislature in the last few weeks and months—there are a lot of serious funding issues facing our children's aid societies.

I have information from the Halton Children's Aid Society that I think is important and that people need to understand in this House. Halton receives the lowest per capita child funding in the province; it receives \$194.62 per child, well below the provincial average of \$458.16, well below the provincial average in most funding factors, 11 out of 15. If it was funded at the provincial average, our funding eligibility would increase by \$1.1 million.

There are serious concerns about the viability of these agencies with respect to funding, and I think the government has made some effort to address them, although I don't think it has been enough. Certainly what I have heard from the children's aid society in Guelph and Wellington—actually, the official name is the Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County—is that this additional funding the government boasted about a few weeks ago is totally insufficient. In 2008-09, the agency received \$20.6 million. This year, in 2009-10, they will receive \$19.8 million, which is really a cut in their funding grant even though their caseload has gone up.

These are issues that the government needs to address as well during the course of this debate and in the days that follow. I would encourage the government to look at the priorities and make sure that our children's aid societies are adequately funded.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Toronto Centre, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: I gotta tell you I'm a little confused; maybe it's just because I'm new. I've heard my friends in the New Democratic Party and Conservative Party, who I have a great deal of respect for. These are very smart people who care deeply about this province.

But they've challenged us, on one hand, that we don't have a plan. When you actually go to our party's website, which I'm sure they visit from time to time, we've identified two big challenges facing our economy. One of them is to create the tax environment for reinvestment, restoration and modernization of capital manufacturing plants and facilities, because that's one essential building block in rebuilding our economy and renewing it for the

future in the new century—and reinvesting in our children, for which we've add 9,000 teachers, major investments in public education across the board and early childhood education. The difference is that we understand the relationship, that you've got to do both these things and that this is part of a plan. Doing one without the other would be a loss.

1700

I am perplexed how just about every OECD country of consequence is pursuing these policies, that New Democratic governments in Manitoba and Nova Scotia are pursuing these policies—the federal Conservative Party, when I was an advisor to John Baird, believed in this kind of tax reform and education reform. It seems that we have some lonely friends in opposition who not only don't believe in these things, they don't understand the critical relationship to them. You cannot have the public sector rebuild and modernize technology in the manufacturing sector. You create the tax environment to incent them to do that. And the tax record, when you look at the research—I challenge any member in this House to produce credible research that says this kind of—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

I'll just take a moment to allay some of the fears a couple of members expressed. It was the Chair's understanding that this was a maiden speech, and you know that there's a great deal of latitude given when maiden speeches are given, so they can talk about family and the communities they've lived in and a whole range of things. I was listening very carefully, though.

Further debate.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I enjoyed the member's maiden speech. I found myself agreeing with him on some of his economic thoughts that he was talking about, and that shocked me. Then when he mentioned that he had worked with John Baird, everything became clear, and I found out that he was—

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh:—I had some inkling of where that knowledge came from.

Talking about Bill 242 and early childhood education, one of the major things that is of great concern to me—and I do like the concept of the bill; I think the timing of the bill is a little iffy—is the \$1.5 billion that this is going to cost the people of Ontario. It's going to cost the people of Ontario \$1.5 billion at a time in our economy when we are just beginning to crawl out of a significant recession. Of course, when you pull money out of the economy in the form of tax revenues, that slows down the recovery and could indeed stall the recovery.

The \$1.5 billion that this program is estimated to cost also doesn't include the physical space that may be required. Every elementary school in Ontario that takes on this program is going to need additional space, and that space, of course, costs money to produce and also takes time. So one of the problems is the space problem.

The consequences of this move perhaps haven't been thought through by the government in as much detail as I

would like to think that a government bringing in a major policy change in early childhood education would have given this kind of initiative. What are the consequences to all of the daycare centres that currently exist in the province of Ontario? What are the consequences to all the physical space that those daycares use, much of it in our churches throughout Ontario? Lord knows—no pun intended—the churches are having a difficult time making ends meet at this point in time in our economy, and here is a revenue generator, or a revenue offsetter, in some cases, in non-profit cases, that the churches are going to lose, or lose some portion of, because the government, in their early childhood education, is coming in to take up that portion of their revenue. I think that is something the government should think about as to the consequences of what they're doing.

The other one is the consequences of the effect this is going to have on early childhood education in grades 1, 2 and 3. One of the promises of the government in getting elected in the last election was a hard cap on class sizes of 20. The effect of this is going to raise the class size to 26, I believe. I think it's going to be a soft cap as well, which means that you can have an average of 26 students in your class—some classes may have 30 and others may have 24—but it will not be a hard cap with none over 26. Of course, the hard cap of 20 never really came to that. There were all kinds of classes in grades 1, 2 and 3 across Ontario that had more than 20 students in them. The average might have been close to 20—in some cases, it was above; in some cases, it was below—but it was never exactly on that 20 or below.

I think some of these things are difficult because I don't think that the government has thought through the consequences of where these students are going to physically sit, as far as the space is concerned, and where the cost is going to escalate to. One point five billion dollars is an estimate, and I don't know what percentage of the students in junior kindergarten and kindergarten the \$1.5 billion takes care of. I don't think we can implement the entire program. I don't think it's proposed to implement the entire program in one year. It's to be phased in.

Of course, some taxpayers in Ontario will get the benefit of their children going to junior kindergarten on a full-day program, and they won't have to pay daycare at \$125 or more a week. They won't have to pay that because that will come out of the school budget. If some parents get that bonus and others don't, that creates a very unfair situation in Ontario where you have a group of haves and you have a group of have-nots, and they're all paying the same amount of taxes. To me, that is terribly unfair. I would propose a solution to the government, if they would look at it, that for those students who could not get into a full-day junior kindergarten or kindergarten program, the government could hand out a voucher for the students who couldn't get in. That would make it far more equitable across the province. Otherwise, there are going to be people who are very upset and consider themselves to be disenfranchised when it comes to getting early childhood education with their children.

This program also does not allow for junior kindergarten—once the school is involved in this program, I don't believe that the program has the flexibility to allow a parent to opt for a half-day program. You're either in the one-day program or you're out, and the half-day program isn't an option. Many parents in today's society work split shifts or work at different times of the day. Quite often, they're home in the morning or they're home in the afternoon, and they could have their children with them in these very formative years. I always think it's a wonderful thing to increase the amount of time that parents spend with their children, especially in those younger years under six years old. I think those are the years that are very formative in the creation of values that a child takes on, and it's a very valuable thing to have those values come from their parents as opposed to an organization such as the board of education or a school system. I think the time that you spend with your parents in those years is a very valuable thing that makes for a much better citizen in the years ahead as he develops into a mature student and then a mature adult.

1710

There's been much criticism of this program around the province. There have been many school boards—school trustees themselves are calling this “one of the most ill-conceived and badly thought-through programs the province has ever announced.” That was from Irene Atkinson, Toronto District School Board.

Again, it appears to me that the government hasn't thought through the consequences, the financial, the physical space, the impact on families, the impact on people who are currently supplying the daycare needs of those students in Ontario today, and not thought through all of the various aspects and the effects that this program is going to have on parents and students, space and other people who are involved in the daycare system. That's too bad.

I think if they had hearings on this bill, we would find that there would be an awful lot of people in the province of Ontario who are very, very concerned about the direction that this is taking us, in particular at this time in the very infant stages of the beginnings of a financial recovery, an economic recovery in the province of Ontario. It's a very delicate point in time when we begin the recovery financially in a province coming out of a recession. As you may remember, in the early 1990s the NDP were coming out of the recession, they didn't do a very good job of coming out of that recession, and Ontario stayed in recession for some period of time afterwards. When the rest of Canada had emerged from the recession, Ontario was still in it. So I would like the government to think through the consequences of this bill a little more carefully.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: The concept of this bill is really very simple. We don't have people in Ontario to waste. Those early learning years are ones that make a big difference not merely in the years that you're actually

getting your education in the classroom setting with an ECE instructor and with a teacher, but those years come back to benefit you enormously as you get into high school and university and even your graduate school years. These precious early years are what make an average student a good student, a good student an exceptional student and an exceptional student a world-class student.

India outnumbers Ontario about 85 to one. China outnumbers Ontario 100 to one. China is no longer red. India's no longer Third World. Brazil outnumbers Ontario 15 to one. All of these places, plus places like Russia, want what we have. One of the things that differentiates us from them is the fact that we put our effort into making sure that our number one asset, which is the minds of the people who create the value that companies come to Ontario to get, is the best in the world.

We don't want to see any prospect of having lost an exceptional mind. This proposal, this bill, enables Ontario to take its best minds at the earliest age we can get them into school and get them accustomed to a lifetime of learning, that lifetime of learning being the difference between someone who might not make it and someone who will make it, contribute and be a world leader, a business creator, an employer, a good employee and someone who, in the long term, will pay his taxes and contribute to the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I'm pleased to support the member for Halton in some of the concerns that he raises with regard to this bill, one being the cost. The cost, as told by the government of \$1.5 billion to cover only a part of the population across the province of Ontario when we have a deficit of \$25 billion—an economic concern. But the more important concern for me is the inequality that this bill will bring upon the citizens of the province of Ontario. How can you say to one parent, “Your child is going to have an advantage while the other doesn't”?

The previous speaker mentioned China and the differences that we have with China. One of the great differences that we have in the province of Ontario, in Canada, is that each child can get an education. That's not true, even in today's China, that children can get an education there without paying. Most children, or parents of children still pay for education in China in order to gain an education in that country.

I have in Almonte a public elementary school and a Catholic elementary school across from each other. The Catholic elementary school is going to offer this program, whereas the public school is not. Guess what's happening in that community? It's fracturing apart because the parents of public education students are now registering them in the Catholic system.

You cannot introduce a program where there are some winners and there are some losers. Introduce a program where everybody can be a winner, to a certain extent, even if it can't be as thorough and wide as the program that they're putting forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened very carefully to my Conservative colleague's speech. I want to say to him that while I disagree with him fundamentally on the issue of vouchers, I think he's quite accurate to raise a number of questions about how the government proposes to do this, about the equity and the evenness of it. But putting vouchers into the equation is simply going to raise more questions. So I would say to him that I fundamentally disagree with him on that.

This is important social policy, and if you're going to implement important social policy, it is important to do it right. If you have, in some schools, a program that is going to be offered, but on the other side of the community the program is not going to be offered, given the history of some of the differences that we've had between the Catholic separate school system and the public system in this province, where you further have those kinds of delinkages, this has the potential to create problems rather than move us ahead.

Similarly, I think one of the questions this government has to answer is this: It is relatively easy to put in full-day kindergarten in a school that has vacant classrooms, but what do you do in the hundreds of elementary schools that do not have vacant classrooms? Where is the capital budget to then construct those classrooms? And if you don't have an answer to that equation, you get more of the inequality, more of the inequity that you want to avoid if you're implementing good social policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen very carefully to the comments from my colleague from Halton. I must say that my brother and sister-in-law, Doug and Jane Leal, live in Milton. They moved to Milton in 1973 when it was that quaint little village of about 14,000 people.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Who'd they vote for?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I don't know. I chat with them from time to time. I don't know who they vote for.

But I must say, when we announced this initiative in Peterborough, we did quite a bit of consultation with Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington separate school board and Kawartha Pine Ridge. We selected three schools: St. Paul's, Prince of Wales Public School in the city of Peterborough and one in the far eastern part of my riding, Havelock public school. When they did that consultation and made those choices, they spread them apart so there wouldn't be this sort of internal competition within the community. Prince of Wales Public School is one in the downtown core of Peterborough, and the city of Peterborough has created a community hub at Prince of Wales Public School, so this initiative, this full-day kindergarten, will certainly assist the city of Peterborough in meeting that goal of creating that community hub in the downtown core. In the far eastern part of my riding is Havelock public school. There have been, over the years, some economic challenges in that area, and we see the introduction of

full-day kindergarten in that particular community as a real opportunity for community revival and the rejuvenation of that area of my riding. At St. Paul's separate school—again, it's further away from Prince of Wales, so we won't have that internal competition.

One of the experts I always rely upon when it comes to full-day kindergarten is my wonderful wife, Karan, who is a vice-principal at St. Anne's in Peterborough, and she certainly sees this as a very positive initiative for our school system in Ontario.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Halton, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I want to reassure my friend from the third party that I was not advocating for a voucher system. I was merely pointing out that the system the Liberals are introducing has this tremendous inequity and that that would be one way to solve it. I think that the distaste, perhaps, for the voucher system would only emphasize the fact that they do have a problem over there, and it's of the magnitude that that system would solve the inequity issue. I don't think for a moment that they're going there.

To the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, thank you very much for your comments. I would agree that much of the world wants to have our system and wants to have what we have; the cargo, as it's called in *Guns, Germs and Steel*. In large part, we have it because of our educational system. I would argue that the education on the other end, in the post-high school period, is where we would get the biggest bang for our buck, as opposed to early childhood education. If we were going to put that kind of money into our college and university systems, I think we would get far more economic stimulus out of our province there than in early childhood education. Not that early childhood education isn't important as well, but if we were doing a study on which ones would have the greatest effect, I'm pretty confident that it would be post-secondary.

Certainly, the issue that was brought up by the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, the creating of haves and have-nots in our various school boards and various communities, is a very important one that the government should have a close look at.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a few comments on this legislation, the Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act. Let me first of all say that I think the evidence is very clear that children benefit overwhelmingly from quality early childhood programs. I don't think there's any debate over that. There has been study after study here in Ontario, in other provinces, in the United States and in other countries which demonstrate that ensuring children have access to quality early childhood education helps them in terms of their social development, their

educational development and their psychological development. It helps them in so many ways.

They demonstrate that in fact investments in early childhood education actually save us money down the road. They save us money in terms of the ongoing costs of the education system. They save us money in terms of fewer incidences of young people interacting with the criminal justice system. They save us money because of the potential for increased educational achievement and increased employment potential later on in life. So I don't think there's any debate about that. This is something that needs to be done, and it needs to be done soon.

The issues really with this bill are, first of all, how long this is going to take. Now, the government talks in terms of a five-year plan, but you only need to look at the fine print to see that this is going to take much longer than five years when you get into actually having to construct the classrooms, and there will have to be significant classroom construction in many parts of the province. That by its very nature stretches things out by at least a couple, if not more, years. So the question then is, where is the fairness, the equality, the equity, when some under the government's own plan will have to wait in excess of five years to see any movement? Where is the fairness in that?

The second issue: Again, this is an issue which boards of education themselves have raised. For example, the Toronto District School Board has said very clearly that they are concerned about whether the funding that the government has outlined is adequate to do the job. Once again, it is fine to make an announcement, but when you're dealing with really important social policy that can have all kinds of implications for different communities and different parts of province, one of questions you need to ask and you need to very clearly answer is, will there be adequate funding? You have very reputable school boards now saying they doubt that there's equitable funding.

Indeed, at the same time that the Toronto District School Board asks the question about equitable funding, that board is very worried that they're going to have to make further cuts to special education budgets, and that has been raised by a number of school boards. In order to do this initiative and do it right, is it going to mean cuts to other educational programs? And if that's the case, I would suggest to you that where we already have a system where one envelope of the public school budget is raided this year to pay for something that was underfunded and something else is raided the next year to pay for another envelope that is underfunded, this doesn't move us ahead in the way that we need to move.

Another issue that has been raised, and this has been raised by people who already work in child care: In the implementation of this policy there needs to be care taken to ensure that the existing child care system is not disrupted, cut, or otherwise, in many instances, child care centres will be forced to close. First in Toronto, now in Windsor, we're already seeing very real concerns raised

about that, that if you take four- and five-year-olds out of the existing child care centres and put them into schools, where does the funding come from to continue to operate the child care centre that was pre-existing? Parents will no longer be paying fees to that child care centre; they've moved their children on. So where does the funding come from to ensure that the existing child care centres can continue to operate and continue to provide the much-needed services? How much are these services needed? Go to any community in this province and see the existing wait-list, parents who want to get their children into good-quality child care programs and can't because the spaces are already filled and there isn't funding available for more spaces to be accommodated. I think the government has to answer that question.

A question I've asked already, again, but which needs to be answered, and for which this government has not provided any answers: It is very easy to announce four-year-old and five-year-old full-day kindergarten in this school, which has vacant classrooms. It is easy to announce it in this school, which has vacant classrooms. But what about these schools over here, which do not have any vacant classrooms? Where is the physical space going to come from to accommodate four- and five-year-olds in that part of the region, in that part of the city, in that part of the town? As far as we could see, there are no capital allocations. When you start building classrooms, it becomes a very expensive undertaking indeed, which opens up the question: Are we going to see full, all-day kindergarten where it is needed, or are we only going to see it where there happens to be vacant space in existing schools? If that is where we're headed, and it certainly seems at the outset that that is where we're headed, then that creates a very unfair and inequitable system.

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In the very parts of, for example, the city of Toronto, where children might benefit the most from full-day kindergarten, it will not be available. In other communities—and I want to thank my colleague from Timmins—James Bay for pointing this out—one of the places where we probably need full-day kindergarten the most is in schools where you have a lot of aboriginal children, because, in many cases, coming from very low-income families, families that are struggling to find a place in the local economy, families that are challenged by other issues, full-day kindergarten would make a great difference there.

But if full-day kindergarten is not going to happen where children need it the most, then this doesn't resolve the inequality and the unfairness. In fact, it fans the flames of greater inequality and greater unfairness. These are the questions the government needs to answer. I listened to people from the government stand up and speak, and they, oh, so deliberately avoid answering any of these questions. But these are the real nuts and bolts of good social policy. How is this going to be implemented? How is it going to be implemented fairly? How is it going to be implemented equitably? How are we going to ensure that the kids who need it the most don't have to wait the longest?

As I listened to government speaker after government speaker, they, oh, so deliberately avoid answering any of those questions. It's very clear. The evidence is in. This kind of initiative is good social policy, but if you haven't thought through the details about how to do it fairly and equitably and in a balanced way, if you haven't thought through the details about how you do it without closing down, cutting or otherwise undermining the existing child care centres, then it's very likely not a step ahead, but creates more problems.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for—are you in your proper seat?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's what caught me short. The member for Ajax–Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I thought it was the glasses.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank the speaker from Kenora–Rainy River. I'm very pleased to hear his comments, in particular one of his initial quotes: "This needs to be done." It's certainly a pleasure to have him onside with us. Some of his other questions are legitimate: "How long will it take?" We say five years. We're not 100% sure, but it's all dependent, of course, on a number of circumstances.

I have to tell you that I was born with the best of both worlds. My mother graduated and became a teacher. This is for you who are too young to realize, but in those days it was called normal school. The other best part of being there was that I was the eldest of 10 children. I saw all my brothers and sisters grow up, I saw what my mother went through, and I know her comments. Her comments were, "Just to have one extra year for a child at the beginning of their school life would give my children a head start." She's right. It's coming to fruition a half a century later. The comments that we are sharing here today—and everybody has said it: Investing in early learning is good for children, good for parents, and good for Ontario.

I have to tell you I love a couple of the comments, one from the president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario: "We commend the government for its commitment to the welfare of our young children. The decision took a lot of courage in today's economic environment, but it will pay a lifetime of rewards, not only for our children, but for our communities and the economy."

My compliments once more to the past third party leader—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Kenora–Rainy River on a number of the points he raised. As we've said before, we support in principle this program. Some of the issues that he identified are concerns that we have as far as the haves and the have-nots in some of the same districts. I know in mine there are four schools that are going to provide this in Sarnia–Lambton, yet there's a number of other schools that

won't be able to take advantage of this. Those are concerns of ours. There's also, the funding model—we'll have to see if that's going to work—the provision of space, the opportunities for the schools and parents to access this.

I've got two grandchildren myself. I know I look too young for that, but I've got two grandchildren myself who are in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten at this time. I know that when our children were growing up, it would probably have been quite a relief, for my wife anyway, to have had an opportunity to put our children into something similar to this.

But I've got concerns, as the member from Kenora–Rainy River and a number of other members have spoken about, about access and the people who aren't able to access this, maybe on the opposite side of the street. Just because of where they live and geography, they're not going to be able to take part in this. Those are valid concerns, I think. Hopefully, if we can take something like this to committee and try to make the bill better—I see my honourable friend from Peterborough nodding his head. I think that's reassuring.

Anyway, we look forward to that and also to the rest of the debate today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to pick up on the comments made by my friendly member from Kenora–Rainy River. He's right picking up on the fact that it's a good policy. Nobody's arguing about the direction and what the government is doing. It's a question of, how are we going to make sure that this policy applies to as many Ontario citizens as possible?

One of those issues is, how does this relate to First Nations kids? The reality is, it's not going to apply to First Nations kids in 99% of the cases because most of those kids are inside a federal education system that doesn't afford junior kindergarten. That's why I've always favoured the issue of getting into discussions about how we're able to create aboriginal school boards and transfer education from the federal to the provincial jurisdiction when it comes to First Nations. I think it's pretty discouraging for kids and their parents when they see a child in a provincial system who gets \$12,000-plus per annum, the amount of money per year to pay for that education in the provincial system, and you get less than half of that in the federal system. I think we need to be able to deal with that.

The other issue that he raised is the issue around daycare, and that is a really serious issue. I wish that the government would pay a little bit more attention on this one because you have a lot of not-for-profit daycare centres, and some for-profit centres, that are going to find themselves in the position of trying to figure out how they're going to balance the books at year end, because a lot of kids that they've presently got in the daycare system are kids who are going to end up in the junior kindergarten system. Should that be a reason not to do this? Absolutely not. It's something we've got to do. But

I think the government needs to approach this in a much more global way and take a look at the issues around how we make sure that this policy is not going to negatively affect daycares and other people who are in contact with their kids in the education system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Mauro: If I could, I'll make my comments in these two minutes by way of example of, I think, one of the reasons why we as Liberals in the province of Ontario are so very proud of this particular policy and the \$1.5-million commitment that we're making to it and to the 35,000 children who are going to have access to this program come intake this fall 2010.

If you think about it, governments of all stripes—senior levels, federally, provincially, even municipally—are not, I would suggest, well known for making investments in policy decisions the benefits of which will not accrue until five, 10 or 20 years down the road, health care probably being the best example of that.

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I could give a lot of examples of things that we've done on health care in the province of Ontario in the seven years since I've been here that are wonderful examples of us taking money when resources are tight and putting it on the front end of the health care system to try and prevent illness, for example, HPV vaccine for young girls, saving families \$550 per year; a colorectal screening cancer program—great examples of how we take resources and put them in on the front end. The benefits of that may not be seen. They're harder to quantify.

But when it comes to this particular policy in education, I would make the same argument. I think that's why we can be extremely proud of it. It would have been extremely easy for the Premier and our government to walk away from this particular commitment because the benefits of this to these 35,000 kids starting this fall—it's going to be 10, 15, 20 years out before we see the benefits of what we have done here: the higher graduation rates from high school, more kids attending post-secondary education and more kids achieving success educationally and in the workforce on a go-forward basis. We're not really going to see and feel that for 10 or 20 years, but I think as a government we can be extremely proud of this policy. It would have been very easy not to do it now, but I think this is a very clear signal from our government and from our Premier on how important we see this particular piece.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Kenora–Rainy River, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to thank members for their comments, but I want to use this opportunity to again illustrate one of the questions that is being asked and needs to be answered.

This came up recently at a child care forum here in Toronto where the very child care advocates who have worked the longest and the hardest to promote the idea of

full-day early childhood education are now raising the issue that the government intends to water down the rules and regulations for the operation of child care centres.

At the same time that some schools receive full-day kindergarten, child care centres, which look after not only at this time four- and five-year-olds but younger children, and where there's a considerable amount of evidence as to the number of early childhood educators there should be per child, the government is seriously looking at watering down those standards such that the quality of child care that children receive is thereby diminished.

I would just say that it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that if that's where the government is headed, you water down the standards for early child care, for early childhood education and then, on the other hand of the stick, say, "Oh, but some schools are going to have full-day child care," that's not going to be a step ahead. That will be taking from some children in order to potentially benefit other children, but it doesn't make for good social policy and it doesn't make for good outcomes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to be able to speak in support of Bill 242 and full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds and thought maybe I'd start with a little bit about why. This is Carl Corter, who's the Atkinson Charitable Foundation chair in Early Childhood Development and Education, and this is what he had to say: "More than a decade of solid research at home and abroad shows the benefits" of early learning "for children's learning and development, and social savings on prevention. Healthier, better educated children are the best social and economic investment we can make, now more than ever."

To put it briefly, what we are doing here is something that is good for children, good for families in terms of their individual development and something that is good for our economy in terms of skills development and economic development. My colleague from Toronto Centre spoke very eloquently about the economic benefits of this.

I think that I will spend a little bit more time talking about the implementation and what the program's going to look at. I've been quite fascinated listening today to the somewhat manufactured angst we've been hearing about the equity of all this. If we could put things in a little bit of perspective, to phase in part-time junior kindergarten took about two decades, 20 years, during which the two opposition parties were, for the most part, the government of the province, and they took a very laissez-faire approach: "Oh, when you get around to it. Whatever. If you want to."

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's stretching it.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I will give you some credit. The NDP was a little bit more aggressive than the Conservatives.

It was a 20-year process. So to complain because we have 2015-16 as a target for this massive program is just plain disingenuous on the part of the opposition parties.

Let's talk about the phase-in, because the phase-in is a legitimate issue. How are we going to handle this? We do know, as has been mentioned, that schools come, from a physical state, in three categories: They already have room; or they have some classrooms, but they're not appropriate for four- and five-year-olds so they need renovations; or they just plain need an addition. What we are doing right now is working with the school boards to identify which schools are which—which ones are good to go in terms of space, which ones need renovations, which ones need additions. The reason you don't see the capital dollars sitting there as a laid-out program is because we are discussing with the school boards how we are going to phase in the capital needs on this. We quite admit there are capital needs, and those capital needs will be taken care of.

The second issue I've heard a lot about is the whole issue of child care. We also understand that we will have some impact on child care. First of all, I think we do need to look at this from the perspective of families. From the perspective of a family, what this means is that if you have a four- or five-year-old, the child will be able to go to school all day, every day, and schools will offer, on a fee-for-service basis, before-school and after-school child care in JK or SK in the full-day-learning program classroom. So from the parent's point of view and the child's point of view, we are dramatically improving service to the families of young children. From the child care point of view, that does mean they're going to eventually have less four- and five-year-olds in child care, but what that also means is there will be more space for two- and three-year-olds in child care. That's a good thing, not a bad thing. What it does mean is that we need to work with our child care operators to figure out how to make that transition. That's why we said to the boards this year, "Don't implement it in a school where there's child care, because we know we need to work around the issues with how that's going work."

So, in fact, we do have a plan to phase this in carefully, and we do have a plan to address exactly those issues which the opposition has raised.

Let's talk a little bit about the model that's going to happen here. In my view, this is an absolutely brilliant model. What we're going to have in each full-day learning classroom is a teacher who is qualified to teach small children, primary children, who is going to be able to take the lead on matters academic. But what we're also going to have in every full-day-learning classroom is an early childhood educator who is specifically educated around issues of early childhood development—what does a four-year-old's and a five-year-old's social development look like? How do you take advantage of play experiences to reinforce the learning experiences that the teacher can set up? It's a wonderful model. You're getting the best of two professions working together to have a marvellous program for small children.

What that means is that, yes, we may have more children in each classroom—we've said a maximum of 26—but there will be two adults in each of those classrooms. So for every 13 children, there will be one fully qualified adult—the two adults working together to create the best program possible. Then, before and after hours, we can have the early childhood educator working, where required, to provide the actual child care program. So I would suggest that, again, the suggestion that somehow we're raising the class size from 20 to 26 is just silly. No, we're not. We're taking four- and five-year-olds who are currently in classes of 20 and we're going to put them in classes where there will be 13 kids for one adult.

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Now, I've heard some people, particularly from the Conservative Party, expressing concern: "How on earth are we going to manage these little four-year-olds at school all day?" Isn't this an awful thing? You know I've got white hair. My son is 35 years old, so it was 30 years ago when he went to kindergarten. Do you know how he went to kindergarten? He went to full-day alternate days. He went Monday, Wednesday and alternate Fridays, and complained bitterly on Tuesday and Thursday when he couldn't go to school. School boards have well over 30 years experience with having five-year-olds all day.

As I mentioned, it took 20 years to implement half-day JK. It's the same thing with JK: For school boards that have busing and for schools that have kids on buses, the four-year-olds are already going full-day alternate days. We have 20 years of experience in this province with having four-year-olds at school all day, just all-day alternate days.

My grandson, who happens to be four, goes to school Tuesday, Thursday and alternate Fridays. He's very fortunate because there's actually child care in his school, so on Wednesdays he goes to child care at the same school.

We have a lot of experience with these program models; we just need to get them implemented all over the province. Yes, that is going to be complicated, and we're going to take five or six years, and we're going to get it done very well and very carefully. It will be wonderful for kids, wonderful for families and wonderful for the economy.

What the actual legislation does is it sets up the legislation to allow school boards to set up this staffing model. It allows school boards to offer child care, which currently they are not allowed to do, for the extended day places. It sets up the working relationship between the teacher and the ECEs so that they have a collaborative relationship. It sorts out the details. But I am very, very proud that our government, despite the economic situation in which we find ourselves, recognizes that this is of huge social importance, and we are moving forward in a cautious but planned manner to help the families of this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to rise in this House to speak on Bill 242, full-day learning. At the outset I would like to commend the Minister of Education, our government and also our Premier for his initiative on this very issue: education, full-day learning for our four- and five-year-olds.

Education is the key for the success of every society. As an educator myself, also as a father and as a grandfather of two lovely girls, I realize and I know that education, particularly early childhood education, is the key; it's important. My wife also works—she is an economist, but she works as a supply teacher in one of the daycares in Richmond Hill. I learn a lot from her and her experience in dealing with kids.

In this world, we know that the economy is moving toward a knowledge-based economy, and we need to educate our kids right from day one, when they are born. Education actually starts at the same moment as a person is born, not at the age of six, not at the age of seven, not at the age of four or five. In reality, education starts at the same moment that a person is born. If you can afford education right at that moment, even better. But practically at this point, we can afford to provide full-day learning for four- and five-year-old kids. That's what our government is doing, and that's why our Minister of Education has brought Bill 242 to the House for consideration. If it passes, it's going to bring public education to our four- and five-year-old kids, and this is going to be paid off in the long term, though it's going to cost money, of course—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

My apologies. We'll get back in order now. The member for Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: The member from Guelph mentioned that the “capital needs will be taken care of”—that was the specific quote. I have to say that, as an MPP, usually we get pressures in certain areas to try to deal with issues. I don't recall any major pressure coming forward, especially in these economic times right now—the added funds in revenue that will be taking place to implement the program over a period of time. We understand what's coming forward regarding the benefit. However, in economic times like this, is this the right time to be moving forward with this?

The impacts are going to be far greater than what's being mentioned here, for example, when you talk about it being implemented this fall. Those kids now—and we are getting calls from individuals, “How do we get them to school?”—they will be moved to other schools to fill those vacant spaces. What's going to happen to those kids when they get to grade 1? Do they move out of that school now and go back into their other school? What will take place at that particular time with those individuals?

Not only that, but when you talk about the impact on the daycares and what's going to happen there, as it stands right now, the kids of that age group are the ones essentially a lot of daycares are making their revenues from. Those are the easier kids to take care of. When

you're driving by and see these places advertising that they have so many kids available this age, so many available this age and so many kids available this age, what's taking place now is that we're going to eliminate that pocket of individuals at the daycare which are easier kids to take care of—cost-wise as well. We can expect that those other kids will now increase the cost for the lost revenues.

Not only that, I had a meeting with the faith council on Thursday, and I was quite surprised. They were actually very concerned about this because of the impact on their churches. In this particular case, it was two churches that spoke. They were going to lose, effectively, their daycare and the ability to come forward with what they were teaching those kids in those schools.

There are a lot of other aspects that need to come forward, and I hope I get a chance to talk about it at a later date.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I was pleased to hear the former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education speak on this bill because there were a few things that I was hoping she would raise. Most important to me was this change that is going to take place with the number of children in a classroom. Currently, of course, we are supposed to have 20 children per teacher up to grade 3. With the implementation of full-day kindergarten, that number is now changing upwards to 26. Again, that will depend, of course, on the school, because you can always ask for exemptions.

I think it's unfortunate that the former parliamentary assistant wouldn't at least try to explain that sudden backtracking. Limiting the number of children in the school age group down to 20 per teacher was, of course, a Dalton McGuinty promise. What we're seeing now with the new implementation of full-day kindergarten is that that promise will have to be—how shall we say?—rescinded. It would have been nice for the parliamentary assistant to raise that.

I think what we are seeing in the debate that has been occurring for the last number of hours on all-day kindergarten is that there are more questions being raised with the implementation of this proposed legislation than answers. We had a beautiful opportunity this afternoon with the former parliamentary assistant to answer some of the questions that have been raised in the last three hours of debate; instead, we didn't get any of that. I think it's a terrible missed opportunity that could have been used very effectively in this afternoon's debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Back in the nick of time, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We have it all sorted out now.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Back in the nick of time.

I have just a couple of very quick questions to the former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. There are, I think, some legitimate concerns. I

believe this is something that should happen. We believe that a speedy process is a good thing. It pays dividends when it comes to kids in the longer term, as far as investment. We buy all that. But there are a couple of legitimate concerns that need to be answered. One is: What about those school boards which already offer this service and have been doing it for years? For example, where I come from, I'm pretty sure most of our school boards have been doing full-time JK for some time now. It started with the French Catholic, and as a result of that the other school boards followed through. What happens to them? Are they going to be compensated and not fall behind other schools when we fully implement junior kindergarten for all?

The other issue is, how do we deal with those daycares? I don't want to argue that every daycare in Ontario is going to be affected, but certain daycare centres are going to have bigger problems than others. What do you do in those daycare centres where a sufficient number of kids who would normally be in junior kindergarten—where they rightfully belong—leave, and end up in junior kindergarten rather than in their daycare centre? How do we deal with that, and what are the responses from the government when it comes to the overall daycare policy part of this that is not being spoken to?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Guelph, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members from Richmond Hill, Oshawa, Dufferin-Caledon and Timmins-James Bay for their comments. I want to start with the comments of the member from Dufferin-Caledon, so let's go through this one more time.

Currently, if you are in a primary class, which would be junior kindergarten, kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2 or grade 3, the class size which is required by and paid for by the provincial government is 20 kids for one teacher, okay? Yes, we are going back on that for JK and SK. We are making it better, because there will be only 13 kids for each adult. It's just that we will have two adults who have slightly different qualifications, each very appropriate to deal with four- and five-year-olds. We will have one teacher who is qualified to teach primary children and one early childhood educator, also qualified to teach four- and five-year-olds. So we will have two qualified people in a classroom of a maximum of 26; two qualified educators. Now, 26 divided by two is 13, so the ratio will be 13 to 1. That's better than 20 to 1. We're making this better.

I did want to work through that in a lot of detail, because it seems to be going over a lot of people's heads. But what's really exciting about this isn't so much the numbers, it's the fact that we are going to have two qualified educators with slightly different points of view working collaboratively to create the absolutely best program.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you, and thank you for letting me sort that out. You realize it was about 24 hours ago that every clock in Canada stopped with 24 seconds to go.

It is now 6 of the clock. This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Tuesday, March 2.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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