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of Debates
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**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 26 May 2015

Mardi 26 mai 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 May 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 mai 2015

The House recessed from 1757 to 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING THE SCHOOL
YEAR ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION
DE L'ANNÉE SCOLAIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 26, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to resolve labour disputes between the Durham District School Board, Rainbow District School Board and Peel District School Board, and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation / Projet de loi 103, Loi visant à régler les conflits de travail entre les conseils scolaires de district Durham District School Board, Rainbow District School Board et Peel District School Board et la Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I recognize the member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'll just finish where I had left off earlier in the day.

Hon. David Zimmer: It's an illegal strike.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Then maybe you should have waited for the OLRB ruling before you brought forth this legislation.

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Speaker.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Will the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs come to order?

Hon. David Zimmer: You're condoning criminal activity.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, come to order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of Aboriginal Affairs—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): If you would allow me to do my job, I'd like to.

I would ask for your indulgence to behave the rest of the evening. And the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, let me be the Speaker, not you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Absolutely.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Okay.

The member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. When I left off earlier, I was talking about the Toronto District

School Board and how they've lost 215 teachers, 100 ESL educators and eight secretaries because of \$22 million in cuts. The theme in all of this, the theme in my remarks today, is that this government sets the priorities for education in this province. However, whenever an issue arises in the education sector in Ontario, they take actions to limit their accountability.

In staying with the Toronto District School Board, the Liberals formed a panel for a hearing to address some of these issues. What they didn't include is their role in all that has happened at this school board. The consultations don't include any focus or reference to the actions of this government.

Well, Speaker, Ontarians are quick to catch on. A letter to the minister from an organization called Fix Our Schools, which largely organized around the issue, reads as follows—it was dated April 13, 2015.

“Dear Premier Wynne, Minister Sandals, Deputy Minister Zegarac:

“While governance of school boards is an important topic, the TDSB governance advisory panel seems merely a distraction from the more urgent issue of funding.

“This panel will not include any discussion of funding and, as such, will not address the real issues that impact TDSB student safety, well-being and ability to learn. Instead, this panel seems only to distract from the pursuit of funding solutions that would resolve urgent issues such as the \$3.3-billion repair backlog, cuts to special education and overcrowding at 146 TDSB schools.

“This panel will also not include the province's role in governance, even though the province has power over the both the money and major policy decisions pertaining to public education. This approach conveniently absolves the province of any responsibility for the issues plaguing TDSB schools and continues to place all the blame on the TDSB. In refusing to take any accountability, the province is undermining public confidence in the TDSB. As such, will you please:

“(1) Stop blaming the TDSB and start working with the TDSB and the city of Toronto to find funding solutions to resolve key issues such as the \$3.3-billion TDSB repair backlog, cuts to special education and overcrowding at 146 TDSB schools?

“(2) Stop citing selling off public schools as the funding solution for outstanding repairs and improving student programs and, instead, commit to your mandate of using schools as community hubs? Even if the TDSB were to immediately sell off all 130 schools operating at 65% utilization or lower (as per provincial calculations), there would be over \$1 billion of repairs in the remaining 458 schools.

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“(3) Release emergency funding immediately to repair all leaking roofs and complete every ‘urgent’ repair currently outstanding at TDSB schools to ensure children attend school in safe, well-maintained buildings?”

“(4) Commit to using information from the TDSB governance panel in a manner that does not subject TDSB children to a massive reorganization at this time, such as splitting up the TDSB into smaller boards, which will only continue to delay the pursuit of funding solutions?”

It was signed,

“Kind regards,

“Krista Wylie—on behalf of Fix Our Schools.”

Every week I’m copied on a similar letter to the Premier demanding that this government accept accountability for the chaos that they are creating in our schools. Clearly, Ontarians are not being fooled by Liberal spin. This organization knows the facts. In fact, Speaker, Toronto school boards have already been forced to cut 260 jobs, including 50 special education staff, and parents in the Toronto Catholic board are trying to protect the intensive special education support programs that their children need.

Fact: The Toronto District School Board will be trimming another \$7 million from its budget on top of making \$16.5 million in cuts to balance its budget. The board recently announced that they would not be filling some jobs that came open mid-year.

We know that students will bear the brunt of these sizable cuts to publicly funded education in the province. Speaker, we’re taught from a young age that the division of powers in our constitutional monarchy and people across Ontario know that the provincial government is responsible for education. There is no constitutional provision that specifies that this is only when things are moving well on the file, but given the actions of the government, you would seem to think so. No, this government must wear the mess that they are making in our schools.

I was in Peterborough not too long ago for a panel discussion with secondary school teachers. In this area, at the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, 118 full-time contract teachers were declared redundant. For so many, this wasn’t their first time. Listening to their stories, you really got a sense of the impact that this has had on their life. While many Ontarians face precarious work in this province, it’s always difficult to hear the personal narratives of those most impacted.

Largely, these positions were eliminated because of— you guessed it—Liberal cutbacks to education funding. Again, this government is at the forefront of the havoc in our education system. They are creating the mess. This month, we discovered that 50 educational assistant positions and early childhood educators in Bruce-Grey are on the chopping block. In Simcoe county, the Simcoe County District School Board special education budget was reportedly cut by \$1.7 million, as indicated by the chairperson. As a result, nine special education resource teacher positions were eliminated, as well as 11 educational assistants.

Let’s walk through the process once more so my colleagues across the floor can understand their role. As the Minister of Education has said several times, the provincial government administers education funding in Ontario. This year, major cuts were made to this funding, and these cuts have resulted in job losses at the board level. What do you think the root of all this is, Speaker? The buck stops with Liberal cuts.

I’ve spoken at length about the Liberal cuts to education and the impact these have had across Ontario. It seems that the one thing the government does have money for, ironically, is to close schools. Yes, amid sweeping, across-the-board cuts to education funding, the government announced their school consolidation fund. In fact, they trumpeted it from the rooftops. This fund allocates money to force neighbourhood schools to close. This is where the government is allocating our precious education resources. My office receives calls every week from people across Ontario concerned about the closure of their good neighbourhood schools.

As the minister continues to state, it is the government that administers education funding. It is government underfunding that forces our schools to close. When a neighbourhood school is forced to close, the fabric of the community suffers. You may be losing your community park, green space or child care space in your community. In some neighbourhoods in Windsor, when the neighbourhood school is forced to close, the long-term viability of the neighbourhood is at risk. In so many of these areas, we are trying to attract residents and incentivize young families to stay in the neighbourhood. Students in areas like Old Sandwich Town deserve to go to school in Old Sandwich Town.

When a school is forced to close in rural areas you are losing the identity of the community. If you live in LaSalle, if you live in Kingsville or Leamington, your children should be able to go to school in your community. You should be able to access health care in your community and other social services. This government is clear that it expects students to commute long distances to attend class. It wants to hollow out our rural communities. It’s clear that this government does not understand the concept of community.

It is this government that forced the closure of 88 schools across the province since 2011. It is this government’s cuts to education that threaten the closure of neighbourhood schools like Lakefield district secondary or Norwood District High School in the Peterborough area. In southwestern Ontario, Amherstburg along with Harrow and Kingsville are being forced to pick and choose which community will get to keep its school.

I attended meetings in April to hear the voices of Ontario families that were fighting to keep their schools open, and I was joined by my colleague the member from Essex at one of the meetings. These schools include Harrow District High School, Harrow Public School, Kingsville high and Western Secondary School. Western is the last vocational school in the area. Students and graduates spoke passionately about saving this school;

some were even in tears. Students and alumni spoke about how they came to Western from other schools or left Western and eventually returned because they saw the value of the special programming that Western Secondary School offered. Most, if not all, of the students at Western have special needs that can only be accommodated at a vocational school. I listened as hundreds of parents gathered for an opportunity to speak out, but the meeting was limited to only 90 minutes of comments, so many did not get a chance.

Speaker, I can speak on a different level to the potential closures of the schools I talked about because they, in fact, are part of the public board that I was a trustee on. To fully understand the impact that it would have on these communities, we've had the town council in Essex actually pass a resolution to fight the closure of local schools.

We have a government that touts healthy choices—they say they want kids to have physical activity—and, yet, they're forcing school board trustees to close schools, put kids on buses and send them sometimes half an hour to an hour on a bus to get to school rather than allowing them to walk to and from school every day.

Many of the people that come to these meetings have talked about how the process pits school communities and families against each other—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member from Kitchener Centre come to order, please.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It pits municipality against municipality, and families feel that schools are often targeted. Those in the most marginalized areas are the most vulnerable schools, and often are the ones that face closure.

The process, as I mentioned, often favours closing community schools where students have the opportunity to walk and puts them on the bus and sends them across town. Parents will tell you, Speaker, that putting children on a bus to send them to school also limits their after-school activities—their ability to participate in sports, or by the time they get home from school on the bus, it limits what the family can actually do together by the time the students get home and sit down and finish their homework.

To make it easier for this government to force schools to close, the government announced changes to the pupil accommodation review guidelines. In fact, these came out the same day that the government announced their cuts to the GSN funding. So the Liberals both cut education and turned the pupil accommodation review guidelines into a playbook on how to close schools—both on the same day.

Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines—or PARGs—outline the minimum standard process by which local school boards conduct reviews to determine the future of local schools. Given this government's appetite for school closures, I would think that we need as robust a process as possible to ensure our neighbourhood schools remain open. We will not accept government cuts that force the closure of schools. The PARGs

were last updated in June 2009. In November 2014, the Liberals quietly released a consultation document for changes to the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline governing the process for school closure decisions at local school boards. People for Education posted this document on December 7.

The deadline for public feedback to the Ministry of Education was December 18. The revised guidelines announced in March of this year required school boards to conduct long-term enrolment planning and invite municipalities and potential community partners to an annual meeting. School boards must document their efforts to engage municipal governments and community partners. After engaging and undertaking the long-term enrolment assessment, a school board may proceed to request a staff report on accommodation of the schools in question.

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However, the guidelines cut public meetings in half. The minimum timeline of process will be cut from seven months, with four public meetings, to just five months, with only two public meetings. A newly created loophole will allow for an optional shortened accommodation review process, with no committee and only one public meeting. The process would take just two months.

The Rural Ontario Institute stated: "The extremely limited timeline for commenting on these proposed changes suggests the ministry is not prepared to have an extended public discussion about this even though many rural stakeholders would likely be concerned about the potential impact of the changes especially for communities that have only a single school." They indicated that they have strong concerns that the proposed PARG changes fail to encourage school boards serving rural and small-town Ontario to consider community, economic and social impacts in situations where the community has only a single school.

Community Schools Alliance's Doug Reycraft said, "These changes are really just a recipe for an avalanche of closures across the province. To take the existing process and make it tighter is just an affront to democracy."

With these changes, it's clear that the Liberals are trying to cut community input when deciding the future of community schools. Again we see this government misplacing its priorities. The government is focused on eliminating participation in school reviews and paving the way for more schools to close. The government, the Minister of Education and the Premier should be focused on building community hubs. When they committed to utilize schools as community hubs in the province, we expected that there would still be neighbourhood schools left.

Communities cannot be silenced when it comes to the future of their local schools. Limiting community input is the wrong thing to do. These changes confirm what New Democrats have been saying: The Liberals are intent to shut down even more local schools across Ontario, no matter what the impact is on students, families and local communities.

Mr. John Yakabuski: How is this relevant to the bill?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My New Democrat colleagues and I know that decisions about local schools must always be made with the best interests of the whole child and the whole community in mind. School closures cannot be forced on communities to soften the minister's bottom line.

I spoke at length today about government cuts to education in a number of areas across the province and the ramifications of these short-sighted, ill-conceived cuts. The point in all of this is to highlight the government's failure on all fronts in education.

I heard one of the members from the PC caucus say that this wasn't relevant to bill. I think it's very relevant to the bill. This speaks to how the Liberal government has mismanaged the education file. They are cutting education. Page 230 of your own budget says—although you won't say “We've cut,” you will say, “We just didn't spend,” which is basically the same thing; let's be honest—\$248-million in-year cut to education; a millions-of-dollars cut to special education. The minister will stand up and defend these cuts—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kitchener Centre.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: —in fact, she'll say it's not happening. I can tell you, as a former school board trustee—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry. The member for Kitchener–Waterloo, please come to order—second warning.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I can tell you that these cuts to education are happening, regardless of whether this government wants to admit it or not.

We have people in our communities coming forward with children who have special needs. They're being affected by these cuts that the Liberal government refuses to admit are happening.

The government continually denies that they are responsible for the chaos that has been created in our schools. This bill that we're debating today speaks greatly to the fact that they are not tuned in to what is really going on in our schools in this province, and that they are creating the chaos themselves.

We feel it's time for them to stand up and take responsibility for the issues that they have caused. Bringing forward this legislation now, Bill 103, to legislate the teachers in three boards back to work just goes to show that they are once again shirking their responsibility. There has been an opportunity to negotiate a deal for months—for months—and they did not come to the table and negotiate fairly.

Hon. David Zimmer: It's an illegal strike.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: We wouldn't be debating this bill if they would take responsibility, take a really good look at what is going on in education, and try to make some positive changes, rather than causing the chaos that you have.

Hon. David Zimmer: We have a responsibility to uphold the law.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Speaker, I have just a little bit of time left, but I would like to point out that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is sitting over there yelling that it's an illegal strike and basically saying that teachers are criminals for walking out. I think that that's an insult not only to education workers but to the people that have supported them and understand the value that they are to this system. We had the member from Nickel Belt stand up during petitions. She had 2,600 students. She didn't start the petition; they did—2,600 students in the Rainbow board, where the teachers were out, who signed a petition to say that they support their teachers because they know the value of them.

The ORLB has made the ruling; kids are going back to school tomorrow. There is no need for anyone in this government to sit there and imply that teachers are criminals. If they were criminals, they wouldn't be in our classrooms teaching our kids. I think it's an insult to the professionals in our classrooms.

To sit there and deny the chaos that they are causing—Speaker, they can deny it all they want, but again, I'll go back to page 230 of their budget. It's in there, plain as day: a \$248-million in-year cut to education. It's time that they stepped up to the plate, admitted that they've made mistakes and try and fix the system.

Stop standing up there and saying that the parents of kids with special education needs are basically making it up that their kids are not getting the supports that they need. Stop standing there and usurping the authority of trustees and then throwing it in their laps and saying, “It's their mess, not ours.” I think that it's shameful that this government will not take responsibility for the mess that they've made of our education system and then try to put it back on someone else and wash their hands of it.

As the member from Windsor–Tecumseh said earlier in debate—again, he knows we're not supposed to have props; we all know we're not supposed to have props. But really, the minister should sit over there with a bowl of water and some soap and actually do the actions of washing her hands of the problem.

That's pretty much my time, Speaker. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: What I think is shameful from those last set of comments is that there's no discussion about declining enrolment. There is no discussion going on about the amount of money, which has increased on a per pupil basis.

But what I want to talk about in my little bit of time I have here is the students—the students in Durham, in Sudbury, in Peel—who were at risk, potentially, of not completing the school year if we didn't take action. I always believe a negotiated settlement is the way to go, and that is still entirely possible. There's nothing that says a settlement can't be reached.

I have two grade 12 children of my own in the Durham District School Board. I know first-hand how important it is that they complete their school year and how worried they are about what's going to happen to them. I've sat as an SCC school president and I have sat

on the special ed advisory committee, so I know first-hand how the system works.

We're worried about kids not finishing their year. We're worried about kids who aren't doing well and need the rest of the year to get those grades up. We're worried about kids who didn't get a first-round offer from a college or university. We're worried about kids who do have offers but their admission is conditional on a minimal mark in certain subjects, like you have to have 65 in English to be accepted to this college or that university. That's what we're worried about.

It was the ERC that advised yesterday that this is all in jeopardy. This is not what we're saying; this is what the Education Relations Commission says. And of course today we have the OLRB ruling that says that the strikes are indeed illegal.

I'm looking forward to seeing my children get back to school as soon as possible. I'm looking forward to all kids getting back to school as soon as possible and working with the administration to have a good end of year.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to be the honest broker in this fight here this evening, my goodness gracious. There seems to be an awful lot of ill will going across the aisle between the third party and the government, and I'm here to try to bring them together. Perhaps if I was mediating this thing, we would have never had a strike in the first place.

But having said that, here we are. We have a strike in the Durham, the Peel and the Rainbow boards, but the Ontario Labour Relations Board has ruled that the strike is illegal. So where are we? We understand that the students are going back to school tomorrow, but we're still debating this piece of legislation.

Look, I know there's lots of lawyers in the backrooms up in the Premier's office, probably having coffee and cake right now, thinking, "We've got to figure out a way out of this thing." But the common-sense thing to me would be that we simply let these folks get back to work. Because the priority all along, from our point of view—our caucus and our critic, Garfield Dunlop—has been, "Let's get our children back in school."

I don't have any children in school anymore, but I have grandchildren in school. I certainly wouldn't want them to be out for six weeks, like these people in Durham have been. For six weeks they've been out of school, and that is absolutely unacceptable, that we should have to have waited this long.

Have we waited so long that the Ontario Labour Relations Board has actually done the work that the government should have been doing six weeks ago; that is, getting our children back and doing what is necessary? As the minister said, "I'm going to do whatever is necessary to get our children back in school." Well, was that any less necessary six weeks ago?

It's a failure on the part of this government. They should be ashamed of themselves, and by God, I hope they learn to do better in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on what I thought was a very comprehensive analysis of where we are in public education from the member for Windsor West. As a former trustee, she actually understands what's happening on the ground in school boards. People run for trustee because they actually care about students and they care about the quality of education, so she brought those values and those principles to this debate, and I want to thank her for that.

I remember when we were talking about Bill 122. The NDP raised this one concern, and the concern was that, according to the legislation, employers, being school boards, "shall co-operate in good faith with the crown in preparing for and conducting central bargaining," but there was no reciprocal requirement for the crown—i.e., the government—to co-operate in good faith. I think we've seen that play itself out here in the province of Ontario, with the government not bargaining in good faith, not bringing the interests of the people of this province to the table. That is why you have created this chaos in public education.

At the time of this debate, the commentary on the Liberal government and where they are with public education, I said: "We saw this centralized system of power that the Liberals brought in, a very neo-Liberal agenda that was somewhat patronizing to school boards: 'You do a good job. We'll tell you what to do. We're not going to give you the resources to do it, but we're going to give you the mandate to do it, and then we're going to punish you if you don't do it properly, as we see fit.' This is not a healthy relationship."

That's where we right now in the province of Ontario with public education, and it is a sad, sorry state of affairs.

I remember when Mr. Snobelen, formerly of the PC caucus, said, "We're going to create a crisis in education, and then we're going to push that envelope and we're going to get what we want." When he said that, he was on the record. The Liberal government has done the same thing, except they didn't get caught on tape. But we know what you have done to public education in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I could entitle this two minutes "Pandering, pandering, pandering," but I know a lot more.

I recall a time when I was in grade 9 and Bette Stephenson—

Interjections.

Mr. Chris Ballard: The earth was young and dinosaurs ruled.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Stop the clock. The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, I would like to have a little bit of discipline.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You got it from me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Okay.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

New into grade 9, and we had a secondary school strike that put us out for—I think it was almost two months we were out of class. I think it actually was the first time that we had a secondary school strike in Ontario. I certainly remember that, although I was not a student who necessarily enjoyed being in school, after a couple of weeks, we knew that things were pretty serious. After six weeks, we knew that we were in trouble even in grade 9. It was not fun anymore.

I sympathize with the secondary students who have been out for that long. I am in complete agreement with the Education Relations Commission, the independent body that tells us that the school year is at risk. For us, it certainly was, and for us, the repercussions of almost two months out of school echoed for the entire time. Just to show how old I am, right through to grade 13 we were still playing catch-up with some of our classes.

I was happy to hear that the ERC advised that the school year was in jeopardy. I was satisfied with the introduction of Bill 103, designed to get the 70,000 students from Durham, Sudbury and Peel back into the classroom where they belong so that their school year wasn't in jeopardy, and so they won't have to play catch-up like we did to those many years ago.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member from Windsor West. You have two minutes.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Just to wrap up on some of the comments that have been made: The member from Kitchener–Waterloo was also a school board trustee. She knows what the trustees face on a regular basis. As she pointed out—so clearly pointed out—the government controls the purse strings. What they say to school boards, to trustees, is, “Here’s less to work with. Here’s less funding for education.” Some 38 school boards received less funding for special education. What the government says to the trustees is, “Okay, we understand you’re elected officials. We think you can do a good job. Here’s less money to deal with for special education and you’re going to have to make it work. Heaven help you all if those kids don’t succeed, because we’re going to lay the blame on you.”

A \$248-million in-year cut this year—the 2014-15 school year—that they continue to deny: They passed that down to school boards, down to trustees, and they say, “Figure out how to service the students well with this, but don’t ask us for any more when the money’s run out. When you can’t actually provide for those students, because we’ve put such restrictions on the money and given you less, don’t come to us.”

What this bill points out is the government’s continuing failure to adequately manage the education file. The fact that they continue to put the blame on everyone else—just like with this bill. For years they’ve underfunded education. They’ve caused chaos in the schools. When things started to break down—they had months to deal with this, didn’t come to the table—they then put it on this side of the room and said, “We want you to fix it by helping us put teachers back to work.”

The point is, we can’t support something like this. We want the government to stand up and actually admit to their mistakes and start moving forward in a positive manner.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Good evening, everybody, and welcome to night sittings on Bill 103, the Protecting the School Year Act. Thank you for allowing me to speak today, Mr. Speaker. Considering this bill was put on the table yesterday, this has been a major topic of debate. I’m happy to have a chance to discuss this bill.

When I take a look at the current state of negotiations between the government and the teachers, I have to wonder how exactly we got here and why exactly they feel this legislation is necessary.

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Let’s be clear—and I want the Liberals to listen to this, because I know they’re busy over there. The Liberals created this crisis; make no mistake about it. The Liberals are responsible for the crisis. It’s not the teachers; it’s not the parents; it’s not the kids; it’s the Liberal government. So let’s make no mistake about that.

I’m going to outline a few things, which I believe may—

Interjection: Don’t yell.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Sorry. I’ll cool it down. I apologize.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It is what it is. This is what you get. What you see is what you get.

When we look at all the cuts that the teachers are facing, we have to wonder: What is causing these cuts? What’s causing these issues? We have to ask where the money went and why it isn’t being used in education.

There have been quite a lot of cuts to the education sector since 2011. It seems like those cuts are just going to keep on coming. It’s like that little bunny. What’s that bunny’s name?

Interjection: The Energizer Bunny.

Mr. Wayne Gates: The Energizer Bunny; yup. Anyone watching this Liberal government can see some examples of where this money went and why they need to make these cuts. I’m going to list a few of them. I know Liberals know what they are, but I’m going to list them anyway: cancelled gas plants; paying people to delete documents; Ornge Air; smart meters. They all cost this province money.

We look at the Auditor General’s report, which showed—now, it showed this. This isn’t Wayne Gates saying this; this isn’t the NDP saying this; it’s not the Conservatives saying this; this is the Auditor General. This province paid upwards of \$8.2 billion more than they needed to because they relied on P3s.

When you add those up, and I’m sure there are some teachers at home who are adding this up, doing the math, you can see that around \$13 billion was wasted on these projects and these failures. Think about this; I want you all to think about this, on both sides. That \$13 billion

could have gone to transportation—we've heard a lot about transportation, on selling off our hydro, giving up our public utility—to health care, or it could have—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Are you going to talk about our kids?

Mr. Wayne Gates: —to your point, and I'm glad you're listening—it could have gone to education. That's where it could have gone: \$13 billion could have gone to education. So I'm glad you asked that question; I hope I answered it—billions of dollars that could have been used to keep class sizes manageable and to make sure the children of this province receive the education that I believe they're entitled to.

Instead, what we're seeing in this province is quite the opposite. Instead of putting money back into schools, we're seeing that money come out of the education sector. The numbers prove this. The money coming out of education: Since 2011—that's not that long ago, and some of the people who are here today were here in 2011; I wasn't here in 2011—88 schools in the province have been closed. That's 88 communities affected in some way by school closures.

I saw first-hand how much this government cared about communities fighting for schools when it came to Parliament Oak school in my riding in Niagara-on-the-Lake. This is important: Parliament Oak is called that because it was the first Parliament of Upper Canada. The first Parliament of Upper Canada—that was Parliament Oak school in Niagara-on-the-Lake—in what would become Ontario was held on the site of an old oak tree that stood where the school stands today, the building that stands today. Its history—think about this—at Parliament Oak school can be directly related to what happens on the grounds of Parliament Oak school in the Old Town. Parliament Oak was the heart of the Old Town, an institution that people in that town respected and, at the end of the day, loved. The residents of the community—the parents, the school teachers—fought tooth and nail to save that school so that their kids could get an education in the Old Town.

In this House, I asked the government to stand with the parents of that community time and time again. The government never did. They were happy to make education cuts and then pass the buck with every opportunity they had. They were never there to stand with the parents of Niagara-on-the-Lake. They never seemed to want to listen to that community.

You didn't just not listen to Niagara-on-the-Lake; you didn't listen to the other 88 schools that you closed in the province of Ontario. The parents organized fundraisers, committees, and even tried to save their school in the court system. Every step of the way, they were asking this government to help their children to have an education in the Old Town. It was always ignored. While this community was fighting tooth and nail to save their school, this government was slashing the amount of days required to consult with the public before a school closure.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Shameful.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Decisions could be made—now, that's shameful. Think about it: The parents can't even come and say, “Don't close the school, and these are the reasons why.” You're taking that away from them. While the parents have—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would appeal to the member that I've been listening carefully for well over six minutes and I would like you to relate your remarks to what's in front of us—the bill—because you're really way off topic.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that, Speaker, and I'll try to stay on the issue of education, although I thought I was doing that.

For Niagara-on-the-Lake, the issue is huge. Families have had a hard time moving to new communities and settling down where there is no school for their kids. They don't want to hear that their kids have to travel an hour—an hour. Kids who are five and six years old travel an hour on a bus. It hurts the town. It hurts the community.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like you guys to listen. This is the kind of environment that education advocates are facing in the province today. This is the kind of environment that advocates are facing through the Premier, who's a former school trustee and Minister of Education. Think about this: They're facing a government that has drafted a budget that contains \$750 million to close schools in the province of Ontario. I believe that's shameful. But here's the part that really bothers me: Do you know how much money they're putting in to keep them open? Anybody know? Maybe on that side; help me out. Mr. Speaker: zero. Think about that: \$750 million to close them and zero to keep them open, when you have all the infrastructure there. When you have the principals, the school and the hub of the community right in every community right across the province of Ontario, not one penny is being put into keeping our schools open.

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That's why I'm concerned about this bill—to your point, Mr. Speaker. Even the title of the bill—I'm not sure who drafted this, but I think a better title would be, “Blame the teacher act.” We've seen that since day one with the Minister of Education. The Minister of Education has been saying that the teachers—think about this, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education said right over here—it was a front-page story. Do you know what they said? That the teachers were itching for a strike. Think about that. I don't know any teacher who—and I'm married to a teacher. My daughter is a teacher. My middle daughter works with special needs in the Catholic school board. My daughter is in grade 12 at St. Mike's in Niagara Falls. So I hang around with teachers. I talk to teachers all the time. And I'll be honest with you and I'll be honest with the group here: I go out with teachers. They are not the most fun people to go out with. Listen: Teachers—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Because this is what this is about. This is about: What are teachers like? Teachers don't

want to be on strike. They want to be in the classroom. They want to be with their kids. And when I go out, it's the same thing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order from the member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I just want to draw the member's attention to that the teachers may not want to be on strike but they were performing an illegal strike, hence the reason we were having this legislation and hence they're continuing to drag this on by talking about an illegal strike and trying to defend an illegal strike which earlier today the Ontario Labour Relations Board decided to deem an illegal strike.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for that point of order.

I would recognize the member, and again I ask you to speak to the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that. I'm talking about Bill 103, but I'm fine with it if you think that—maybe I'll get down to the education cuts that threaten the form of education. As class sizes get bigger and teachers lose their jobs, and things used in the classroom to help our kids learn start to disappear, we begin to lose the connection between teachers and students. It's not because the teachers stop caring once the cuts come in; it's because they simply don't have the ability to teach dozens of kids all the time.

These education cuts are hurting our children. They can be stopped tomorrow, and we can start working on making sure our kids have the absolute best education in the country—not just in Ontario, but in the country. We do this by supporting schools and supporting teachers. They can only do so when the tools given to them—when this government takes them from them, they take from our children. They take away the ability for our children to have the best possible chance in this country to succeed. It's unfortunate, but that's the way this goes. The government may just come in, make some cuts and try to bring in money that they lost on gas plants and P3s. But why should the future generations have to pay?

Here's the part, Mr. Speaker, that I think you're going to enjoy. And I'd like the Liberals on that side to listen, because this is important. It goes to the very heart of Bill 122. They put Bill 122 in place, and it was bargained between the parties, where the unions, the government and the opposition came to Bill 122. And what they did with it is that they split it up into a local and a master, or national, agreement. That's how it was done, and it was under Bill 122.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, here's the part that I think you might find interesting, if they give me the opportunity to talk here. I've had the privilege, as a union rep and a president of a local union, to bargain 150 collective agreements, with one three-day strike. But what happened under Bill 122—because in General Motors, where I participated in the bargaining process in 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2011 and 2014, guess what we were able to do locally and at the national table, or the master

table. We were able to get a negotiated collective agreement. And when I look at other workplaces in my area, there's a place called Securitas, which had the same type of mechanism as Bill 122, and it was the same thing. It was the same thing. We were able to get a negotiated collective agreement in those same years. So Bill 122 isn't the problem.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what the problem is? The problem is, when you go to a bargaining table, you need a dance partner; you need somebody to actually bargain the collective agreement with. You need somebody on that side of the table who is going to bargain with you. And what happened under this process is, the teachers went to it and the only thing that has been asked at the bargaining table is concessions. How do we do that? So what happens is, Bill 122 can't work. It's not the bill that's the problem. The problem is that the Liberal government has chosen not to get a negotiated collective agreement. They chose to do what they're doing to the teachers, and it's wrong. They know exactly what they're doing at the bargaining table. So it's not the bill; it's the government.

I would like to conclude on a few points, if I may. But I want to make sure—because for the 16 minutes that I've been talking, unfortunately the other side of the House has been heckling, they've been saying things. You've been doing all that kind of stuff. But do you know what? Here's the reality: This is too important to the province of Ontario—and who created the mess? Who created it?

Interjection: Right over there.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Right across there.

This crisis was created by you. You decided to do that. That's the way it is.

I would like to conclude on a few points, if I may. Like I said, this doesn't need to be a game of blaming the teachers or the school boards or whoever. This can be solved with good faith—and that's what you're not doing. You're certainly not doing it in good faith.

I have to wonder what kind of education system these students will be returning to. This government—not anybody on this side; you've got a majority—has cut \$250 million from education in 2014-15. There are teachers—think about this: Our teachers are some of the most educated people in the province of Ontario; I think we're all proud of our teachers—who are being fired, and their schools are being closed.

We know there have been cuts to special education funding in this province. Do you know how I know that? As I said earlier, my daughter Tara works in special needs. These cuts have resulted in less opportunity in education, fewer classroom supports.

Think about this: What are you fundraising for now? When I went to school, we fundraised for equipment, maybe sports or something. We're actually fundraising now in our schools for books, we're fundraising for pens and pencils, because of the cuts in education. That's what's happening.

It's even tougher, I'm going to say—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Davenport, come to order, please.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, this is important, because that's what happens. What happens is, if you live in a relatively rich area, you're getting a lot more funds. So a school that's in an area that's maybe a little more challenged, like my wife's school, where they used to have a breakfast club—and do you know what they used to do? I was amazed at this. The teachers, on their own, would go on Sunday to one of the grocery stores and they would buy food. They would show up at school at 7:30 in the morning—not just one day a week; every single day—and they would make breakfast for those kids, who, by the way, are lined up at the door at a quarter to 8 in the morning because they probably didn't have supper the night before. It was the teachers that did that. In a lot of cases, they did it out of their own pockets. They never told anybody, and they never put it in the paper.

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These are the teachers that this government has chosen to attack and say publicly that they're itching for a strike. There isn't a teacher, I believe, that shouldn't be shown the respect and the dignity that they deserve because every one of us can think of a teacher that made a difference in our lives. I think it's shameful how the teachers are being treated in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: You know, Speaker, it won't surprise anybody in this House to know that I might have some disagreements with the member opposite despite his vociferous comments. I appreciate his passion for this subject; it's one that is shared by many of the members of this Legislature.

You know, there have been lots of comments this evening about the children and the teachers. I want to talk about the children in a moment because, really, this is what this conversation should be about. This should be about our children and getting them back to school, because that's what we want to do and that's what we're committed to doing because we want our children to have a good, solid education. Why do we want that? Because we know that investments in education are important, and so that's why there has been an increase of \$8.1 billion since 2003 by this government, an increase of 56%. Per pupil funding has increased by \$4,260 to \$11,451 since 2003, an increase of 59%.

I'd like to, because it's important to the people in my riding, talk a little bit about Halton and our school board in Halton. I just want to talk about the Halton District School Board for a moment. But before I do, let me just say quickly that I have teachers in my life too, as many of us do. I have a brother-in-law who's a retired teacher, and I have two nieces who are teachers. They work very hard and are committed to their students. I can't think of people who are more dedicated and committed to the learning environment for the children in their classrooms.

Closer to home, though, in Halton, we have 60,000 students in the Halton District School Board alone. The

results, when you look at the annual report from last year by the director of education in Halton, are astounding. Our grade 3 and grade 6 students continue to improve. In secondary math scores, 90% of students are taking secondary math in the academic stream—applied math. You know, these students are all succeeding as a level 3 or 4, which means—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to join this debate today because I think it's important that those who are watching from home or those who are clearly mystified by the goings-on in the Ontario Legislature today are fully understanding and aware of where we're at.

Earlier today, the Ontario Labour Relations Board ruled that the ongoing strike in three districts across Ontario was illegal. Hence, two things: One, it made sure that this legislation we are debating is entirely irrelevant or, as my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West says, is moot; and that those in the New Democratic Party are continuing to defend an illegal strike.

I think the better use of the Legislature's time today is actually to be talking about issues that are relevant to children in our classrooms. My husband informed me about 40 minutes ago that outside of the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board there was a protest outside. Perhaps we could be talking about some of those issues. But perhaps we could also be talking about legislation that's actually relevant in this assembly.

This piece of legislation, at the moment, is irrelevant. The government has an obligation to take it off the order paper. In fact, I think it's incumbent upon the New Democrats to understand that the Ontario Labour Relations Board—they should actually respect their ruling, which suggests and said very clearly that this strike that has been ongoing in Rainbow, in Peel and in Durham is illegal. It is unlawful, and therefore we are simply just adding more words to Hansard rather than actually settling any educational issue in the province of Ontario this evening.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the opportunity to add comments on the remarks by the member of Niagara Falls. I'd like to address what the member from Nepean–Carleton had said about the fact that we're defending an illegal strike. I don't think that anybody over here has actually stood up and said that we defend an illegal strike. We respect the ruling of the OLRB. What we have issue with, and why we can't support Bill 103, is the fact that the government has created this crisis in education, and they refuse to stand up and take responsibility. Instead of taking responsibility, they've lobbed it over to this side of the room and said, "We've screwed it up. We want you to help us fix it."

What we want and what people in Ontario would really like from their government is for them to stand up and take responsibility for their decisions, take a good

look at what is going on in education and help move it forward in a positive manner. They've had months to deal with this, to go to the bargaining table, to have lots of back-and-forth. As the member from Niagara had pointed out, it's a dance. You need everybody at the table, willing to sit and negotiate, and there's back and forth from every party. The government has not done that, and because they chose to sit on their hands and let all these problems fester, the teachers went out on strike, and they sent it over to us to try to solve their problems.

We respect the ruling of the OLRB. What we don't respect is a government that refuses to stand up and take responsibility for the mess that they've created, expecting that the members on this side—the PC caucus, as well; they expect all of us to jump in and save them from what they've created. They need to take care of it.

The member from Burlington ended her remarks saying they're doing a great job with education and that they put more funding in. Well, there are 88 schools closed since 2011 and there are 38 boards that have less funding for special education, so I don't think their track record is anything to brag about, and I certainly don't think those 38 boards with less funding are lying about it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: It is a privilege to rise today and talk about our education system and the importance this education system has in our communities, our society and our province, and for our children. We know that our teachers do a great job. We also know that our students do a great job, and we know that parents and residents in this province are doing their very best to create the right kind of future for our children.

Parents want to see their children thrive. Students want to know they can complete school and that they can go on to university or go on to the next year. At the same time, we need a process and a system in place that respects our teachers and stays focused on what is important in this province, which is our children's education.

I believe that that's exactly what we're doing. We have a process here that is taking all of those things into account, and we've tried to make sure that we've done that, not just this year, but for many years. Since 2003, as the member from Burlington mentioned, our funding has been going up: an increase of 56% in funding since 2003 for our education system, an increase of 59% per pupil for students in this province.

What this says is that our priority is and continues to be children's education. I know this well. I know how important the work that our teachers do is, because my parents were teachers. My cousins are teachers. My aunts and uncles are teachers. My mother was voted one of Alberta's 100 most memorable teachers in the 100-year history of the ATA.

I know well how hard teachers work and how important their children's and students' education is to them and to our community. What we are doing here today is trying to make sure that we respect all the different pieces and yet still do the right thing, which is to make

sure that our children can continue in the classroom and get the education they need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Niagara Falls. You have two minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to actually address the last speaker, from the Liberals. I can't really see that far to where she's from, but—

Interjection: Halton.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Halton? Well, I want to say to you, because I touched a little bit on it in my 20 minutes—you're talking about your family members being teachers. Am I correct? And you have some people who won some awards as teachers.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Yes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: So I'm going to ask you a question, because your education minister said that teachers wanted to go on strike. Did any of your relatives, at one of your parties, or over lunch or a family dinner over the weekend, come to you and say, "Jeez, I wish we could go on strike"? I would be surprised if one of your family members said that. I want to make sure you know that.

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I want to say again: Who created the crisis? It was created on your side of the fence. You're responsible for the mess; nobody else—the Liberals. You made the decision. And do you know what? You could have made the right decision.

Mr. Speaker, as you told me to stay on subject—which I appreciate—I talked about Bill 22, because Bill 122 works. It can work. One of the two partners decided that Bill 122 wasn't going to work. It wasn't going to work at the local table, the master table, the national table or whatever you want to call it. Somebody decided to make sure that that process didn't work. And do you know who it was? Right over there. It was the Liberals that decided that Bill 122 wasn't going to work during the bargaining process. That's shameful. That is what the problem is today.

So I'm going to say to the Liberals—I don't want to give you a lot of advice because you're probably not going to listen anyway. But at the end of the day, if you go to the bargaining table and just do what Bill 122 was intended to do, we could get a negotiated settlement tomorrow.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: And women's issues, too, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): And women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker, I'm going to share my time with the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I know that she has some important input to provide into this debate.

I want to talk about something that really hasn't been discussed. Since we're here at night sittings, I thought I would take advantage of the opportunity to talk about what's going on with children with special needs in

school during the strike, and how pleased I am that we've been able to provide support to them.

We have children with special needs in the three school boards that have been on strike: Durham, Peel and Sudbury. We knew that labour disruption could affect them quite negatively, especially if they are used to receiving intensive supports during their school day. That's why, when we thought this labour disruption would start, my Ministry of Children and Youth Services worked very closely with the Ministry of Education to find ways to extend help to families and caregivers in the community to support those children who receive those kinds of special supports every day. Many of the parents of those children go to work, so obviously the concern was: What would happen during a labour disruption? We wanted to make sure that those children and their families could access appropriate programming or respite services or small recreational programs so that parents could continue to work and children could continue to be supported during the labour disruption.

We encouraged families to contact their regular caregiver and the school board. I want to tell you a bit about how it played out these last few weeks. The school boards in Durham, Sudbury and Peel had regular messaging on their websites. Our regional offices at children and youth had daily meetings and reports about any inquiries for support that was required for families. I'm really pleased to say that every family who requested support for their child with special needs during the labour disruptions was supported.

For example, in the east region we had 40 families to date requesting one-on-one respite workers and day program services or some sort of combination of respite and day program workers. That includes the Durham school board, as I spoke about earlier. That's where I live.

There has only been one request so far in the northern region, but the regional office had regular contact with what we call our lead agencies in the community and with the school board. Lines of communications were very open there.

In the central region, which involves Peel, Halton and Waterloo, 129 families, total, to date requested respite worker and day program service or some combination of that.

I'm just so thrilled that we were able to coordinate that kind of support for families during this labour disruption. It took a lot of calls with superintendents and school boards and our regional offices and our community partners to make sure that the needs of those children with special needs and, particularly, complex special needs were met. This is the part of the strike that hasn't been discussed.

I just want to say thank you to all of the parties that were involved in making sure those kids who have those special needs—that their lives were not unduly disrupted, that they had a program to go to, that their parents had respite. School is a form of respite. When we talk about respite services for special needs, the reality is, children who do go to school—that provides respite for families

who often have to provide care around the clock for their child. I think we can all take pride in the fact that those kids, those higher-needs children, have been well supported during this labour disruption.

Speaker, I also want to go back to the numbers, because there seems to be a lot of discussion here tonight about whether or not our government has really supported education as much as it should have. We've heard about the good test scores in our schools. We've heard about increasing graduation rates.

I know the Minister of Education has spoken about keeping funding stable at \$22.5 billion for this school year, in 2015-16. It's important to remember that that's an increase of \$8.1 billion since 2003. That's an increase, percentage-wise, of 56%.

Despite declining enrolment, which the third party is not talking about, we continue to invest in our students. The per pupil funding that I spoke about in the earlier debate has actually increased by \$4,260 to \$11,451 since 2003, an increase of 59% per pupil.

We're also making sure that those dollars are spent on priority programs that benefit children and students the most. We don't want school boards to continue to spend money and taxpayers' dollars on empty classrooms. The Minister of Education has spoken in the past about too many schools being underutilized. We know, across the province, that there are cases of schools that have been built to accommodate 600 students and only have 70 students enrolled, and there are others built to accommodate 1,000 students and only 300 are enrolled. So we are maintaining the funding, but we are looking at the most effective use of our public assets, including school space. That's why the Minister of Education acknowledged that we're helping school boards, through a \$750-million school consolidation fund, so we can make sure that our students are benefiting from safe, modern and efficient learning environments.

We are doubling funding for school renewal projects, from \$250 million to \$500 million. We know there's some backlog on some of these renewal projects, so we are addressing that, and we're building on the \$12.9-billion school infrastructure investments our government made since 2003.

I'm just sharing these stats and facts because I think they're quite important to put into some context when we talk about what's going on in the education system.

The reality is that our government continues to invest despite declining enrolment and that per pupil funding has increased by a significant amount since 2003. We want to make sure that money is being spent on the right things, to help our children learn and thrive and be successful, and we want to make sure that money is not spent where it's not really helping students achieve that goal.

Those are some of the realities of the funding situation, and I think it's a very good-news story for students and school boards in Ontario.

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While I don't love sitting in night sittings that much, I really appreciated the opportunity to tell you earlier about

what we have done to make sure our most vulnerable students, the students with special needs, are getting support and services throughout this labour disruption, and that every family who has asked for assistance has been responded to. That's something we can be very proud of.

Of course, we're monitoring what's going on at the elementary level as well. If need be, we'll continue to coordinate planning and so on. I don't want us to get ahead of ourselves, because there's no strike action, but there is the work-to-rule action.

So we are at a critical juncture this evening. Earlier this afternoon, the strikes were declared illegal by the Ontario Labour Relations Board. The Education Relations Commission ruled earlier this week that the school year is in jeopardy. My goal as Minister of Children and Youth Services, as the mother of a child with special needs and as someone who is very involved in the school system—I'm very motivated to do whatever we can to make sure that the three boards that are out get back so those kids can complete their year successfully and feel good about going into their summer vacation this summer.

With that, I'll conclude my comments. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. I rise and I'm pleased to speak to the proposed legislation and what it's going to accomplish. The Protecting the School Year Act would, if passed, guarantee the end of labour disruptions at the secondary schools of the Durham District School Board, the Rainbow District School Board and the Peel District School Board.

I'd like to begin by walking the Legislature through some of the provisions of this bill. If passed, any strike or any lockout in contravention of the act would also constitute an illegal strike or lockout under the Labour Relations Act. This would put the issue under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, a quasi-judicial body with significant enforcement remedies in the case of illegal strikes.

If the respective school boards and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation have not resolved the local issues in dispute before the day that the act receives royal assent, all outstanding local issues would immediately be referred to fair and balanced binding mediation-arbitration.

The school boards and the OSSTF would, at that point, have five days to appoint a member to a board of arbitration. If either party would fail to appoint a member within those five days, the Minister of Labour would appoint one upon the request of either party. Within 10 days of the appointment of the second member, the two members would appoint a third member to be the chair. If they fail to do so, they must notify the Minister of Labour, who would then appoint a chair.

The board of arbitration would be required to begin the mediation-arbitration proceedings within 30 days of appointment, and must make the award within 120 days

of appointment. Throughout that time, the parties will continue to have the opportunity to work on the outstanding issues with the support of the mediator-arbitrator panel. If they cannot work out those issues in the 120 days with the assistance of the panel, then the panel will provide a decision.

The arbitration award would address all matters in dispute necessary to reach a memorandum of settlement on local terms. In making the award, the board of arbitration would be required to take into consideration certain criteria, including the employers' ability to pay and the economic situation in Ontario. The school boards and the OSSTF would then be required to share the cost of the mediation-arbitration.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that on this side of the House we respect collective bargaining, and we want to assure the member that nothing in the act would prohibit the boards and the union from continuing to bargain. In fact, the government's position is that we encourage them to sit at the bargaining table and resolve all issues through negotiation. And if all the parties resolve their issues in dispute, they would be required to inform the mediator-arbitrator, and the mediation-arbitration process would then be terminated.

Speaker, we do believe it would be best for the parties to reach an agreement and achieve a quick ending to their labour negotiations. We want school boards and their employees to be able to negotiate fair and reasonable contracts, but this must be done without jeopardizing the education of students. Like parents, our government does not want children's education further disrupted because of this dispute. We want Ontario students to benefit from time in their classrooms with their teachers so they can fulfill their potential and learn in one of the best education systems in the world. That is why we're continuing to put students first by introducing the proposed Protecting the School Year Act.

I want to talk about all of this in human terms. What does all of this legislation mean? At the centre of it all are our kids and parents. Let me tell you the story of one of my constituents, Vandana. She came to meet with me during constituency week. She came to my office with four other parents, and this is what she said: "My son is in grade 11." I said, "Well, if he's in grade 11, you have nothing to worry about because university applications are for kids in grade 12, so you should be okay." She said, "No, I'm worried because my son didn't do well in his January exams and we were hoping he would make up his marks later in the term. If he doesn't have this opportunity"—because, as we all know, when you go to university, they look at your grade 11 marks in addition to your grade 12 marks. Her son wants to go into engineering college. She was so concerned, so stressed, that now her son, who was hoping that he would be able to make up his marks on another exam, might lose the opportunity, that she was in tears. She said, "Is there anything you can do to get the teachers back?"

That is what we are really talking about behind all of this talk. I hear the opposition constantly talk about, "We

care about children's education," and constantly try to blame us, suggesting that somehow we are cutting education. But when they have the opportunity to help mothers like Vandana, when they had the opportunity on Monday and this morning to give us unanimous consent so that we could have speeded up this process and sent our kids back to school so that Vandana's son could have had another chance at taking an exam, what did the NDP do, Speaker? They kept saying no, no, no. What are you going to say to Vandana? How are you going to defend your position when you had the opportunity to send our children back to school and all you did was say no, no, no? So I submit that at the heart of this bill is the well-being of our children. I know this.

I have this email, and I would like the opportunity—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would warn the member that devices are not allowed in the chamber while you're speaking.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Okay, how about I do this? I'm just reading an email, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You're not allowed to read from your device. Stop the clock. I will reiterate to you: The rules are that while you're debating, you're not allowed to use devices or props.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: You can use pieces of paper.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I know, but—that's okay.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to paraphrase. She just sent me an email thanking us and saying, "Thank you so much." I'm paraphrasing, "Premier Wynne and you have heard my concerns, and I am so happy that my kids are going to go back to school." I don't believe the members opposite are going to get these kinds of emails from their parents, because what are you going to say to your parents when they're going to ask you, "What did you do when you had the opportunity to send our kids back to school?" All you did was say no, no, no. That's your record. Shame on you.

2010

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Question and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a pleasure to join the debate tonight. I have breaking news: About three hours ago, the Ontario Labour Relations Board of Ontario, of this great province, said that the strike that was ongoing in three different school boards across the province was deemed unlawful. Therefore, this legislation that we are debating—I want to apprise the government House leader and the government whip and everyone on the government side that it is moot.

In addition to that, I would also like to inform the New Democratic Party, the third party, that as they continue to debate this legislation, they are in fact supporting an illegal strike, an unlawful strike, a strike deemed by the Ontario Labour Relations Board as unlawful. And here you are supporting it.

I do have one final question, Speaker: Given that this is a piece of legislation that effectively is not in order, that is irrelevant, does it mean, when two ministers of the

crowd debate irrelevant legislation, that they too are in fact irrelevant?

Speaker, at the end of the day, I think what ought to be happening today is that the New Democrats and the Liberals act like the adults I know they can be and remove this legislation from the floor of this assembly and celebrate the fact that kids in three different school boards across Ontario will be back in their classrooms. Gosh.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: We're not going to take any lessons from the PC caucus on public education funding. The system has yet to still recover from the \$2 billion that you removed from it—seriously, no lessons coming from that side.

It is true, though, that the government who introduced this piece of legislation to the floor could remove this piece of legislation. But they seem dead set on legislating over negotiating. They have a majority. They could do whatever they want, Mr. Speaker, as you know—and they have been. They're been promising to sell off and move forward with the privatization of Hydro One. They've assumed that teachers in the province of Ontario, through this pseudo-collective bargaining process that they created—and made promises about public education and transit and infrastructure and everything else. They are doing whatever they want. They could remove this piece of legislation from the floor, but they are still set on moving forward and accusing those who actually are committed to advocating for public education of not operating in good faith, when really it is the government that was supposed to come to that table in good faith. When people negotiate in good faith, you get solutions. The solutions were not to be found in this process.

The last delegation that we heard in the budget committee this year was an occasional teacher from the Parry Sound–Muskoka area. She talked about 30 students in her full-day kindergarten program. She talked about removing special education students from the education system because they don't have the resources to deal with them. That is the reality.

New Democrats are standing up in this House and speaking the truth about public education. Liberals don't want to hear it. They don't want to hear it. They want to legislate, and they're willing to stay till midnight to make sure that it happens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It gives me great pleasure to add my voice to the debate. I'm probably the only member in this House who has had children continuously in school in Cambridge and in Waterloo region since 1988. Our oldest was in grade 3 when we moved to Cambridge, and currently I still have one in grade 12, and I have one in grade 6 today, and many more who are out the other end. So I think I can add a voice of experience here.

Going back to what the member from Newmarket–Aurora said, I had a school strike in grade 13, when I was

in Toronto. We were out for almost two and a half months, and it did put our school year in jeopardy. We in grade 13 had difficulty achieving success in our applications to universities and colleges in that particular year, and that hurt my own education. I was much more limited in finding an ability to get a spot in nursing school.

I also wanted to talk about my daughter, who started high school in 1999, the year that she was a double cohort in grade 12, and under a new curriculum. There were no textbooks in the schools for grade 9 students in the year 1999; not enough school desks, either. And that's incredibly different from today. So when we look at education today and the funding that we have for our students today, I have that experience for many decades to know that we're doing better.

This debate tonight should be about the students and making sure they get back to school. This government's top priority is the future of our students and ensuring that they can get and reclaim their year. The legislation is here tonight to make sure that those who are in jeopardy actually finish their school year. We need to pass this bill in order to make sure that our students can return to school. Everything else that we've been debating tonight is not focusing on that. We need our kids back in school. We need to pass this bill tonight.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have to admit, I'm confused. I'm in a situation here. On the one hand, we've got the Liberal government that insists on retaining a bill in the Legislature that, according to what the labour relations board has said, is redundant; it's unnecessary. You've got the New Democrats, who want to continue to debate that redundant bill and support a strike that has been determined is illegal. And right in the middle, you've got the common-sense Conservatives, who are saying: What the heck is going on here? What is going on here?

I have always taken the position that if you want to have me working at night, at least let my time be productive. I'm asking how many bills and how many debates we could be having that are absolutely necessary when we have this little cat-and-mouse, tit-for-tat game going on across the aisle here. The New Democrats don't want to give in to the Liberals and the Liberals certainly don't want to give in to the New Democrats. So it's like this little impasse: "Are you going to give up?" "No, I'm not going to give up. What about you?" "No way." It's like a little game. We've got a piece of legislation that is now unnecessary, and a party that wants to debate about supporting a strike that has now been determined to be illegal. So what I would say is, we are setting one hell of a bad example here this evening. We're supposed to have our children in school. That's what we want to do. The children should be the priority. I sure hope that none of those students who have been out of school for six weeks is watching this sideshow tonight.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I am delighted to respond to all of my colleagues who took the time to address this bill. I just want to start by saying, Speaker, that today is a good day for Ontario, particularly a good day for Peel, because I understand that school is actually going to be back tomorrow, Wednesday. I am absolutely delighted that all the kids in Peel, Durham and Rainbow district are going to be finally back to school.

I know that parents like Vandana are heaving a sigh of relief that her son—I can just about imagine the families in Mississauga right now, Speaker, excited that school is back, packing their school bags, getting organized after, I think, four weeks of not going to school, and getting back to school. But mostly I know that Vandana right now is thinking that her son is, after all, going to get a second chance. And if he gets into engineering college, I hope she will remember to call me and let me know that he did get in, that he did get a second chance to improve his marks.

Mr. Speaker, I am also confused, like the member from Pembroke—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. That's something I'm not confused about: the great people I represent.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: —Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. The reason I'm confused is that I still don't understand why the NDP doesn't see the light of day, why they continue to stubbornly defend an illegal strike. It's one thing to be against Liberals; that's fine. But it's another thing to be against the Ontario Labour Relations Board decision. It's another thing to be against parents and kids. So I don't understand, Mr. Speaker, why they don't see the light of day. And I don't understand why the Conservatives don't understand that, understand that, notwithstanding the good news today, we need this bill. The reason we need this bill is to ensure that there is no further labour disruption in these three boards.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great day for Mississauga.

2020

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed it is an honour to be able to stand in this House and bring the voices from Windsor-Tecumseh to this debate.

I just heard that we're defending an illegal strike. We're not; we're speaking to a piece of legislation that the Liberals have on the table. We don't think it's a great piece of legislation. We think they screwed up the entire bargaining process, and they should be reminded of that.

Let me say once again that no one in the NDP caucus wants to put children at risk or wants to risk the school year.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Why didn't you say yes, then?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: With all due respect, you have the piece of legislation on the table. Part of democracy is that the role of the opposition is to comment on your proposed legislation. That's what we're doing.

Once upon a time, way back in the dark, dark days of the Common Sense Revolution, there was an education minister who made quite a splash when he was caught on video ruminating about creating a “useful crisis” in education. I don’t even have to mention his name, because it was mentioned earlier, but I know that the member from Mississauga–Streetsville knows him well, because he ran against him and lost in 1999—but I digress.

A useful crisis in education—oh, how the wheels of history keep on turning. That Conservative crisis in education led to Bill 160, which introduced us to standardized testing, a cut in teacher prep time, and allowed the government of the day to determine the number of pupils in a classroom.

If you fast-forward to fall 2012, to Bill 115, when the Liberals demonized education workers and stripped them of their collective bargaining agreements—oh, sure, there was a brief kiss-and-make-up as we got close to the last election, but now we find ourselves here tonight at 8:20 with the same government sticking it once again to education workers, Ontario’s students and Ontario families.

Another crisis in education: Why? Because it’s politically expedient. The government holds the cards. They stacked the deck. They dealt the hands. They knew that the ante was just too rich for the educators. There were too many strips, too many take-aways. You can’t win the hand if someone has taken away all of your chips.

The government has the chips—big ones—on their shoulders. That’s right; they have a huge chip on their shoulder. They want to demonize education workers yet again for political gain. All we have heard from this government up until now has been, “Hey, we’re hands-off. Let them negotiate at the local table. Negotiating is the way to go.” Now they’re burying their heads in the sand for weeks. They want to wash their hands of the problem. The minister pointed across the aisle and said, “Now it’s up to you”—threw up her hands. “Now it’s up to you. This is on you. We’re washing our hands of this mess.”

The Liberals created a crisis in education, and now they want us to solve their problem for the minister. They have a majority government, Speaker. They can do whatever they want to do, and they can do it whenever they want to do it. They have the majority of votes, but no, that’s not the politically expedient way, because they want to play the blame game. The government screwed this up, and now all of a sudden they need a fall guy, so they want to blame someone. Why not blame the NDP? Heck, why not? The NDP is coming up in the polls; they’re going down. “Let’s blame the NDP.” We didn’t create this crisis in education. We weren’t at the bargaining table. Don’t be blaming us for your screw-ups.

They want to turn the channel, Speaker. They want to skip down that yellow brick road singing a different tune. Instead of “Somewhere over the rainbow,” they’re going to be singing:

“Nowhere over the Rainbow board, Durham and, yes, Peel,

“We can’t find a settlement, we can’t sign a deal.

“So we’ll reach out across the floor to our friends in blue and legislate a deal just for them and you.

“Someday over the rainbow, bluebirds fly,

“The Liberals called this back-to-work tune; the Tories cried, why can’t I? Why, oh, why can’t I?”

I don’t want to cut in and break up these two dancing partners. The ones in red have the votes; they don’t even need the ones in blue. But wait a minute; maybe they’re not the real red birds after all. Maybe this dance is between the blue birds and the even bluer bluebirds, the old crisis-in-education birds and the new crisis-in-education birds; birds of a feather. Chaos in education, Speaker? “No worries. We’ll invoke time allocation.”

The Liberals and the Conservatives have changed the channel together. Think about it for a moment: No more talk about selling 60% of hydro. “We’ve changed the channel. We’re going to sell hydro. We didn’t consult the people of Ontario about it. We didn’t make it absolutely clear during the last campaign. We didn’t spell it out clearly in the budget”—smoke and mirrors. They’re changing the channel; they’re resetting the agenda, taking the sting out of all that sharp criticism from the hundreds of thousands of residents of Ontario who feel they’ve been had, tricked, misled, hit with that old bait-and-switch routine, silenced for the time being, because the Liberals ran out the clock. They played around instead of actually bargaining. They created a crisis of timing—another Liberal-government-crafted crisis in education. And now we’re here saying: Shame on you for playing with the lives of the students, their parents, their families, and messing with the careers and the livelihoods of education workers yet again. You knew this was coming. You egged them on. You said the teachers wanted to be on strike. What complete and utter nonsense.

Speaker, I’ve been there. I bargained once for 18 months and then got locked out for two months. Let me tell you, nobody wants to be on a picket line, be it a strike or a lockout. Look at the poor souls, the Steelworkers—and I say to the labour minister that the Steelworkers, who have been out for, what, almost two years—

Interjection: Twenty-one months.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: —21 months at the Crown Holdings beverage can factory in the GTA—that’s where the labour minister should be bringing in back-to-work legislation. The minister may remember that last fall we spoke about this face to face, and I urged him then to do something about it. I urged him before Christmas to find a solution, nearly six months ago, and very little or nothing was done.

It’s a sad, sad day in this province when the bullies gang up on the innocent. One year you cancel the contracts of education workers, impose a settlement, demonize them, make them out to be the bad guys, and then you say, “Oh, I’m sorry. It’ll never happen again.” No, not until it’s politically expedient, like now.

2030

Fix the system. Learn your lesson. Don’t keep on playing the same old tune. Quit demonizing education workers. Treat them with the respect they deserve. They’re the

professionals. Treat them like professionals and bargain with them fairly.

Negotiations: The Premier used to know this—used to: Negotiations are about give and take and compromise. You don't change the rules of the game in mid-stream. All of this could have been avoided if you would have come to the bargaining table with an open mind and a sincere willingness to seek a compromise. You didn't do that, and then you ran out the clock and created a crisis in education. This is nothing to be proud of; instead, it's something to be ashamed of. I say to those who may be viewing at home at this hour: Don't be blaming the education workers; blame the government. They didn't play fair. They wanted this confrontation. They needed this confrontation to take your mind off of their horrendous budget proposals.

They have no right to sell 60% of Hydro One. They didn't ask your permission to do that. You own Hydro One, not the Liberal Party of Ontario. Their friends in the banking and investment sectors are going to make bundles of money and you're going to be paying higher rates.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I was very much enjoying the member's dissertation on Bill 103 until he digressed to a topic nowhere near close to the subject of the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for your point of order. I'm listening very carefully, and I'll ask the member to continue.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I wonder why they're so sensitive about talking about selling Hydro One.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm just trying to help.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you. Here's a system, Hydro One, that returns \$300 million of revenue a year, money that could be used for education, money that could improve the system. Instead, they're going to give it to their banker friends for profit.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Eight hundred million.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Eight hundred million; I'm sorry. Eight hundred million a year comes back. It could be used for education, and instead they're going to sell Hydro One to their banker buddies and we're going to pay higher rates. That is part of this equation.

Don't be fooled by this gang of profiteers. Don't be misled about why the Liberals created this crisis in education. They have a majority government; they think they can dictate whatever they want. They seem to forget that they have to answer at some point to the taxpayers, the voters. As I said before, no one wants to see a school year lost.

Speaker, you may remember Brian Mulroney 25 years ago. He admitted to deliberately waiting to the very last minute to roll the dice on the Meech Lake Accord, and he lost.

Now the OLRB has stepped in. This was what has happened here: They waited to the very last minute. This was like a—no, not even a Liberal plan B—this is a plan D: designed for failure. They wanted this. They put the

school year at risk. They bumbled and fumbled about. They have no integrity left. They rolled the dice and they came up snake eyes.

It should be clear to everyone that this Liberal government has no respect for the collective bargaining process. They have no respect for students, no respect for their families and no respect for teachers. I doubt they even respect themselves after the way they screwed up the education file this time.

Class sizes are at the heart of this manufactured crisis. Future students won't get the attention they deserve with larger classes. Kids with challenges who need special education will not receive the attention they need and deserve with the cuts this government is making to education. Nearly 40 school boards will get less money next year for their special education needs. The government has closed nearly 90 schools in the last four years, and there are more to come.

I get part of it, at least: Student enrolment is down. I get that part, but you don't have to close every school. You can turn them into community hubs. You can bring in service clubs and health clinics, and keep the schools open and keep the kids in classrooms.

Schools are the heart of a community. In rural Ontario, a lot of schools are closing. The Liberals said at one time that they would protect rural schools. Rural schools are defined by how far it is from one school to the next—say it's five kilometres.

Ms. Cindy Forster: The same as hospitals.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The same as hospitals.

Instead, now they've expanded that boundary to 10 kilometres or more. So many school boards that used to have rural schools that had to be protected and kept open don't have them anymore because that boundary, that distance from school to school, has been enlarged so much they don't qualify under what they used to qualify, and they can be closed. I say: Shame on that.

Think about this just for a moment: I don't know if anyone has brought this up before or not, Minister, but all that money that was spent on the renovations at schools for all-day kindergarten—millions of dollars just a couple of years ago—and now you're closing a lot of the schools where you spent all that money. No, somebody wasn't thinking right there. It's not something to be proud of. Enlarging class size is not something to be proud of either.

Ms. Cindy Forster: The Liberals do well; they waste a lot of money.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes, they do waste a lot of money, don't they, these Liberals?

Teachers know their students; they know their needs. They are the professionals—the highly trained and educated professionals, and many of them have specialized skills. They shape and mould our children and our grandchildren. They help them work through their problems. They help them learn by their mistakes.

What does this Liberal government do? It does not learn by its mistakes. They find problems and make them worse. That's the scary thing: They make them worse.

They're making sure there will be years and years of unrest in the education sector. That's no way to create good policy. That's no way to treat your professionals. It's certainly no way to gain respect. That's not what integrity is all about. That's no way to run a province.

Seriously, folks, you're not building Ontario up. With this kind of action, you're tearing Ontario down. You're running it into the ground. Learn by your mistakes. Learn how to bargain. Learn how to compromise. Learn how to work well with others. How many report cards—"Johnny knows how to work well with others. Johnny plays well with others." Give education workers the professional courtesy they deserve and the respect they deserve.

Speaker, don't let anyone fool you. The New Democrats did not create chaos in the education system. We did not create crisis in the education system. This was solely manufactured by the Liberal government. They left it to the last minute. They're looking for a bailout; they're looking for a fall guy. They want to blame somebody, and, of course, we're the third party—why not pick on the little guy, you bunch of bullies? We didn't create the crisis.

Teachers didn't create the crisis in education either. Yet the teachers are the ones who have been left behind to handle crisis after crisis that the Liberals have left in their wake.

Ms. Cindy Forster: And the school boards.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The school boards are left holding the can. They're carrying the can for these guys.

You're too willing to take the easy way out; to roll the dice and hope for the best. You're gambling away Ontario's future. You say you want to improve the education system; you're destroying it. Turn underused schools into community hubs. The communities have paid for those schools time and time again. Like Hydro One, schools belong to the taxpayers of Ontario. Keep them open. Keep hydro in public hands. Do not increase class sizes for our students. That's at the heart of this discussion. Don't try to balance your budget on the backs of students, parents, teachers and all education workers. We're dealing with future generations here.

2040

Stand up for your children and your grandchildren. Stand up for education. Fix the system. Don't throw up your hands, point across the aisle and say, "It's up to you." Don't be blaming others for your own incompetence. Get back to the bargaining table. Get serious about negotiating a new agreement, one that all sides can live with, and do it now. It might take a day or two, but it will be well worth it.

Thank you for your time and your—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. I enjoyed his references to the Wizard of Oz. I did notice that he has a slight resemblance to Frank Morgan, who played the wizard. But I'm actually thinking more about Winnie-

the-Pooh. He's sounding a bit like Eeyore, because things are really bad and really dark.

But if creating a crisis in education is smaller class sizes, well, then I'm okay with that. If it's higher scores on tests, then I'm okay with that. If it's more students graduating, then I'm okay with that. So I don't think that is a crisis. The investments that we've had in education over the last 10 or 12 years have been significant and have made a difference in people's lives.

We were talking about grandchildren. We're going to have a grandchild sometime, I think, within the next 24 hours. We've been waiting for a couple of days. So education is important to all of us.

I am proud of the investments that we've made, and I'm proud that we continued to invest when we found ourselves in the middle of an economic crisis. What we all need to remember, with all due respect, is that we have been borrowing in the neighbourhood of \$10 billion to \$12 billion to \$14 billion a year since about 2008-09, and we have to get to balance. So unless there's a magic money tree here that we all don't know about, we have to bargain within certain constraints. What we've had is a ruling, which is a ruling that has occurred under different governments—and I know that on the other side of the aisle, the third party has supported back-to-work legislation for garbage workers.

I think we have to work in the interests of children.

I respect the member for Windsor–Tecumseh and very much look forward to his response to my response.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I just want to say thank you so much to the Liberal caucus for joining me on the Progressive Conservative side here today. There's one thing: We don't agree on a lot of things, but what we do agree on tonight, in the official opposition and in the government, is that the New Democrats are standing here defending an illegal strike. They want to, for example, talk about the fact that this is about a crisis that the government has created. No offence to you or to anybody else, but I'm actually going to try, for once in my life, to defend them. I'll try. It's going to be very, very difficult after nine years here. Yasir Naqvi is keeling over right now.

I will say this to you all: The government of Ontario has not forced anyone out on an illegal strike. People walked off the job, and the Ontario Labour Relations Board has ruled that the action was illegal. This happened almost three and a half hours ago, so it's not new information. I've seen it on Twitter. In fact, I've tweeted about it myself. We'll see it in the newspaper. I'm sure it's on CP24 as we speak.

So I would suggest to the members of the third party who want to continue to debate a bill that is really meaningless and irrelevant, that it's not really in their best interests to defend illegal and unlawful activity and actions in the province of Ontario despite the fact that the Ontario Labour Relations Board has ruled that it was actually unlawful.

It's really good to see you, Todd. I was all by myself here.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's great to be here. I'm glad to be here to support you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As I conclude, I might just suggest to the members of the third party that they consider that illegal action that they're defending.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's intriguing, both to hear my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh and my colleague from Nepean–Carleton. She has demonstrated the ongoing co-operation between the Liberals and the Conservatives in this matter and I have to say, frankly, that my voters would be very impressed to see that. I want to make sure they'll know that this alliance is strong and healthy.

If, in fact, the OLRB ruling has made the bill irrelevant, the one that's on the floor, then—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I've tolerated a little bit of the going back and forth, and I think we're now getting really out of control. I might have to bring you in line. I'd ask everybody to try and respect the Speaker.

The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. As I was saying, I think that if, in fact, the government and their newfound allies, the Conservatives, believe that this matter has been settled, then I call on the government to withdraw the bill. I think that we could go on to other legislation or spend a pleasant evening with friends and family.

The speaker, my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh, was dead-on in his comments. We have a mess in education. The government has been cutting its corporate tax revenues for years—shortfalls in billions of dollars in our budget. They boast about it in their budget documents. After a while, if you cut your revenue enough, you start having problems. You stop having the money you need to run an education system, a health care system, a transit system, a road system.

This government is engaged in an austerity approach to public funding that generates conflict in our public services. No one should be surprised that we have a mess on our hands. You can only cut your bills for so long before you hit the wall.

This government did not resolve the funding formula problems that it inherited from the Mike Harris government. It put money into the education budget for some of its promises and didn't resolve the core problems. Until that's done, we will continue to have these conflicts in our schools.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to rise in this House and speak on behalf of the students in Ontario and, more importantly, my own sons. I know that

our government is always concerned when our students are out of the schools and out of the classroom and not learning. Let me tell you that if my kids have a dentist appointment and I need to pull them out that half-hour earlier, they're begging me to change that dentist appointment because they want to be in the classrooms. That's where the teachers also want to be; they want to be in the classrooms.

That's why our government asked the Education Relations Commission to advise whether the school year was in jeopardy, given the fact that we have secondary students in Durham, Sudbury and Peel whose school year was in jeopardy. In light of this advice, we introduced legislation that would have put students back in the classroom today, had the NDP agreed to unanimous consent for speedy passage. Unfortunately, that didn't happen.

This legislation is designed to get those 72,000 students back into the classroom so that they can complete their studies. We didn't take this decision lightly, and we are focused on ensuring that we are doing everything possible to mitigate the impact of these strikes on students and their futures.

I just want to comment a little bit about what the member opposite—from Windsor–Tecumseh, I believe it was—said with regard to our schools and the fact that some of them are underutilized and perhaps that they should be used as community hubs. I'm very proud of the work that our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, has done in trying to address the specific issue and that we have in place right now an advisory council headed by Karen Pitre that is looking specifically at different schools, at their utilization rates, at how they can be used to serve the community as community hubs.

I'm very proud that one of the schools that is being looked at is in my riding. It was used very recently in CivicAction workshops. I'm very proud to know that we are looking at schools and we are looking to have them be used as community hubs.

I'm very proud as well that our government continues to invest in education and that we will continue—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

I now recognize the member for Windsor–Tecumseh. You have two minutes for your reply.

2050

Mr. Percy Hatfield: First, let me say to my friend from Ottawa South, who's about to become a grandparent: Congratulations. There's nothing like it. I wish you all the best with it.

I'll give a shout-out to my grandkids tonight: Paisley, Arwen, Fletcher and Katana. I know they're not watching. If they're up this late, they're watching Treehouse; they're certainly not watching anything on this channel tonight.

You did talk about money and education. It has to be spent wisely. When you go to the bargaining table—I get it; you don't want to put any money on the table—but you shouldn't be going in saying, "Oh, by the way, we're going to increase your class sizes while we're here."

The member for Nepean–Carleton proves that old adage about politics making for strange bedfellows. She had two Liberals standing beside her while she made her presentation tonight and said something good about the government for the first time in nine years. I thought that was kind of cute. Of course, she had the Liberals on her side because for most of her caucus it's past their bedtime and they left for parts unknown.

My friend from Toronto–Danforth, thank you so much for your support in this bill. You're right. You hearken back to the dark, dark old days of the Common Sense Revolution and what they did to education. The funding has not been recovered for education since those days.

The member from Willowdale—I'm sorry; Danforth.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Davenport.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Davenport—lives in Willowdale, represents Davenport. I get confused with these ridings. It's Toronto. I get it; thank you. Yes, community hubs may be the answer to saving a lot of our community schools. I certainly look forward to hearing more about that in the days to come.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to give me an opportunity to talk about Bill 103. I've been hearing the debate in the House, and there are some serious points that have been made in the House on this bill and some not-so-serious points. That's totally fine, but I think I want to spend my 20 minutes while talking to the bill to come to the most important point: Why are we here debating Bill 103? What is the purpose behind Bill 103? To me, the essence of Bill 103 is our children and their well-being by making sure that they have the best education available to them. That is why we're debating Bill 103. It is about our children. It is about our education system, which includes our excellent teachers, parents, and other staff in our schools, which has made Ontario an envy in the world.

I bring to this debate my personal perspective. Many of you have heard me say in this House before that I'm a child of immigrants. I came to this great country and this amazing province at age 15. In fact, I was a month shy of being a 16-year-old. Many people think I was born in Canada, but I was almost a 16-year-old. The main desire, the main purpose for my parents to make a very difficult decision to change countries, to come to a country like Canada, was so that their three children could receive the best education in the world—right, Speaker? They knew that if their children could get the best education in the world, they would be able to do whatever they want to. I have this great privilege today as the member of provincial Parliament for the great community of Ottawa Centre, a minister in Premier Wynne's government and government House leader because of the education I received.

The reason we're here today, the reason we're debating this bill, is that we want more children just like me, and everybody in this House, to have those opportunities available to them. And they will have those opportunities

available to them only if they are in classrooms getting their education. That is why we're standing here today debating this bill late in the night.

All joking aside, all calling names aside, all partisan debate aside, let's not forget our purpose in being here. At least for me—and I can speak for my colleagues on this side of the House, on the government side of the House—it is for those 70,000 children who are not in the classrooms right now. We want to make sure that they are in school.

I know that teachers—whom we have a lot of respect for—and other workers in the school system want exactly the same thing: They want to be in school as well because they want to teach and they want to be with the children because that's what they're best at and that's what they're trained for, and we respect them, we salute them and we support them in that. That is why we're standing here.

All the rhetoric aside, let's not forget our aim: We got into public service so we can have great public institutions. I got into public service so that we have a great public education system. This education system gives opportunities to kids like myself and many other children in all our communes to be who they want to be. The reason that I am a proud Liberal and I have put my name three times on the ballot as a member of the Ontario Liberal Party is because this party and this government believes in education and believes in investing in education.

Speaker, if you look at what we have been able to accomplish since 2003—almost 13 years now—it's incredible when it comes to the education sector. We have invested billions of dollars to make our education system an envy of the world. The result is that our education system is ranked top five in the world.

As many of you probably speak to your friends and colleagues in other parts of the world, I'm sure you get the same questions as I do: “How have you built such an amazing education system? How come your students are so successful? How come we meet Ontarians and Canadians in different parts of the world who are so well established and are professionals? And they received—what—public education?”

It's because we have invested in our education system. Over the last 13 years under the Liberal government, both under Premier McGuinty and now Premier Wynne, we have ensured that our schools, our teachers, our education support workers are the best supported in all of Canada, in all of North America and, in fact, around the world. That's why we decided to invest in full-day kindergarten: Make sure that we give our children the best start from the moment they go to school, from junior kindergarten from age four.

I have a three-year-old son—a lot of people hear stories about Rafi from me—and I just cannot wait for Rafi to go to school starting in September 2016. I cannot wait for Rafi to attend full-day kindergarten in one of our neighbourhood schools because I know that he is going to excel. I know he's going to get an amazing education

from incredible teachers and support workers in his school. That is why I'm standing here along with my colleagues to make sure that we continue to provide those opportunities to other students.

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Similarly, we have worked hard to keep our class sizes smaller. We have worked extremely hard to increase our graduation rate. We have an over 80% graduation rate in Ontario. Imagine that: an over 80% graduation rate. What a great success. Our numbers of high school graduates going to post-secondary institutions, like our colleges and universities, are at an historical high. As a result, our universities and colleges are growing. We continue to build them more and more. Just most recently, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities announced a new campus with York University in Markham. Imagine that: We are the kind of government that is investing more money building new schools and new universities and new colleges so there are more opportunities for our young people when they come out of high school to go to university. This is the kind of government that we are part of, that puts education front and centre as part of our economic agenda. We know that our economic well-being, our prosperity, lies in having a good education system, and our young people are successful as a result of this.

Despite enrolment rates going down—and don't take my word for it; the numbers are out there. You can see that enrolment numbers came down, because our demographic has gone down; we have fewer children—we didn't start spending less money as a result of this. In fact, you see the line of investment actually continuing to go up. So despite the fact that there are fewer children in the system, the per pupil funding has increased by over 50%. Where we used to spend about \$6,000 per pupil, now we spend \$10,000 to \$11,000 per pupil in our system, and that has only happened during the Liberal government, first under the leadership of Premier McGuinty and now the leadership of Premier Wynne. We are very proud of that.

I'm from Ottawa, so I will speak a little bit about Ottawa. Similarly, I look at the boards in Ottawa. We have four very strong, vibrant boards, English and French. Funding in our school boards in Ottawa since 2003 has gone up by over 55%—over 55%. We have been building new schools in every part of the city: in Ottawa Centre, in Ottawa–Orléans, in Ottawa–Vanier, in Ottawa South, in Nepean–Carleton, in Carleton–Mississippi Mills, in Ottawa West–Nepean—every single riding. In every single riding we have built new schools to create more opportunities for our children.

Interjection.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Those members who are heckling on the other side actually are on the record praising this Liberal government, like the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who used to praise this government—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo will come to order. This is her last warning.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi:—and she can't deny that any more because it's on the record. She used to boast—I remember meeting with her many, many times when she was the chair of the Ontario public school boards and she used to praise our government and how much we have done for our school system. I thank her for that. It's okay; her views may have changed now. But I thank her for recognizing the kinds of investments we've made in our schools.

I look at my riding. I would be remiss if I did not speak a little bit about the kind of investment we're seeing in Ottawa Centre. For example, I'll mention three schools which have been amazing. Remember, I have the downtown riding. A lot of my schools are now actually celebrating their centennials; they're over 100 years old. Most recently, Elgin Street Public School celebrated their 100th anniversary—a small, beautiful downtown school right on Elgin Street. Connaught Public School in Hintonburg also celebrated its centennial, which was amazing, to see graduates from previous years coming. Last summer we had a great celebration at St. George elementary school as well. We celebrated its 100th anniversary. So I have a great privilege of having schools that are fairly old but full of history, full of charm, and incredible stories come out of those schools.

We are continuing to invest in schools in the downtown core to make sure these schools remain vibrant, because my community continues to grow. I know it's the same thing in Ottawa–Vanier, the Attorney General's riding. More and more people choose to live in the downtown community. That's why I was very proud, when I was first elected in 2007, that one of the very first announcements—and I was so happy at that time because, as I mentioned earlier, one of the big reasons I got into public service was because I wanted to promote education—that I got to make, and the member for Ottawa–Vanier helped me so much with that, was on a \$5-million extension to St. Francis of Assisi Catholic school—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: A wonderful school.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi:—the only French elementary school in my riding. I'm very proud of them, right in Hintonburg. St. Francis of Assisi built a beautiful new addition so, again, in that growing school the children can have more opportunity. I want to give a big salute to Diane Doré, a very good friend who is a trustee and former chair of the French Catholic school board, a great champion of education. We worked very well together. Madame Meilleur introduced me to Madame Doré, and we continued to work together to make sure that we are promoting French education in the downtown community of Ottawa Centre.

Most recently, in the community of the Glebe in my riding, we are investing \$4.6 million in building a brand new addition to Mutchmor Public School. Mutchmor Public School is also over 100 years old, and it's growing. It was a great community-led initiative where the community worked with our school board and myself, as the member of provincial Parliament, and the

Ministry of Education. We were able to get \$4.6-million funding to build a new, permanent addition to Mutchmor Public School. It's almost done. I was there last Saturday at the Great Glebe Garage Sale and I made sure that I would go by the school to see how the construction is coming along. It's almost ready to go, and we're looking forward to welcoming more children in September to the school.

Most importantly, most recently in the neighbourhood of Westboro that I have the opportunity to represent, we, as a provincial government, announced almost close to \$10 million, along with the school board, to build a brand new Broadview Public School. Broadview Public School has been there since the early 1920s, and you can tell a new school is needed. You couldn't really refurbish that school. Parents worked very hard to make sure that we actually secured funding to build a brand new school. Shovels will be going into the ground very soon, and the plan and the school will be all done and ready to go in September of 2016.

All of this speaks to our government's commitment to quality education. All of this speaks to our belief in the potential of our children and how we want to make sure that our children are successful by getting the best education. All of this speaks to our confidence in our amazing teachers and their value, and how they share their training and their education and their values with our children. All of this is a demonstration of the belief of our support workers and the heart and soul that they put into our education system because it is that village that helps grow the children in our community.

That is why we're not cutting education funding. We are continuing to invest in our education system. Yes, these are tough economic times, but our priorities remain with health care and education. That's why we continue to invest in education.

I'm really proud to support Bill 91, which is part of the budget. Why? Because in that budget we are investing \$11 billion over the next decade to build and rebuild local schools—\$11 billion over the next 10 years. That is going to result in building new schools or rebuilding schools in every single one of our ridings, in all communities from all three political parties. Why? Because we want to give our children a good opportunity to learn.

That's what this debate is about. That's why we are here today, late in the evening, talking about Bill 103. It is about our education system. It is about protecting the gains we have made in our system. It is about making sure that our children—70,000 of them in this instance, in Durham, Peel and the Sudbury area—who need to be back in school because we don't want to jeopardize their school year. We want to make sure that they're able to graduate by the middle of June and are then able to pursue the opportunities they want to pursue. A lot of those students are in grade 12, Speaker. They have the great possibility, the great opportunity in September to be in a college or a university. We cannot rob that from them.

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The opposition, especially the third party, is going to make it all about labour relations and all about strikes and this and that. Yes, that is part of the dynamic, and nobody is saying that we will not continue to negotiate. The Premier has been absolutely clear and the Minister of Education has been absolutely clear that we will continue to negotiate, that there is an agreement to be reached at the table. We firmly believe in collective bargaining, and we will continue to do so. But this bill is about making sure that our children are also getting an education at the same time and that their academic year is not being jeopardized.

So I really urge the members in this House—first, thank you for listening to why I'm here today, why I'm standing in this Legislature, how I have benefited from this great education system, and how my community continues to thrive because of the investments that we have made over the last 13 years in our education system. I urge all of you to support this bill, to really contribute to this debate in terms of talking about the value of education. At the end of the day, partisanship aside, we really all—I have that belief, in every single one of us—believe in our kids. We believe in our children, and we want to make sure that they are successful. That is why I urge you to support Bill 103, so we can ensure that our children are back in classrooms and are able to graduate come the middle of June.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a pleasure to once again join the debate on this piece of redundant legislation that is unnecessary and, at this point in time, unrequired. I say this, Speaker, because as of about four hours ago, the Ontario Labour Relations Board ruled that the strikes engaged upon by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation in Rainbow District, Durham District and Peel District School Boards were unlawful. Those aren't my words. That's the Ontario Labour Relations Board's words: "unlawful strikes."

When they ordered the teachers' union back to the classes for tomorrow, and since the union and the boards have said that there will be classes tomorrow in those three school districts, it begs the question—two questions, actually: Why does the New Democratic Party continue to stand here this evening, right until the midnight hour, to defend an unlawful, illegal strike that affected children right across this province, kept them out of their schools, and almost jeopardized their education and their school year? That is a serious question I have for the New Democrats.

Finally, I would ask the government House leader, who I have great respect for and a good friendship with: You are very much aware that this piece of legislation is now irrelevant. Would you please consider removing it from the floor of the assembly so that we can continue to debate issues that are relevant, the issues that we must deal with, including the sale of Hydro One, including the Ontario pension plan, including other issues that are

important to the people of Nepean–Carleton and the broader public?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, to the beginning comments that the member made about being a young man of 15 years old emigrating to Canada and the experience that that brought and where he's at today: I think that speaks volumes to what this nation is all about. It's a nation of immigrants, of people who come here, make this their home and contribute. I think the only mistake you made along the way was, you became a Liberal. I do notice you have on an orange tie. You could have been a New Democrat like your brother, and you probably would have done just as well.

I just also want to speak to the point—the government has this bill before the House, why? Because it hasn't decided if they need to withdraw this bill or go forward with this bill. They haven't had a chance to, quite frankly, have their lawyers be able to go through this thing in order to make that decision. That's why we're in this debate. I always enjoy Conservatives because they always have a very simplistic view of things when it comes to how they deal with legislation.

The reality is that if the government thought that they didn't need this bill, and if they thought the OLRB decision dealt with this effectively, they would have withdrawn this bill or they would have indicated to the opposition House leaders—myself and Mr. Clark—that, in fact, this bill was not needed. So at this point why we're doing this is because the government is still reviewing at this hour what it is that they're going to do tomorrow morning, and we wait to see what that's going to be.

Again, I just want to say to the honourable member across the way: I always appreciate your comments.

I also want to speak directly to why we're in this mess in the first place. The Minister of Education, quite frankly, dropped the ball. She was responsible to negotiate an agreement, and what she did is she tried to blame everybody else for her failure to go to the bargaining table and to negotiate a settlement. That's how you deal with bargaining in order to not be in this position where we're debating this in the House today. If anybody should take responsibility for having this debate today, it should be the Minister of Education, who failed in her job to properly do what needs to be done, to negotiate a collective agreement, so that we wouldn't be in this spot in the first place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you.

Interjection: Joe was up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Forgive me. I did not see him because he's on this side. The member for Ajax–Pickering.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Fellow members, yesterday the government received a student jeopardy advisement, and that's why we have brought forward Bill 103. Why did we bring it forward? We brought it forward because of the students.

The Ontario Labour Relations Board has declared local strikes in Durham, Peel and Rainbow, which is Sudbury, to be unlawful. Durham being my home area—my colleague the MPP from Durham is here as well and understands the same process. He's a former school trustee, and he understands what we're going through.

Also, it's very important for the students that they know that our proposed legislation will allow students the opportunity to successfully complete their school year without further disruption. That is so important. Some of us here are past school trustees, and they are very sensitive at these times. I, as a Catholic school trustee, am very, very sensitive at this point in time, and sensitive about our children.

What about our teachers? And what about our students? And what about our children? I can capsule that in one general statement: I was blessed with a mother who graduated from normal school, was a teacher, and she went on to do something significantly more important, and that was to mother 10 wonderful children, of which I had the pleasure to be the oldest. I can tell you that my mother was special. She was special as a mother, she was special as a teacher, and teachers themselves are special. Let's never, ever forget that.

When we talk about things, we always want to remember the very special times, and those special times are with great education, with special teachers—very special teachers—special children, all of our children. But so important: Let's send them back to school today, ladies and gentlemen. Why? It's because of our students.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to share my two cents on this debate; however, I find it very difficult to—I keep hearing from the Liberal side, the government side, that “it's for the kids. It's for the kids.” I don't have the experience of a school board trustee—everybody keeps showing that out there—but what I do have is that I am a parent. My daughter is in grade 5. I'm the silent majority out there that's saying that our teachers need to be teaching our kids.

Unfortunately, we're spending three hours now, tonight, in our last two weeks at the Legislature, debating a bill that's not needed anymore. These school boards are back to work tomorrow. The teachers are teaching and the kids are learning as of tomorrow, but we want to continue to debate this bill.

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We should be debating a bill, maybe, on how to fix our hydro rates, on how to deal with the debt and deficit or on how to deal with employment. Because at the end of the day, 10, 15 or 20 years down the road, that's going to affect our children that we're debating about, even though we have this bill on the floor that is not going to

accomplish anything because they're going back to work tomorrow. Why not deal with something in the future that our kids can actually deal with going forward?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I ask the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Continue.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much, Speaker.

However, I will deal with one issue in our school board system, and that's the fact that our one French immersion school in all of Elgin county is going to crack 800 students next year—it's a school built for 400 students—but it's going to take maybe three to four years to actually deal with the issue because of the bureaucracy this government has created.

So unfortunately, French, which is definitely needed in southwestern Ontario, is not going to be dealt with because we're too busy debating whether or not teachers should go back to work even though they're going back to work tomorrow. The francophone affairs minister is here. Minister, mes élèves français ont besoin d'une nouvelle école maintenant. Please work on that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Government House leader, you have two minutes.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Let me thank the members from Nepean–Carleton, Timmins–James Bay, Ajax–Pickering and Elgin–Middlesex–London for their comments and feedback on this topic.

Interestingly, I picked out a theme in all of their comments. It was about our children. The theme was that everybody agreed that education is important and everybody agreed that we need to make sure that our children are in school and that they need to get a good education to thrive. So I thank the members for validating the point that I was making.

I knew that and I said that already at the outset of my 20 minutes, that we all, 107 of us, share a common goal, dream and vision. We're here because we believe in public services. We are here and we believe in making sure that we've got quality health care—publicly funded, universally accessible—and that we've got the best public education system in the world.

That's why we're here tonight debating this bill. We want to make sure that children in Durham, Peel and Sudbury are able to go to school tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. Some of them have been out of school for the last six weeks. Their school year is being jeopardized. That's not our call; that's the Education Relations Commission's call. It is an independent, non-partisan labour relations board. Even it has ruled that their school year is in jeopardy. We owe it to our children to make sure that we allow them to be in the classroom to learn, to be able to get an education and graduate in the next few weeks. That's why I urge the members to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Here we are at 9:30 tonight—a wonderful evening for having a debate in regard to our school children.

J'aimerais dire un beau petit mot à mon beau vieux Matthieu, qui est à la maison et qui m'a appelé de bonne heure ce matin. Sais-tu ce qu'il m'a dit ce matin?

Une voix: C'est quoi qu'il t'a dit?

M. Michael Mantha: Il m'a appelé et puis il m'a dit : « Dad, j'ai de bonnes nouvelles. » Mon garçon vient de graduer de Canadore comme électricien certifié. Il m'appelle et il me dit : « Dad, j'ai de bonnes nouvelles. Non seulement j'ai gradué, mais je me suis trouvé un emploi. » Mon garçon, qui a passé à travers son éducation, à travers l'école, a travaillé extrêmement fort.

Je veux donner beaucoup de crédit à plusieurs écoles : premièrement, l'École Notre-Dame du Rosaire à Gogama, qui a été suivie par l'école St-Joseph à Wawa. Je sais qu'il y a plusieurs personnes qui ont formé mon garçon à l'école, surtout M. Bédard, qui était le « principal » dans le temps—et puis l'école Villa Française des Jeunes à Elliot Lake, qui a vraiment sorti Matthieu, on va dire, de sa coquille. Et puis là maintenant, il va commencer sous peu, dans les deux ou trois prochaines semaines, à se trouver dans le domaine du travail dans sons cours d'électricien.

Il est tard dans le soir, Matthieu, mais il n'est pas si tard que ça; j'espère que tu es parti au Tim Hortons prendre un café avec tes amis, et que tu es en train de parler du projet de loi qu'on discute ce soir.

Une voix.

M. Michael Mantha: Oui, il a l'âge; il est peut-être bien parti au coin de l'hôtel.

Tu es au commencement de ta vie, mon garçon. Dad est très fier de toi, et puis continue.

À mon plus jeune, mon beau bébé, Roch—tu vas tout le temps être mon bébé, Roch. Toi, continue.

Je veux aussi encore reconnaître les écoles qui l'ont aidé avec son éducation. Comme parents, ma femme et moi, on a tout le temps reconnu que Roch avait des difficultés à apprendre certaines choses, mais c'est grâce aux écoles et aux enseignants et enseignantes—les aides-enseignants—qui étaient là et qui sont venus à bout de reconnaître la difficulté qu'il avait—maintenant, ce n'est plus une difficulté; c'est maintenant un atout qu'a Roch. Il a démontré qu'il est capable d'avancer dans le domaine de l'éducation. Il est super bon; il a de super belles notes dans les mathématiques, et puis lui, il va se préparer dans le domaine de la menuiserie.

Je veux dire merci surtout à une belle demoiselle qui était à Wawa et qui a reconnu ses talents, M^{me} Lorraine Bélanger. Merci, Lorraine, pour tout ce que tu as fait avec Roch. Maintenant, Roch est à Villa Française des Jeunes à Elliot Lake, et il continue à s'avancer dans les écoles. Il est super. Il est comme un papillon social qui se promène partout. Je pense qu'il est à Sudbury aujourd'hui en train de participer à une compétition de Radio-Canada.

Je veux dire à toi aussi, Roch : il est tard; j'espère que tu es couché et j'espère que tu es revenu de Sudbury.

Prends soin, mon gars. Dad, il te regarde. Chaque jour, les deux, vous me faites fier; I'm with your mom.

I'm proud to speak tonight to this bill on behalf of New Democrats and teachers across this province in regard to, particularly, kids from Algoma–Manitoulin. And that's something that we haven't heard in a lot of the debate that has been going on here tonight. I haven't listened to or received any information that any of you have been hearing the voices of our students. I'm going to try and touch on that in some of my comments that I'm making tonight because they are alive and they do have an opinion and they have been voicing it. I'm going to be sharing some of their comments with the Legislature tonight here.

They come from a vast area. Some of them whom I've met through my riding have put me in contact with kids across this province, so I'll be bringing some of their comments that they've been having with some of the decisions that have been going on here.

It has been crystal clear that parents and students and educators and educational workers in this province have been frustrated for a very long time. Year after year, we continue to see the Liberal government putting education on the chopping block. Liberals say that they are putting students first; then they turn around and they chop and chop and chop. It's evident that education cuts are undermining the ability of students to learn.

We continue to see cuts that are resulting in closed schools, fewer classroom supports, decreased access to special education and the strikes and work-to-rule campaigns by teachers who would much rather be in the classroom. Teachers teach; that's what they know best. And teachers want to be in classrooms.

This Liberal government says they care about education, but teachers, educational workers and educational assistants are all being fired across this province. These cuts hurt Ontario students and these cuts undermine our teachers' and educational workers' ability to do their job and provide the best possible education for our kids.

This does not look like the work of a Premier and a government that has students' and teachers' best interests at mind. This does not look like a government that is putting students first. This is a government that says one thing during election time—tells voters they are different, more progressive and that they respect education—and then turns around and does whatever they want, with no regard for people and process.

So here we are again; it's like déjà vu. This Liberal government has yet again thrown Ontario's school system into chaos, and students and parents are left paying the price. But we could have predicted this.

2130

For months, we've been hearing from parents and teachers expressing their concerns about Liberal cuts to education and what it means to their kids' education.

Students have been put out of the classroom in Durham since April 20, in Sudbury since April 27, and in Peel since May 4, and this government, who says they are about teachers, students and parents, just sat there on the sidelines wondering why.

As our leader, Andrea Horwath, stated yesterday, this is a Premier who campaigned on promises of fixing the bargaining process and repairing the damage done in our schools by Bill 115. There was a lot of damage that was done in regard to Bill 115.

We reminded this Legislature yesterday that we elected our fabulous colleague Catherine Fife as a result of the mess that the Liberals made with Bill 115 in their cynical ploy to try to gain a majority government at the expense of teachers, students and families. Here we are sitting in this Legislature with a majority government putting the blame on the opposition, wondering why they can't do what they're supposed to do, which is to negotiate. Instead, they want to legislate.

In reality, this Premier and this government have no respect for teachers, no respect for students and no respect for parents, and they certainly have no respect for collective bargaining. Just like with Bill 115, the government has shown that it prefers to legislate rather than negotiate. Don't be fooled. This is only the beginning. This government is making it clear that it will legislate anything that it fails to negotiate in good faith.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things we have been working hard to combat in our schools is bullying. In fact, just a few weeks ago, on May 4, members participated in the anti-bullying day, or Pink Shirt Day, a day to symbolize a stand against bullying in our schools. Well, it's pretty darned clear that the Wynne Liberal government is the bully in this legislative playground. We all should have worn pink today.

We teach our children to use their words, not their fists.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I've asked you to come to order several times. You walk out of the chamber and you scream; you walk in and you scream. Next time, you're going to be named.

Continue.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I actually enjoy the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Stick around, be quiet and listen, please.

We teach our children to work together and come to an agreement when they are in arguments with their peers—we're not in agreement; we're having a discussion here. These are the very basic, simple learning and development skills that we, as parents, as educators, as role models and leaders preach.

As a parent, I always tried to do my best with my sons. The answer should never be—and my wife, the mediator, always reminds me—"Because I said so." You should not tell your children: "Because I'm the boss. Because I'm in charge."

What we want to do is use our words. We should negotiate and not legislate.

These are terrible negotiating skills and not what we want to teach our youngsters. Yet again, this government that claims to care so much about students, teachers and the education system and creating a bully-free environ-

ment is in fact the biggest bully of all. You are sending an abysmal message to students, teachers, parents and everyone else that our opinions do not matter; you will do whatever you want. The Liberal government's behaviour is nothing short of shameful and irresponsible.

As I was stating a little bit earlier, I want to introduce you to a group of very dedicated and active students who are in our schools. I'm not sure if any of you have bothered to look at their website. They're called Ontario Students Right to be Heard. From Sudbury Secondary School, there is Anna-Lisa Shandro and Benjamin MacKenzie; from Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School, there's Spencer Pylatuk and Greg Lee; from Confederation Secondary School, there's Vincent Leduc; and someone I just recently met—we've been speaking over Facebook and we've actually been looking forward to meeting up with each other—the representative out of Espanola High School, Daneen Maher. Their petition reads:

"Ontario teachers in three different regions have been striking, as many of you know. Now there is talk of back-to-work legislation. This legislation takes away our teachers' right to strike, and why, might you ask? 'For the students.' As a student myself, after being out for five to six weeks, I'd like if it did something. Don't make teachers go back without negotiation; make the school board negotiate." Make our government negotiate.

"People don't strike for no reason. Back-to-work legislation is a quick fix that will only lead to this happening again.

"Stand up for our teachers' rights."

I've asked Daneen Maher for her permission to read out her letter that she sent to the Premier, and I'll read it out:

"I, Daneen Maher, student of Espanola High School, Rainbow District School Board, have a problem with what is currently an issue for all parents, teachers, and students like me.

"This year, 2015, will be my last year of high school. I am now entering a new world of reality and have been accepted to Cambrian College for police foundations. My dream career of becoming a police officer is now in jeopardy because of this strike. Sending students back to school now is unbelievably ridiculous. I, as a student, cannot learn at fast paces. I have studied at home to prepare me for this decision that has officially come up. I have a part-time job, now a full-time job, that I have been working to save up money for college and my future goals. The government has officially ruined my education and opportunity to learn more, pick up my grades, and succeed in high school, and you expect me to go back to school for three weeks, finish exams, and graduate?

"Excuse me for the deliberate response but the government needs to understand [that] students like me will not be able to pass their exams or learn as fast as you expect us to. I cannot go back to school as if nothing happened and learn as if I did not miss any days of my education. Clearly the government does not care about students, nor do they care about the teachers who went on

strike and had their legal right to do so. In my opinion, teachers should continue their legal action and be heard; students should graduate with their mid-term marks, as expected. I do not believe this was a wise decision. Thank you for ruining my education and learning abilities.

"Thank you for letting me have the opportunity to give you my opinion.

"Daneen Maher,

"Rainbow District School Board."

There are more students that are voicing their opinion. Here's Shawn from Sudbury: "I'm signing this" petition "because I want to continue to live in a democracy and not have the rights of my fellow citizens slowly chipped away. These teachers aren't fighting for better pay or better benefits; they are fighting for things that students will benefit from. I'm signing this because, if and when I have children in this school district, I don't want to be sending them to an even more flawed school system than what we already have.

"Negotiate fairly and listen to those who are on the front lines and in the schools. You politicians are so very disconnected from the issues. Trust those that teach our youth."

Here's Hanna from Tehkummah: "I am signing because I am a student, because teachers' voices aren't being heard and, more importantly, students are not being heard. The teachers deserve a contract and fair negotiations with their boards. I am signing because this strike is affecting all of us, especially student education and teachers' basic rights. The teachers are striking to better our education so the school boards don't strip away basic classroom needs like spares and class cap sizes.

"Students are being completely disregarded, and frankly it's pissing me—and many other students—off.

"Smarten up."

Simran from Brampton: "I'm signing because I believe everyone should have their rights. The right to strike is the teachers' right to stand up for themselves. They literally shape the future, and we should start treating them fairly."

Ahmed from Mississauga: "I am signing this petition because the 'going-back legislation' is a way of the government avoiding negotiations."

And we think our children don't know what's going on?

Melanie from Toronto: "I'm signing because our teachers aren't striking for themselves. The issues they're striking for go way beyond. Maybe the board should take into consideration the issues with the new changes in contracts. It is unfair for a child to be forced to learn with an unlimited number of other students in the classroom. Being at my high school, I stayed for five years because simply having 30 kids was already too much. Please also consider the teachers that will have to teach all those kids. In the long run, the education system is sinking and no one wants to do anything about it."

2140

Tara in Espanola: "We should not live in a country where the government can pass legislation forcing teach-

ers back to work without the government negotiating fairly. Shame on the bullying done by our government!”

Last but not least, Charlene from Brampton: “Standing up” to fight “for education in Ontario!”

Those are kids who are telling us this. This is the message that they’re telling us.

This Minister of Education and Premier claim that these are local issues, but with the breakdown of central talks in OSSTF and ETFO, the government must take responsibility for throwing our schools into chaos. They have created this mess. No one else is to blame. You had a duty to sit down and meet with the teachers, meet with the unions and come up with an agreement. That was your job. That’s what your mandate is. That’s what you’re supposed to do as a government. You have a majority government. You can sit down and get this done.

But no, you’d rather play the blame game, throw the ball to the other side and say, “We can’t take the responsibility. We can’t do the job that we’re supposed to do, so we’re going to pass the buck on to you and now it’s your fault and we’re going to blame you, because that’s politically correct for us to do.”

We can’t stop the Liberal government from passing this legislation. The Liberals have a majority; they’re going to push this through regardless. They will do what a majority government has the ability to do, regardless of the spin that they’re going to put through this. You can basically count on it; they’re going to get it done. But we also know that the Liberals have not learned a single thing since implementing Bill 115. Again they have failed parents. Again they have failed students. And again they have failed teachers.

I still have many emails from parents and students who voiced their discontent in regard to what happened with Bill 115, and a lot of that discontent is still relevant today. I’ll read from Arlene, a teacher who is up in Elliot Lake. It:

“—gives unprecedented decision-making powers to the Minister of Education without public review,

“—is undemocratic and violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,

“—restricts the collective bargaining rights ...

“—has created unnecessary labour unrest ...

“—takes away legal powers from democratically elected trustees of school boards,

“—and removes the rights of” bargaining unit members.

I have another one from Mark in Manitowaning:

“As a retired school teacher I am very disappointed with the” Liberal government “and also the Conservatives on their pushing through Bill 115. It is very wrong and undemocratic to take away collective ... rights and eliminate all that stands for in democracy and the former collective agreements.”

From Ray in Manitowaning:

“I would like to express my displeasure through you.... I am more upset by my loss of rights ... than I am by the imposed contract conditions. At this time, I am required by law” to teach.

“If I wanted to live in a country where union rights are unilaterally taken away, I could always have moved to a country run by a dictator.

“I am very upset, and I thank you for advocating for the rights” of our teachers.

The list goes on and on and on in regard to where they’re coming from and how their arguments are being put forward. Again, we learn that this continues on. Nothing has changed and this government still has not learned from their errors that they’ve made over and over and over in the past.

Children and students know what is going on. The decisions that you’re making today will have a huge impact on their future. You as individuals, as MPPs here—we have the same responsibilities as teachers do in our riding. We are moulding the future views of the kids who are going to our schools, who are in our education system. Take the time to reflect on the decisions that you’re going to be effecting and how it’s going to be affecting their lives.

My time is up, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

L’hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Il est 10 heures moins quart le soir. Alors, je veux que les gens d’Ottawa–Vanier sachent qu’on est ici et qu’on est en train de parler du projet de loi 103 parce que nous voulons que les jeunes retournent à l’école. Je suis chanceuse parce qu’à Ottawa–Vanier—à Ottawa—il n’y a pas de professeurs qui sont en grève. Alors, les étudiants peuvent continuer leurs cours.

J’aurais aimé pouvoir parler longtemps ce soir parce que j’aurais voulu vous parler—moi, je viens d’une famille d’enseignants. Ma mère était enseignante. Ma belle-mère était enseignante. Mon beau-frère est enseignant. Ma nièce est enseignante. Notre fils est enseignant et sa future femme est enseignante aussi. Alors, pour nous, l’enseignement est très important et on connaît les deux côtés, soit d’être étudiant ou enseignant.

Dans ma circonscription, j’ai des écoles extraordinaires, des professeurs hors pair et des directions d’école extraordinaires aussi. Je ne suis pas ici pour critiquer l’un et l’autre. Bon, on sait qu’il y avait une grève illégale, alors les professeurs vont retourner travailler dans trois des conseils scolaires.

Dans ma circonscription, il y a des écoles extraordinaires. Par exemple, il y a deux écoles de ma circonscription qui ont été classées dans les premières selon un « think tank » qui a fait l’évaluation des écoles dernièrement. L’école Minto est arrivée en première place, et en troisième place est l’école secondaire Colonel By.

Le député d’Elgin–Middlesex–London veut avoir une école française. Savez-vous, monsieur le Président, que depuis 2003 on a construit 100 nouvelles écoles francophones en Ontario? Alors, peut-être vous êtes sur la liste pour la prochaine. Bonne soirée.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my pleasure to once again join debate today on this piece of legislation. I do have an

important update for the New Democrats. About five hours ago, the Ontario Labour Relations Board ruled that the strike with the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers' Federation in Rainbow, Peel and in Durham, in their school boards, was, it's important to know, unlawful. Those are not my words; it was the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

Hon. Michael Coteau: What did they say?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They said it was unlawful; it was an illegal strike. So we are now sitting here, five hours after the Ontario Labour Relations Board ruled that this was an illegal strike, and the NDP continue to stand up and defend an illegal strike. In fact, in the words of my dear friend from Algoma–Manitoulin—he said this: “It is the duty of the government to meet the union and get an agreement.” You cannot get an agreement when people are on an illegal strike that has put a school year in jeopardy for students in three school board districts right across this province. That is shameful, Speaker.

Here we are tonight, debating a piece of legislation that becomes irrelevant as of tomorrow morning when those kids get back into their classrooms and those students start to learn again, because those teachers will be back in their classrooms—which, by the way, is the end and ultimate goal.

I would remind the third party—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —and I remind the former chair of the Kitchener and Waterloo school board that she would have, as the chair of that board, opposed an unlawful, illegal strike in her school board. So I will stand here as a Progressive Conservative and I will suggest respectfully to the NDP: Get on with it; let's move on to something that's relevant. Stop supporting illegal strike action.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member but I would remind—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order. Order, please. I thank the member from Nepean–Carleton, but I would remind all members in the Legislature that when you are in fact given the floor, you address the chair and not turn to other members in an attempt perhaps to antagonize. I'm just saying.

Further questions and comments?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm talking about over here. But I will say to the member: If the shoe fits, wear it.

Further questions and comments?

2150

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to thank the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for actually bringing the voices of students to the Legislature. It's interesting because the students get it. They get why those teachers walked out.

They get why they were at the table and that they were fighting for those resources. They get it—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Ms. Catherine Fife: So the students get it, but the government doesn't get it. The natural default position of the Liberal government of Ontario currently is that they would rather legislate versus negotiate—if they really truly cared about students.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I might add that back-to-work legislation is a very, very public admission that the Minister of Education and the Premier have failed to bring the people together, resolve the issues and end the chaos in our schools. You have been very successful at creating a crisis in education. It isn't anything to be proud of. Bringing forward back-to-work legislation to this Legislature is nothing to be proud of, and I want to remind you of why we are here in the first place. It all goes back to Bill 115, when you squashed the collective bargaining rights back in 2012. It's an issue very close to me.

Then you brought in Bill 122 to try to fix the problem, but it was never designed to work. That was never designed to work because the government holds the purse strings. The last delegation that came to the budget committee—she was from Parry Sound–Muskoka. She talked about having 32 kids in her full-day kindergarten class. She talked about the special education kids that have to be sent home because they do not have the resources in their schools. Those are the issues at the table.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know you don't want to hear it. I know you don't want to hear it, but that's too bad because it is our job—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, you don't care? You don't care about hearing those voices? That says it all.

Back-to-work legislation solves nothing. It never has. It never will.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: A number of my colleagues on all sides have said, “Why are we here debating this?” and a few on the opposition side have asked, “Is this bill indeed relevant?” So let me explain by quoting from the decision from Justice Fishbein why it is that we're here.

In part, his decision reads as follows: The decision “orders that Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation ... its officers, officials and agents and striking employees at the Durham District School Board, Rainbow District School Board and Peel District School Board cease and desist their unlawful strike”—here's the key part—“from the date of this decision, and not resume it until the two (2) week moratorium described in this decision has expired.”

Do we need to go back and do this again in two weeks? We are here today debating Bill 103 so we do not need to come back here in two weeks and solve this problem all over again. We need to get this bill passed.

We need to ensure that, two weeks from now, these same three bargaining units cannot go back on strike. This is about getting the students back into school tomorrow morning at the Durham board, at the Rainbow board and at the Peel board, to get them to finish their school year without running the risk of having that school interrupted by the resumption of this particular labour stoppage in two weeks.

That's why we need this bill passed. That's why Bill 103 is important and that's why I'm hoping that our colleagues from the NDP will simply stop this action. Let's get this bill back on the floor of the Legislature after question period tomorrow. Let's get on with it, let's get the bill passed and let's get these contracts negotiated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Final comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: C'est tout le temps un plaisir d'être dans la Chambre avec les commentateurs de la ministre—the Attorney General and minister responsible for francophone affairs.

To the member from Nepean–Carleton, the only thing that I can say, my dear, is: Negotiate; don't legislate. That's something the Liberals and the Conservatives have been teaming up quite well on over the last few years and demonstrated that they can do. We all know who sets the order paper. You have your majority government—they have the mandate, they have the votes, they have the capacity of pushing this forward, and they can do it. They can stop playing the blame game.

I just want to say I'm glad that the Premier was here because Daneen Maher, who wrote you a letter, will be very impressed that I had the opportunity to read it out to you.

To the member from Kitchener–Waterloo: Students do get it. You're absolutely right; they do get it, and they also have ideas. And you know what? They also have voices and are also getting to an age where they will be able to exercise their right to vote. If this government continues to do the attacks that they're doing on our education system, you will live to learn and to regret the decisions that you're making today, and also the ones that you are not making today. I encourage you to listen to those young voices because they are the future of this province.

To the member from Mississauga–Streetsville: The only thing I can say is that there is a reason why there is a possibility that we might be here in two weeks from now and there's a reason why we are here right now. That's because the government has refused to negotiate, and you have implemented—to legislate.

You've got to change your course of action. There has to be a way. You've got to reach out to the teachers and listen to what they're asking for. Look at the impacts that your decisions are having on our children and into our schools, that are going to be implemented—because these kids, these children, are the ones who are going to be making your decisions tomorrow. We need to make sure that they are shaped and that they are prepared,

because whether you like it or not, they are making decisions. If you are not listening to them, they will go in their own direction, and it won't be following you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? Further debate? Further debate?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm getting to you, okay? I mean, I'm going to recognize you. I recognize the member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As always, it is my honour to rise in this Legislature to address the concerns of my constituents and all Ontarians. Actually I was going to say, "But today"—it's not today; it's my first time in a midnight sitting, so I thank the government for that opportunity.

It is my privilege to rise on behalf of kids, parents and educators in my community and beyond. This government is failing our students. Instead of investing in education, supporting our classrooms and partnering with our schools, the Liberals want to gut the system, increase class sizes and cause chaos in our communities. These are the priorities the government has set for our education system. Instead of working together to enhance our schools, the government has set its focus on dismantling them all by themselves.

The Minister of Education was given a job, but she didn't get the job done. Instead of bringing people together, the minister blamed teachers, blamed boards of education and drove the two sides apart. That's not just failing to get the job done; that's blatantly making things worse.

If the minister was capable of running our education system, then we would see negotiation without legislation, but instead we've got Bill 115, the sequel, here on the Legislature floor. If she can't get the job done, it's time for the Premier to fire her minister and appoint someone who can. If the Premier can't see that, then it's clear she isn't serious about putting kids and parents first.

We expect more from this government. Our students expect more from this government. Parents expect more from this government, and teachers expect more from this government. I expect more from this government.

Tabling back-to-work legislation is a public admission of failure. This bill is living proof that the Minister of Education and the Premier have failed to bring people together and resolve the chaos in our schools, the chaos that they have created.

Our classrooms are squeezed. Our schools are squeezed. It wasn't that long ago that I was in the classroom and saw first-hand just how squeezed. This Premier is squeezing more by the day. The Liberal government cut \$250 million from education in 2014-15. I guess the minister and the Premier must think that our kids are doing too well. This government is firing teachers and closing schools. They're cutting classroom supports, decreasing special education and undermining the ability of our students to learn.

The Premier claims she cut her teeth on education, but now she's just cutting education, period. This is yet an-

other example of this Liberal government painting themselves one way before revealing their true colours: the progressive Premier, privatizing Hydro One, introducing austerity budgets, limiting oversight and transparency and topping it all off with chaos in our classrooms. Our students deserve better. Our parents deserve better. Our teachers deserve better, and Ontarians deserve better.

I would like to know if the government thought that nobody would notice when they cut \$250 million in education funding this year. I wonder if they thought that parents wouldn't mind as they dismantled programming and increased class sizes. We know that the Premier has managed to get herself out of some pretty sticky situations, but things start to catch up with you eventually and some of this is going to stick. That's what we're seeing happen: the government tripping over its own mess—a mess it created; a mess this Minister of Education created.

2200

Last month, the minister said she was perplexed by what is taking place. Perhaps that's because she hasn't been paying too much attention. It seems she just hasn't been paying much attention to anything going on in education. If her job is to deliver an effective education system and she can't even reach a deal with teachers, I don't see what use she is to us in that role. The Minister of Education has failed to get a deal with teachers that will put kids first, and she should resign for that reason. If she's not willing to do that, we leave it to the Premier to take the appropriate action.

In the meantime, the government is desperately trying to point fingers as they desperately try to clean up their mess. But these are Band-Aid solutions. As long as the government continues to gut our education system, then there is going to be chaos in our education system.

The entire point of education is investing in the future, yet this government can barely see the end of its nose. Maybe it's because it's growing or maybe that's just an acknowledgement of their short-sightedness. They're both accurate, and they're both a part of the problem.

This government systematically underfunds and under-resources our kids and their futures. You know far too well that in order to address even a fraction of the initiatives and priorities that our kids deserve in their learning environments, there is so much more funding required. You know the gaps. In fact, you know the areas of challenge.

We are grossly underfunding our public education system in every way, but you know that—you know that—and you count on teachers and families—

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oh, I'm going. I'm just excited that she's listening.

You count on teachers and families to offset that underfunding; you put it on the teachers and communities. In schools—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. Order, please. I would just like to remind members

that although I recognize and appreciate a little bantering on both sides, if you're going to do that, you should be—no, I will rephrase that—you must be in your own seat. I shall encourage those who may not be in their seat, if they're going to continue, that they shall go to their seat. I'm just saying.

Back to the member, please, for further debate. I recognize, again, the member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to say it again to make the point: We are grossly underfunding our public education system in every way, but you know that, and you count on teachers and families to offset that underfunding.

In schools in areas that are well-off financially, you depend on fundraising and community resources to fill in the gaps and pay for supplies and opportunities in the classrooms and in school.

I have taught in schools that are significantly under-resourced in the heart of communities with low financial security and predictability. In lower-income communities, schools can't fundraise for big-ticket items; we fundraise to replace the things that break. We fundraise to replace sports equipment that we wear out, and maybe, if it's close and inexpensive, we can afford a bus for one field trip per year per grade.

In lower-income areas, we depend on donations from businesses like backpacks with school supplies. We depend on charitable donations when it comes to breakfast programs. You know that there is not a teacher in this province who will let their kids go without. You count on that to fill in that funding gap.

When I cleaned out my desk when my school closed when I was teaching at R.A. Sennett Public School in Whitby, there was a bag of new socks and granola bars, because that was the reality in that community. I used to have to buy second-hand shoes in every typical grade 5 size to keep my students in shoes, because parents couldn't afford to replace the shoes as they grew out of them.

Teachers should keep track of what they spend in a month on art supplies, pencils, food, clothing, paper, teaching resources, sports equipment and everything else that students need to fully learn and participate in their learning. They should keep those receipts and then submit them to the Minister of Education so you could at the very least not claim to be perplexed or ignorant about this.

Speaker, just a reminder: The government created this mess. It seems to be what they do with their desperate austerity agenda. Attacks on teachers, our classrooms, our students and our communities are unconscionable. This is not an accidental or perplexing situation that we find ourselves in. This is what happens when this Liberal government funds scandals and boondoggles and doesn't prioritize our schools or fairly fund our future.

Cuts are real, despite the fact that this government pretends they aren't happening. When they talk about keeping funding the same in one column, it's just a shell game of shifting from column A to column B. There is

less money, and as a result our classrooms and schools are squeezed.

I will tell you how challenging it is to teach in a classroom with a third or a fourth of the class on individualized education plans, needing specialized support with no educational assistant support, because cuts are so severe that our EAs are primarily allocated for safety concerns, toileting and behaviour. Unfortunately, resources don't actually extend far enough for our educational assistants to be able to educationally assist anymore.

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The fact that they find this laughable I find really disconcerting, because this Liberal government cuts away and closes, and our communities are left the worse for it. The more that schools are starved and stripped, the more they will have to close. We are currently losing one of our high schools in Oshawa; we are in the ARC process now. The government cuts and chokes, and our boards are forced to make impossible decisions.

This is not a positive, forward-moving system. But you know what? It could be. This government wants our system to be constantly in chaos. Are they hoping, perhaps, to break it down into chunks that they can sell off like hydro? Who knows? You can point across the aisle all you want. You can point at school boards; you can point at teachers. Maybe you'll point at communities and families next. But here's the real point: You did this—you did this knowingly; you did this purposefully—and you aren't even a little bit sorry.

As much as this government tries to ignore it, there are consequences to their actions and damage created by these cuts. We've all heard the stories in our constituencies—my colleague the member from Nickel Belt proved how extensive the list of those stories is earlier today. This afternoon, the member from Nickel Belt introduced a petition. This is not a petition she started; it was not a petition the NDP started. It was a petition started by students who have had enough of funding cuts and disappearing supports; students who want their government to invest in their education, not throw their hands up and walk away and point the blame; students who expect better. The petition is primarily online, based through change.org. This is a site that the government might recognize, as it is full of petitions against hydro privatization, cuts to education, scandals etc. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker: Those petitions are full of signatures.

When my colleague introduced the petition no more than a few hours ago, it had roughly 2,600 signatures online. The last I checked before I came in this evening, that number was above 3,600 and still climbing. It's not just signatures; it's full of stories from students who are fed up. I'd like to share a few of them with you now.

I will start with the student from the Rainbow District School Board who wrote, "I am signing because I am a student. Because teachers' voices aren't being heard, and, more importantly, students are not heard."

This a sentiment we are hearing time and time again about this government: Ontarians' voices aren't being

heard. Tonight we will make sure their voices are heard, or at least that they are said in the general direction of the government, and it's up to them whether or not they would like to listen.

Another student from Sudbury stated, "These teachers aren't fighting for better pay or better benefits; they are fighting for things that the students will benefit from."

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Another wrote, "This is only a temporary fix, and the teachers deserve better."

One signee from Gravenhurst wrote, "Come to the table and compromise. Forcing teachers back to work solves NOTHING. They are standing up for the rights of our children—listen to them!" Well said.

One of my favourite comments regarding the government's push to increase class sizes: "60 students in a class is a lot of sass." As a former intermediate school teacher, I can relate to that one; 60 students in a class would be an awful lot of sass.

One parent wrote, "I do not want to see bigger classrooms. I'm interested in my son's education/learning. I'm fighting for his future."

Another says, "Fifty kids per class is unrealistic."

It seems that students are starting to catch on that you can never trust how far this government is going to take something. When they say that they'll only sell off 40%, you might lose 90%; just like if they say class sizes will only increase by a few, you might find 50 students in double-decker desks.

One student from Pickering wrote, "I'm signing because the things that were fought for during the strike still have not been resolved and they need to be in order for students to have a better education."

Speaker, I've been out of the classroom for about a year now, but it is still refreshing to hear how smart and complex our students are. They're too young to vote, and already they're not buying what the government is selling.

Finally, from my own riding of Oshawa, one student wrote, "Teachers deserve the right to strike for whatever reason they have. It all benefits the students in the long run. What the government has done is cruel to the teachers and the students."

Speaker, I hope the government has taken some of that in—any of that in. I hope they will take a look at the petition, go ahead and scroll through the comments and realize what their actions mean for our education system.

This government is failing our students, and our students know it. Instead of investing in education, supporting our classrooms and partnering with our schools, the Liberals are gutting the system, increasing class sizes and causing chaos in our communities. Instead of working together to enhance our schools, the government has set its focus on dismantling them all by themselves, as I said. Instead of bringing people together, the Minister of Education blames teachers, blames boards of education and drives the two sides apart. If the Premier can't see that, she isn't serious about putting kids and families in our communities first.

As a result of today's OLRB decision, kids are going back to school. If the Liberal government continues to go ahead with this back-to-work legislation, it is a preemptive strike on teachers. It's another reckless move and a groundless attack. It's another example of the government spending more time and energy on creating new problems than it would ever be willing to spend on finding solutions. It's the easy way out that puts us on a path to more hard times. But the government isn't going to listen. It hasn't thus far. They're too busy trying to cover their tracks to check to see if they're even headed in the right direction. I can tell you right now: They're not.

Speaker, as I noted earlier, we expect more from this government. Our students expect more from this government. Parents expect more from this government. Teachers expect more from this government. The government created this mess and now we all have to live in it, since they've shown that they have no intention of cleaning it up themselves. Instead, it looks like they are going to continue to make matters worse.

It will be interesting, come September, to see the state that we're in. The Liberal government cut \$250 million from education in 2014-15. I guess the minister and Premier must think our kids are just doing too well; they have too much. But do you know what? We know the truth. Our classrooms are squeezed. Our schools are squeezed. As I said, it wasn't that long ago that I was in the classroom and I saw first-hand just how squeezed they are. I see that this Premier is squeezing and squeezing, and she's not stopping. This government is firing teachers, closing schools, cutting classroom supports, decreasing special education and undermining the ability of our students to learn.

I would like to finish by thanking the other speakers for their comments, the member for Nickel Belt for sharing such a powerful petition earlier today, and my colleague from Windsor West, the NDP education critic, for leading the way this afternoon.

Speaker, our students deserve better. Our parents deserve better. Our teachers deserve better. Ontarians deserve better. We ask that this government give them the respect and the support that they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Comments and questions?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I appreciate very much this opportunity to respond to the member from Oshawa's comments. It was delightful to hear a previous intermediate school teacher address the House on this issue. I found her gentle admonishing tone quite reminiscent of my time in grade 7 with one of my favourite teachers, Ms. Freeman. It brought back very warm memories of my educational experience there.

But I've got to tell you, if she's going to be admonishing this House with that tone, she really needs to better learn her subject matter. For her, in the middle of her remarks, to have the Premier of Ontario walking by and get stopped dead in her tracks—not even in her seat—to have to remind the member that the budget in education

this year has actually gone up by \$8 million, that there's more—

Interjections.

Mr. Arthur Potts: —\$8 billion, and that there's more funding per pupil. You really need to get those facts straight. This is important.

We're looking at a bill here which is dealing with the negotiation circumstance that we're in right now. You would have done very well to have taken the course that I taught in Seneca College on first-year labour relations. You would understand the bargaining process far more clearly.

I am a trained fact-finder under the Education Relations Commission of Ontario, having done my master's degree at Queen's University. I want you to know that I fully respect the right to strike. It's a cornerstone of our democracy.

But when it comes to teachers' bargaining, the Education Relations Commission plays a very key role in balancing the right to strike with the right to learn. That is what this legislation is about: protecting that piece of the puzzle, the right to learn. Their right to strike is somewhat of a hybrid. Once the Education Relations Commission has found that the school year is in jeopardy, it's incumbent on us to get the kids back to school so they can have their year, so they can move on to the next level in their education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a pleasure to rise to debate this bill with respect to the illegal strike activity that did occur over the last couple of weeks. I want to say thank you to the member from Oshawa for her speech. I thought actually it was very well done.

That said, it was not timely, so I'm not sure if she was aware, but about five and a half, almost six hours ago, the Ontario Labour Relations Board ruled that the strike by the Durham, Peel and Rainbow District School Boards was illegal. In fact, the Ontario Labour Relations Board said it was "unlawful."

With respect, I notice that the member opposite from the NDP was talking in a similar vein to what the other members of this assembly from the third party were talking about in terms of the union being misled by the government or was negotiating in bad faith. The problem is, you're either following the law, or you're breaking the law. In this case, the Ontario Labour Relations Board found that the union broke the law, and the people who were most affected by this unlawful work were students who were trying to graduate from school this year.

That concerns me as a mother. My daughter is in grade 4. I know that there's going to be work-to-rule, and there is work-to-rule action with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. She's impacted. Her teachers are doing everything in order to keep their school year as effective as possible. That said, in three school boards across the province, that wasn't the case.

The Ontario Labour Relations Board, just about six hours ago, was very clear that it was illegal. I don't know

why the third party continues to defend illegal strike action.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is a pleasure to listen to the member from Oshawa because she actually has the lived experience of what it means to be in that classroom and face the reality of what is the reality in education right now. It is astounding to me that the members on the opposite side can say, “No, that’s not real,” when she actually lived it, and more importantly, the students and families have lived it as well.

2220

Do you know what? Perhaps if this government is so enamoured with back-to-work legislation, maybe they should have brought in some legislation to get the Minister of Education back to work and not sitting on the sidelines for the last six weeks. How about that? She just sat by the sidelines for six weeks. Newsflash: Ministers of Education have a responsibility to ensure that when negotiations happen, there’s actually something to negotiate. Teachers in this province have actually been talking about the learning conditions in our classrooms. That is what they’ve been talking about. But that is not what the Liberals have been talking about.

It is astounding to listen to the member from Beaches–East York try to school us on the education funding in this budget. You saved \$246 million when there are students in special education classrooms across this province being sent home, excluded from public education because they do not have the resources at school board level, in the school level, to actually ensure that those children can be included. That was the last delegation for us at the budget committee. That was the last message that we heard, and you should take it to heart.

Mr. Speaker, honestly, where we are right now is, yes, the OLRB has made their decision, but where is the Liberal government on back-to-work legislation? You could pull this legislation, but no. This is now your default position. From Bill 115 to Bill 122 to back-to-work legislation: That speaks volumes about the respect that this government has for public education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened to the speech, the comments made by the member from Oshawa. She spoke very well, and she gave a good perspective on what it is to be a teacher. I think teachers have a unique perspective. We have teachers on our side as well. When I talk to them, their concern is the students. I think all of us here are concerned that the students are able to get their education.

We’ve gotten advice from the Education Relations Commission, and they said that if we don’t introduce legislation, there would be three different areas, Durham, Sudbury and Peel, where the students couldn’t complete the year. We just want to get them back in the classroom—focus on the students and get them back in the classroom—and finish the school year. If I put myself in

those shoes and I was in grade 12 or 11, I’d want to be in school and finish the school year. That’s really what I have to say. Good speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Oshawa for her final comments.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, first, to the member from Beaches–East York. I’m glad that you found my remarks delightful. I’m sure that you as a grade 7, young Mr. Potts, would have been equally delightful. I appreciate your comments about the right to strike, the right to learn, and I would remind the member that negotiating is the option rather than legislating. That should have been what happened here.

To the member from Nepean–Carleton, thank you for your comments. While you said that my remarks were not timely, I appreciate you mentioning the time, because here we are, on our way to midnight. As a new member, this is a first, as I mentioned.

She also said that if you’re not following the law; you’re breaking the law. But I would remind her that here we are, in the Legislature of Ontario, and this is where we debate the law as well, and where we make the law. I find it interesting, as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo brought up, that we had the opportunity—we’re here because you invited us here. You invited us. You said, “Let’s have sittings until midnight. Let’s talk about the school year that’s in jeopardy. Let’s talk about back-to-work legislation.” But somehow it is morphed, because you know that the school year is not in jeopardy.

The member from Scarborough Southwest did bring up the ERC recommendations, and that’s great, but I also know that there are members on that side of the House and others who have seen the letters from these schools saying, “Congratulations, graduate. You’re graduating.” The school year may or may not have been in jeopardy, but we got our decision, as the member from Nepean–Carleton mentioned, five and a half or six hours ago; something like that. We’re here anyway, because we’re drawing out your theatre; we’re drawing out the chaos. And I know that this is just the beginning. With OSSTF, ETFO, OECTA and all of them ready to go—what a summer we’re going to have; what a September we’re going to have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, thank you for recognizing me this evening. I appreciate it.

I want to thank my colleagues from Algoma–Manitoulin, Windsor West, Oshawa and Niagara who’ve spoken so eloquently this evening on this quite extraordinary circumstance we find ourselves in.

It has always astounded me, in the time that I’ve been here, that the Liberals create chaos and then walk in and act as if they’ve never seen this before; this is startling to them. “My God, how did this happen? Round up the usual suspects. I’m shocked, shocked that this is going on,” the Liberals say. It’s extraordinary to me that time after time I can watch this party create conflict, demoralization, chaos in the education system and then act as if they’re the saviours when, in fact, they were the instiga-

tors of the problem. They have created the mess that we see in our schools today. They have done nothing to fix that.

I remember being here—was it a week ago, two weeks ago?—when the Premier was saying she was going to put people's feet to the fire to get this resolved. Unfortunately, that was a match that burned out a long time ago, when it was applied to the sole of that boot and it did not have any impact. Nothing got resolved.

I talk to parents, I talk to students, I talk to teachers and education workers, and I hear from people on a regular basis about the problems they're dealing with in their schools. We went through this a few years ago with Bill 115. It wasn't back-to-work legislation; let's be clear on that. It was an act that imposed collective agreements on people, which created a huge demoralization across this province. I had to deal with the fallout in my riding: students who found the conflict and tension extraordinarily difficult to deal with; parents who came out to public meetings to meet with teachers and figure out how parents and teachers could work this through together, neither of them having caused the problem in the first place, but both of them committed to making sure we had an education system that worked.

The people who work in the schools and the people who depend on them—the parents and the students—have been thrown into this conflict not at their behest, not at their will, but because of the approach this government has taken to education, to public finance, to, really, the way this province is run.

This has not happened overnight. I'll go back again to Bill 115. I had a chance to talk to people behind the scenes on both sides going into that year, where teachers and education workers figured they weren't going to get much. They just wanted things to be stable. I understand from government negotiators who subsequently went on to other careers that they had the same approach. Yet that wasn't what the Liberals wanted out of those negotiations. They didn't actually want peace in the schools. They wanted to deal with their deficit problems—deficit problems self-imposed by an austerity approach, by a tax-cutting approach that undermines the viability of the provincial budget.

I watched as that mess unrolled. I watched as a former Minister of Education, Laurel Broten, was given a career-destroying assignment: to go and wage war with the parents, the students, the teachers and the education workers of this province. Whether you agreed with her or disagreed with her, it was pretty clear that she was being thrown into the breach. Frankly, she was sacrificed to other people's interests.

Speaker, as you may well be aware, and my colleague from Windsor West has said this numerous times: On page 230 of the most recent provincial budget—not generally riveting reading—you can see that in the last budget year, the Ministry of Education underspent by 250 million bucks.

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Now, Speaker, just to let you know, this government used to have a program called Healthy Smiles. They

allocated \$45 million a year to dental for low-income families. But unfortunately, who knew? What can you do about this? The rules were so tight that two thirds of the money didn't get spent on dental and would be re-allocated—reallocated. Again in this situation with education: too bad, so sad, a quarter-billion bucks not available.

A few years ago, I was walking down Boulton Avenue in my riding. I was going door to door and came across someone, a parent, a person on the street who was unloading groceries from the car. He recognized me, and we got chatting. He said, "I have a special-needs child, and I have to tell you, for all of us parents who have special-needs children, that we have a very difficult time. It is hard to get services. We know that our children need more support. Many parents are on waiting lists. Students are on waiting lists for assessment."

I say to you, Speaker, that there are pressing, legitimate needs that need to be met in our schools. And when you're not spending the money that's been allocated—that actually is needed to make the schools work—your approach is reckless, your approach is callous, your approach is one that makes life more difficult for students and parents, and undermines the morale and performance of our schools. It's our intention to work with families and with those interested in the education community to improve the quality of education, and improve the quality of schools in Ontario.

We know that the government has a majority; we can count. I went to public school here in Ontario. I am very grateful to those who were patient enough to go beyond 10 digits—to count more than 10. So I can count. You guys can get this legislation through. If you didn't think it was necessary, and maybe that's the assessment you'll make, you could withdraw it right now. Mr. Naqvi, a very capable House leader, could stand up and say, "We're satisfied. It's gone."

I'm a bit puzzled as to why you're not going forward. I've heard there is some indecision about whether you got what you wanted from the Labour Relations Board. But until it's clear, we oppose this legislation. We don't think this is the right approach. We think this will lead to demoralization. We think this is the very crude Band-Aid put on top of a very large wound imposed by the government itself on the education system—on the students and parents of this province.

Speaker, I have to tell you that there is extraordinary concern among parents and educators about the move to increase class sizes. My colleague from Oshawa spoke to that. On Saturday, I was at the Wilkinson Fun Fair in my riding, talking to a local mom who is also an elementary teacher. She has 30 kids in her class, and four of them are special ed—only four. I have to tell you that she said she couldn't quite envision how she would manage if that class were any larger. She said that a lot of the time her focus is just making sure everybody is safe, and that's it. That is a concern she has, and that other parents and educators have.

There's going to be a fight around funding for education in this province for years to come, because the need

is substantial and the motivation to reduce resources to meet that need is also substantial. One is something that we must address. The other is something we have to resist.

Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind—no question at all—that parents and students across Ontario want their schools to be properly resourced. What the government is doing with this bill is saying, “We’re not going to resource them properly, and if there are any problems down in the hold, we’ll make sure that we put on a little more pressure just to keep it under control.”

As you’re well aware, Speaker, this bill addresses labour disputes between the Durham, Rainbow and Peel district school boards and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation. Speaker, you have to know that this conflict exists within a much larger context, and I alluded to it earlier.

Earlier this year, I was talking with some teachers who work with the Toronto Catholic District School Board. They said to me that they had been talking with directors and senior staff, had come across documentation, which I’ve seen subsequently posted on the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board website: a consultation guide for school boards on how to deal with a reduction in education funding of \$500 million over the next three years.

How are you going to manage that? How are you going to manage that when, at the same time, we know, from the pressures that the member from Oshawa was talking about, that many more children are in very difficult circumstances when they come to school? How are you going to manage that when we see another round of—I guess you had the baby boom, the echo, and this is the echo of the echo: more and more new families coming into our cities.

I don’t know about the other members; they can speak for themselves. But when I go door to door in my riding, I find babies and small kids everywhere. In downtown Toronto, in East York, there used to be a community of people who were retired. I now find young families have moved in so that I have parts of my riding that I just refer to as the “baby belt,” because you can be sure, when you go around, you’re going to find strollers at the door and babies in the houses.

Those babies—and I saw some of them a few years ago, so I think they’re more than toddlers now—are going to be going into our schools. They’re going to be going into kindergarten. I want to say, I support all-day kindergarten. I support full-day kindergarten. I support its expansion. If we are going to have class sizes that are appropriate for four- and five-year-olds, if we’re going to have good facilities, we can’t cut that budget further, but that, in fact, is what is on the table. When we do that, we see conflict.

I’ve listened to the Minister of Education talk about the money that’s wasted on empty classroom space. First, I’ll say that I’ve actually watched schools over the decades in my community. I’ll take Frankland school at Logan and Danforth, which is packed. I remember in the 1970s when it was emptying out and there was a lot of

discussion about just getting rid of that school, a demolition job—and then a decade and a half later, a playground full of portables. The portables go away, the population fits into the school—and now it’s expanding again.

When we put in place schools, we size them for a potential population. That population is going to expand and contract. It’s going to expand and contract. Over time, if you don’t have that capacity, you can’t properly serve the community, and you can never afford to buy back that land to build schools. You just can’t. You can’t. So it is short-sighted at best to get rid of those school properties—short-sighted at best and, frankly, financially reckless. It’s financially reckless.

Speaker, look at some of the cuts that we’ve seen to education across Ontario. The Toronto District School Board is firing 215 teachers, 100 ESL educators, eight secretaries and five vice-presidents because of \$22 million in cuts. The simple reality: We’re told that the education budgets are being protected in a time of austerity, but in fact, they’re not. I want to tell you, Speaker, when you talk to parents and you talk to teachers and the people who work in those schools, they feel that crunch.

Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board in Peterborough is firing 118 contract teachers; 21 early childhood educators cut in Windsor-Essex. People know Windsor. Windsor is a tough town—resilient people. They’ve been going through difficult times. They need support. They need to know that the schools will be there for them. Putting in place a funding regime that means that we’re going to lose early childhood education makes no sense at all. Some 88 schools have been closed across the province since 2011. That’s a lot of schools, a lot of future headaches as those families who live in that community realize that they can’t get into their neighbourhood school. I’m dealing with that problem right now in my riding, where parents have been told that the school is so full that, yes, they live within the catchment area, but they’re out of luck. “Go somewhere else because it’s full; it’s packed.” That’s what happens.

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The 2015-16 Grants for Student Needs—that’s what they call the money that’s given out to boards of education for operation of schools—were released in March. Overall funding is \$22.46 billion. That’s virtually identical to 2014-15. I want to note, Speaker: Inflation didn’t disappear in North America recently. It continues; it is a reality. It is a reality. This is the lowest annual increase of funding for schools since the Liberals came to office. But beyond that, Speaker, note that we may well have that silent take-away under the radar—\$250 million in the last budget year. Cuts and cuts and cuts as the years go on.

The Pupil Foundation Grant, which covers the cost of salaries, textbooks and classroom supplies, will be \$36 million lower than this year. The government blames this on declining enrolment. I have to tell you, Speaker, I have a student who is doing a student placement in my office right now, a young guy called Romeo Tello. He goes to Monarch Park Collegiate. He has done a place-

ment in a city councillor's office. He has come here. He has found it an interesting and exotic place; a place with its own discreet charm, I think would be the term.

Romeo told me a few years ago about his textbooks. He asked me, "Why is it that the textbooks are older than I am? Why is it that when I open the textbook that has a picture of a high school student with a cellphone, the cellphone is bigger than a brick?" I didn't have a good answer for him. But I think you can look at the numbers and give him a very good answer. The money has not kept up with what is needed. Textbooks are not kept up to date, and as people are well aware, many teachers are photocopying textbooks. Instead of having their school boards buy textbooks, they're having to photocopy them.

This is an unsustainable way to run an education system. Some 38 school boards will receive less funding under the Special Education Grant next year, including a \$3.5-million cut for the Toronto District School Board and a \$2.7-million cut for the Toronto Catholic District School Board. The high needs allocation will be frozen for the next four years at \$1.05 billion overall. I have heard the Minister of Education say that the budget for special education isn't being cut, and maybe she's right. Maybe it's frozen. I won't argue that. What I will note is that the formula has been changed to deal with pressures in other school boards, which has essentially simply meant that money has been taken from one school board and given to another. It isn't as though the Toronto District School Board or the Toronto Catholic District School Board had a reduction in the number of special-needs kids; what they've had a reduction in is the money to actually provide those children with the service and support they need.

The Liberals come along, see that there's a mess and say, "How did this happen? How did this happen?" That's why we're here debating this evening: because they brought forward a bill that, instead of actually dealing with the long-term, profound structural problems with funding and support for schools, just tries to heap pressure on top of pressure.

Speaker, my time is short, but I do want to get as much of this out as I can. When the Conservatives set up the funding formula back in 1997, they did not put in what was needed. Dr. Rozanski, in 2002, did a study that said it was about a \$2-billion shortfall. At the time, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives said it was a pretty good estimate. In 2007, Dalton McGuinty said he'd dealt with all this. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives said no. Money had been put in to deal with promises made by the Liberals—possibly not bad promises—but the core funding shortfall was never addressed, and the CCPA reassessed that in 2014 and found the same problem still in place.

Speaker, we have a 1997 funding model. It has tape wrapped all around it, it has all kinds of clips holding it together, but it doesn't work.

This government continues to put education on the chopping block and not address the real problems.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Toronto–Danforth. I'm glad he mentioned babies. As I mentioned earlier, I'm watching my BlackBerry to see when the new baby comes in our family. Babies have always been an important thing in our family.

I want to tell a very quick story. My dad, my sisters and I were driving in the car one day, and my dad said to my sister, "Do you see all these buildings? Do you know why they're building all these buildings?" My sister, who was probably about seven at the time, said, "Why?" He said, "Babies. People are having babies. That's why we're building all these buildings." That was back in the 1960s. They were having lots of babies.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Wow, you're old.

Mr. John Fraser: I am old.

The reality is, we did build schools and communities.

We are addressing the issue of community hubs with Karen Pitre. They're really difficult things because, as the member would know, often our city partners—the way we develop cities doesn't always match how we fund education and how we build schools, so it is a challenging thing.

We're here tonight because we had a ruling that said the school year was in jeopardy. We've had another ruling today that says the strike was unlawful. So it's unclear what effect that will have on that ruling. I believe it's important that students get back in school. I do believe in collective bargaining. That's why we're here. I think it's prudent that we're here, given that we don't know how that decision will impact things.

I do appreciate that the member supports full-day learning. I don't agree with some of the descriptions, like that we put the schools in chaos, when we have higher graduation rates, when we have better test scores, when we have more kids going to college and university, when we have full-day learning.

We have tough choices to make. I don't think we're in austerity. There's a fine balance. When you're borrowing at the rate we're borrowing, I don't think you can describe it as austerity.

Thank you very much for the time, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to respond to the member for Toronto–Danforth on his speech this evening. I want to compliment him on his enthusiasm and energy. I wish I shared both of those qualities right now. It is in fact 10 to 11 tonight. Many of us have been here for two consecutive nights, sitting till midnight.

Of course, we just heard why we're here. The fact is, we're here because the government passed a motion to have night sittings tonight and have us sitting till midnight. They called for debate on this bill, Bill 103. We are supporting this bill, and we're not putting up additional speakers. As you know, the New Democrats are pretty much carrying this debate this evening, although we are responding with questions and comments. It seems that the New Democrats, unfortunately, are putting

collective bargaining rights ahead of the needs of students, and that is in fact what's happening here tonight.

I know the New Democrats feel passionately about the need to protect collective bargaining rights when they seem to be challenged. But the fact remains that the Education Relations Commission, which is a provincial organization that is charged with the responsibility of determining whether or not the school year is in jeopardy, has concluded that the school year is in jeopardy at these three school boards: the Durham District School Board, the Rainbow District School Board and the Peel District School Board.

So we see this as a very simple issue and very straightforward. The government needs to bring this legislation forward to ensure that the students are back to school as soon as possible. That's why we're supporting this legislation. We would encourage the New Democrats to think about that before they continue this debate any further, and recognize and understand that we've got to put the needs of students first, irrespective of all the other issues that, of course, are important issues and vital issues in terms of the overall debate on education. This needs to be resolved as soon as possible in the interest of these students, and let's get it done tonight.

2250

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Toronto–Danforth. He always does a great job when he talks about education in this province. I was happy to hear him actually raise the issue of cuts to special needs because I've heard a lot of members from the government tonight saying that they really haven't cut those dollars; that there is less enrolment.

On Sunday, I got to attend, with the member from Oshawa, an event called Telling Tales Out of School, by People for Education. It was interesting to be there because we were told by people there that usually it's well-attended by Liberals but, in fact, there was not a Liberal in the house amidst all of this chaos. There were some New Democrats there.

We heard interesting things while we were there. This group actually had done a survey of education leaders late in 2014. They didn't survey unions or teachers; they actually surveyed principals. In the survey released at the end of 2014, 49% of elementary principals and 41% of high school principals said that they recommended to parents that children designated as having special needs need not attend a full day of school because of safety concerns or because the necessary supports are not available for the entire length of time that students are in the building. This forces parents, like the one Peter talked about who he met, to actually find alternative arrangements given that the province's education system requires children to attend for a full day unless they are ill.

There are thousands of students on wait-lists waiting for assessments to determine whether or not they'll receive the supports, and there isn't enough money in the

budget to even give the appropriate supports to the kids that are assessed already. So, in fact, there are cuts, and this is an austerity budget with respect to those kids who really need this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Han Dong: I just want to say at this late hour—I just feel that there is something I want to get off my chest. I have a lot of respect for the member from Toronto–Danforth. He's a hard worker, but I think he missed the focus on this issue. It's easy to criticize but it's hard to suggest. I haven't heard any solid suggestions from the members across—nothing tonight.

I want to say that I heard the member calling this bill a cruel Band-Aid, and he thinks this bill is unfair. What is unfair? What's cruel is the kids in Durham at home tonight, or last night, wondering what's going to happen the next day. What's unfair is that the parents, the taxpayers, pay the salary of the educators—they pay our salary—and now we have to put them through this chaos of not knowing what the outcome is. I think that is unfair.

I think we should remember that they are our bosses. They're the reason why we're here: the kids, the parents. We're here to serve. So I say, let's get the students back to school; let's give the parents peace of mind and let's pay some respect to our bosses, to our employers.

Enough is enough; let's get it done. Let's send the students back to school and end this issue once and for all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Toronto–Danforth for final comments, please.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank my colleagues from Ottawa South, Wellington–Halton Hills, Welland and Trinity–Spadina. Speaker, you've been around this place long enough—the fact that people listened to my speech enough to be able to comment on it is a compliment in and of itself, and I thank them for that.

I want to speak to the comments of the member from Trinity–Spadina. He wants to settle this issue once and for all. I was around for Bill 115, and I'll tell you, if you continue to undermine the education system, damage the morale of the people who work in the schools, make parents and students aware of the insecurities in our school system, you aren't going to solve the problem. You may well stop something from happening right now, but the eruption later is going to be a lot bigger.

I've been through this cycle now. This is my second round at this kind of conflict in the schools. I saw it under the Harris government back in the 1990s. I have to tell you, it does not end well. It doesn't end well for students and parents, and it certainly doesn't end well for the governments that engage in this kind of conflict. It doesn't end well at all.

I want to say in my few remaining seconds that they asked, "What solutions?" I would say, stop the corporate tax cut agenda that seems to be at the centre of where you guys are at. I looked at the Liberal budget. In the most recent budget, they say, "We cut corporate income tax rates for businesses, providing \$2.3 billion of tax relief

per year.” In other words, “We cut our income by more than \$2 billion a year; we’ll figure it out somehow.” They also implemented significant cuts to high business education tax rates, resulting in ongoing savings of over \$200 million per year for Ontario businesses—\$200 million less for education. That’s where all this is coming from.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Pardon my voice tonight; I have a little bit of a cold.

I just want to say that it’s been interesting nonetheless to sit here tonight and listen to this particular debate unfold on the government’s failure to deal with negotiations. What’s been really interesting is that I’ve been listening to the questions and comments by the government and the opposition. I just want to put a couple of things on the record right at the beginning.

The reason we’re here is why? Because the Minister of Education failed to do her job. The minister had a responsibility, given to her by the Premier and by the cabinet and this Legislature, to go out and negotiate with teachers to try to get a collective agreement so that you can in fact negotiate a collective agreement that’s fair to the taxpayer, the crown, and fair to the employers, the teachers, and this particular Minister of Education failed to do that. What’s been really kind of galling in watching this debate tonight and watching her comments is that she doesn’t accept any responsibility for the failure. The reality is that she had a responsibility to do this, and instead what she did was she blamed other people. We saw her come into the House—not in the House, but to the media—saying, “It’s those teachers. They want to strike.” I’m sorry; I’ve been around for a long time. I don’t know any worker who wants to go out on a picket line. Workers want to go to work, they want to do what they’re paid to do and they want to go home at night, do their job during the day or the night shift or whatever it might be.

Teachers didn’t want to go on strike. This government, quite frankly, created the chaos that led to where we’re at with those three school boards. This particular Minister of Education, quite frankly, has not done her job, and we find ourselves here, with this bill, why? Because the Minister of Education failed to do what she was charged to do. They go to the table—and I have to say, these matters are things that can be dealt with. It’s not as if workers across this province, whoever they might be—school board employees, people working in sawmills or people working in mines or whatever it might be—have never negotiated and found ways to be able to resolve their differences at the negotiating table. People have been doing that for years, and in 99% of cases you resolve it at the bargaining table. But this is clearly one of those failures, and I think the government has to accept a certain degree of responsibility that it failed to negotiate a collective agreement with the teachers, that they’ve in fact engineered this crisis to a large degree, and now they’re trying to play the politics around education and people losing their school year and trying to blame everybody else for where they’re at.

So here we are with legislation that deals with ordering teachers back to work at a time when the Ontario Labour Relations Board has made a ruling that in fact the teachers have to return to work tomorrow morning. At the beginning of this debate this afternoon, we, not for reasons to be dilatorious or to be obstructionist to the government, called a 30-minute bell on the debate so that I could have a chance to talk to the government House leader and the opposition House leader, Mr. Clark, to say, “Okay, where do we go from here? The Ontario Labour Relations Board has ordered people back to work tomorrow. As a result of that, the classrooms will be back in full swing tomorrow. What is your government going to do? Are you going to withdraw this legislation? Because it seems to me, to a degree, that this legislation is a bit of a moot point.” The government didn’t have the answer.

2300

You know what? In fairness, I get it. The government’s lawyers had to figure out: Are there any provisions within this act that need to be passed, in the view of the government, that may not be dealt with by the OLRB decision? I get that. I’ve been around here for 25 years.

I didn’t stand there and say, “Well, I’m going to be obstructionist. I’m going to do” all kinds of things—no. We said to the government, “How are you going to deal with this? If you’re going to withdraw the legislation, fine; we’re okay with that. If you’re not going to, let us know.”

The government came back after the 30 minutes and said, “Our lawyers still haven’t given us that answer.” Fair enough; it’s not because of any other reason that the lawyers are still trying to figure it out.

So we are in this debate why? Because the government is in the position of saying, “If the OLRB decision doesn’t do what it’s supposed to do, we need to make sure that we keep our options open when it comes to back-to-work legislation.” That’s why we’re having this debate tonight: because the government, quite frankly, wants to keep that option open.

It goes back to my first point. Why are we here? Because the Minister of Education failed to get an agreement. That’s why we’re here. I think that, quite frankly, is a huge admission of failure on the part of the government, the very fact that we have this legislation that’s before us being debated today. Is it possible to get an agreement? Absolutely; I think an agreement could have been had. But what you needed to have was the will on the part of the government and Minister of Education to be able to do that. What’s clear here is that that has not happened.

To the issue of teachers, students and parents wanting to be in school, I’ve got no doubt that the vast majority of teachers and students want to be in the classroom. I get that. We’ve all been around long enough to know that, in fact, students want to do what? Most of them are serious, and they want to be able to do the right thing: complete their education and move on to post-secondary education and move on with their lives. Parents want their kids to be able to learn.

Nobody in this House misses that point. But let's be clear: We're in this particular debate because the government failed to do its job. That's why we're here tonight. For us to be able to deal with this is really on the government.

At one point, the government came to us and said, "This has to be dealt with right away. We want you to pass a unanimous consent motion"—on a bill that nobody had seen. Can you imagine that? The government actually wanted us to agree to a time allocation motion to fast-track this legislation without us having read it. I want to propose a question: Who would go and sign a document with a bank on a loan or any other kind of legal document without first reading it? So of course we as New Democrats are not being dilatorious by saying no to unanimous consent.

We're essentially saying, "Hang on a second. There is a process. First you have to print a bill. Then members of this assembly have to be able to read it." Yes, there is an obligation for some debate on those bills so that we're able to discuss the pros and the cons, the public is able to hear, and this House can come to an agreement. Is it a lot? It's six and a half hours. Let's be real. The world is not going to come to an end because of a six-and-a-half-hour debate. This whole contrived crisis that the government has been trying to point out is happening because we're in a six-and-a-half-hour debate is a bit beyond the pale. Mr. Speaker, the world is not going to come to an end because of a six-and-a-half-hour debate.

The government is, again, trying to play the politics of teacher negotiations rather than actually getting the negotiations done so that we can actually deal with it. I look at some of the members in the House who have been around here for a while, and we've seen different governments deal with teacher negotiations. We understand, as in all negotiations—none of them are easy. There's always somebody who wants something, and we don't want to give as much. That's just the nature of what negotiations are all about. But most governments have found ways to deal with that stuff at the bargaining table.

There has been a failure from time to time where in fact these types of things happen where back-to-work legislation has got to come forward. Sometimes it has been done by all of the parties for various reasons. But in this particular case I'm saying we should never have been here in the first place. If the Minister of Education had done her job and actually tried to work at getting an agreement, I believe that the teachers would have actually settled.

I don't think the teachers are asking for a whole bunch. What they're trying to do is make sure they protect class sizes and deal with issues in a reasonable way when it comes to the responsibility they have and the responsibility we have to the people who pay the bills. I think an accommodation can be made. So it begs the question: Why is the government putting us in this situation? I think the government is putting us in this situation because they are, in a way—it's been raised by a couple of members—trying to raise a crisis in education where none exists.

This goes back to our good friend Mr. Snobelen, who was the first Minister of Education in the Mike Harris government. I'll always remember: He goes and makes a video inside his minister's boardroom—makes this great big speech about they were going to create a crisis in education to be used as a backdrop so they could make the ideological changes they wanted to make in the system. I thought at the time that it was astounding that a Minister of Education would ever say that. In a funny kind of way, the government is not saying it as crassly as Mr. Snobelen, but the effect is about the same. There's no reason that we have to be in this situation.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I hear the government across the way saying, "Oh, come on, Gilles. That's not fair." Well, it is fair. The Minister of Education came to the media and said, "It's the teachers who want to be on strike. I don't understand what's going on." She was really trying to play as if she didn't know what was going on.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Perplexed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: She was talking about being perplexed, and it was the teachers' fault. Then the government comes into the House and says, "If it's not the teachers' fault and it's not the perplexing fault, then it's got to be the fault of the NDP," always trying to blame somebody else in order to be able to deal with what the problem is.

You are the government. You won a majority in the last election. You have the responsibility and the ability to deal with this issue in a responsible way. What this government should have done was take that responsibility and actually do what they were supposed to do; that is, find a reasonable way to come to an accommodation in these negotiations. Would the teachers have gotten everything they wanted? No. Would the government have gotten everything it wanted? No. That's what negotiations are about; they're about having some form of compromise.

I say again to my good friends and honourable colleagues across the way—of course, there are some of them inside the Conservative heartland of the official opposition, because that's who they are—that there's no need for us to be here. First, we're here because the Minister of Education failed in her job to do what she was supposed to do in negotiations. If anything, she should resign or we should find somebody else to take over that job, because she's clearly failed in that job. Second, we're debating this tonight why? Because the government lawyers have not yet advised the government if the back-to-work from the OLRB is actually dealing with the issues they want to deal with in the legislation.

Now, I don't support this particular legislation, but I understand why the government is doing it. They're doing it why? Because they're trying to keep both of their options open.

This is not a question of New Democrats trying to filibuster debate and trying to slow things down. Heck, we've only got six and a half hours, and we're coming up to it in about 10, 8, 7—we're coming to it pretty quickly. There are only six and a half hours to deal with this.

We're doing what we have to do as a responsible caucus, and that is to raise the issues in debate, to have a debate about what the issues are. Again, I think our members have done a fairly good job of laying that out. I just say to my honourable colleagues across the way that we would have been better off if the Minister of Education had actually done her job.

I just want to end on one point very quickly. Members always like to talk about where they come from and their particular ridings. Members have talked about their ridings and what happens in education. I just have to say that in constituency week last week, I had the great opportunity, like all of you, to do a number of events in my riding. A number of events I did was to speak to grade 5s and to grade 10s. Why? Because that's when they do their civics classes. Man, we are in great shape. Those young people are sharp; they're smart; they're really articulate; they're with it. You've got grade 5 students who are talking about concepts that I would never have understood in grade 5 when I was there, and I've got to say that grade 5 was the best three years of my life.

But I just say this: I think it's a reflection of our education system. We have an education system—a public system of education—that serves our interests well as parents, as students and as the kids themselves.

I've just got to say, I was really pleased at the end of the week, having spoken probably to about 10 schools, to see to what degree the kids are with it, they get it, they know what's going on and they're looking forward to taking their place in this society within some time.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think somebody over there is trying to clear his throat. Would you get that member a glass of water, please?

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for having this time to debate, and I look forward to comments by the members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions or comments?

Seeing none, pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: No further debate, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): No further debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGRICULTURE INSURANCE ACT (AMENDING THE CROP INSURANCE ACT, 1996), 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'ASSURANCE AGRICOLE (MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1996 SUR L'ASSURANCE-RÉCOLTE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 26, 2015, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte (Ontario) et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Leal has moved third reading of Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell—but hold on. We have a vote that has been deferred.

"To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly: Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request the vote on third reading of Bill 40 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, May 27, 2015."

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that we—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 2314.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
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Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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