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Tuesday 25 September 2001

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Mardi 25 septembre 2001

**Standing committee on
estimates**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 25 September 2001

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The committee met at 1547 in room 228.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling): May I call the meeting to order now to do some business of the committee.

My understanding is that the minister will be here shortly, but I understand the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care may not be here. I just want direction from the committee if we can proceed without the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I want direction from the committee.

We can deal with that and then have a recess until the minister comes. We can start with the Minister of Education.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): For the last four or five years we have had ministers attend on behalf of their ministries, and the committee has generally been gracious enough to accommodate the ministers' schedules. That has been our tradition. We haven't had substitutes, especially with presentations and so on, but I guess it's up to the tradition and the discussion or the decision of the committee to accommodate that in the schedule we have.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): It's my understanding that the parliamentary assistant is prepared to make the initial statement. I would suggest, then, in the interests of moving ahead with this that we accept that presentation through the parliamentary assistant. If there are subsequent issues that have to be referred, I think we can always deal with that at a later time.

Mr Kennedy: We have had a tradition on this committee, as Mr Klees may be aware, of having the minister, but understanding that the ministry staff and the PA are on notice for today, perhaps we could consider taking one day out of the schedule—maybe tomorrow—and the minister would then be available next week, but have the PA start off today, which is usually a formal presentation anyway, and it won't detract from the committee's ability to get answers or have a lot of stuff backed up.

The Vice-Chair: Am I hearing you say that the parliamentary assistant can proceed?

Mr Kennedy: But tomorrow, when we're able to give them notice, we would defer, waiting for the minister to be available next week.

The Vice-Chair: Is that the direction that you are giving the Chair?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): So, Mr Chair, the Minister of Health, to understand correctly—I think people should raise their voices, because I can't hear very well in this room, or maybe I can't hear very well in general. You said the Minister of Health is not coming this afternoon?

The Vice-Chair: Yes. The Minister of Health will not be here this afternoon, but the parliamentary assistant will be here instead.

Mr Marchese: Right. Mr Kennedy's suggestion was that we hear from the ministry staff today?

The Vice-Chair: That's my understanding.

Mr Marchese: You were suggesting that, and that we defer to the minister on one other day, like tomorrow. Is that correct?

The Vice-Chair: Like tomorrow, that's what I was hearing, and that seemed to be OK by all.

Mr Klees: Pending that this would be subject to the minister's availability, of course.

Mr Marchese: OK.

The Vice-Chair: I understand that the minister is not available tomorrow either, and will not be available until next week.

Mr Kennedy: That's the idea, that we've been advised that the parliamentary assistant is coming today. There'll be a lot of staff already on schedule for this, but we would stand down the committee tomorrow to wait for the minister's availability, which I understand is confirmed for next week.

The Vice-Chair: Is that an agreement, then, that we don't meet tomorrow, considering the fact that the Minister of Health will not be here tomorrow? We will hear from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care today, but we will not sit tomorrow. Is that an agreement? That is the direction in which we will go.

Now we will recess while we await the Minister of Education.

The committee recessed from 1551 to 1556.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

The Vice-Chair: We now resume the estimates for the Ministry of Education. Mr Marchese is not here at the moment. The rotation would have started with him and

then gone to the government side; the NDP and then to the government. He's not here. I want to ask for direction that we could proceed with the government to do their 20 minutes, and then when he comes, he gets his 20 minutes. Is that OK?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Certainly, we'll accommodate the delinquent member.

The Vice-Chair: We have 20 minutes for the government side and 20 minutes for the NDP, then we've got 18 minutes afterwards to be divided equally among the three.

Mr O'Toole: So if he doesn't return, I just get his time, is that it?

The Vice-Chair: You can go right ahead now.

Mr O'Toole: Welcome, Minister. I know you've had a hard-working summer, so I won't comment on the good weather we had, because I didn't get to enjoy much of it either.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Not so good for the farmers, though.

Mr O'Toole: Yes, it was a dry summer, I might say. Yield is down and commodity prices are down. Oh, this is a different topic.

Thank you, Minister. I certainly do keep a careful eye and I'd like to compliment you on what I sense to be a very good strategic move by putting children first. I sense the tone, just from local letters to the editor and various comments I hear from members of my family who are in the teaching profession, that I think the right climate is there for extracurricular activities and some of the structuring of class time. I'd like to be on the record as thanking the boards for trying to work through rescheduling and all the difficulties I've read about in the paper. Whatever role your ministry staff had in that, I commend them for that, because we're really trying to set the right climate for young people to learn properly. All of the animations that play out day to day in the newspaper and in the classroom aren't perhaps helpful for them.

I really was quite taken with the initiative that I gather you spoke on last night, Aiming for Success—Early Reading in Ontario. I commend you, because I heard much about that initiative—I gather in your response you will reply to it—where money is invested and it's part of the agenda, not in a sort of a political way, of quality education and being prepared for literacy and numeracy, which are the fundamentals in the learning process.

Perhaps you could share with the members of the committee today the progress that's been made. But before I get to your response, I'd like to take as much time as I can possibly take.

As you probably know—may I call you Janet? I usually do, outside of the formal setting.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): We'd need a ruling from the Chair.

Mr O'Toole: You'd need a ruling.

Madam Minister, my wife is a primary teacher. Just toward the end of last year, every kindergarten and junior kindergarten teacher got a day off and there were people

rotating in and out while they got out and got trained on this new literacy program in the primary sector.

She was given an inordinate amount of materials, about three or four boxes full of books, videos, puppets and animating ways of bringing life to learning. She was talking with some of her peers, and in the Durham board, which is right next door, they were also in the midst of getting a new package, a new kind of curriculum for the early literacy initiative, I gather. She found out that the material they were buying for the one board, the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board, was the very material that the other board was throwing out. The Durham board was throwing out the one that they were buying.

I'm just wondering, is there any sense of accountability, or is there a list provided for the kinds of program materials available by some circular—I think it used to be circular 14 or something that used to be circulated? Not to put you in a difficult step, but I hate to think that's still going on, that there is waste to that extent in the system. Because it was elaborate; the materials themselves and the workshops were elaborate. I would say the in-servicing is of a very high level and I understand that children in kindergarten will be expected basically to read, which is quite a more intensive kind of rigour in the learning setting.

With respect to this early reading strategy, perhaps you could comment generally on the government's investment, intentions and perhaps the materials or resources, and who scripted them. Who directed? Was it the directors of education in the 70 or so boards? There was a list, I gather, they could choose from. What steps are we taking, really, to make sure we efficiently use the resources for children in the classroom? Time and time again we see there is difficulty with the resources. Not to get off too far on a tangent here, but the single most important area I hear about is the resources available in special education.

I think I've asked nine questions so far, so I may give you some time to respond. Mr Marchese is back now, so I'll probably give him back his time. I've given you a few things you could respond to, like the early reading program. Other members here may have questions, and I'm certain they will, in the 20 minutes we're allowed, but I'll start with that.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Thank you, Mr O'Toole. The early reading strategy is sort of phase 3, if you will, of our plan for improved student learning in our schools. We started with the new curriculum, making sure that we had in place the information, the knowledge and the clear expectations for what our students would be learning, what they needed to learn. That was the first step.

The second step was to do the testing so we knew if we were all doing the job for our kids: were they learning what they needed to learn? Now that the test data is starting to come in on a reliable basis, we're in that next phase where you take the test data and say, "Where are the problems and how do we fix them?"

Of course, there were many critics who said that testing wasn't necessary, that everything was fine, but as

the testing is clearly showing, and which we knew, everything is not fine; our kids are not meeting the standard for literacy they should be meeting in Ontario schools. So that's why the early reading strategy is in place. We started by investing money over a year ago, \$70 million, for kindergarten to grade 3 literacy initiatives, so the money was there for schools to start taking steps to improve how well our children can read.

This year, we require each school, in consultation, a sort of a team approach with their teachers and their parents, to set improvement targets for how well the children will do in grade 3. Then we have resources which include materials, experts and training for teachers on how best to go about doing this. All of this is being put in place this year to support improved student learning for kindergarten to grade 3 on literacy skills.

At the conference we're having this week, international experts and Ontario experts have gathered to share best practices about how you can use the assessment data to improve how well students are learning. I was very pleased to hear from a number of the international folks last night that they thought the \$70-million investment was quite significant, quite substantial, based on what they're seeing in Australia, the United Kingdom and America on a comparative basis. One of the things they did recommend to us was that we perhaps may need to be more directive about the purchase of the learning materials than we currently are. You're quite right: what has happened in some schools is that the principal changes or a couple of the teachers on the team change and everybody runs out and buys all new material—sometimes that may be appropriate, sometimes it may not—and they buy material based on an approved list, if you will. We have a committee, an advisory group, that gives us advice on what kinds of materials should be on an approved list so boards and schools can select from that list. But, as I said, we just had the recommendation last night that perhaps we should be a little more directive. I'll be looking forward to the input of everyone at the conference as to whether or not we should go down that road.

The other thing I'd like to say about the conference too is that we anticipated that it would be well attended; we thought we would get about 350 people. We have run out of standing room today. We are well over 400 and it was climbing last night, which was wonderful to see, as people from schools at all levels, from teachers to administrators, were quite anxious to come in, to learn from each other, to share best practices and to put the new resources to best use to improve the way our children read in the earlier grades.

Mr O'Toole: I thank you, Minister, for that response. I appreciate the model that you've outlined here. It does make common sense, if I could be so bold, the way you've described it, moving out the OAC year and, as the curriculum changes, precipitating down—and then you were testing and sort of modelling and developing data and making the appropriate investments and setting benchmarks or targets, as you said, and applying resources. It comes back to the question that this conference is

sort of a statement on best practices. Just as a house-keeping type of issue, the attendees at the conference are indeed classroom teachers, I gather, and they would be backfilled by a supply teacher in their classrooms. If they're at the conference, somebody's got to be in the classroom.

Hon Mrs Ecker: In some cases, yes.

Mr O'Toole: Who is actually paying for that? Is it out of the board budget or is it out of the \$70 million? That's a huge issue, this whole supply-teacher cost.

Hon Mrs Ecker: That's why in the \$70 million and the \$24 million, expenditures having classroom teachers obtain training is part of that. That's very much part of that. The other thing I should say is that this conference was put on by the ministry free of charge so there would be no barriers or impediments to anyone coming, which I think was a very good step. That's why we put in new resources, so teachers would indeed be able to do specially targeted training, specially targeted professional development, based on research, based on data, based on best practices, because one of the things the experts will tell you is that simply taking a teacher away from a classroom, away from the school, is sometimes the worst way to do the actual training. Sometimes what is better is to have the people with the expertise and other teachers come into that teacher's classroom and work right there in the classroom as they're teaching the children. So there are a lot of different options that are available which are appropriate, and I think we're going to see some very positive responses to this.

Mr O'Toole: I just want to conclude my remarks by being appreciative of setting up the model that you've described and putting an emphasis on the whole issue of literacy, which is the toolbox for future learning, and doing it at such an early stage. I commend both you and the ministry people for coming up with that and setting up some rigour. I like the idea of more direction—not that it's centralized control. If we have some expectation of outcomes, we need to provide the necessary resources, which you've defined in dollars, but now we're down at the material level and making sure that we haven't got somebody going off on some whole-language junket reinventing this whole argument about the strategy of literacy.

Perhaps there are other members here who want to—Mr Miller had a question that I'm sure he wanted to ask. If he doesn't, I'll continue.

1610

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): First of all, I would like to commend the minister and ministry staff on the fine job I think they're doing at the Ministry of Education. They are making some real progress and I feel confident that education is improving in this province and that students of this province are benefiting. I now have three children in the public education system in this province and they are certainly having an excellent education.

The effective education report came out this summer. I read through that and there are a lot of good suggestions

in that toward improving the education system. I'm sure that you're going to be implementing some of those.

When we were here last time we briefly talked about the seven demonstration projects that were set up to assist students who have been expelled from school and wish to re-enter the system. Actually, I was asked a question by the press about the Safe Schools Act that relates to expulsion and suspensions, and I believe that has come into effect this year. I was wondering if you could tell the committee the steps now in effect to make sure that our schools are a safe learning environment for our students.

Hon Mrs Ecker: A very important initiative to try and make sure that our classrooms are safer was an issue that we heard before the last election from not only parents and students but also from teachers. So we've started with a couple of steps all encapsulated, if you will, or within the framework of the Safe Schools Act, which comes into effect this fall. Underneath that act, or within the framework of that act, you have first of all a code of conduct which sets out clear codes of behaviour for our students, and everyone within the school is very much encouraged to make sure that respect and responsibility are part of the values that are being taught to our students—so clear rules and clear consequences if those rules are broken. For example, students would be expelled for possessing a weapon, including firearms, or using that weapon to threaten bodily harm to another person, or committing physical assault, trafficking in drugs, those kinds of things—clear rules for expulsions and suspensions.

The other step that is included in this is giving the front-line people, the principals and teachers who are most familiar with the circumstances, most familiar with the students, the authority that they might need to make decisions to keep their classroom or their school safe. Teachers have the ability to suspend a student for a day, if they feel that is what is required in their classroom. Principals have the ability to expel a student for up to a year from their school. School boards retain the authority to expel a student from all the schools in that board, potentially indefinitely. So there is the additional authority.

What also has come with this, though, is additional training for teachers and principals on the use of that authority to make sure they understand what is appropriate; secondly, to put in place the appropriate due process, checks and balances, appeals, whatever is needed to make sure that the authority is not used inappropriately; and finally, a new and I think very positive step is to ensure that for students who are expelled or suspended, the school or the board is not saying to them, "Here, go down to the local mall and have a good time for a couple of days." For example, under the old system a board would expel the student from their school board and that was it; they had no obligation. The kid might or might not get into another school board, another school. What we have established is a series of strict discipline programs, demonstration projects, again based on research and best practices, that allow an expelled student to earn their way back into a regular classroom by

successfully completing activities, courses, behaviour or otherwise, to deal with what caused the behaviour in the first place and also to continue to keep their education going. So they can earn their way back, through a strict discipline program, into schools. I think that's a very good improvement.

We're looking forward to the outcome of the Safe Schools Act. We've had a lot of positive feedback on it and I think it will be another step to make sure that our kids and our teachers are safer in classrooms.

Mr Klees: Very quickly, could you just comment on the issue of teacher shortage? Where do we stand in the province today?

Hon Mrs Ecker: We got a wonderful co-operative working group between all the education partners—the unions, the college faculties—to first of all get real, solid data on what the problem is, and that is just being finalized; and second, to put in place the strategies that will help make sure that we don't have a shortage.

The projections look like we'll be tight, but we should be OK if the data are correct. But we're not banking on that. We've already started investing more monies and expanding spots in teachers' colleges, for example. Some 6,000 additional teachers will be graduated at the end of this process. Secondly, we've altered the rules around retired teachers being able to come back into the classroom so that they're more readily available to do that. There will be other steps that we'll be taking to make sure that we do have teachers in our classrooms for the kids.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): If I could just expand on that, Minister, I've certainly had inquiries from people who are educated in other fields. Perhaps they went to law school and found after their education that they in fact do not want to practise law; they want to pursue teaching. Are there any programs they can pursue, where they can try teaching before making the commitment of going to teachers' college, before they take up the profession on a long-term basis? Are there any programs whereby they could put their hand in teaching and see if in fact it is a career that they want to pursue in the long term?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Not currently, as I understand it. I'd certainly be quite pleased to talk to the College of Teachers and the faculties about what may be available there. Basically, there are standards that have been set for what constitutes a certified teacher, and those policies stand. There is certainly the flexibility in the system that if a certified teacher is not available, school boards have the flexibility to find someone of appropriate equivalent qualifications to fill in on a short-term basis. There are opportunities for people to become employed who are in the process of becoming teachers. Those are the steps that are in place now. But as I understand it, there's no try-out program, if you will.

The Vice-Chair: Now there are 20 minutes for the New Democratic Party.

Mr Marchese: Madam Minister, I see you've got a few fans on the other side, in the midst of so much disagreement.

I want to talk about the tax credits in private schools for a bit, if I can, with you. I just want to refer to some quotes from the Premier—well, from your government, really; I'm sure they reflect the Premier—just to get a feeling from you, perhaps as a way of gleaning what you think the Premier might have been thinking when he was saying these things.

Here's what he says with respect to it. Reading from communication 694/1996 to the United Nations, your government argued, in section 4.4.3: "The state party argues that if it were required to fund private religious schools, this would have a detrimental impact on the public schools and hence the fostering of a tolerant, multicultural, non-discriminatory society in the province of Ontario." Reading from communication 694/1996, it continues, "The public schools build social cohesion, tolerance and understanding. Extending public school funding rights to private religious schools will undermine this ability and may result in a significant increase in the number and kind of private schools. This would have an adverse effect on the viability of the public school system, which would become the system serving students not found admissible by any other system."

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Reading from your government's response to the United Nations on February 26, 1999, three years later: "The overall effect," of funding private religious schools, "would be to diminish the multicultural exposure of children in schools. This lack of exposure, in turn, would diminish the mutual tolerance and understanding of Ontarians of diverse cultures and religions for one another."

In the 1999 leaders' debate, your Premier said, "I've been asked, 'Would I support private schools?' I said, 'No, I'm sorry, my priority is public education.'"

There's a consistency to this argument that your government and your Premier advance. For three years he held to the view that if we extend funding to private schools, and religious schools in this case, it would have an adverse effect on public education in a variety of different ways. This government, you and he and so many others, are proud of keeping your commitments and your promises. Could you explain so you can help me understand what may have happened that might have changed the Premier's mind with respect to those opinions he held, for a number of years, in fact?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, Mr Marchese, I appreciate the question but I wouldn't presume to speak for or on behalf of the Premier. I'm sure you'll have opportunities to talk to him about that. But I think what's important to recognize here is that when the Premier has said, when I have said, that our priority is public education, that remains the case. Absolutely, 100%, that is our priority and continues to be our priority for many of the reasons that have been cited in correspondence, in various documents.

We also respect that parents have a right to choose. For some parents, they wish to make a choice other than the public education system. So we respect that. We can respect that while at the same time keeping the priority

on the public education system, which we are continuing to do by investing new monies every year to increase the investment in public education, to set clear expectations for improved student learning, putting in place supports to make sure that we can get improved student learning. That is the goal of our plan for education reform.

The other thing I think it's important to note is that the government is not proposing to extend public school rights to independent schools. That is not what the government is proposing to do at all. What we are proposing to do is to have a tax credit for a portion of tuition to parents, if they choose to use it, for those who might wish to go to independent schools that meet the eligibility criteria.

Mr Marchese: You raise different points, which I will get to in a second. But in reading those quotations, I don't remember anything that says, "We respect the right of parents to choose."

Hon Mrs Ecker: How about the Common Sense Revolution, 1995; Blueprint, 1999; many, many press releases; many, many speeches; the throne speech in 2001? There are lots of places where we set out parental choice as a very important principle in our education reforms.

Mr Marchese: Minister Ecker, I'd love to give you the time that you need to answer questions. I was responding to the statements you made; I was taking notes. So I'll speak, and then you can make statements as well. Is that OK with you?

So there was nowhere there, in those quotations that I read, that speaks to the right of parents to choose. Furthermore, you say, "Our priority is public education." But I read to you the quotations which say, "The state party argues that if it were required to fund private religious schools, this would have a detrimental impact on the public schools." So it seems to be contradictory to say, on the one hand, "Our priority is public education," while all the documentation that I've read coming from your government says, "If we do that, it will harm public education." Do you see an inconsistency in that argument?

Hon Mrs Ecker: If you're comparing apples to apples, Mr Marchese, no. The argument before the United Nations revolved around the rights of independent schools when you compared them to the Catholic system, for example, and, as you yourself said, extending public school rights. It was a very different argument, a very different kind of legal court case that was being discussed at the time.

We have chosen to respect parental choice. Again I would say, as I said before, we have laid that out before two elections as a very important principle of our education reforms.

Secondly, if you look at the investments: \$13.8 billion for our public education system, a \$360-million increase in one year alone. We had almost that much last year alone in new money. Clearly the facts indicate that our priority remains the public education system, as it should, and we can, and should have, a strong public education

system and respect parents' right of choice. That is not an inconsistent position.

Mr Marchese: Did you at any time ever say that if we extended funding to religious schools, we would lose \$300 million and it would come out of the public education system?

Hon Mrs Ecker: If you were to—

Mr Marchese: Did you ever say it?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Marchese, if you were to fund support to independent schools from the public education system, you're quite right, it would be detrimental. That's why this government is not doing that.

Mr Marchese: So when you said what you're not admitting you said, but what I quoted to you in the Legislature that you said, that \$300 million would come out of the public education system, you didn't mean that; you meant it would come out of some other source, but it wasn't that. Is that possible? Because I'm trying to help you.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Actually I think you're confusing the members of the committee from what I hear on the other side here, Mr Marchese.

When we spend \$22 billion on health care, does that come out of public education funding? No, it doesn't; it comes out of general revenues. When we spend the millions of dollars that we spend on transportation in this province, does that come out of education funding? No, it doesn't. When we have spent more money for developmental services this year, did that come out of public education? No, it didn't; it came out of general revenues.

Mr Marchese: I understand.

Hon Mrs Ecker: And so, Mr Marchese, one of the things I have been very clear about is that taking money from public education for independent schools would not be correct, and that is not what the government will be doing. We are going to continue—

Mr Marchese: OK, but you said—

Hon Mrs Ecker: —to invest in public education as we have in the past.

Mr Marchese: I understand. But you said the \$300 million will come out of public education. That's what your quotation said.

Hon Mrs Ecker: If you were to fund independent schools that way, that would be very detrimental to public education, but that's not what we're proposing to do. The discussions around the United Nations were talking about extending the same kinds of public funding rights to independent schools, and that is not what this government is doing. As you know, there were legal rulings and stuff about the legalities and that, and I'll leave that to the lawyers to discuss. The goal of this government is to have a strong public education system, the focus of which is improved student learning, and to respect parental choice. I know the opposition keeps saying this, hoping that if they repeat it often enough it will be true, but that does not make it true, because it isn't true. We are not taking one dollar from public education for any kind of funding for independent schools.

Mr Marchese: It's just that I know you say that, but that's not what you said then. That's all I'm trying to say to you, that when you were quoted, you said \$300 million would come out of public education. That's what you said.

Hon Mrs Ecker: If you did it the way they were recommending we do it, you would end up—if you extend public funding rights, you're walking into a whole different legal process, a legal world, if you will, that we don't think is appropriate.

Mr Marchese: So it's different.

Hon Mrs Ecker: We are not taking money from public education.

Mr Marchese: To pursue an argument you just made, you said, "We are not extending public school rights to these private schools; therefore, this new money doesn't come out of public education, it's from some other source." Is that basically what I'm hearing?

Hon Mrs Ecker: We can sit here and debate how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, but what is important to recognize—I think it's a very simple message, a very clear message—is that our priority continues to be the public education system. We have invested new money and we'll continue to invest in public education. The independent schools are being funded through a tax credit to parents, and that funding to parents is not in any way going to negatively impact on public education spending in Ontario.

1630

Mr Marchese: The fact of the matter is that you estimated it would be \$300 million that would come out of public education, but let's for a moment say not public education—

Hon Mrs Ecker: But that's why we're not taking money out of public education, Mr Marchese, because that would be very damaging to public education. I said it would be if we were to do it. We're not doing it, because I agree, it should not come out of public education and it isn't.

Mr Marchese: You're not doing it. That covers it. OK, great.

Hon Mrs Ecker: There seemed to be some doubt about that.

Mr Marchese: Yes, there is.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I just wanted to make it clear.

Mr Marchese: You're quite right. We're going to have this little discussion because I've got some more time. Let's just for a moment now agree you're doing something very different. What you said was different then, but it's different now because you're funding something else.

You estimated \$300 million would come out of—I'm not going to say public education any more—some other pot: consolidated revenue. Your Premier said that \$500 million to \$700 million would probably come out of—at the time he said public education, but now you're saying consolidated revenue. Is that still a lot of money that worries you in terms of the additional money you have to find, or not?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Marchese, no one is finding money for independent schools out of the public education budget.

Mr Marchese: No, I realize that. I understand. I thought I was clear. So it's coming out of another pot now. You have to find it from some other pot.

Hon Mrs Ecker: We've increased money for developmental services this year. We've increased money for health care this year. We've increased money for environmental protection this year. We've increased money for public education this year. These are all priorities. This government said we would invest new monies, and we are indeed doing that. The other thing I think it is important to note—I think you might have misspoke yourself—is that was not the Premier's estimate of the cost of the tax credits.

Mr Marchese: We have quoted him as saying \$500 million. That's what he said.

Hon Mrs Ecker: That is not the estimate of a tax credit. If you're talking about funding independent schools as you would public schools, for example, that might indeed be a whole set of numbers but that's not the proposal the government is making, and we've been very clear what that proposal is.

Mr Marchese: Let me understand this. This is a tax credit. What would that proposal look like if you had done something different?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Marchese, when you look at what other provinces do, some of them give direct grants and some of them fund a percentage of what public schools get. There's a whole range of direct grant processes that other jurisdictions use. We did not adopt that. We felt, because we respect parental choice—

Mr Marchese: I'm just asking what kind of a model would have amounted to \$300 million or \$500 million. Would that have been direct grants to them or—

Hon Mrs Ecker: The budget has been very clear that the estimate of the tax credit as we are proposing it should be approximately \$300 million when it comes to be fully implemented in 2006, several years from now.

Mr Marchese: I understand that. You were saying that this is a different system you propose as a tax credit, and whatever—

Hon Mrs Ecker: A tax credit is a very—schools in Ontario, as you probably know, get funded according to a formula—

Mr Marchese: I know that.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Yes, and it's been legally proven in courts etc. Tax credits to parents—

Mr Marchese: I'm not sure what question you're answering now.

Hon Mrs Ecker: It's a very different process.

Mr Marchese: Yes, I know. I'm just trying to ask you a question. You were estimating it would cost \$300 million to fund religious schools. Under what kind of a granting formula would that \$300 million have been taken out of public education? What would that have looked like versus the tax credit that comes from some other source?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The government's proposal is to fund tax credits for parents. We've been very clear on the estimate of that. We've been clear on how we wish to proceed on that. We did not wish to get into funding independent schools the way we fund the public schools. I think we have the correct priority for this government, for the people of Ontario, and that is on the public education system.

Mr Marchese: I understand that. I was just trying to ask different questions, but you're unwilling or not getting my question. Maybe I'm not clear enough, but we don't need to pursue it because in the scheme of things we can move on to other questions related to this.

You're giving out money to private schools. In my view—I suspect in the view of many Ontarians; I suspect in the view of many taxpayers—once you give public dollars to a private institution, religious or otherwise, do you think the taxpayer expects some accountability from them in terms of how that money is spent?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, I'd just like to correct the premise of your question. The money is going to parents, and I think we should be very clear about that. It's going to parents via a tax credit. That's a very different method than how public education gets funded, and I think that's an important distinction that we make.

In terms of accountability to parents, I agree there should be accountability to parents in the public schools and the independent schools.

Mr Marchese: My view is that in spite of the fact that you're giving money to parents rather than the institution directly, in my mind it's the same thing. Public dollars are going to private schools, to a small number of people in private schools. I hold the view, and I think a lot of people in the public realm hold the same view, that if you're going to give money to individuals who go to these institutional places, these schools, we have to have the same rules for them as we have in the public system, ie the same curriculum, the expectation that there will be teachers, the expectation that if you're going to test teachers in the public system—if public dollars are going to these families who are in turn going to have their children in prep schools, they should be able to follow the same rigorous rules that you apply to public schools. Do you not agree?

Hon Mrs Ecker: As I said—

The Vice-Chair: We'll have to wrap up, Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: OK. Very quickly, I believe that public schools and independent schools should have accountability to parents, just like many parents home-school their children. I think that is another parental choice that this government respects.

Mr Marchese: I believe, yes, they should be accountable to those parents. We have that in the public system, but in addition, in the public system we are—everyone is—accountable to you and to your rules and regulations. So you say teachers will be tested. They're already accountable in so many other ways, but you're saying in the public system they will be tested because you feel that's—

Hon Mrs Ecker: A certified teacher, regardless of who employs them—

Mr Marchese: Why wouldn't you expect that the teacher in the private school be tested too, given that they are going to get public dollars?

Hon Mrs Ecker: So you're implying they're bad teachers in independent schools?

Mr Marchese: No, I'm saying apply the same rules.

The Vice-Chair: We have about 18 minutes left in the estimates of the Ministry of Education. I'm going to rotate that 18 minutes in six-minute portions. We'll start with the Liberals, then we'll go back to the NPD and then go back to the Conservatives.

Mr Kennedy: Could I get unanimous consent to have my time extended to 60 minutes? Is that a possibility?

The Vice-Chair: You can always ask it, but I don't think you'll get it.

Mr Kennedy: The minister was agreeing, and I appreciate that.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Given where I'm going next, I might agree to that, but I'd better not get into trouble.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, there was a private meeting held by the Minister of Finance inviting people to make comments on the tax credit. When you were here last, you said you had not made any submissions concerning the private tax voucher, or credit, as you wish to call it. I'm wondering if you have made any submissions to the Minister of Finance around conditions to be placed on the private school tax credit.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Ministry officials have certainly consulted with Ministry of Finance officials and offered their advice. It's my understanding that there have been not only meetings with individuals and organizations by the parliamentary assistant and other members of our caucus; there have also been many written submissions. Indeed, they will still be coming in until the end of this week, as I understand it.

Mr Kennedy: Sorry, Minister. I'm asking you yourself, as the minister—and we have discussed a little bit before your unique role in this province on behalf of public education—have you made representations or submissions, have you taken a position you'd like to share with this committee today? You're asking us to authorize the money for your ministry. Have you done something to put forward a position on what kind of requirements there should be for private school tax credits or not?

Hon Mrs Ecker: As a cabinet minister, I always put forward my views on issues that I think impact on public education or other issues which affect my ministry or my responsibilities as an MPP. I have offered my advice in this area as well to my caucus colleagues. As you know, what transpires in caucus and in cabinet is confidential. The government will make its decision as to how to take all of the submissions and the input they have received to date on this matter as to where to and how to develop an accountability framework for independent schools.

1640

Mr Kennedy: Minister, I don't know exactly how you feel about it; you perhaps can take a second and tell us.

But I am offended on your behalf that the Ministry of Finance is making all these decisions. I do know that there are many people out there, people whom you meet in your day-to-day travels and so on, and they look to you. I'm just wondering, do you have anything to say to them about what safeguards you'll be seeking? Is there anything that you can share publicly with those people on how your government as a whole will proceed with this private school tax credit initiative, anything at all?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Kennedy, I have provided advice. I will continue to do that. That is my job as Minister of Education. The Ministry of Finance is not making the decisions. Cabinet will make this decision, as it does other decisions. That's part of how any government proceeds. That's how this government will proceed.

Input is still coming in from individuals as to how the government should answer the question of accountability, and that's what will be considered. I believe there do need to be eligibility criteria for an independent tax credit, and this government will be announcing what those will be at the conclusion of that process.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, you noted cabinet; it's actually the Minister of Finance, but I appreciate the limited answer you're able to provide me, and I would like to ask you about your own ministry.

Your own ministry has increased administration spending in the last short while. I'm wondering if you could tell us—in the limited time, not getting unanimous consent, I'd like to know specifically if you could address the amount of money that you're diverting away from children to advertising. I'm wondering if you could identify specifically—two years ago in this committee you were asked, and you agreed to provide specifically, where the advertising funds were coming from. Further, Madam Minister, you agreed to provide a protocol as to which members of your ministry, which of these fine staff you have with you today, sign off on that advertising so we can be sure it's in the public interest and not serving any partisan purpose. So, very specifically, how much money are you spending in your total budget this year, and where can we find it in estimates, on public advertising?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, Mr Kennedy, officials can talk about our communications spending for the ministry. It does not come out of money that goes to school boards. As you know, we fund our public schools by very clear, consistent standards and a formula which has been validated in the courts. So we do not take money from that budget to do anything. That would not be something I would support, so we don't do that.

Second, on the administration funding, again that was largely because of reallocations, which the staff can talk to you about.

Mr Kennedy: They're noted in estimates, Minister, but I wonder, just for a point of clarification—

Hon Mrs Ecker: You did ask. Sorry.

Mr Kennedy: In a previous year you did indicate, or your staff did indicate, various sources—in other words, not one single place you could find advertising dollars—

and it included operating funds, which are ostensibly for the support of children's education. But I just wonder—

Hon Mrs Ecker: No, the ministry has operating funds, Mr Kennedy. Let's be clear.

Mr Kennedy: We can refer this to an objective source. I'm very—

Hon Mrs Ecker: The ministry has operating funds. We do not take it from school board operating funds.

Mr Kennedy: Madam Minister, I agree with that, but it does come from funds that are supposed to support the operations of school boards, and I think advertising over their heads is a funny way to do that. But, Minister, you have other priorities.

Hon Mrs Ecker: There is money for the ministry to operate and to communicate. That's part of the budget process. It doesn't come—

Mr Kennedy: Minister, I think you'll like the question, so I wonder if I could—

Hon Mrs Ecker: —from the operating funds of the schools.

Mr Kennedy: —direct your attention to it.

The Vice-Chair: Let's get some audible dialogue here.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, if the bureaucracy—and I say that in the most positive fashion—the able people you have here, could provide us with an accounting of exactly where the advertising dollars are coming from, and if they could pick up the unanswered, promised undertaking of two years ago to give us in writing the procedures by which this kind of advertising is approved and by whom it's signed off, I think those are accountability questions. I am troubled by the fact they haven't been answered over the past two years, and I would like to know. If that information isn't here today, could we at least give the main sources of advertising and where they are to be found in estimates? I think it's a reasonable question and I hope you would agree. I'm quite willing to rely on your staff for that answer.

The Vice-Chair: Mr Kennedy, as you had suggested, it's better off in writing because the time is up for—

Mr Kennedy: Mr Chair, with all respect, could we at least ask the minister to indicate positively or negatively whether that information will be forthcoming?

The Vice-Chair: Is it a yes or no you're looking for?

Mr Kennedy: Yes, I am.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Certainly we can provide information.

The Vice-Chair: Mr Marchese, you have six minutes.

Mr Marchese: This is a good question here that Mr Kennedy is raising. It interests me. It intrigues me, in fact.

Do you think there's a difference between what Liberals might have done when they were in power and what the NDP might have done when we were in power versus what you're doing when you're in power in terms of public advertising to explain to the public what we're doing?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Marchese, I think every government in a democratically elected society should com-

municate with the public. I see that as part of the obligation of government.

Mr Marchese: Me too. When you were in opposition—you weren't there, so it's unfair to you—but when your friends were there, they used to attack the NDP for spending money, I dare say, differently than you are. But we were spending money to advertise, to publicize what the government was doing. Do you have a sense of why they would criticize us like that?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Actually, yes, I do.

Mr Marchese: Oh, you were there.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The one I remember is a full-colour, almost life-size poster of Mr Hampton as Minister of Natural Resources, if you want to compare that against brochures that go out to parents with information on what's happening in education and give them an opportunity to respond—

Mr Marchese: That's the difference. Now I understand.

Hon Mrs Ecker: —so they can provide input. Obviously there will always be disagreement between government and opposition. But that may have been one reason why my colleagues from before might well have criticized your government.

Mr Marchese: I was going to ask you just to get a fair sense, you see, because I—

Mr Mazzilli: You don't like the answer.

Mr Marchese: You expect that, right? It's beautiful, because when you're in opposition, as we've all been—some of you haven't yet but you will be—you say exactly what they did when they were there. Mike Harris used to say that all the time. He used to decry the dollars we were spending. I remember, because we had this discussion with our former Premier, Bob Rae, whom we were urging to do a television program, Frank, because he would be unfiltered by the media. It would be direct and he would talk to the public. He expressed reservations about spending money to do that, and we were saying, "But that's the only opportunity we've got to communicate directly with the public." We had a good man on the job who was worried about spending public dollars.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Marchese, I've been involved in politics, not as elected before 1995, but I have never disagreed with the government's right to communicate with the public. I might disagree with how or what they say. That's fair, that's part of a democratic process, but I think the principle is extremely important.

Mr Marchese: I agree with you. I was just reminding you, for your benefit and theirs, because they're still so fresh on the other side, that when you were in opposition you weren't so charitable. But that's another point.

To get back to the previous discussion—

Hon Mrs Ecker: I'm always charitable, Mr Marchese.

Mr Marchese: It depends with whom, and from time to time.

The point you raised earlier about, "Are you," meaning me—

Hon Mrs Ecker: Can I—

Mr Marchese: We're moving on.

Hon Mrs Ecker: OK. It was a good one, actually.

Mr Marchese: But you can still use it. You can always fit it in.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Yes. I might.

Mr Marchese: You were saying to me, "Are you implying, Mr Marchese, that teachers who teach in the private schools are bad?" I wasn't saying that.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I knew you must have misspoken yourself. That's why I gave you the opportunity to clarify.

Mr Marchese: I didn't misspeak at all, and I'm going to clarify, in the event that you thought I misspoke myself.

What I was saying was, shouldn't the rules be applied fairly and equally to both systems? That's all I'm saying. I'm not agreeing with your teacher testing, by the way, and that's another, longer debate and we can't really have it here. I disagree with what you folks are doing, because it's all politics. I know that. I'm saying that it is, but we don't have time for that. I'm asking a different question at the moment.

You're saying that I said that those teachers in the private schools are bad. I'm not saying that. I argue that you should apply the same standards to both.

Hon Mrs Ecker: We do: certified teachers in both.

Mr Marchese: OK. So the certified teachers in the private system will be tested? Those who are teachers in the private school system, the ones you're funding through the tax credit, will be tested as well and go through the courses—

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Marchese, a certified teacher is a certified teacher is a certified teacher.

The Vice-Chair: You've got a minute to wrap it up.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The policy and the legislation we passed deal with certified teachers, as I believe they should.

Mr Marchese: I didn't know you were doing that. You might put that out for the sake of clarity, for those of us who didn't know it applies to every teacher in the private schools, they ones you are about to fund. If you're doing that, I think it's helpful to the general public.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Certified teachers.

Mr Marchese: That minute flew.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you. That six minutes really flew by. It was a rather interesting exchange.

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Mr Mazzilli: Thank you, Minister. I want to compliment you and your staff. You've been working hard over the summer. What I've noticed in the London community is that things have gotten off to a relatively good start. From what I'm hearing from family members who are in the teaching profession and so on is that the workload issues have essentially been solved and extracurricular activities are generally functioning very well. So I want to thank you and congratulate you and your staff.

I'd also like to talk for a moment on the teacher shortages that we're going to see in the future, and it's not just teaching. If you hear from some opposition members, they like to talk about it like it's the only place of shortages. In fact, there is a shortage of professionals throughout the province, whether it's physicians, whether it's nurses, and teaching is among those professions.

I also believe that when economies change, the best professions that come out of it, or are able to get some very good people, are ones that see that there have been some layoffs in certain sectors. Let's take for example the high-tech field. For the last six months some very well-educated people in the high-tech industry have found themselves without work. These are people we could certainly use in the teaching ranks. These are the people we have been trying to recruit into teaching. I guess I'm asking, are there any strategies, from your perspective or from the ministry perspective, of trying to attract these professionals to the teaching profession and letting them in the door?

Sometimes there are unreasonable requests: you want someone to go and take some kind of training for two years in the middle of a time where they may have families and so on. Are there programs we can come up with that can get some people who are already educated into the classroom to teach in their fields?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Mazzilli, I'm just going to ask Norbert Hartmann, who's the ADM with our ministry, to talk a little bit about that.

Mr Mazzilli: That would be great.

Mr Norbert Hartmann: Norbert Hartmann, assistant deputy minister for education.

What the minister indicated earlier was that we've established a working committee which has not only put together the estimates in the process for determining what our needs are in the future, but also where those specific needs are, particularly in shortage areas like the kind you just mentioned, Mr Mazzilli. That is also reporting back on what kinds of strategies would be best put in place in order to do exactly as you indicated: what would make teaching attractive to them? What kinds of programs and processes would we would have to be putting in place to make use of that kind of talent that is available? We expect those kinds of reports to be able to be considered by the minister over the course of the next three to four months.

Mr Mazzilli: I await that.

If you look back at some of the shortages in the past, my understanding is that there were shortages in the 1960s and some changes were made. Some of the best teachers I had went into teaching when there were shortages and there was the opportunity to go into teaching, which otherwise they probably could not have pursued at that time.

I feel strongly that there are people in that situation today. The ministry should take every step to try and attract those people to the teaching profession.

I will move it on to Mr Klees.

Mr Klees: Minister, I'd like to talk about the province-wide student testing. The feedback I've had in my

constituency has generally been very positive. In fact, you're to be commended for implementing something that I think is long overdue in this province.

Nevertheless, there have been some glitches in the system, apparently, and we've heard that there were some administrative problems. I'd like you to comment on where we are and how you see this system being extended perhaps to other grade levels, and if that is the case, if that's the plan, in what time frame. I would also like to ask how many independent schools across the province have taken advantage of this testing system; and if in fact the independent schools are participating in this student testing, do we have statistics in terms of how well the students in the independent schools, as a group, are doing compared to students in the public system?

The Vice-Chair: Minister, again I unfortunately have to say that you don't have time to respond. We are out of time.

Hon Mrs Ecker: We will get that information for you, Mr Klees.

The Vice-Chair: We have come now to the other phase of the reviewing of the Ministry of Education, where we shall proceed to voting on the Ministry of Education estimates.

For the Ministry of Education, shall vote 1001 carry? Has it been carried?

Interjection: Carried.

The Vice-Chair: It was silent over there.

Shall vote 1002 carry? Carried.

Shall the estimates of the Ministry of Education carry? Carried.

Therefore, shall I report the estimates of the Ministry of Education to the House? I shall do so.

I want to thank you, Madam Minister and the staff of the Ministry of Education, for your presentation and your attendance.

I will then ask for a recess of 10 minutes so that the Ministry of Health can set up. Thank you.

The committee recessed from 1657 to 1712.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE

The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy): I apologize for the delay. We welcome the parliamentary assistant. We are proceeding with vote 1401 for the estimates of the Ministry of Health. As I think people are aware, the format is a 30-minute presentation from the minister or minister's representative, followed by 30 minutes for each of the caucuses, and from there to 20-minute rotation. Mr Maves, would you like to proceed?

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I am very pleased to appear before you to review the estimates for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for 2001-02. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss our government's and this ministry's achievements with respect to Ontario's health system. I'm pleased to outline our strategies for continuing to create a better system.

Minister Clement, as all of you I am sure are aware, is at the health ministers' conference in Newfoundland. I understand that we have moved tomorrow's session into the future in order to accommodate his attendance.

As you know, Ontario's current health care system was first established in the 1970s, but health care, like everything else, has changed a lot since then. There have been huge advances in technology, medical diagnosis and treatments, and the medical needs of people have changed too. People are living longer and healthier than ever before. In fact, the greatest challenges facing our health system in the 21st century are population growth and aging.

In the face of these changes, people in Ontario have to know that the system will be there for them and for their families when and where they need it. They have to be assured that they'll have timely access to existing health and long-term-care services and to new treatments and services in the future.

I am pleased today to update you on our progress with fundamental reforms and new initiatives that are helping us to achieve our goal.

In 2001-02, Ontario's spending on health programs and services will increase for the sixth consecutive year, to \$23.5 billion on a PSAB basis, or \$24.4 billion on a cash basis, as you can see in the printed estimates before you. That's \$1.2 billion more in PSAB funding, or \$1.3 billion more in cash than in 2000-01. That means the government will meet its 1999 Blueprint commitment to increase health care spending by 20%, two years ahead of schedule.

But I must emphasize that increasing spending at this rate is not sustainable, given that our population is growing, health services are being used more, and more sophisticated technologies and drugs are driving up costs. Responsible choices and tough decisions are needed, not only to sustain, but to save our health care system.

That's why the ministry supported the Premier in his role to negotiate restoration of the Canada health and social transfer from the federal government. Although the partial restoration is a good first step, the federal government is still providing less to health care in Ontario than it did in 1995. The federal contribution is less than 14 cents on the dollar for health.

That's why we believe that a national dialogue on health care is long overdue. However, the results of the federal Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada, the Romanow commission, are not due until November 2002. This is far too long to wait. We want to deal with saving our health system much sooner, and we want the public in Ontario to take an active role in considering fundamental changes to the health system.

That's why, in early August, we mailed a questionnaire to every Ontario household to begin this public dialogue. We began asking patients, doctors, nurses, administrators—everyone who is concerned about health care—to identify needed reforms and the best way to use the billions of dollars spent annually on health.

We're continuing to call upon the federal government to provide adequate, sustainable, long-term health care

funding. At this year's conference in Victoria, British Columbia, the nation's Premiers unanimously called on the federal government to restore its funding of health care to at least 18%, the federal share prior to the 1996 cuts. We simply want the federal government to provide its fair share.

We know that health care spending has increased at a dramatic pace: 27% in five years; 19% in the past two years alone. We know that health care resources are not endless and that such double-digit increases in health spending are no longer sustainable. At the current rate of increase, within five years, health spending would consume 60% of Ontario's operating budget, up from 45% today and 38% in 1995.

Spending pressures of such magnitude raise serious questions about the long-term sustainability of Ontario's health system; questions about the very real possibility that demand might outstrip resources. These pressures challenge us to think differently about how we organize health care; about how we deliver vital services; and to which services we allocate health dollars. Most importantly, they challenge us to entrench accountability for those health dollars in every facet of our health system.

That brings me to the focal point of our government's vision for the future of health care in this province. Our government believes that a strong commitment to providing the best possible care, the best possible customer service, goes hand in hand with accountability. To improve health care and services, we must first understand how those services are performing. Accountability brings with it the obligation to answer for results and the way in which responsibilities are discharged, and accountability rests on the shoulders of all of us. That includes all of us in government, it includes all health system providers and it includes all who use the health system.

We have a number of measures in place to ensure that our health care system is delivering the highest level of care to Ontario residents, including mechanisms such as operating plans, service agreements and compliance reviews. As a government, our challenge is to ensure accountability to Ontario's taxpayers by showing exactly how and how well their tax dollars are being spent.

1720

We may not directly manage the health system, but the public holds us accountable for ensuring the provision of health services. Some 96% of our health budget transfers to service providers, ranging from publicly funded hospitals to 20,000 doctors and drug costs for two million people in Ontario. Our transfer partners must be accountable for the cost of their services and their part in the health system. I am pleased to report that the establishment of a patients' charter and the publishing of hospital report cards are two decisive steps in this direction.

With this year's Hospital Report 2001, we deepened our commitment to performance reporting for both the public and the providers of health care. Released in July, the report card reflects our commitment to conduct and publish measurements of how efficiently Ontario's hospi-

tals are operating, how they compare with one another, where they have achieved successes, and where there is room for improvement.

Hospitals are already accountable to their boards and their patients, but with report cards they subject their performance to the toughest judges of all: Ontario's taxpayers. Hospital report cards are ensuring that health care administrators do not set their own standards in isolation. The report cards create an opportunity for comparison with others and for sharing best practices.

Just as providers must be accountable to the public, the public must become accountable for its own use of health services. Among individuals, personal accountability means taking responsibility for one's own health and health care. Within the broader community, accountability calls for public recognition of the stresses and strains on our health system and it calls for the public to take an active role in considering fundamental changes to our health system.

I think there is an awareness among everyone in Ontario that Canada's health system is under stress and that our government, like those of other provinces, is working hard to improve and enhance all facets of the health care system. In spite of the need for federal funding, our strategies for 2001-02 continue to support Ontario's health objectives of keeping people healthy, providing early diagnosis and treatment, ensuring timely access to health care and treatment, and providing health services closer to home. Central to these objectives is a hospital system that maintains the very highest quality of patient care.

In the past three years we've increased funding by over 25%. Hospitals will receive \$8.6 billion base funding in 2001-02. This amount supports the most extensive modernization of hospitals ever undertaken in Canada and includes increases in global budgets for every public hospital in the province, a separate allocation to implement a new funding formula, coupled with new funding for priority programs such as cardiac care and dialysis.

Our overall goal is to ensure that the health care system is integrated, provides care as close to home as possible and remains accessible to all Ontario residents. To better coordinate programs and services across this vast province and among our many health care providers, we will continue to develop integrated networks that provide access to a range of services that put the patient first, while using resources more effectively and efficiently.

Our commitments include ensuring that rural and northern hospitals develop networks to improve patient services, and that regional emergency services networks across the province, made up of hospitals, long-term-care facilities, ambulance services and community care access centres, meet to address emergency room issues.

We will take a look at how health care providers, including community agencies, can improve their efficiency and effectiveness. We will continue our zero tolerance policy for fraud by working with the OPP and our partners in the health care system to help identify ways to

prevent and deter fraud. We are committed to implementing the legislative reforms necessary to tackle fraud more strongly and to ensure offenders are held accountable.

Detecting an illness early, whether it's heart disease, cancer or diabetes, means better, more timely treatment. That's why the ministry has supported the expansion of the Ontario breast screening program so all women aged 50 and over can have better access to breast screening. As of June 2001, there are 77 Ontario breast screening program sites across the province; 56 of those sites have opened since 1996.

Prior to 1995, there were 12 publicly funded magnetic resonance imaging machines across the province, which can reduce the need for expensive exploratory surgery. By the spring of 2002, there will be 43 machines in Ontario. These high-tech machines can detect brain and spinal diseases, several forms of cancer, musculoskeletal disorders and many heart conditions. We are continuing to improve access to health services throughout Ontario.

Fundamental to our vision of the future of our health system is primary care expansion: the development of an accessible, integrated, dependable system, where physicians and other practitioners work in teams to provide comprehensive care to patients 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I'm proud to note that our primary care expansion initiative has made significant advances. More than 175 physicians and more than 245,000 patients have joined Ontario family health networks across the province.

During 2000, the ministry and the Ontario Medical Association agreed to expand these networks. Primary care networks were renamed Ontario family health networks in early 2001, and we made the announcement that Dr Ruth Wilson would be the chair of the Ontario Family Health Network Agency.

Our goal is to have 80% of eligible family doctors practising in more than 600 family health networks by the end of 2004. To achieve this, the 2000 Ontario budget provided \$100 million in incentive funding for doctors and \$150 million for information technology to support these networks.

Information technology that allows information sharing among health care professionals while protecting the privacy of sensitive data is key to making the Ontario family health network expansion work. As well, 2001-02 will see us enhancing the use of information technology to improve health services.

Smart Systems for Health will create a "digital nervous system" to connect health care providers to one another. Through a secure information network, health care providers will be able to quickly access health information needed for patient care. For example, the Ontario Laboratory Information System will give doctors timely access to their patients' lab test results.

In 2000-01 we continued to develop the Ontario Laboratory Information System. Laboratory reform planning involving doctors, hospitals and community labs began in three regions of the province. Reform of hospital and

community labs will reduce duplication of services and increase accountability, quality and access.

The sustainability of our health system greatly depends on patients being able to receive care in their communities rather than in hospitals. One of the most important aspects of Ontario's health system reform is the dramatic shift from institution-based care to community-based health services.

Medical advances in technology and drugs mean that people are spending much less time in hospital yet requiring more care either in their homes or in community-based facilities. For instance, some 70% of surgery now happens on an outpatient basis.

Our government is continuing to develop long-term-care beds to ensure that there is care for the elderly and to ensure improved quality of life in nursing homes and homes for the aged.

To continue to meet the needs of a growing and aging population and to ensure that new long-term-care beds are built on time and in service areas where they are most needed, we established the long-term-care redevelopment project early last year.

This project has helped to cut red tape and reduce delays for operators assembling land and obtaining zoning approvals. We also streamlined processes and made it easier to create successful partnerships and joint ventures for developing and constructing long-term-care beds. With over 2,600 beds built already, we should have more than 6,000 ready by the spring of 2002, and we remain committed to building 20,000 new beds by 2004 and redeveloping 16,000 old beds by 2006.

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To support Ontarians already in long-term-care beds, we've increased our funding from a per diem of \$80 in 1995 to over \$102 this year. This represents a 28% increase over the last six years. As well, long-term-care facilities will receive \$25.3 million this year to replace outdated equipment. Health care providers in long-term-care facilities will be able to use better and more efficient treatment equipment to increase access to diagnostic and treatment services.

As well, our government spends \$1.6 billion annually to provide in-home health care and support services to let people recuperate at home, live independently and stay at home longer instead of being admitted to hospitals or long-term-care facilities. We also expanded school health supports, personal support services and medical equipment to children outside the provincial public school system.

To help meet the needs of patients across the province, our government is working aggressively to address the issue of physician supply and distribution. We provided \$1 million to increase the future supply of doctors by expanding medical school enrolment by 40 positions in the fall of 2000. This was in response to the interim report of the ministry-appointed expert panel on health professional human resources. I'm pleased to report that these positions were filled at the start of the 2000 academic year. Also in response to the expert panel on

health professional human resources, we are committed to a northern medical school, with a main site at Laurentian University in Sudbury and a clinical education campus at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay.

Medical school enrolment will be expanded by up to 120 positions over the next two years across the province, and post-graduate training positions will increase by up to 25 in northern and rural communities, beginning in 2002.

We are also expanding the existing international medical graduate program and introducing a new program that will bring as many as 40 new doctors each year to underserved communities that sponsor them. These two programs combined will mean that as many as 90 foreign-trained doctors will be assessed and trained to practise in Ontario each year, up from the current number of 36.

We recently committed \$4 million to provide free tuition and location incentives to new doctors willing to practise in underserved areas. As well, we committed \$11 million annually to expand medical training programs targeted to underserved areas and specialties and to provide training opportunities to enable more foreign-trained doctors to practise medicine in Ontario.

Most recently, on July 11, we stepped up our commitment to keeping physicians in the north by announcing a three-year, \$20-million northern physicians retention initiative. This incentive will help ensure that doctors not only come to northern communities but build roots in those communities.

In its 1999 report, the nursing task force recommended that the government invest \$375 million in annual funding for nursing positions by 2000. We've exceeded that target over the last two years in order to create new nursing positions across all sectors, invest in continuing education for nurses, reform basic nursing education, support nursing scientists to conduct research to guide nursing human resources planning, and to create 106 nurse practitioner positions.

We're seeing our concerted efforts to bring more nurses into the workforce come to fruition. According to the most recent report of the joint provincial nursing committee, there are more nurses working in Ontario today than there have been at any point in the past decade. The report confirms that new funding for nursing has created the equivalent of 12,833 new nursing positions in Ontario.

We're also seeing a significant increase in applications to nursing programs this year. Almost all colleges and universities expect to exceed their expanded enrolment targets this fall. That's great news for the future of nursing in Ontario.

We are continuing to expand and strengthen community services in all aspects of health care, including mental health. The 2001 Ontario budget invests an additional \$26.4 million over three years to improve facilities for community mental health organizations. It provides \$20 million annually to support children's treatment

centres and commits \$15 million a year government-wide to break the cycle of youth prostitution.

One responsibility of a modern health system is to show people how they can lead healthy lives and stay healthy. With this in mind, our government will continue to focus on public health promotion. We know that most illnesses and premature deaths are preventable. For example, in Ontario it's estimated that more than 25% of all deaths attributable to cancer are due to tobacco use, poor nutrition, physical inactivity or alcohol consumption. And there are few who are unaware of the impact of smoking, the leading preventable cause of premature death, disease and disability. That's why, in 2000-01, the ministry increased its illness prevention programs. Health promotion and disease prevention programs pay off by creating a healthier population, reducing human and financial stresses on the system and strengthening the system's sustainability.

We have renewed our efforts to promote healthier lifestyles with the Ontario tobacco strategy, which focuses on public education, smoking cessation and preventing smoking among young people. Funding for anti-tobacco initiatives increased from \$9 million to \$19 million last year. This included \$1 million to help the Canadian Cancer Society establish the Smokers' Helpline, a province-wide, toll-free telephone service to help people quit smoking. We are renewing that additional \$10 million in tobacco strategy funding for 2001-02.

A \$17-million, five-year heart health program raised public awareness about the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating to reduce heart disease. This funding supported the work of more than 700 community groups and 37 agencies in spreading information about heart health throughout the province.

Ontario's diabetes strategy focuses on promoting self-care and preventing complications for the more than 600,000 people diagnosed with diabetes in the province, and we invested an additional \$7 million to expand diabetes education programs across Ontario. Currently, 120 programs are in operation.

Each year, 15,000 people in Ontario suffer from strokes, which are the leading cause of adult neurological disability. But new life-saving treatments offer opportunities to reduce death and damage from strokes. I am pleased to report that we are implementing one of the most comprehensive strategies in North America to prevent strokes and rehabilitate stroke victims. The ministry has committed \$30 million annually to implement a province-wide system of organized stroke centres across the continuum of care. In addition, our government is investing in improved rehabilitation for stroke survivors and better prevention programs throughout Ontario.

We increased funding for our Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program from \$20 million in 1998-99 to \$67 million in 2000-01. This program is part of our long-term commitment to an integrated system of effective services that improves the well-being of children in Ontario. The program screens newborns in hospitals and contacts the

family by phone 48 hours after hospital discharge. It provides assessments by public health nurses, links families with services and offers home visits. We also developed plans for a universal hearing screening program for children.

Let me give you just a few more highlights. Our government has invested \$4 million in asthma research, education and prevention, and in helping patients manage the disease. We also helped implement arthritis management pilot projects at five community health centres last year. Sixty AIDS service organizations received a total increase of \$1 million, allowing them to strengthen their support to people living with HIV and their families and friends, and to enhance HIV prevention education for communities at risk of HIV infection.

What I've given you today is a brief overview of what we've accomplished so far and what we are continuing to do as we reform Ontario's health system. I'm proud of the steps we've taken since we took office in 1995, and I'm proud too that our government has made the tough decisions needed along the way.

In closing, I want to emphasize that we stand firm in our commitment to rebuild Ontario's health system and that we will continue to establish the policies and programs needed to ensure health and long-term-care services that are accessible, sustainable and affordable for us, for our children and for the generations of the future.

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The Chair: Thank you, Mr Maves. There are approximately two minutes remaining in your time, if there's anything you would like to add extemporaneously. We've also circulated your remarks for the benefit of the committee. Is there anything further, or would you like us to proceed?

Mr Maves: Let me just say that part of my speech dealt with the tobacco strategy. I know that the minister, who will be before the estimates committee on future days, has been very active in this and he's looked at some of the tobacco strategies in other jurisdictions, not only in Canada but in the United States. I know that's an area of keen interest for the minister which he will probably be anxious to expand upon when he meets in the coming days with the estimates committee.

The Chair: Now to Mrs McLeod for the official opposition. You have 30 minutes.

Mr Klees: Chair, if I might—

The Chair: Is that a point of order, Mr Klees?

Mr Klees: It is. On a point of clarification here, in light of the fact that we have agreed that we will defer the next session until the minister arrives, I would just suggest that any questions that may be put would be at the discretion or at the choice of the parliamentary assistant. If he chooses to defer any questions to the minister, that would be his prerogative.

The Chair: Yes, and let me make that clear. This section is a presentation session but the presenting minister or minister-designate can choose whether or not to entertain questions. I assume that probably was something Mrs McLeod was going to put forward.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): It was indeed. I would like to move to questions, but I would certainly, in that context, respect the right of the parliamentary assistant to defer to the minister. It's quite possible that many questions would need some background information to be brought forward anyway.

The Chair: If there is agreement, we will proceed on that basis—it's well understood—and we'll make use of the remaining time we have today. Mrs McLeod, please proceed. You have approximately 15 minutes before we're done today and 15 minutes in the next round.

Mrs McLeod: I would like to proceed to questions, although I would just like to take a moment, not to make this a subject for debate or even response, but just to put some facts on the record about federal proportion of funding so that the record could show that the federal funding this year, with tax points and cash transfers, is \$9.6 billion of \$23.8 billion in spending, which is 40 cents on the public dollar. The province's contribution is \$14.2 billion, which is 60 cents on the public dollar. We recognize, of course, that since there is 32% of total health care spending in Ontario which is private, the province's total contribution to health care spending is 36% of total health care spending dollars. I just want to note that as a matter of record.

Also, with the \$1.2-billion cash transfer—and I recognize that's offset—there's about \$623 million of the increase in this year's health spending which is directly attributable to federal transfers and that 80% of the increase in health care spending in Ontario since 1997-98 has been the result of federal cash transfers. Let me just put that on the record.

I would just ask one basic question off the top. Mr Maves, I appreciated the fact that you spoke to the difference between the PSAB figure of \$23.5 billion and the estimates figure of \$24.4 billion, but I wonder if I could just ask if you could reconcile that for me in terms of the difference between the PSAB and the estimate figures. Is that approximately \$1 billion of funding that was booked in previous budgets but not spent, that is, to be spent this year?

Ms Maureen Adamson: I am Maureen Adamson, assistant deputy minister of corporate services. It is actually not as simple as that. There are a number of adjusting entries, obviously, to move from a cash basis to a PSAB basis. There's a reconciliation in the front of the estimates book, and we can expand on that if you wish.

Mrs McLeod: I would appreciate just particularly knowing what major expenditures had been booked in previous years and where you expect to actually make the expenditure this year. I'm happy to have that tabled at a future date.

Ms Adamson: We can table it at a future date. It's not always expenditures in future years, though. As you know, it is setting up liabilities that have a timing difference around the cash flow, so it's not always previous years.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate that. I'm really just looking for booked expenditures that you expect to flow this year.

Then just, again, a relatively minor issue before I turn to something a little bit more substantive. If I could take you to page 27 of the estimates book, I'm looking at "Ministry administration." I probably would have some questions about ministry administration, but if there's time at the end of estimates I'll return to that, because I'm not sure if it was the reorganization of the ministry that meant that you were about \$34 million overspent on the ministry administration budget last year, or just what happened. But I'll return to that if there's an opportunity.

What I did want to particularly look at in the ministry overrun from estimates to actual spending, on page 27 under the communications budget, was the fact that under communications services the services budget went from an estimate of \$3 million to \$16 million. I wonder if you could just explain that to me, what those services would be?

Ms Adamson: Can we ask the director of communications to respond to that, John Bozzo?

Mr John Bozzo: I'm John Bozzo, the director of communications for the Ministry of Health. The numbers are in fact from \$3 million to about \$16 million. In every year there are contingency funds put aside for specific communications activities that may not have been put into the original budgets. For example, the flu program, the Telehealth program, all of those were items that had proceeded during that calendar year for which there needed to be some communications activity. That explains the difference from the \$3 million to the \$16 million.

Mrs McLeod: While I have you here, would the ministry's advertising budget be under this budget line?

Mr Bozzo: Yes.

Mrs McLeod: Can you tell me what the actual advertising budget for the ministry was last year, then?

Mr Bozzo: In actual expenditures?

Mrs McLeod: Yes.

Mr Bozzo: In terms of media buy, it was \$13 million.

Mrs McLeod: In terms of media buy, it was \$13 million last year. Do you have a comparison for the previous—

Mr Bozzo:—the previous years? I don't have it here, but if I recall, it was about \$10 million last year and it was about \$8 million the year before, in that range.

Mrs McLeod: That's in media buy. Can you tell me about publications that were distributed, every-home publications, for example?

Mr Bozzo: I don't have that figure here but I could get that.

Mrs McLeod: If you could get that for me I would appreciate it. In that figure, could you include the cost of the consultation document that went out this summer?

Mr Bozzo: Yes. That was in this year and that was \$2.1 million.

Mr Maves: If I could add, Mrs McLeod, the media buy for 2000-01, which is the one where you talked about the large increase, was for the influenza campaign, Telehealth, Hep-C, the federal-provincial campaign, nursing home advertising and emergency health. The flu

campaign, as you know, was the first time that we did that province-wide.

Mrs McLeod: I think that's why I particularly would want to see the door-to-door distribution costs. I appreciate that the media buy was often to get information to the public.

If I can turn, then, in the time that we have—and we'll just really get started in the next moments—to the issue of hospital funding and direct you to page 71 of the estimates book. With all of the programs that are here in "Integrated health care," I know it's going to take a substantive part of our time, but I do want to focus initially on the line of transfer payments specifically for the operation of hospitals. I noted that Mr Maves used the figure of \$8.6 billion for hospital funding this year, which was the figure that was announced in July with the \$200 million announcement. So I assume that we will see then, on top of the \$8.47 billion that is in the estimates books for this year's spending, a supplementary estimate for the \$200 million that was announced in July that is supplementary to the current estimates?

Mr Maves: Yes. That \$8.47-billion figure for the 2001-02 estimates will change to reflect the announced funding.

Mrs McLeod: I'm having difficulty with the figure that's been used repeatedly by the ministry which talks about the \$450-million increase, because if you look at the actual expenditure in 2000-01, it wasn't \$8.45 billion, as was estimated; it was \$8.7 billion. Therefore, there's actually a planned decrease. Even with the \$200-million infusion in July, there's a planned decrease in funding for hospitals this year.

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Mr Maves: There is an increase in funding. The estimates line for 2000-01 does include some one-time funding that was put in at year-end, \$120 million for performance funding for hospitals and \$177 million, I believe, for one-time funding for cleaning up deficits at the end of the year. That's the difference between the estimates and the interim, predominantly. I think there's also some more money within the estimates that was considered to be a one-time allocation.

Mrs McLeod: I understand one-time and I understand that there has been some movement of dollars into base from one-time funding. The bottom line is you're still spending less on hospitals this year than last year, according to your estimates, even with \$200 million added in July. You can't exclude the fact that one-time funding nevertheless went to hospitals and helped them with their budget deficits. Hospitals are facing significant budget deficits.

I really do believe that it is—I'll find parliamentary language—difficult to rationalize using a phrase like "\$450-million increase," when in fact you're spending \$120 million less at the bottom line on hospitals this year than you spent last year.

Mr Maves: But there are occasions when we have funding programs that only last a year and they were never intended to be an increase in the capital program.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate that. The bottom line in terms of the need for hospitals for dollars and the government's response to that is \$120 million less than the previous year. I'm assuming that you can't identify \$120 million that you funded last year that you're not going to fund this year, that you're not going to be able to pull it out in quite that linear a way.

Mr Maves: If you would, John, expand on that.

Mr John King: I'm John King. I'm the assistant deputy minister for health care programs. Actually, the amount of funding has increased for the hospitals. Part of the problem in dealing with the estimates and actuals is we're still going through hospital restructuring, so there is some one-time cost. We're also closing buildings and moving programs. But the actual dollars to hospitals have increased.

Mrs McLeod: The actual spending on hospitals shows a \$120-million decrease planned for this year.

Let me ask you, then, to put it in the context of the challenges that are facing hospitals. The hospitals obviously presented to the government their estimates of what they were facing in terms of deficit. Prior to the \$200-million infusion in July, they were looking at \$750 million, based on studies that they'd had done. I realize the minister has suggested that was a worst-case scenario. So I'd like to ask you, Mr Maves—refer to the minister, if you wish, or the ministry—what do you truly believe is the deficit figure that hospitals are going to incur this year?

Mr Maves: I couldn't put a figure on that and I know that the minister and the ministry have been working with the hospitals. He has a working group with administrators from the Ontario Hospital Association, and they are working on budgets. I don't know who could actually put a really detailed number on that at this point in time. I'll let the ministry try. I don't know if Mr King wants to elaborate.

Mr King: We have been working closely with the hospitals. You need to understand that we do not know what the nursing settlement will be this year. The nursing settlement is going to arbitration. The difference that we always have between the OHA and the ministry is the fact of what assumptions are made in the deficit numbers. Some of the hospitals have assumed a 5% or 6% increase for nursing, others have assumed 0%. The ministry usually takes a 2% line. So we are way off in our opinions about what the deficits are in the hospitals. We won't really know that number until we see the arbitration settlement. Forty per cent of hospital budgets of the 70% is for nursing salaries, so it's a large chunk of money, especially when people are assuming a huge increase. So that's where we get the difference between the \$750 million.

Also, we have made some announcements this year and there are further announcements that will be coming on funding to hospitals. We have not completed the process this year. So we're still off on that as far as a total contribution to their deficit.

Mrs McLeod: That was actually a lead-in to my next question which is, what percentage of the \$8.47 billion

has been announced, directly allocated already? We're now into almost October of the fiscal year. I'm assuming that hospitals—

Mr Maves: All of that.

Mrs McLeod: All of that has been announced?

Mr Maves: I believe so, yes.

Mrs McLeod: Without the nursing settlement having been known?

Mr King: I'm sorry, may I?

Mr Maves: Yes.

Mr King: The difference here is that most of this has been rolled into base this year. So all of that \$8.4 billion has been announced and additional funds have been announced to that.

Mrs McLeod: The \$200 million in July?

Mr King: Yes.

Mrs McLeod: So all of the funds that are presented here, plus the \$200 million in July, have been allocated and there appears to be no reserve then in terms of estimates for a nursing settlement?

Mr King: I'm saying that we still have additional dollars that have not been announced.

Mrs McLeod: I'm sorry, I thought I understood you to say the \$8.4 billion plus the \$200 million have already been announced.

Mr King: Right.

Mrs McLeod: I don't know where the rest of the money's coming from then.

Ms Adamson: In terms of your question with respect to the estimates, all of what is here in the \$8.7 billion has been announced.

Mr King: Yes.

Ms Adamson: In terms of the planning and—

Mrs McLeod: You're looking at last year's interim actuals?

Ms Adamson: No, looking at the \$8.47 billion in this year's estimates line.

Mrs McLeod: And that's all been announced, plus \$200 million more?

Ms Adamson: Right.

Mrs McLeod: So where does the ministry go to help hospitals with the nursing settlement when it's reached?

Ms Adamson: That's not here, obviously, in this ledger, but we're looking for ways to be able to do that.

Mrs McLeod: At this point, then, we assume unless there's a significant infusion of dollars for hospitals that's a planned deficit for hospitals?

Mr Maves: There's a 2% base funding. I think it's assumed that some of the nursing settlements would come out of that. You also have to realize that some of the hospitals, when they've had deficits, they not only have the one-term cost like Mr King has mentioned—some restructuring costs that end—they also have had deficit reduction plans that they were implementing last year and this year. So a deficit last year of a certain level in many hospital settings is going to be lower this year because they're implementing change within their facilities to lower those deficits.

Mrs McLeod: So if I can translate that, then hospitals are expected to pay for the nursing settlement with cuts to the current programming?

Mr Maves: No—

Mrs McLeod: That's what it means when you have to have a deficit. If you have to remove your deficits, as hospitals have been directed to do, and you have to handle a nursing settlement with a 2% increase in base, which you've just told me is the increase in base, if the nursing settlement should exceed 2%, it has to be covered in addition to making any program reductions to deal with the deficits that were inherited from last year. So they still have to reduce because it was one-time funding, as you've acknowledged. You helped with one-time and said, "You've got to get your budgets balanced this year." So they've got to find their deficits through program reductions, plus cover any difference in a nursing arbitrated settlement between the 2% base increase and the actual arbitrated settlement. Is that a fair description of what they're facing?

Mr Maves: No, I don't share your opinion. When they reduce their deficits from year to year, some of their costs change, in restructuring for instance. They have programs where they're looking at the efficient use of their resources and they find that they're using their resources inefficiently and they make changes.

Mrs McLeod: Have you actually seen evidence of that, Mr Maves, in deficit reduction plans that are being presented by hospitals?

Mr Maves: I have in my own Niagara health system, sure.

Mrs McLeod: I'd be very interested in putting some of that to the test then. I'm wondering whether you have any figures for this year compared to last year in terms of funded beds in the hospital system across Ontario, just in the acute care system. How many funded beds were there last year and how many funded beds are you anticipating this year?

Mr Maves: I don't have that number. John, do you have that number?

Mr King: No, I'm sorry. We can table that and bring it back to the committee.

Mrs McLeod: I would appreciate that, because I'm trying to get some measure of what hospitals are actually going to experience with the deficit reduction programs that they are having to undertake. Funded beds is one of the issues I think we know about.

The Chair: We're pretty close to the end of the time in the sense that we expect the House to recess shortly. Did you wish to defer or did you want to open a new line of questioning? You may have a minute.

Mrs McLeod: In one minute then, I'll put two other questions on the table because it may be that there's a desire to bring something back in the future.

The Chair: Sure. We have an interval between the next sitting.

Mrs McLeod: The ministry has the critical care bypass and emergency redirect figures for as of last month, for example, or the current month for September. They're not being released publicly but I believe they are public figures that we should be able to access, at least through the estimates process. So I'd appreciate having those figures tabled at the next meeting.

Secondly, and lastly, before we break, I know Mr Maves made reference to the number of nurses that were hired. I would like to see that figure addressed in terms of new full-time nursing positions—not hires. I'm wondering if you have a figure. I'll just for the moment look at acute care hospitals because that's the focus of my questioning. How many new nursing positions have been created—full-time equivalent positions—and how many of those are permanent, in the past year? Or if you want to take a longer period of time, that's fine with me. Thank you, Mr Chair.

The Chair: OK, thank you, Mrs McLeod. We'll stand adjourned until next Tuesday at 3:30. I thank all the members of the committee and the members of the ministry delegation and their staff.

The committee adjourned at 1801.

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