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**Wednesday 11 June 2003**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Mercredi 11 juin 2003**

**Standing committee on  
estimates**

Ministry of Education

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère de l'Éducation

Chair: Gerard Kennedy  
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : Gerard Kennedy  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 11 June 2003

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*The committee met at 1528 in room 151.*

## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** I call the estimates committee to order. When we adjourned yesterday, we had a few minutes left on the clock. Mr Gerretsen, would you want to proceed with those two minutes? I don't know if the minister is ready.

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education):** I'm ready.

**The Vice-Chair:** She's always ready. It's good to see you, Deputy. I didn't say hello the last time. She's one of my favourite deputies.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mine too.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Gerretsen?

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** I have a question for the minister, and this arises out of the questions that were asked by Mr Kennedy in such an able fashion yesterday afternoon. You may recall that he referred to a Management Board directive, and that directive specifically states—I don't have it in front of me, but from the best of my recollection—that for advertising to be done by the ministry, opinion is not to be used; in other words, it is just to be factual information.

The message that you and the Premier sent in that 24-cents-per-copy brochure, in which, for example, the Premier is asked the question, "Are we spending enough money on education?" and his answer was yes, and then he goes on to say a whole bunch of other things—do you regard that as a factual question or do you not agree with me that that is an opinion question? He's giving his opinion. If he were asked, "How much money are you spending on education?" and gave the amount, then that is a fact. But if he's asked, "Are we spending enough on education?" and he answers yes, that is his opinion, and he's entitled to his opinion. But do you not think that that is wrong, particularly when that is directly against the Management Board directive, which in effect is the overseer of the way in which advertising is handled by your ministry?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Thank you very much, Mr Gerretsen, for the question. I think the piece you're referring to is the householder that was sent out to inform people in the province of Ontario about the plan for education. I can tell you that, as a result of that going out, 12,000 people actually sent in requests for more information.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Answer my question, Minister. I don't want to be accused of cutting you off, but answer the question. I've only got two minutes left.

**The Vice-Chair:** You're going to burn the time that way too, anyhow.

**Mr Gerretsen:** For the Premier to say yes to the question, "Are you spending enough money on education?" is an opinion, would you not agree with me, rather than a fact?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** First of all, the question is not as you state it to be. I would direct you to the pamphlet, because that's not the question.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Well, what is the question?

**The Vice-Chair:** Your time is up, Mr Gerretsen. May I, then, move the next 20 minutes to the third party?

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** You did your best. That was very good.

**Mr Gerretsen:** It wasn't good enough because I didn't produce the information.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, yesterday we were talking about safe schools. I don't want to spend too much more time on it, except I happened to get a report called the Franklin Report. I'm not sure whether you've seen that.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm not familiar with it.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm not sure whether the deputy has seen this report. I think it was just released today. The Franklin Report—did you see it?

**Ms Suzanne Herbert:** I'm sorry, I was just dealing with a consult.

**Mr Marchese:** I was just beginning to ask my questions. I was returning to the issue of—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Who is the author of the Franklin Report?

**Mr Marchese:** They're actually OAC students, Ontario academic course law students.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** In Toronto?

**Mr Marchese:** In Toronto. I'll get you a copy. You don't have to worry too much. I'll read—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We're not familiar with it.

**Mr Marchese:** OK. I bring this to your attention not so much because it relates to the school safety issues I was talking about, but rather because you raised the issue of the Safe Schools Act, and because it's so pertinent, I thought I would raise some of the points that they have raised in this report.

They say, "The ministry requires schools to inform students and the community about the code and how it

will affect them. However, only one of the schools interviewed had made an attempt to continually inform its students of the code that now applies to them. The other schools instead suggested they were understaffed and did not have adequate resources to implement the act as they wished. The lack of resources prevents schools from taking full advantage of opportunities to establish appropriate localized policies. Schools are forced to rely only on the provisions of the code of conduct, which alone may not sufficiently address individual school dynamics. That aside, there was a clear consensus about the act's success; all of the schools felt the SSA, even with its faults, was sufficiently promoting a safer environment."

They talk about, generally, "The lack of resources prevents schools from taking full advantage of opportunities to establish appropriate localized policies." Do you or the deputy have a comment on that?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Do you know what? I do. I have a question, actually, because we're not familiar with the report. I think you indicated some OAC students had put the report together.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Just a couple of questions. One, when was the report done; when were the questions asked? Secondly, how was the information gathered?

**Mr Marchese:** In fact, what I will do is give you a copy of this.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Do you have a date?

**Mr Marchese:** I'll ask my assistant to give you a copy of this report and then I'll return to these questions another time. Otherwise, I'll ask you questions, you'll ask me questions and—you know.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Well, I guess we have to put it in some context.

**Mr Marchese:** No, no, I hear you. I want you to have the opportunity to see it, of course. What's the point of me asking a question and for both of you to say, "We haven't seen it. What's the sample size? How many schools?" We're not getting anywhere with that, right?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Right.

**Mr Marchese:** OK. I was going to talk about the alternatives they proposed to what you proposed in the act, which I agree with, but again, we won't discuss that until you see it. I'll come back another day. We've got two more days of this.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** That's fine, Mr Marchese.

**Mr Marchese:** Let me get to an issue of interest to me, and that is, students at risk. You said it's dear to your heart. Mr O'Toole mentioned that yesterday as well, that it's dear to your heart, and his, I'm assuming, and mine and so many other people's.

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** He doesn't have a heart.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm sure he's got a heart, Frank. I'm convinced of it.

Students at risk are of concern to many people, because unless we deal with issues of how we treat students at risk, we're never going to solve the issues of edu-

cational disparity or educational outcomes of different individuals or social class differences, and we've got to get to the bottom of that.

One of the things that concerns me in terms of students at risk is that at the Toronto Board of Education, the supervisor eliminated what are called youth counsellors. Youth counsellors of course have made many deputations here, and students who actually are helped by youth counsellors demonstrated at the Toronto board on numerous occasions. I went to the Toronto board many times and participated in those discussions and demonstrations and agreed with those students that youth counsellors are an incredible, integral staffing part of dealing with kids who are in trouble. So many of these young people youth counsellors deal with are at risk. They might have had problems with the law, they might have had problems with issues of sexuality or issues of sexual abuse or substance abuse. These are kids who, with the help of youth counsellors, have managed to stay in the educational system, and they were pleading with the board, with your supervisor, not to fire these youth counsellors. What do you think of that?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I appreciate your concern for the students who are at risk, Mr Marchese. I recently had the opportunity to speak to some of the professionals involved in this work: the attendance counsellors and the social workers—they had their conference in Hamilton—and I mentioned to them how they are oftentimes the unsung heroes. I would certainly agree that some of these people do manage to do a tremendous amount of good in helping support these young people and helping them to get on a pathway to success.

I can speak particularly to the situation you're referring to. If I take a look at what happened in Toronto, according to the information we've received from the board, the supervisor was attempting to eliminate duplication. I guess there is some duplication—and you would probably know this better than I—among the work done by youth counsellors, attendance counsellors and social workers and, depending where you live in the city of Toronto, in some cases there are different people who are employed to do the work. So I understand that the responsibilities of the youth counsellors were transferred to the board's social workers, who were considered to be highly qualified staff. As a result, they felt the needs of the students could be addressed.

As you know, youth counsellors I think were a position unique to Toronto. In many other boards, the same job is provided by social workers. So in essence, I was informed that the responsibilities of the youth counsellors would be transferred to the board's social workers, who I think you and I would agree are certainly very qualified and dedicated people. So it was a case of trying to eliminate some of the duplication.

**Mr Marchese:** In saying that, you obviously agree with the decision the supervisor has made.

1540

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I agree with providing the best resources we possibly can for students at risk. I don't

think the title is the most important; it's making sure you've got a highly qualified individual who can help the students. As I say, in this instance, the information I've received is that the work was transferred to board social workers, who I understand are highly qualified and highly regarded staff.

**Mr Marchese:** Sure. I have no doubt that social workers are qualified.

Are you familiar—you or the deputy—with how many attendance counsellors or youth counsellors have been lost or how many fewer social workers we have today than we did in the past at the Toronto board, or generally anywhere else but particularly here at the Toronto board? Do you have any—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I don't have that information, Mr Marchese.

**Mr Marchese:** In saying they have transferred these duties to social workers, the supervisor who has fed you that information makes it appear like we have plenty of social workers in the Toronto board; not to worry. They are as qualified as youth counsellors and therefore the fact that we got rid of people whom he might have qualified as redundant is not an issue because we are dealing with students at risk.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** The one thing I can tell you—and as I say, I don't have the numbers you're referring to—if we take a look at the funding that's provided to all boards this year, 2003-04, boards have approximately \$575 million in flexible funding that they can use for local priorities, and it certainly could be for professionals and paraprofessionals such as you have just indicated you believe are necessary.

**Mr Marchese:** The problem with that answer is that we have seen fewer of everything imaginable. Yesterday I mentioned to you we see fewer caretakers in the school system—based on the surveys that you reject from the Toronto Parent Network and People for Education—fewer education assistants, fewer vice-principals, and fewer principals for that matter. They are now contemplating getting rid of 300 caretakers. They will be working at night, some of them on contract. Education assistants for regular kindergarten are likely to be reduced by half, from 772 to 350. We have fewer guidance teachers, fewer librarians, fewer lunchroom supervisors, fewer anything. So when you give me the answer that they've got flexible bucks, it makes it appear like they've been doing a good job of being able to retain these people. The problem is that they don't have any money, because you control the bucks centrally and boards only spend what you give them. The deputy is trying to show you figures for this and this; the problem is, we've seen a reduction in almost every area you can imagine. So the real problem is, there are fewer people in the system.

My point about this is that there are also fewer social workers. So even if we make the assumption that social workers can do the job of youth counsellors, my point is there are fewer social workers than before, as one point, and I'll get back to another point as soon as you try to answer that.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I just want to remind you that I think some of what you have been referring to is—and I put it in quotes—a “speculation budget,” where some trustees have talked about what may or may not happen as far as the budget for this year, and I think we have to be really careful.

I think we have to keep in mind that the Toronto board did receive more money last year, they are receiving more money this year, and I think at the end of the day they are going to be receiving a total of \$2.1 billion. So certainly there are additional resources that are flowing to the board in order that they can help students.

**Mr Marchese:** OK. Well, I'm going to try to get to that issue on the next round in terms of funding-related stuff. I'm not going to try to tackle it now because I want to deal with issues of students at risk.

My point is that the youth workers are a unique type of person, men and women, whose relationship to these young people is very special. This is not to say social workers are not special or that they're not qualified. If youth counsellors were doing the job of holding on to students so that they are staying in school and are therefore being given the opportunity to reach greater educational attainment for themselves—and if they stay in school, it means they're not out of school. If they're not out of school—because they are students who are at risk, could potentially become a problem to themselves and society, to the police, to their families, to the justice system and to your taxpayers. Would that not be something that you would be worried about?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Now, do you have some data demonstrating that youth counsellors are more effective than social workers?

**Mr Marchese:** Are you concerned in such data?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** No, I'd like to see the data.

**Mr Marchese:** You're asking me for data. But I'm concerned about this, and I'm saying youth counsellors, according to what students said to me—and we've seen hundreds of students dealing with youth counsellors. That, for me, is a great deal of evidence that shows the effectiveness of these people. I'm assuming that if you're concerned, you might have asked Mr Christie, the supervisor, to have done some studies, because you said to us that students at risk are dear to your heart—and they are to mine. So would you be concerned to ask Mr Christie that he would do some studies to show the difference in the way youth counsellors relate, and therefore the importance of holding on to them, versus saying, “Oh, this is duplication. We're going to pass them on to fewer social workers”?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Based on the information I've received, there certainly was concern about helping these students, who are at risk for many reasons. I think what they attempted to do—and obviously it was based on the advice of staff—a decision was made to take a look at who they felt was most appropriate to respond to the needs of these students, and a decision was made that those responsibilities would be assumed by social workers. I know when I went to the conference a couple of

weeks ago, different boards use different professional or paraprofessionals to respond to the needs of these students. I think what's important at the end of the day is that there are people there who are prepared to do everything they possibly can.

**Mr Marchese:** Sure. I appreciate that. I have no doubt that those fewer social workers that work at the Toronto board will do their best. My belief is that those youth counsellors are specially trained. They have a personality that makes them able to relate to students in ways social workers may not.

I am saddened by what Mr Christie has done. I believe that if you have this and if students at risk are at the core of your heart too, you would worry about it; I'm saying you should. I worry about it, because the social implications are going to be terrible down the line.

The same supervisor has now gotten rid of senior kindergarten. There were nine full-time senior kindergarten programs. He has gotten rid of them. Do you, you or your deputy, when we talk about students at risk, do you worry about that? Either one of you can comment on this issue of students at risk.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We're looking to see what the number is for the senior kindergartens, Mr Marchese.

**The Vice-Chair:** You have two minutes, Mr Marchese.

**Mr Marchese:** Two minutes.

**The Vice-Chair:** Time flies when you're having fun.

**Mr Marchese:** Something is wrong with time. You've got to get hold of it. You've got to help me suspend it from time to time. We're having a little chat. We only got to two points.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** You know what? Because of my own experience with attendance counsellors—that's what I'm familiar with—could the youth counsellor job have been assumed by the attendance counsellor?

**Mr Marchese:** No. I think they're different people. I believe they're different people.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** So you feel the role was different?

**Mr Marchese:** It's very special and very particular. We talked to a lot of students, a lot of students who were there at many demonstrations, talking about how youth counsellors in particular saved their lives and kept them in school.

But on the issue of senior kindergarten, the deputy will find it in the next round, I'm assuming. My point is that it's a disaster.

I leave you with this thought before we terminate this period. I leave you with this thought for the next round. I'm profoundly disappointed that the supervisors are still there. If we implemented Rozanski, one recommendation says that if every board had access to 5% of the foundation grant—and I'm expecting you're committed to Rozanski, as you often say—they would have enough flexibility, the Toronto board, to be able to deal with their own particular issues. If that is so, why is the supervisor still there? You won't have time to answer, but we'll come back to it. Please reflect on it.

1550

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Thank you, Mr Marchese.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr O'Toole, you've got 20 minutes, and I understand Mr Mazzilli wanted to share some time.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** It is interesting when we have, as Mr Marchese says, a chat and keep the tone at that level while we're all probing a subject that is near and dear to every one of us, regardless of our party affiliation.

No one has the perfect answer to this. I know as a parent of five children I'm keenly interested and remain so; I hope all of us are, for the right reasons. There have been a lot of hostilities, if you will, in the education world, probably for about 20 years, that I'm aware of. It really started when Sean Conway was the minister.

**The Vice-Chair:** A good minister.

**Mr O'Toole:** He was a good minister. I met him. He was a very young guy. He's much younger than I am. I was chair of the board when they opened a new school in my area, and Sean came up. This young guy jumped out of the car, and I thought, "Gee, he can't be the minister." Yet look how good Elizabeth looks. So it's true that most Ministers of Education are nice people to be around. It's just setting a bit of a tone.

I am still going to pursue, Minister, with your indulgence, the special education part of it in a more specific sense. Mr Marchese was pursuing some of that. I can only say that I've seen profound changes in that one area. I know that with ADHD and all of the children with special needs—which are now more than ever being intensely defined, diagnosed and treated. I know the issues with autistic children, which we're all dealing with in our ridings, and the solutions, or at least the temporary proposed solutions, to deal with that are things like IBI, intensive behaviour intervention, an extremely current issue. It's before the courts, actually, in BC. I think there are some court decisions here on it. These programs are supposed to be helpful, and the experts are saying they are, and they're expensive.

I certainly hope we each try to respond to the goal here: to have every individual achieve their best potential. That's really what the goal of this whole system is about. You'll see that around this table. Some of us have achieved more than others, some less. I'm more on the less side. That's because I'm older, though, and a lot of these supports weren't in place when I was—I think I was dyslexia when I was a child. I'm pretty sure.

**Interjection:** Dyslexic.

**Mr O'Toole:** Dyslexic—see? I can't even pronounce it. But we all bring certain things. This is what I really want to focus on. One of my children was quite good at math and languages. He's an engineer. He's a lawyer. He's bilingual. He skipped school more than he went to school. It's a sad thing to say, but he really learned quite easily, whereas his sister had more difficulties in school and needed a lot more support. So it isn't like a cookie-cutter thing. I think having a strong home is extremely important. I credit their mother with being the primary educator, for sure. When I look at it, and I don't want to

get into a self-diagnosis here, one of the children actually had a learning disability—I didn't really know too much about that—and learned coping mechanisms.

That's why I was so impressed with the report I believe your ministry commissioned, the Learning Opportunities Task Force, the report that I referred to briefly yesterday by Dr Bette Stephenson. It said something that's quite profound to me and also something I want to put quiet clearly on the record.

When I was in the Ministry of Finance, we did pre-budget consultations. At the time, I think it was 1999 or 2000-01—and this is part of the public record. I do have the Hansards. I always keep them close to me because I use them. I was told by a special-education consultant that they were actually wasting money in assessments. I'm not making this up. I was appalled at some of these assessments for special education children. They said, and I'm not quoting it word for word, but I think it's important for the members around the table. Here's what they said to me: "We know how to use the system, and we intend to use it to make the system not work." It's not helpful of me to say things like that; I understand that. But if we put children first, which I hear you say in most of your responses, let's try to do that at least here in this room amongst the different party perspectives.

Let's give credit to Dr Bette Stephenson and her report. I'm going to read one of the first observations she made, which supports the observation I've just made by a special education person in—we'll just put it this way: it's close to where your riding is, Minister. That's where it was made. What they found here—and I'll read it, because it's a bit long. "A key finding"—it's on page 7 of that report.

"A significant majority of the students arrived at the pilot institution with no or at best inadequate diagnostic information." We're spending a fortune on this. "As a result, students had neither appropriate documentation nor understanding of their own learning disabilities. A comprehensive, up-to-date diagnostic assessment is essential for the provision of requisite supports, services, programs and accommodations for students with learning disabilities. Almost all, 85%, of the pilot students required professional reassessment to enable them to succeed in their post-secondary education."

I could go on, but the point I'm making is, and you can respond in numbers or in kind, I believe we're spending \$1.6 billion—I hardly even know how to say the number—in special education, and the demands exceed that. Some boards say they spend more. Yet I've been told by some persons that there are a lot of assessments and reassessments. I'm told there's a plethora of forms. The forms are almost laughable. I've seen some of them, because I'm still very much familiar with the system. My wife is a teacher. My sister teaches special ed now at Queen's in the summer program. This program is keenly important to me.

What's wrong with these assessment processes? Why are they wasting so much money on it? Now, I don't think intentionally; I didn't suggest that. I don't think

they really know what they're looking for half of the time.

Of the \$1.6 billion in your response, you might attempt to say how much of that is actually spent on students as opposed to some psychometrist, or whatever they call them, doing reports and talking to other psychometrists about professionalization of special education.

I believe that some of the kind, gentle special-ed support assistants—EAs and TAs—are probably contributing more to that child than some of the people with PhDs. No disrespect here. I think it's just needing someone listen to them reading and correcting them, intervention, as opposed to the union-card-carrying person that otherwise is doing the job.

The observation to conclude is this. I've heard, I've seen, I've been in special education; I'm familiar with it. Diagnosis is a problem, big time. The solutions are even more complex, like IDI. I would like to know, of the \$1.6 billion, how much is actually being spent in the classroom on the student? That's a pretty long question. I could have simplified it.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** OK. Maybe what I'll do is try to set the special education funding that's provided today, in the year 2003, in some sort of a context.

I think we need to go back to Bill 82, which our government introduced in 1980. That bill guaranteed universal access for all children to have the right, condition notwithstanding, to be enrolled in school boards. That really did change the makeup of our schools. Also, schools were charged with the responsibility of providing special programs and services to these children.

Over the years, special education programs have evolved. Some boards became deliverers of the programs much earlier than other boards. There was a lot of sharing. Some boards didn't have programs, so they had to buy the programs from other people.

#### 1600

At the present time, special education funding is provided in one envelope, but there are actually two components. There is what is called SEPPA funding, which is special education per pupil amount funding. That goes to boards on the basis of the total number of students they have in their board, and it meets the needs of most students who require some special education needs.

However, as you know, there are some students with very, very high needs, so the other component of special education funding is called ISA funding. That's the intensive support amount, and that flows to boards based on the assessment of the student. I think it's that assessment that you're talking about. That certainly took some time for boards to undertake. It's now complete, and it was as a result of getting that information and seeing the fourth cycle that we were able to announce funding.

But I can tell you what we did do. We heard from boards that they needed additional resources to address the waiting lists for the assessments for these high-needs students. There were real problems, particularly in the north, the rural part of the province and French-language boards, because they just didn't have access to people

who could do the assessments in the same way that some of the urban boards did. So in June 2002, in our budget, we announced that we would provide an additional \$10 million in one-time assistance to school boards to address the waiting lists for professional assessment of our high-needs students. The budget also included \$10 million for capital improvements to provincial schools for children with disabilities. As a result, we have had the assessments done. The assessments are complete, and with all of the new files that were submitted, we did flow \$130 million immediately, based on the increased need demonstrated in the ISA comprehensive review.

I can tell you that as they complete new files for the fall, 2003-04, we're projecting that the ISA funding, based on the information we have right now, will increase by \$250 million in 2003-04 compared to the funding announced for special education in May 2002. That money is primarily being directed into the classroom to help the students: educational assistants, special education teachers, assistance. It's going to front-line workers, because the assessment you talked about for all intents and purposes is complete, except for new students who are going to come into the system.

**Mr O'Toole:** Do they have reassessments every year?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm going to just let the deputy clarify that.

**Ms Herbert:** We're talking about individual student assessments of their needs?

**Mr O'Toole:** Yes.

**Ms Herbert:** That can happen. If there's a change in the child's—

**Mr O'Toole:** A material change of some sort.

**Ms Herbert:** Exactly. Otherwise no, it's not necessary.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Thank you very much, Minister. Certainly I meet with our local school board, as most MPPs do. Just an observation. We talk about whether there's enough money in the education system, over \$15 billion. I would argue that yes, there is. At the same time, I think education is much like health care. The expectation among parents is great, and I'm one of them. When you look at the choices I have as a parent under the publicly funded system, they're enormous, probably more than there ever has been. You may know better, having served both as a teacher and a school trustee.

If I look at my options, the public school system, French immersion in the public school system, the Catholic system, French immersion in the Catholic system, or French of either that I obviously don't qualify for are my choices, and then you have the high school systems that all offer the same.

You will get areas of London where, in a matter of 10 minutes, you have six or eight buses picking up one or two kids for all these different choices. I made the choice as a parent, and the school board does a great job of delivering the service. I'm happy with the choices. I believe the school board is providing those choices because parents want them. I don't begrudge that one bit, because it allows me a wide range of choices. Have you

ever seen those types of choices in your experience as an educator or as a minister?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** The choices of?

**Mr Mazzilli:** The broad choices of three or four different systems to pick from within the publicly funded—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** No. As you know, we haven't always had the number of choices available that we have today. Certainly, students have many more choices and many more options than ever before. We're actually funding four systems. As you know, we've got the English public and Catholic, the French public and Catholic and, within the boards of education, there are some boards that offer specialized schools and opportunities. I know when I was chair of a board, we set up a high school that was a special school for the arts. So today, our students have more opportunities than they've ever had in the past.

**Mr O'Toole:** I guess I'm thinking in the same terms as Frank. Going back to the Rozanski report, it ultimately came out of two commissions that I'm aware of. One is the Ontario Fair Tax Commission and the other is the Royal Commission on Learning. Both suggest the equity issue, that education be publicly funded. Wherever you live, it shouldn't be a disadvantage to what education you receive. I think it was really started by the NDP. I always like to give them credit for a lot of the changes, or at least doing the studies.

Making the difficult choices you've had to make has met some opposition. They've resisted. But generally the evidence is starting to come through, both in the marks and in the satisfaction surveys I've seen. It's that time, that patience, and making the proper investments. I'm convinced we probably need one more term to get it right and I'm hopeful that will happen. The people will have to see. I hope they're patient, as you've been.

I know you have the greatest respect for the public education system—I'm not putting words in your mouth, I'm just repeating what I hear you say—and also for professional teachers. I have some problems with the antics that get orchestrated—that happens in a lot of different workplaces—but I do believe the students are better off and I don't think money is the only solution. I just want to commend you for the work you're doing, and share the last minute with Mr Arnott, because he's your parliamentary assistant.

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** Mr Chairman, on a point of order—and I'll use a moment of our party's time for a point of order—yesterday, I brought to your attention the fact that I believe one of the members of our committee was engaging in questions that I felt were rude, and continuously interrupting, whether it be the minister or the minister's staff. I listened intently and took note of his questions in the last round—this is the Liberal opposition critic. He asked 10 questions of the minister and ministry staff, and nine times he interrupted the minister or the ministry staff before they could complete their answers. I don't think the answers in any case were long or verbose or ragging the puck, as we say

around here. I would suggest to you that that kind of behaviour constitutes a lack of order and decorum, and I would look to you again, as Chairman of this committee, to maintain order and decorum. If this particular member continues to do this, I would ask you to call him to order.

I would have to contrast his behaviour with the questions asked by the NDP opposition critic, who this afternoon engaged the minister in a very thoughtful dialogue of about 20 minutes. Not once did he interrupt the minister or the ministry staff while they were attempting to answer his questions.

Again, Mr Chairman, I would ask you to do what you can to maintain order and decorum in this committee.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you for bringing the matter to my attention. I've kept very close watch on all the questions and the interchanges that happen. Estimates has a way of having this dialogue that goes back and forth, and I will continue to observe that. Thank you for bringing that to my attention.

You have a minute. Any other comment?

**Mr Marchese:** Let's debate that.

**The Vice-Chair:** On the same point of order?

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**Mr Marchese:** Mr Chairman, I want to say, for the record, that we all have different styles and each style may be appropriate to the type of questioning one is engaged in. I'm not sure that we need to talk about your role here as not having maintained order or decorum. I have full confidence in your ability to run this committee. It does reflect the different styles and it's not as bad as Ted Arnott is making it out to be.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thanks for your support. We move to the official opposition, taking the next 20 minutes.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** I want to return to the deputy minister. When we last broke—

**Mr Mazzilli:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: In this committee, as I understand it, all the questions are directed to the minister and then the minister can choose to answer or to defer to one of her staff. I thought that's the way the process—

**The Vice-Chair:** No, not quite.

**Mr Mazzilli:** So you can pick anybody out of the crowd and ask a question?

**The Vice-Chair:** You asked a point of order. Do you want me to respond?

**Mr Mazzilli:** Sure. You can pick anybody out of the crowd and ask a question?

**The Vice-Chair:** The person who is asking the question can ask that the question be answered, so to speak. It's up to the minister to say that.

**Mr Kennedy:** I trust, Mr Chair, that's not coming out of the limited, precious time we have to discuss the matters of importance here with the minister and the ministry.

Obviously, if the minister instructs the deputy otherwise, but the question here relates to the deputy's role as described in the memorandum on advertising content, the content directive. It says very clearly that the deputy has a role to implement this particular directive.

I want to draw your attention, Deputy, to page 3 of that directive, the first bullet on that page: "Material should not be liable to be misrepresented as party-political." This is speaking now about advertising material. "Information campaigns should not intentionally promote or be perceived as promoting party-political interests. Communication may be perceived"—and it gives a number of criteria for when this could happen—"as being party-political because of any one of a number of factors."

I want to relate this, Deputy. I want to come back to the question I asked you yesterday, because we asked earlier questions in good faith. For example, it says, "What was communicated." Well, we raised the question of the television ads you recommended to the minister for \$4 million worth of expenditure, which the minister has obviously approved. They contain largely stale information, in other words, report cards from six years ago—an initiative that was six years old—test results that were four years old, and then another ad on special education which was found to be inaccurate by Advertising Standards Canada. So that's "What was communicated."

Next, "Who communicated it." Basically it was the ministry using its corporate voice.

The other question is, "Why it was communicated." You have provided us with not a single answer. Why were these ads put on the air? In a general sense you have, but the question I ask you again is, were these ads party-political? Because in the absence of non-party-political objectives about why it was communicated, and similarly the other question in the memorandum, "What it was meant to do," it seems fairly clear that it's meant to promote the political interests of the party in power.

You've suddenly taken out ads, four years after initiatives have happened, in a period of time where it was generally accepted there may be an election. Four million dollars were spent, and I remind you again, 150 education assistants could have been hired for the money you spent on these ads. The point today is that this estimates committee is where we're supposed to get accountability for spending \$4 million of government money.

It also goes on to say you're supposed to consider, "How, when and where it was communicated." Well, it was on prime time television that these particular messages were put on; not shows that parents were watching but prime time television. I submit to you that that suggests very clearly—again in the absence of any of the communications plans, the objective information that you have a legal responsibility to provide—that these were politically inspired ads.

The most important consideration here is, "The environment in which it was communicated"—this pre-election period that exists—and "The effect it had." I don't know what effect it had but I'd be interested to know whether there was polling that you or anyone related to the ministry took in this regard.

Given that this is a specific set of considerations that you're supposed to take into account, I want to ask you

again: when it comes to this education report pamphlet with pictures of the Premier and the minister, you say you're responsible for that content as per this directive. You yesterday declined to say whether it was party-political and said that wasn't the correct question. Maybe there's a different response you can give us today. Deputy, given your special role in this policy on behalf of the people of Ontario, can you guarantee this committee that it's your view that all of this advertising we've been referring to is not party-political? Can you give us that assurance, Deputy?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Kennedy, I will respond to the question. If you take a look at the directives, they do state that advertising should meet an identified "information need by identified recipients based on appropriate market research."

One of the things the Ministry of Education has learned is that parents want information in order that they can assist their children to be successful in school. I don't know if you remember, but there was a parent survey that was completed last year which showed very clearly that parents wanted additional information.

**Mr Kennedy:** With respect, I'm asking a very specific question. I have very limited time. If the minister is instructing the deputy not to answer the question, could she indicate that? I asked the deputy about her duties, and I asked a yes-or-no question. I'm very prepared to move on if there isn't an answer forthcoming. I'm not prepared for us to lose time for other questions that maybe the minister or the deputy is prepared to answer.

**The Vice-Chair:** The minister intended to answer that instead of the deputy, she said.

**Mr Kennedy:** But again, in respect of how the committee operates, I'm asking whether or not the deputy is prepared to declare, as the memorandum I referred to says, whether this is party-political or not.

**Mr Mazzilli:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: Certainly all questions go to the minister. The minister can then defer the question if she so chooses. But for Mr Kennedy to pick people out of the crowd and say, "I'm asking so and so this question" is improper of this committee.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Mazzilli, I've already ruled in that direction.

**Mr Mazzilli:** But he continues.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'd be very pleased to have the minister's answer to that particular question. Is your deputy minister prepared to undertake to us today, as her role is described in the advertising content—an official policy of your government—that all the advertising we've been referring to, the commercials and the householder you spent your education dollars on, is not party-political? That's the question I really would appreciate an answer to.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** What I was endeavouring to do before you interrupted was to share with you the reason for the communications with parents. It was based on—

**Mr Kennedy:** With the greatest of respect, Minister, that wasn't my question. My question was a very specific one. We have guidelines here. You spent \$4 million on

these ads. I have asked whether or not you followed the procedures by having your deputy, the highest public servant in your ministry, ascertain that these ads were not partisan-political. If that's a question you're not comfortable with or are not prepared to answer, then I can understand that. But I would like you to address that question, and I would very much appreciate your cooperation in this regard.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We're being extremely cooperative, and the deputy certainly is quite capable of responding to the question. But I would just like it on the record that the parent survey generated 88,000 responses, and one of the things the parents emphasized in the survey was that they wanted more information on education.

**Mr Kennedy:** With the greatest of respect, the minister gave us that information yesterday. I just want to say back to you, Minister—and I really want the deputy's answer—that Robert MacDermid is a professor of political science at York University. He said that your survey, which got a 2% response and cost \$6 million, was questionable social research that was not reliable. So perhaps you'd like to table any information about that survey, but I have a different question for the deputy, and I really would respect very much if you would honour that question by either letting the deputy answer it or telling us that you won't answer the question.

**The Vice-Chair:** Let me get some procedural things here. Regarding the first question you asked, you agree that the minister will not answer that, so you're moving to your second question?

**Mr Kennedy:** She just said the deputy could answer, and I'm happy to have that answer if it's available. If it's not, I will move on.

**Ms Herbert:** I think I responded to this question yesterday. I'll give you the same response I did, which was that we have an approval process that's quite rigorous. It follows the guidelines. From that answer, one would assume that these three television advertisements met the rigorous approval process.

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**Mr Kennedy:** When I asked about this particular document that I hold in my hand, the education report, of which you said yesterday that you approved the content, I asked whether or not this was partisan-political. In your opinion, you said, it was an unfair question. That's what you said yesterday. Now after reading you the guidelines that require you to assess this against its party-political nature, I'm just asking you whether you are able to ascertain that this document is free of party-political content.

**Ms Herbert:** I think my response yesterday, Mr Kennedy, related to the fact that you asked my personal opinion.

**Mr Kennedy:** Then I'll correct that. In your capacity as deputy, as described in the advertising content directive, were you satisfied that this particular content did not have any party-political—

**Ms Herbert:** What I can tell you is that our education content of the householder was signed off and went through a rigorous approval process.

**Mr Kennedy:** May I ask you, then, does the education content include the Premier's front page splash and assertions about education, that education is working, education is being properly funded? Would that be included in that particular assessment?

**Mr Marchese:** You answered that yesterday. I remember.

**Ms Herbert:** I was just going to say that I answered that yesterday.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Kennedy:** What is the answer?

**Ms Herbert:** As I said to you yesterday, the householder, as we call it, runs through Management Board; it runs through education context approval. That met the rigorous tests that we put it through.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Kennedy:** But she's declining to say whether the specific approval was hers. I guess I'll have to take that as a non-answer.

I want to ask you, Minister: under the same guidelines, you're asked very explicitly to approve ads over \$100,000. You approved these ads to the tune of \$3.7 million. First of all, I want to confirm: did you approve the expenditure of \$3.7 million on the three television ads that we've been discussing?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think as we've indicated here, the appropriate processes have been followed in our attempts to make sure that parents and people in Ontario have access to the information that they need in order to help their students achieve success.

**Mr Kennedy:** I would also like to ask, Minister, do you have with you today the requirements of this policy which you just said was satisfied? If that policy is satisfied, then you have for this committee today, one assumes, the cost-benefit analysis and the communications plans that validate these particular expenditures of \$3.7 million. Is that something you're prepared to share with us today?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We have Mr Kurts here today, who would be pleased to provide you the information.

**Mr Kennedy:** Yes, I remember Mr Kurts from yesterday.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** He was here yesterday. He's prepared to follow through.

**The Vice-Chair:** Again, just state your name for the record.

**Mr Michael Kurts:** It's Michael Kurts. I'm the executive director of communications for the Ministry of Education.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Kurts, you heard the question and you will recall from yesterday the specific information you were checking into. You said you had certain documents—

**Mr Kurts:** You asked specifically whether the requirement of the advertising content directive with respect to ensuring the appropriate documentation was

prepared and approved. That directive directs that ministries must complete a communications plan and obtain the necessary approval before doing advertising. The ministry did complete a communications plan that was submitted to and received approval from the appropriate central agency. In the communications plan we also dealt with the issue of the ministry's cost-benefit analysis. We believe the ministry's advertising expenditures are effective in terms of generating information that goes to parents.

**Mr Kennedy:** Terrific.

**Mr Kurts:** We have information in response to some of these communications activities that we've undertaken that we believe proves it's getting information to parents and they're seeking out more resources as a result of those advertisements.

**Mr Kennedy:** That's very helpful. Could that information be tabled with us today?

**Mr Kurts:** The communications plan is a document that constitutes official advice to government, and as a result it can't be released.

**Mr Kennedy:** Is there any version of that communication plan? In other words, you're saying that the only information that justifies the \$4 million to this committee is not releasable? Is there any part of that which wouldn't satisfy the advice to government?

**Mr Kurts:** No. I think I've answered the question that the planned document constitutes advice to government.

**Mr Kennedy:** I see. Well, thank you for your assistance in this regard.

I'd like now to turn to your responsibility, Minister, for one of these ads—a special education ad. Again, the money you spent on this advertising program in this election run-up could have hired 150 education assistants. With us in the room today is Howard Timms, who is a parent whose son does not have an education assistant in the Toronto board; there are numerous of them who have communicated with me in the last while. They have not seen the benefits from what was advertised in this ad. They are troubled by the process.

One of the members opposite, Mr O'Toole, talked about the ISA process. He may not realize it's mandated by his government—all the paperwork, all the duplication. What is really disturbing is that your government sat on the ISA paperwork, the ISA 3 and ISA 2 applications, and made everyone go through an exorbitant amount of effort. It cost the board millions of dollars, which we've documented elsewhere. You sat on those applications, waited until it was politically opportune, when Dr Rozanski ordered you to pay up for those applications, and then you announced an amount. You said \$250 million would be distributed immediately when you made the announcement. Both you and the Premier made that assertion. You repeated that in the ads. It turns out that you only distributed \$201 million on an annualized basis.

I'm wondering, on the basis of Mr Timms and others who wonder why the dollars didn't arrive—I want to anticipate; you indicate that you satisfied all of the

outstanding applications. I want to caution that the practice that you changed in January—in December you made a \$250-million announcement; in January, you sent a memo saying that you were going to exclude expired cases, but there was no provision for new cases to come on.

If that's the explanation, I'm wondering if you could address why there was a change in policy between the \$250 million—by the way, I have some documentation here that was sent to school boards that demonstrates they were expecting you to send that much money out—and the change that happened in January. The money was not sent out until the end of the year. I'm wondering if you could address for me why \$250 million became \$201 million, making your advertisement inaccurate according to the advertising standards and disappointing many parents around the province.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I hope you understand, Mr Kennedy, that money flows to students in two different ways. There's the SEPPA funding and there's the ISA funding, and we've talked about the students with high needs.

Also, just to correct some of your words, Dr Rozanski didn't order anyone to do anything. Dr Rozanski very thoughtfully reviewed the funding formula. He determined that it was an appropriate vehicle to ensure equality of funding to students throughout the province of Ontario and made recommendations. I'm very pleased to say that in response to his recommendations, we did announce that we would be increasing special education funding by \$250 million on an annual basis. What happened then was that ISA claims were submitted to the ministry from school boards. As a result of those claims, there was more than \$201 million that did flow to Ontario school boards, and in turn, to support the children.

Mr Gooch can come up here and give us more detailed information, because I suspect that that is what you would like.

**Mr Kennedy:** If I may, Minister—

**The Vice-Chair:** I just want you to understand that we have two minutes to go.

**Mr Kennedy:** I've had a briefing from Mr Gooch on this particular subject, for which I thank you and the ministry. But what I wanted to put back to you, as the politically responsible person, is the change that Mr Gooch described to me. When Mr Gooch came to see me in a briefing after the first announcement, he provided me with a copy of a letter from your ministry. In that letter it said very explicitly that the amount of money in cycle 3 and cycle 4 was estimated to be \$250 million; the full \$120 million, of course, will be received over 2003-04. Then we received a letter sent out January 13 from Mr Gooch, saying how there would be enrolment audits that would have the effect of clawing back some of the dollars.

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I've heard from Mr Gooch, and Mr Gooch is a very capable member of your department, but I'm wondering,

from you, for the disappointed parents out there, because they know what this means—Minister, you've said that the ISA claims were collected. They were already submitted. Some of them had been sitting there for six, seven, eight months. So I'm wondering if you could address very specifically your reasoning as to why the criteria were changed from December to January.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Kennedy, it is very important at this point in time that Mr Gooch be allowed to correct the record. I would ask for your indulgence in order that he could do that right now.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, in return, could I have your response later on?

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Kennedy, your time is up. If there's a correction for the record—

**Mr Kennedy:** What's the correction of the record?

**The Vice-Chair:** The statement was not made here, was it? The statement was not made in estimates here. You said you were going to correct the record. I just want to know what record you're correcting.

**Mr Peter Gooch:** One of the statements that Mr Kennedy made was actually incorrect. He represented that the ministry had said it would flow \$250 million immediately. That claim was never made.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'll circulate the letter. I just read from the letter. I'm happy to circulate it to all the members and save their time.

*Interjections.*

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. Mr Mazzilli, did you want to Chair? You seem to be doing that.

Mr Marchese, you've got 20 minutes.

**Mr Marchese:** We'll be moving on to other questions.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** But we might need you back.

**Mr Marchese:** We might need you later. Prepare yourself.

I was on the issue of what the supervisor did in relation to youth counsellors and dealing with the students at risk. From there I moved on to the whole issue of the elimination of SK—I believe there are nine—in the Toronto board.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Right, and you are accurate, Mr Marchese. There were nine senior full-day programs that were ended; however, senior kindergarten, as you know, still does exist. There are today, I understand, seven schools in the TDSB that offer full-day SK. These schools are located in the south part of the board. That's the situation.

**Mr Marchese:** These nine SKs that were eliminated were in areas where there were special needs, obviously, and, I'm assuming, student-at-risk kinds of needs. Are you in agreement with what the supervisor did by eliminating those nine SK programs?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Marchese, obviously this decision was made by the staff of the TDSB. My understanding is that the resources were more evenly distributed throughout the board to ensure that students would benefit from this funding. So it was based on the principle of a policy of equitable distribution of

resources. That's the information that I have. Obviously, these decisions are made by people who are expert and capable, and this advice is given to the supervisor.

**Mr Marchese:** This decision was made by the supervisor, obviously. When the supervisor says, "We've got to cut somewhere," the staff submits ways of finding programs that could go. So I wouldn't blame the staff of the Toronto board. I'm trying to directly blame the supervisor. I'm trying to make the point that getting rid of the nine SK programs in areas of need was seriously short-sighted. I would consider it not very intelligently by the supervisor and those poor staff who were forced to make that recommendation.

You see, when you eliminate such a program, you're eliminating a program that deals with students at risk. That's what I believe, but I'm not sure whether you believe that or not, or whether you as a former teacher think the same as I do.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Personally, I'm a very strong supporter of early education, which would include JK and SK. I believe that we need to invest resources into our young people. I support the work that's been undertaken by Fraser Mustard and I think we need to continue to do everything we can. All of the research shows that whatever you can do early on in life has a tremendous impact on children later on.

**Mr Marchese:** I agree with that too. By the way, New Democrats are saying that we would, if we get into power—sometimes people like us.

**Mr O'Toole:** We like you, Rosario.

**Mr Marchese:** That's nice. We would institute full-time JK and full-time SK. Your thinking appears to be in line with mine. It seems odd. So both you and I agree with Fraser Mustard and others that if you—

**Mr Gerretsen:** Everybody agrees with Fraser Mustard just before an election. They did in 1999 as well.

**Mr Marchese:** And Liberals agreed with him too.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Everybody agrees with him.

**Mr Marchese:** They didn't have it in the program, but they will if they get elected.

**Mr Gerretsen:** We sure have it in our program; we had it two years ago.

**Mr Marchese:** So we agree. We probably have a good profile of who is at risk in the early years, don't we, Deputy Minister? We probably have a good sense of a profile of a student at risk, a student who could benefit from intensive support in those early years. Do we know that? Both of you can comment.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We would, because if you remember, when I was Minister of Health I set up the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, which now does assessments of children when they're born. Those children, as you know, are supported early in life by nurses and then by lay home visitors. So we certainly have a better profile of children who would need additional support than ever before.

**Mr Marchese:** Right. I agree with that. I think we know. I think you know, I think the deputy knows, Mustard knows. I think all the people who have done

early childhood education understand where the problems are. So you say you agree with Mustard in terms of putting in intensive support in those early years. My question is, what are you doing about it?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** It's in our platform too.

**Mr Marchese:** You're kidding?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** It is.

**Mr Marchese:** Holy cow. And was it in your platform in 1995?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I can't recall, but I will tell you it is there now and I'm a big supporter of it.

**Mr Marchese:** What about 1999?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I don't have the platform here, but I've always been—

**Mr Marchese:** Shall we ask Mr O'Toole? I think it was in your program in 1999. Here's my problem. We've had a good economy over the last many years, and God bless the Tories because they made it happen, right? Right.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** No, you made it happen. You guys are great and almighty, and you made it happen.

Minister, given this great economy and we've had so much money, and given that you and I agree and you agreed in 1999 that we should be reinvesting in those early years, my question is, what happened? What's happening that we're not doing it?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Do you know what, Mr Marchese? We actually have been investing. Not only have we seen the expansion of Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, but we've seen preschool speech and language programs. We've also seen the early years centres developed. My colleague the Honourable Brenda Elliott has responsibility for those programs. But certainly there is more happening today than ever before to reach and support those young children who, I think you and I would agree, are at some risk.

**Mr Marchese:** I agree. You say you're doing more and I'm saying if we really wanted to reach out to equity in education and equitable treatment of our students, and we know that so many of our students coming into our educational system are not lucky to have had rich parents and to have had parents who come from professional homes where the literacy rates may be very high, accompanied by, God bless, a good economy or good dollars that come into their homes—if we know that, my question to you is, shouldn't we be working hard or harder; should we not have done that in 1999 when you said you would do it, so that we could bring about greater equality? Why don't we commit ourselves to the idea that we should have full-time junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten? Why can't we say to the supervisor, your friend Mr Christie—he's a friend of Stockwell, I suppose—that he's wrong in making that decision? Why can't we tell him that?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I am sure that over the long term the time will come in this province, as you've seen the evolution of the school system, when we probably will see some full-day SK and JK. We know that some boards

throughout the province already offer these programs. When we first introduced JK, if you remember—there's always some resistance to some of these programs. But I'm sure at the end of the day you're going to see more and more of these programs, because I think there's a recognition that certainly they can be beneficial to some of our young children.

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**Mr Marchese:** Not only can be but would be, because there's no question about the value of having full-time junior kindergarten and full-time senior kindergarten. My point is, if we don't do it when we have money, will we be able to do it when we're back into another recession?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Do you know what? There's one thing we should probably correct for the record, because I don't think we want to leave the impression that Fraser Mustard recommended full-time JK and SK.

**Mr Marchese:** The royal commission recommended full-time JK and SK.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** That's right, but that wasn't Fraser Mustard.

**Mr Marchese:** The royal commission recommended it, which you are a strong supporter of, and O'Toole is, as are so many others. Many people talk about having to invest in those early years in terms of preventing problems from happening, so it's not a matter of whether Fraser Mustard said this or that. The point is, we have a good profile of kids who are not doing well. I think you and I agree. You were a teacher and so was I. We know who does well and we know who doesn't, by and large. So my point is, when you have a good economy, that's the time to invest. My sadness is that you're not investing in education.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would just take you back to the fact that there has been substantial investment into supporting young children, starting with Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, into preschool speech and language, and into the early years centres. There has been a lot of investment, and it has been supporting children throughout the province. That's one thing we have to keep in mind, that we have a responsibility to provide equality of opportunity to all of these children.

**Mr Marchese:** No, I agree with you. That's why I think the \$10 billion that is flowing out for income tax purposes to individuals and corporations would have been better spent on kids at risk and kids who need help.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Well, we're actually investing \$50 million in students at risk as a result of the recommendations for grades 7 to 12.

**Mr Marchese:** I'll get to that right now. I just want to say for those who have the strength to watch our program that you have invested very little in those early years. When you talk about early programs that you provide in some schools, a pittance of a few dollars in a few schools versus all the schoolchildren who need help across—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** It's so hard to talk to the minister. I know you're talking to the deputy. It's so hard. If you both are talking, it's so hard for me to talk to myself—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm listening.

**Mr Marchese:** —because then I talk and she tells you something and then you correct whatever, so it's tough.

Let me get back to your paper where you talk about students at risk. When did you introduce the new curriculum?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** In 1998.

**Mr Marchese:** Did you—or the deputy, either of you, whoever wants to answer—have a sense that with the new curriculum changes there would be some problems for some students?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'll maybe let the deputy respond. She's been there longer than I have.

**Ms Herbert:** I think it would be fair to say that we anticipated the transition period for the new curriculum; that is, that some children would be receiving some parts of the new curriculum. So as they moved through, we would have students using different curriculum at different stages, which is why we tried to build in some remediation opportunities throughout the life of the implementation of the curriculum. I would be happy to have my staff come up and talk to you about that.

**Mr Marchese:** So you knew—and if you know, then the minister knew at the time—that there would be some problems in the transition and that some students could possibly be at risk or might have been at risk. You're saying that there would be.

**Ms Herbert:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** And as far as you're concerned, you simply say, "Oh, we have remediation. There was remediation. We've done our job. No problemo." Is that more or less—

**Ms Herbert:** No, that's not how I would characterize it.

**Mr Marchese:** How would you characterize it?

**Ms Herbert:** I would say that because we knew the transition was going to impact on children differentially, we built in some safeguards, which, as I said, I'd be happy to have my staff come up and talk to you about. Particularly, as you know, we started the curriculum implementation in a staggered way through elementary first and moved through to secondary.

**Mr Marchese:** So you started the elementary and not the secondary first.

**Ms Herbert:** We started at the elementary level.

**Mr Marchese:** Maybe you should bring your staff so we could talk to her. This would be good for the minister too. Your name, please?

**Ms Kit Rankin:** My name is Kit Rankin. I'm the director of curriculum and assessment policy.

**Mr Marchese:** Nice to meet you, Kit. The deputy just said that we anticipated some problems in the transition with the new curriculum. I just want to know what it is that the ministry, in contemplating the problems, may have done to deal with problems that students who normally would have studied at the modified level, basic level or general level, might have, and all the great things the ministry did to help them out.

**Ms Rankin:** The secondary curriculum was actually introduced a couple of years after the elementary. The secondary curriculum, which is where students would have studied at the basic and modified, as you mentioned, was implemented beginning in 1999. Because we knew that teachers and school boards would require some support in changing curriculum to a very different kind of curriculum, there was extensive training. The Ministry of Education made a major effort that's been going on over the past—

**Mr Marchese:** What kind of training?

**Ms Rankin:** We did a number of things. We developed packages of training materials and resources for centralized training. We brought people in from all over Ontario, from every school board, as we implemented the new report card, the new curriculum and some of the supports like exemplars, assessment policies and so on. We've actually had over 10 different training sessions provincially.

**Mr Marchese:** With how many teachers participating?

**Ms Rankin:** Basically, we invited a couple of representatives from each school board. We then provided funding to school boards over that time period so that the people who come for provincial training could go back and provide training at the local level.

**Mr Marchese:** OK. Since 1998-99 so many of our students were doing so poorly. So many of our students at the general level were not doing very well in the literacy test, were falling apart, literally falling out and not doing very well. Many were dropping out early. Professor King even talked about that, a person whom your previous minister had hired. With all of these problems, what were we doing? You or the minister. The minister can comment later.

**Ms Rankin:** Would you like me to continue, Minister?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Yes, I'd like you to continue.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm sure she does.

**Ms Rankin:** First of all, the problems, I guess, for some of our students have been going on for a very long time. When I was in the classroom myself we did have many students who were struggling.

**Mr Marchese:** Of course, but we had different programs that were available to them. We had modified programs, we had general and so on. We don't have that now.

**Ms Rankin:** Exactly.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Marchese, you've got two minutes now.

**Ms Rankin:** With the new curriculum, maybe I could speak to you a little bit about some of the supports that are in place in the secondary school curriculum for students who are struggling.

**Mr Marchese:** Well, no. My problem is that we knew that when you changed the curriculum, lots of people would be suffering and would not be doing very well. My worry is that the minister just made a \$50-million announcement, a month and a half or two ago, I think it

was. All of a sudden they announce \$50 million for students at risk. We knew these students were at risk before. Minister, to you, why didn't we put in the money to support these students earlier when we knew we had problems?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I understand that there was remedial support that has been provided to these students, but as you know, you constantly need to be reviewing what's happening in the school system, and we were fortunate to have some of our front-line educational employees involved in taking a look at where we are today and what more we could do to support these students who do have some special and unique needs.

1650

**Mr Marchese:** This is where I get very pained by it all. We knew in advance that we had problems. We knew from the beginning that as soon as you change the curriculum you're going to have tremendous problems. It saddens me that we failed our students politically. You say, "Yes, well, we had some great people working at it and looking at it." In the meantime, students are dropping out, are not coping well and are finding it difficult. As we know this, we don't put in the intensive supports that we desperately should be putting in to help them. How do you feel at the end of it when I say things like that?

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Marchese, I do understand your point, but the time has now come for the 20 minutes for the Conservatives. Mr Miller is very anxious to lead the charge here.

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I'm glad to get a chance to participate in this debate this afternoon. We have heard a lot of talk about cuts in education, and certainly I don't agree with that perspective. Some of the things I'm interested in, though, coming from a northern riding with lots of rural areas, are rural and small schools. Also, I want to talk a little bit about the funding formula, because I happen to think the funding formula is a good thing.

I'll just talk a bit about my own experience with the education system. I have four children, and currently three of them are in public and secondary school. My youngest son, Winston, is in grade 8, and I'm pleased to see that all of a sudden this year he's starting to do much better in school. He was kind of the dreamer in our family up to this point.

**Mr O'Toole:** Much like his father.

**Mr Miller:** Good point, Mr O'Toole; much like his father. He's the dreamer in the family so maybe he has more of the artistic mind, not that focused. Until this year he hasn't done all that well in school, but this year I'm really happy to see that all of a sudden he has become really focused. In fact, he was very proud to tell me that he came second in the Gauss math competition just recently.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Wow. Very good.

**Mr Miller:** I was really pleased with that, and he's still keeping up all of his artistic endeavours. As I say, he is the artist in the family. Of course, I'm very proud of all my children. He's in grade 8 at Monck Public School.

Our next son, Stuart, is in grade 10 at Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School. In fact, he was just down here with his class last week in the Legislature.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We met him.

**Mr Miller:** Yes, I made the point of embarrassing him in the Legislature. Stuart is doing well. He's involved with the student parliament. I know that last week they had a regatta at the school that he and his sister Renée, who's in grade 12, who's also in the student parliament—in fact, Renée was just nominated as a possible candidate for student of the year or whatever they call it. So I'm really pleased about that. She's the treasurer of the student parliament at Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School.

I'd like to say that all my kids are involved. Our oldest daughter, Abigale, just finished her second year at McGill, taking biochemistry. She came through—she was the first year—

**Mr Marchese:** In the old system.

**Mr Miller:** No, not for the old system. So my kids are involved in the new curriculum. They're being served very well by some great teachers, and they've done really well. I'm really pleased with their experiences with the education system.

I'm a big supporter of the funding formula. If you're in a riding like Parry Sound-Muskoka—and I had three different schools from my riding down here today. I had Evergreen Heights Public School from Emsdale, Land of Lakes Public School—65 of them—from Burk's Falls, and the Britt school. Britt is right up in the northwestern part of the riding on Georgian Bay—all seven kids from grades 7 and 8 from Britt school.

**Mr O'Toole:** Seven kids in one grade. That's amazing.

**Mr Miller:** There are small class sizes at Britt, that's for sure.

Actually, that brings me to my point of rural schools and small schools and how important they are. If you're in Britt, the next nearest school is probably an hour's drive away. It is quite a remote area, and that school is really important to that area.

What is the government doing to ensure that small schools like Britt will continue to exist? I know that Dr Downey is doing consultations and that \$50 million has been allocated, but can you tell me more about plans for small and rural schools?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I can, but first of all, congratulations to your children. It's great that they're doing well.

I think we really need to start concentrating. We can talk a lot about money, but if we take a look at the results today, with the programs we've put in place, with the curriculum and the standards, our students in Ontario are doing better than ever before. I think the international and national testing certainly demonstrates that.

One of the areas we have been concerned about is the remote and small schools in the province. We have many of them. They play a very important role. You've pointed out Britt and the fact that it's very far from any other community. What we're trying to do is make sure that the

students who attend those schools have access to quality education. We also need to keep in mind that these single schools in small communities promote a sense of community and solidarity as well within that community. So we want to make sure we can protect these schools and expand their roles. We do provide them with a geographic circumstances grant and that allows them to receive significant funding that otherwise would not be available.

We also recognized that more is needed to be done, so we asked Dr James Downey, the former president of the University of Waterloo, to take a look at how we can ensure that small schools in northern and rural Ontario continue to have the opportunity to provide the quality education to our students that is required. We hear about school openings and school closings, but we've got to make sure that these schools remain open.

We have \$50 million in new funding that will be made available for small schools in rural and northern Ontario. In addition, eligible school boards will also receive \$19 million to help address the higher costs in rural and northern communities. We also have \$13 million for an update to the cost benchmarks used in the geographic circumstances grant, as recommended by the EETF report, and \$6 million to help boards with small secondary schools.

What Dr Downey is going to be taking a look at is how we would flow the \$50 million. He's going to develop recommendations. It's all part of our rural strategy to keep our schools open. But not just open; we have to make sure that these students have access to the same quality education as others in the province. So right now Dr Downey is doing consultations with education partners and community leaders. He's invited them to participate in these discussions. He's asking them, "What should the role of your school be? What do you see as the future for your local school?"

He is also taking a look at research that's available in other jurisdictions in order that we can use the best practices that have been developed elsewhere, not just in Canada but around the world. He's also reviewing the ministry guidelines and the board practices on school closures to ensure that the decisions that are being made in the province today are open and accountable and are taking place as required under the Education Act. Obviously, at the end of the day, he's identifying school boards that will need additional support to operate small schools in single school communities.

I think his information gathering and his consultation are pretty well complete. He's going to report to us by the end of the school year in June. He's going to give us recommendations that will ensure that students in small schools are in a position where they can receive the quality education they deserve.

We want to protect our rural and northern schools, and that's why we believe it's important to have a third party do this independent study, in order to come up with the best recommendations to help our students achieve success.

1700

**Mr Miller:** I certainly like your emphasis on students and helping them achieve success. I'm very pleased to see how the test results have been improving each year.

I'm a great fan of the funding formula. For an area like Parry Sound-Muskoka that doesn't have a huge—especially when you get up in the Parry Sound area. If you're in Kearney or Britt, you just don't have a big property tax base. So I think the basic premise on which it's built, that each child receives funding that goes along with them, makes all the sense in the world and is fair and ensures all the kids across the province the same opportunity. I think that's certainly excellent.

Getting back to the inference that there have been cuts, when I look at the main boards in the area of Parry Sound-Muskoka, for Trillium Lakelands this year I see in the projections they're seeing an increase in revenue of 8.3%, which is \$4.9 million, even though there has been an enrolment decline of 3.1%. It's a pretty substantial investment in the Trillium Lakelands District School Board. In the Near North board, which also serves my area, I see a plus 9.1% change in revenue, which is \$4.2 million, even though there's been a 0.8% decline in enrolment. The other main board in my area—there are a couple of smaller ones—the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board, I see plus 7.1% change in revenue, even though there's a 2.5% decline in enrolment, and that's \$4.5 million of additional revenue. So I certainly see a lot of investment going into the boards in Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Getting back to the funding formula in rural areas, on the Parry Sound side, as is the case in most of northern Ontario, we're seeing declining enrolments. Can you talk about how the funding formula deals with the case where you have declining enrolments in a school board? Your costs don't necessarily disappear, even though the enrolment does decline.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** You're right; the enrolment in our schools is declining. You're also right that we are spending more money. It's at a record level. This year we're going to be investing \$15.3 billion into the system, and that's \$1.1 billion more than we announced last May. So that's an increase of about 8%, while the population in Ontario is decreasing by 2%. I think it's really important we keep that in mind and that our government continues to address the issue.

I'm going to ask Mr Gooch to give you some of the information about the declining enrolment grant, because it's going to increase from \$36 million in 2002-03 to about \$119 million in 2003-04. In percentages, that is an increase of 200%. So I think our government is doing everything we can to support those schools and boards that have a declining enrolment issue.

**Mr Miller:** That's certainly important for Parry Sound-Muskoka and across most of the north. From the last census—and I don't know what it boils down to in terms of students—I know the general population has seen about a 5% decrease in the north.

**The Vice-Chair:** I know you have before, but you'll need to reintroduce yourself just for the record.

**Mr Gooch:** My name is Peter Gooch. I'm director of the education finance branch in the Ministry of Education.

The minister has asked me to provide a little more information about the declining enrolment adjustment. I can tell you that this is a change to the student-focused funding model that was introduced for the current school year. Many boards had raised the concern that the costs the boards have do not decline at the same rate that the revenue declines. Because it is student-focused funding—and most of the revenue in the model is affected by student enrolment—when boards were losing students from graduation and not having as many students coming into the board, they were losing significant amounts of revenue. The point they made to us strenuously over and over again was that some of their costs did not decline in the same way. Just because a few students left a school, you should still have a principal and a secretary there, you still had to heat and light the building and so forth.

So we pulled together a representative group of school boards, their senior business officials, and we worked with them to try to quantify what a reasonable approach would be, because there already are some parts of the student-focused funding model that do help boards when they have declining enrolment. For example, there's a component called the top-up funding for school operations and school renewal, where if a school is only 80% full, we fund it as if it were 100% full for operations.

But then that doesn't always work because there are limits to that funding and specific criteria. So we asked them to help us determine what parts of their costs were sensitive to enrolment and what parts weren't, and we came up with an approach that in effect simply gives boards a little more time. We recognize that over time, as students leave, boards can adjust their costs. They can sometimes close schools and consolidate them, sometimes they can reduce their costs by other means, and what we've done with the declining enrolment adjustment is give them time.

**Mr Miller:** That sounds like a very logical approach. Did Dr Rozanski make any suggestions to do with declining enrolments?

**Mr Gooch:** He did. He endorsed us. As the minister has mentioned, he gave an overall endorsement for the structure of student-focused funding and he did comment on the declining enrolment adjustment and again recommended that the ministry continue that approach, but that we give boards more time. The current approach gives boards two years. We do the adjustment based on their enrolment decline in one year and give them a revenue stream, and next year we're going to be providing half the funding that we gave them this year for declining enrolment. It's kind of an ongoing approach like that. He suggested we add a year to that calculation. As part of the government's announcements in response to Dr Rozanski to date, the government did announce that in the next school year, in 2004-05, there will be an additional

amount of revenue available for the declining enrolment adjustment to extend it to three years.

**Mr Miller:** I have a question to do with the small secondary schools. I have a small secondary school in the southern part of my riding in Gravenhurst. I think there's roughly around 350 people. There is, I believe, a specific envelope of funding for small secondary schools.

**Mr Gooch:** That's correct.

**Mr Miller:** In the case of this school, I think it doesn't qualify because it's too close to another secondary school. The town of Bracebridge is roughly 15 kilometres away, so as a result it doesn't qualify. Is there any room for negotiation on that? I know there are a lot of parents who are quite concerned about the viability of this Gravenhurst high school and want to see investment into that school.

**Mr Gooch:** That's exactly why the government has appointed Dr Downey to be the rural education adviser. We have heard many concerns on an ongoing basis about how hard it is to run very small schools, particularly in rural or northern parts of the province. So Dr Downey has been meeting, as the minister described, with boards of education and other relevant groups, and he'll be giving recommendations to the government this month. We may see some recommendations from him that the government would turn into some additional funding for boards.

**The Vice-Chair:** Two minutes.

**Mr O'Toole:** I want to follow up a little bit on the—I found the line of questions quite interesting, actually, in a general sense. I think of the big number, the macro stuff. There is \$15 billion roughly and there are about two million students, so we're spending about \$7,000 per student and, as far as I understand it, it's going up. It's being equalized, and that is the problem for some parts of the province. I understand that. I hope I haven't got that totally wrong. Some boards aren't as rich as they used to be.

**Mr Gooch:** Some boards, that's true.

**Mr O'Toole:** Yes. So we're hearing lots of squawking from some but we're not hearing enough about the improvements that Mr Miller referred to. Of course, my riding is the same. I have the same thing. Every board has got more money than they did. Every single board has more money, but they're all playing the same tune as the Toronto-Ottawa-London-Hamilton-type boards. The rich boards are mad, no question, and I understand that. But I think we've got to work with that and not work to the bottom, but work to the best possible resources available.

**1710**

I'm interested in the special ed, the children at risk. I'm going to stay on that topic, if I can.

The ISA working group was an important reason for the change to the funding. I can recall watching the numbers quite closely. What the old system did historically, or prehistorically, was they never gave them an IPRC until the last moment, grade 3 or grade 4. Generally, that's what happened. They struggled along, and by the time the parent caught on to what was going on, the

non-commenting Christmas cards—well, report cards, actually. Do you understand? No one really knew until about grade 4 or grade 5 that they couldn't read. My point, though, is the—

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr O'Toole, that point has to be made in the next round.

**Mr O'Toole:** Maybe I could have unanimous consent that I could continue.

**The Vice-Chair:** Well, we'll ask Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Peters.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Peters, who has been waiting desperately, 20 minutes.

**Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London):** Minister, the Thames Valley District School Board was created five years ago, and since the amalgamation, we've been through two elections. In the past six months or so, there have been a number of issues that have arisen: urban-rural issues, some question over representation. We certainly have seen a decreased number of school board representatives. Actually, I was at a meeting yesterday with the Thames Valley board and Elgin county council, and a couple of the school board members described the representation as scandalous and insulting.

You've had the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, ROMA, pass a resolution this past winter. The western and eastern wardens are looking for a review of school board amalgamations. In February of this past year, the Thames Valley District School Board passed a resolution asking for a third party review of amalgamations as to where we are and where we've been in the past five years.

I caught with interest your comments to Mr Miller in his previous questioning, talking about Dr Downey and the importance of having a third party, independent review.

Minister, would you make a commitment to the Thames Valley District School Board and, quite honestly, to the other school boards around the province who have had to deal with amalgamations, that you would embark on a third party independent review, as Thames Valley has asked for, and could you give me some idea of when Thames Valley will have a response to the resolution they passed in February 2003 regarding this whole issue?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I appreciate the question. I know that this has been an issue of concern for the Thames Valley board and trustees and those involved with it.

If you recall, when Dr Rozanski did his review of the funding formula, he made a recommendation that we would take a look at the governance structure of school boards. It is our plan to put in place a process whereby the issues that you've addressed and others—for example, the role of trustees—would be and could be addressed, because I do believe it's important. As we've gone through the amalgamation, I think there have certainly been some communities such as the one you mentioned that have faced some very unique challenges. So the plan is to move forward.

**Mr Peters:** Can you give us some idea of when this governance review that Rozanski recommended is going to be undertaken?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I don't have a specific time in mind, but I can tell you that it certainly is something I hope we could undertake in the not-too-distant future.

**Mr Peters:** I'd appreciate it if somebody could check. The Thames Valley District School Board is waiting for some sort of a response from the resolution they passed in February asking for this third party review, and if somebody could communicate with the school board, it would be most appreciated.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** What we will do is check the correspondence and make sure that a response is provided to them as quickly as possible.

**Mr Peters:** Thank you.

**Mr Kennedy:** Just to let you know, Minister, later on I'll be asking about special education funding and some of the discrepancies in the advertising. I will come back to that.

I'd like to raise a new subject with you. I'd like to ask you specifically about the growth that your government has fostered in private school enrolment. If you look at your ministry figures, you'll see that—

**Mr O'Toole:** It's their choice.

**Mr Kennedy:** One of the members opposite says it's their choice. Well, it looks like this is one education sector where you can say you've been successful. From 1990 to 1995 there was an 11,000-person increase in private school enrolment and public school enrolment growth was 167,000. In other words, in that period of time about one in 16 of new students went to a private school.

Under your record, from 1995 to 2002, 37,102 new students went to private schools and approximately only 102,000 went to public schools. That is a 50% increase. In other words, there were 50% more children in private schools under your watch compared to a previous increase of around 17%, whereas the public growth dropped from 9% to 5%. Some of the commentary previously had been about declining enrolment. Now you've got one in four new students going to private school. No question you've got declining enrolment in public schools because you've created an environment where parents are being forced to send their kids to private schools to get the quality—they think that's a refuge for them away from some of the problems that you've introduced to the system. I'm wondering if you can tell us, given that now there is a factor of 10 times as much growth, a 50% increase in private schools under your watch versus a 5% increase in publicly funded schools, whether you're proud of that record that your government has to encourage such high growth in private schools?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I guess the question I'd put to you, Mr Kennedy, is do you think parents such as your own or mine—why do we send our children to private schools?

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, if you would like to answer the question, that would be fine. If not, I'm happy to

pursue other questions. I asked whether or not you, as the Minister of Education, presumably of public education, are happy with your track record. Your track record is a 50% jump. Under previous governments, there was little growth in private schools, and now there's a huge jump.

Meanwhile, you talked about declining enrolment. You had an official come up and talk about how you have to help compensate boards temporarily for the impacts, and there are schools closing in rural areas and so on. A big factor is this huge jump in private schools. I think that as the minister of public education it would be important to have your view on the record of whether you're proud of that very large jump in private schools, specifically and exclusively, it seems, on your watch, in your government's time.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Did you ever attend a private school, Mr Kennedy?

**Mr Kennedy:** I did, and I'll tell you what it did. I went to that private school on a scholarship and it proved to me there should be no public money in private schools because they're places of privilege. That's what it proved to me, but apparently you disagree, because you're not satisfied with a 50% increase in private school enrolment. Instead, you're now offering an incentive.

Minister, I want to ask you again: are you happy that there is a 50% increase, 37,000 kids flooding into private schools under your watch? You've helped create these conditions and I wonder if you would like to take credit for this particular accomplishment?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think we need to take a look at the issue of parental choice, just as our parents made decisions for some of us in this room. I'd just like to share with you the type of private schools presently in the province. We have 15 Amish schools, three Armenian, 177 Christian, 25 First Nations, 15 international, 22 Islamic, 35 Jewish, 13 learning-centred, 70 Mennonite, 87 Montessori, 12 Roman Catholic, nine Seventh-day Adventist, nine Waldorf schools and 87 non-denominational, non-affiliated. Obviously, parents have made a choice that this is where they would like their children to go to school.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I gave you a chance to be on the record and you chose to avoid the question.

I want to quote to you from one of the parents, Diane Allen:

"For the past four years, our son has attended a private school, at an annual cost of more than \$12,000 for tuition and books. We are not wealthy people by any means and have had to mortgage our future to pay these fees.

"However, we really have no choice. The public school system has been crippled by funding cutbacks since the Progressive Conservative Party came to power and is unable to meet his needs as a learning-disabled, attention-deficit student."

Ms Allen is telling you, as the minister of public education, that you forced her out. You forced to re-mortgage her house to get the kind of services that her son needed.

Minister, you declined to answer the specific question, as the Minister of Education, around your particular record. I'd like to ask you a different question. But I would like, in respect of Ms Allen, to ask you about the kind of money you're taking away from public education to put into private schools. I want to ask you if you're aware, very specifically again—we talked to nine private schools; those are all of the private schools that we talked to. We talked to Albert College. Their tuition is \$29,000; it's going up to \$31,000 next year. Appleby College is going to go from \$35,100 to \$36,850. Bayview Glen is going from \$17,100 to \$18,126. Branksome Hall is up from \$16,000 to \$18,150. Country Day School is up from \$14,700 to \$15,950. Havergal College is going to raise their tuition next year from \$15,900 to \$16,850. Holy Trinity School: \$13,600 dollars up to \$14,300. Toronto French School: \$16,900 up to \$17,750. Trinity College School: \$31,750 to a bargain rate \$33,750.

Now Minister, the average increase of these nine schools is \$1,400, the exact value of the tax credit you propose to give to them. So what's happening around the province is that the schools are raising their tuition to take advantage of your tax credit. Is that the intent of your tax credit program? It's happening all over the place. Your tax credit means equity for high-end private schools. Obviously that's what they're doing. Are you aware of this, Minister? Has your ministry tracked this phenomenon, that you're actually sending the money to private schools so they can increase their tuition? Do you have a study or do you have some prior awareness of this particular use of your private school tax credit?

1720

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** My emphasis as Minister of Education is to focus on the public school system, and I am very proud and I am very pleased that our government introduced high standards into the public education system. We've introduced testing. We are funding—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, with all respect, I didn't ask that question.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** —the public school system at record levels today. We are providing more money for special education to support children with special needs, and I think it's extremely important that we take a look at the funding that we are presently providing for the public school system, because I can tell you it is better and higher than ever before, as is the quality. We have a stronger public education system in the province and we need to continue to build on that system.

**Mr Kennedy:** Are you aware that your tax credit, the one that you're approving—you approved Bill 53 in the Legislature today—is going to send thousands of dollars, millions of dollars in fact, to high-end schools so they can increase their tuition? I'm asking you very specifically—and I'd like you not to avoid the question this time—have you done studies to know what's happening in the private schools that you're now sending some \$500 million to? Do you know of this phenomenon? This increased tuition is where you're sending taxpayers' dollars, public taxpayers' money—into private schools so

they can raise their tuition. Are you aware of that? Do you have a study of your own of this particular phenomenon?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** As I said before, I'm a very proud supporter of the public school system in the province of Ontario. But you know, for the record, your leader did tell the Jewish leadership that he had no ideological opposition to ensuring public funds support Jewish day schools.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, would you like to answer this question?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** It is believed that it was the first time that any provincial party leader had made such a declaration.

**Mr Kennedy:** Your finance minister, who is now shepherding the bill through the Legislature, wrote to the then minister and said that extending funding to private schools would result in fragmentation of the education system in Ontario. When you were chair of the school board in Waterloo region, you sponsored a resolution against funding private schools. Now, since you've raised it as a point of view, can I ask, are you fully in support of Bill 53, which is sending all this extra tuition to private schools? Have you changed your mind about funding for private schools from the time when you were chair of the Waterloo board and passed a resolution against funding for private schools?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I have always been a proud supporter of the public school system. I think we have a wonderful system in this province. Our government has worked extremely hard to make it even better than it has been in the past. It's a strong foundation that we build upon; however, we also believe that it is fair to support educational choice for parents and to encourage all schools to meet the high standards the province has set.

**Mr Kennedy:** I take it from that that you have changed your point of view, that you're now also a supporter of the private school tax credit that is sending more money into schools and presumably will increase the enrolment further from the huge 50% increase that you sponsored in your government, the government you've been part of, a minister of the crown since day one. That's your track record.

Now, I want to know, do you have studies that you're prepared to table today? What will be the impact? How will the public education system that you're here as the minister representing be impacted by the expanded and accelerated growth of the private school tax credit? What will be the further impact on the public school system? Will it cause schools to close? Will it have an impact on the quality of programs that can be offered? How much funding will get diverted away from public schools if children choose to leave? Have you done these kinds of impact studies? Are there studies that your ministry has done about the impact of the private school tax credit on the public system, which you say you're proud of? Obviously you're also supporting this idea of private school tax credits and vouchers.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Since this is an initiative that goes through the Ministry of Finance, I'm sure they would have additional information. But again, I would just remind the member—

**Mr Kennedy:** Is that a no?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** —that we are investing record amounts of money in the public education system in the province today. If you take a look at the headlines in the paper as the budgets are coming out from school boards, everybody is thrilled with the new funding that the government has provided, the additional resources they're able to make available to their students. I think it's very important that we continue to make sure that we all work together on behalf of public education.

**Mr Kennedy:** How are you working together on behalf of public education when you're encouraging the growth of private schools by giving a tax credit? You're sitting here today telling us you haven't done a single study. You haven't done any due diligence at all. You haven't got one piece of paper to show how public education, of which you're a professed supporter, will benefit or not be harmed, or if it's going to be harmed, to what extent, by this particular initiative of your government.

I think it's stunning that you have not done a single thing, not lifted a finger to minimize whatever adverse impacts there could be out there. I think that's alarming.

Back in 2001, Gerry Phillips, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, requested from your government a copy of a study that was done. The minister didn't acknowledge that study a month later in estimates, but apparently there was such a study done. This study was not released because it was deemed to be advice. But I'm wondering again, for the sake of the people who are out there in the community, if you could tell us—this Equity in Education Tax Credit: Issues for the Ministry of Education, May 31, 2001, was prepared for the meeting of the cabinet's priorities, policy and communications board. Is there any public document, any document at all, you can give us, maybe derived from whatever preparation was done?

I'll just note for the record that an interesting thing happened here. The decision to introduce the tax credit took place earlier in May, and then on May 31, a study was prepared. In other words, four weeks later, there was a study done about the impact of a new initiative.

I'm trying to find out from you, Minister, have you done any studies in your role, now that you're back to the tax credit? You support that. Have you got any new studies, or are there portions of this earlier study that could now be given to the public to show perhaps that your ministry has done any due diligence at all to know what the impact of putting public money into private schools, letting them raise their tuitions, capturing up public dollars, will be on enticing more kids out of public schools into private schools, on impacting rural areas and so on? Do you have any studies at all done by your ministry, or is this previous study now something you can declassify and make available?

**The Vice-Chair:** I'll allow her to respond for a minute.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I don't know which study you might have. Obviously, you have access to some information that we don't seem to be—

**Mr Kennedy:** You don't have them? There are no studies?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We don't know what you're talking about, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'm happy to share it with you. It was from the Information and Privacy Commissioner—it's listed here—Equity in Education Tax Credit: Issues for the Ministry of Education, May 31, 2001. I'm startled that you wouldn't be aware of that study, because that was the official response coming back through your ministry.

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I know you won't have time to answer in full, but I'd like you to come back to this particular question. You mentioned accountability and standards. I would like you to lay out for us a comparison—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** When did I mention accountability and standards?

**Mr Kennedy:** You mentioned you would like all schools to meet high standards. I'm paraphrasing, but that's basically what you said a few minutes ago.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** You took great liberty with the special education—

**Mr Kennedy:** My question—

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. We can take those under consideration on the second time around.

**Mr Kennedy:** So it's a complete thought for the minister for next time, it's simply that I'd like to see a comparison of the standards that she is seeking from private schools that she's now sending public money to and the ones that exist for public schools. Can we have that for next time?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Curling, it's funny that we didn't pursue special education.

**Mr Kennedy:** We will pursue it.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Marchese, you have 20 minutes.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, you are investing \$50 million for high school students at risk. Do you now realize that this is an important investment that needs to be made? I was trying to get at that earlier in terms of the questioning of your staff and you, really. If we knew that we were going to have difficulty with the new curriculum and so many students would suffer and be affected by it, why didn't you invest earlier?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I will ask the deputy to respond to the question, because I think she can continue from where Ms Rankin left off. I think she can demonstrate that there has always been an attempt to provide the support to the students that has been required.

**Ms Herbert:** Mr Marchese, in the learning opportunities grant in the new funding formula we've provided additional money for such items as remedial reading, early literacy from JK to grade 3, literacy and math programs, summer school programs, and then of course,

the new \$50 million that the minister has referenced. That is a new component to what has been since the funding formula was first put in place and acknowledgement in the learning opportunities grant that we would need to have money available for remedial supports.

As well, as you know, we provide money through the language grant for English as a second language and we provide additional support to the francophone boards for French-language students who need assistance with French as a language of instruction.

**Mr Marchese:** So the \$50 million was just announced for students at risk at the secondary level. Did it not occur to the deputy or the minister before that we should have invested these millions much earlier, given that we knew that so many students were not doing well?

**Ms Herbert:** That was my point, Mr Marchese: that in fact through the learning opportunities grant we have been providing additional funds. There is now a new program called GOALS, which will be supported by the \$50 million. I'd be happy to have staff discuss that program with you in some detail.

**Mr Marchese:** There were so many people saying that so many students were falling through the cracks, it just saddens me that we did so little. Only in the last couple of months did we realize that we have to invest some money. It's really pitiful.

**Ms Herbert:** I would say, though, that if we go back to the royal commission, you will see that it too talked about how we serve children in what would have then been, as we would have called it, the basic program. For a long period of time the education system has struggled with how to support these children and what the right set of services and the right teaching instruction and the right curriculum should be.

**Mr Marchese:** I hear you. My point was that we have a new curriculum and that added different stresses to our students. I understand what you just said. But the new curriculum added a new component which created new problems and aggravated old problems—that's my point—and we knew that.

**Ms Herbert:** I would respectfully disagree with that assessment.

**Mr Marchese:** Really, you would disagree with that? How can you disagree?

**Ms Herbert:** In the sense of what the new curriculum is attempting to do, and it is quite new and we are monitoring it, as you can imagine.

**Mr Marchese:** Of course, we always monitor.

**Ms Herbert:** It is attempting to find the right way to support those children, and we can talk about—

**Mr Marchese:** But the point is that the new curriculum abolished the modified basic program. We now have a general program and an advanced or academic and it's different. We didn't know that. When you get rid of a modified or basic program, you're creating—anyway. The point is we knew or, as lawyers say, "ought to have known." As educators, we knew that there were these

problems, and we've let students suffer for so long. I just don't understand how we could do that.

Anyway, now that we've invested \$50 million at the secondary level to help these kids, and knowing that so many of our students in the primary grades, prior to coming into the system—do you think that maybe we should pour in millions and millions of dollars to help those students who otherwise would become at risk at the secondary level? If \$50 million is an appropriate amount for you to put for students at risk at the secondary level, how much do you think would be appropriate to put for students who we know are at risk in the primary grades?

**Ms Herbert:** I think, Mr Marchese, that the issue here is understanding what works for these children and putting those things in place. That is something, as I said earlier, that the system has struggled with for a long time. The minister knows these children well.

**Mr Marchese:** There are so many studies, by OISE and others. We know what problems students bring into the system. We have all the evidence we need. We know their problems. All we need to do is invest dollars, millions of dollars, to help kids who otherwise will be at risk in high school and won't have the opportunity to get into colleges or universities.

I'm saying that you're investing \$50 million because you've got to help these students now and I'm wondering, do you have a sense of what it might cost to reinvest in the early years to help kids so that they'll have more opportunities at the high school level?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Marchese, I think what we're forgetting is that, in response to the needs of the children in our schools, we did introduce a number of programs to help students achieve success, which I think had special application to some of the students who might be at risk later. As you know, we introduced the early reading and the early math programs.

**Mr Marchese:** How many students benefit from that program?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Do you know what? All children. It starts at JK and it goes to grade 6. I have been into the classrooms this past year and I have to tell you I have been so impressed by how our students are working with their teachers and achieving success. They are going to have success like the students you and I knew never will have. In fact, students who have never learned to read and write are now learning to read and write at an early time because somebody is actually taking the time to concentrate on literacy across the curriculum.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you, Minister. I don't think that's happening, but thank you anyway.

This course that these students at risk are going to be taking, at what grade is it available?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** The student at risk? The funding of the \$50 million will start to flow and, as you see, it builds on the early math and early literacy funding. It starts in grade 7, providing remedial support, and goes to grade 12. So we now have a continuum—

**Mr Marchese:** So, if I can: "Students in grade 12 who have not passed the literacy test now have the oppor-

tunity to have their reading and writing skills assessed, meet the required standards and be one step closer to obtaining their secondary school diploma. This course will be available to students starting this September.”

At what grade does that course begin? Grade 7?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** No, that course—

**Mr Marchese:** That’s what I’m talking about: that course.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** —starts in grade 12. There’s also a course in grade 9 to help prepare students who are at risk to write the literacy test.

**Mr Marchese:** That’s good. I was just talking about this one. So the students write the grade 10 literacy test in grade 10. What happens in grade 11?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** They have remedial support that will be provided during the school day.

**Mr Marchese:** This is new remedial support.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** This is in addition to the remediation that was already provided before.

**Mr Marchese:** And this remedial support happens in the classroom? Outside of the classroom?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** This will happen within the school day.

**Mr Marchese:** So the teacher is teaching, and this student willingly says, “I am not very doing well, teacher. This is the person you’ve got to help and I’m very happy to receive the help in the classroom. It doesn’t affect my self-esteem or anything.” How much time will that student get?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** There will be flexible timetables so that the remediation can take place within or outside of the regular school day. We need to be flexible with these students, Mr Marchese, because some of them are also doing co-op placements.

We’re trying to make sure that when they leave school they have a pathway to college, university or directly into the workplace, which could be an apprenticeship.

**Mr Marchese:** I understand. Is there a reason why this course isn’t started in grade 11, as opposed to grade 12?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** The grade 12 literacy program— as I say, we’ve had people who have been on the front lines of education involved in developing the recommendations under the leadership of Barry O’Connor, director from the Limestone board. We felt it was best to be responsive to those individuals. At the end of the day, based on a review of all the information, it was decided that grade 12 was an appropriate level to make sure these children have the opportunity to get their diploma.

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**Mr Marchese:** I think it’s a mistake, by the way. It should be in grade 11, if anything.

Can you tell me, why is the supervisor at the Toronto board, or any other board, still there?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Well, you know what? I think it’s regrettable that the supervisor was put in place but, as you know, the trustees in the Toronto board did not abide by the Education Act. They didn’t submit a balanced budget.

**Mr Marchese:** So that’s why he’s still there.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** He’s still there.

**Mr Marchese:** OK, so he’s still there because they didn’t—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** The legislation requires that the supervisor be in place until there is evidence they’re operating a balanced budget.

**Mr Marchese:** Right. The Rozanski recommendations: do you agree with that report?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Which one?

**Mr Marchese:** The recommendations made by Dr Rozanski.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Well, I think you can see that, as a result of what we have said since he made the recommendations, we’re actually going to go beyond his \$1.8 billion in investments, and we’ve already committed to \$2 billion. He said it should happen over three years. We’ve made, as you know, a very, very good start. We had over \$600 million out the door within three days after the recommendations.

**Mr Marchese:** No, I know that. I’m going to be reading something to you. You’re not only in agreement with the recommendations, but are going to go beyond them?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Well, I know that at the end of the day we are going to be responding to students, because our goal is to help students achieve success. We’ve already committed to do that.

**Mr Marchese:** No, no, I hear you. I’m glad. I’m going to get to that in a moment. Is there something in the recommendations that you don’t support?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We’ve indicated we’re supportive of the report.

**Mr Marchese:** Of the report. So one of the recommendations says that boards should have access to 5% of the foundation grant of every board. When might you be considering instituting such a recommendation?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** OK. As you probably know, different recommendations are being implemented at different times. For some of them, the announcements are already complete. Some of the work is—

**Mr Marchese:** No, just that one.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** OK. A work plan is under development. Let me find it, here.

**Mr Marchese:** But there is such a recommendation, I assure you.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We’re going to get—

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, no, no. Please, I’ve got so many other things that I want to say. All I’m saying, Minister, is if you implement that recommendation—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** You know, Mr Hartmann—

**Mr Marchese:** No, I like him. I do like him. It’s not the point.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** But you know, he can give you the answer. Do you want the answer?

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, well, Mr Hartmann, when do you think we’ll implement that recommendation?

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Hartmann, will you please introduce yourself?

**Mr Norbert Hartmann:** I'm Norbert Hartmann, assistant deputy minister, business and finance. We are developing plans for year two and year three right now, and the recommendation for implementation is being developed in consultation with the education sector itself. Those consultations are not finished yet, so I can't give you the exact time.

**Mr Marchese:** But you're working on that specific recommendation with others?

**Mr Hartmann:** We're working with all the directors of education in the province to determine what their priorities are for year two and year three.

**Mr Marchese:** Sure. My point is that if we instituted that one, Christie would go, and you wouldn't have to pay him and I wouldn't have to criticize him every day. Wouldn't that be neat? That's what I'm saying. He could go tomorrow. Today, actually, if the Liberals get elected—where are they? They'll get rid of Christie, I'm sure, and we certainly will. That's what I'm saying. If we implement—and we're committed to implementing—the Rozanski report, we're saying that with that, Christie could go, and the budget problems would disappear—most of them.

So your answer is that you understand that, but what can you do? We've got to work it out. And Christie's got to stay. We've got to pay him the big bucks, with all the other humble assistants he's got.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think what you've heard Mr Hartmann say is that there is consultation taking place with the directors of education in the province of Ontario, and over the next three years the funding was to flow and, obviously, priorities are being determined in consultation with our educational partners.

**Mr Marchese:** Of course. I understood the answer.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We have the entire province of Ontario, all of the students—

**Mr Marchese:** To worry about, of course. I know.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We need to make sure that they all have equal access to quality education.

**Mr Marchese:** Exactly. But that recommendation would help all boards, because they would be able to have 5% of their foundation grants, and it would help all boards across Ontario.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** But we also needed money for salaries and special education and transportation.

**Mr Marchese:** Of course we would. No, that doesn't let you off the hook in other areas, of course.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** It's so tiring.

Thank you, Mr Hartmann. I'm just going to move on.

Have you had an opportunity, Minister and Deputy and Mr Gooch—he's the finance person. Where is he? There you are. The Ontario Alternative Budget: Telling Tales Out of School—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** You guys don't like him.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** I could tell. I could tell by your reaction.

**Mr Mazzilli:** It's like a David Letterman type of thing.

**Mr Marchese:** Is that right? Mr Gooch, you don't feel the same way as the Conservative members do, do you? Mr Gooch? No comment.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** A good, good person.

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Gooch is?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, of course. But you've seen this report, have you?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** No, I'm sorry, I haven't.

**Mr Marchese:** Deputy, have you seen this report?

**Ms Herbert:** No, I haven't.

**Mr Marchese:** Would you like to see it?

**The Vice-Chair:** What report are you referring to?

**Mr Marchese:** This one, I will assure—

**The Vice-Chair:** I can't read that far.

**Mr Marchese:** It's called, The Ontario Alternative Budget: Telling Tales Out of School: How the Ontario Government is(n't) Funding Education, by Hugh Mackenzie. He's an economist, but you know, the alternative type.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Does he support any political party?

**Mr Marchese:** I hope he's a New Democrat, for God's sake.

But let's see how Mr Gooch—Mr Gooch, I want to read something for the record. You haven't seen it, have you? No.

For the record—and I'll go slowly. I've got a page and a half, or two. How many minutes do I have?

**The Vice-Chair:** You've got about four minutes. Please try to let me be part of this. You're having a discussion outside there. Can I direct some of this discussion here.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, of course. Always through the Chair.

I will just read through this. It will take a few moments, but I'll pick up on it again when we come back another day.

Here we are.

"If you're going to control education funding using a centralized formula, you have to make sure that you keep the benchmarks that drive the formula up to date.

"All of Rozanski's recommendations flow from this basic message. Rozanski recommended: increases in funding to bring benchmarks up to date; annual reviews of benchmarks to ensure that they reflect current costs; new investments to address areas in which the funding formula was clearly inadequate; and periodic (every five years) reviews of the appropriateness of the benchmarks themselves."

You support all this stuff, because you said so.

"After an encouraging start—announcements of new funding totalling \$610 million within 72 hours of the release of the report"—and this is how great you are—"the government's response turned into an exercise in political spin." This is where they are not going to like it.

“Both before and after the release of the Magna budget, a steady stream of photo-op announcements has highlighted specific areas in which the funding formula was to be enhanced. In each of these announcements, the government claimed to be taking one more step toward full implementation of the Rozanski recommendations.” You admit to that, because you say so.

“When you look behind the spin to the numbers, however, it becomes clear that the government has in fact repudiated the Rozanski report’s central message.

“The funding numbers released in the March financial statement were the first hint that what the government had in mind was a great deal less than what Rozanski had called for. In its three-year funding projection, the statement revealed a third-year funding target of \$16.2 billion, \$1.5 billion short of the \$17.7 billion that would have been required for full implementation of the Rozanski recommendations.” I do this for the benefit of Mr Gooch, who will have to work out the numbers for you when we come back next week.

**The Vice-Chair:** It might benefit you that you have about another minute of so.

**Mr Marchese:** “Indeed, the government’s projections will leave funding of elementary and secondary education further behind Rozanski’s standard at the end of the three-year ‘phase-in period’ than it was when Rozanski was appointed to review the system in June 2002.

“However, it was only after the full package of funding detail (the general legislative grants, or GLGs) for 2003-04 was released quietly late on the eve of the Easter weekend, that the full extent of the government’s departure from Rozanski’s plan was revealed.

“A board-by-board and grant-by-grant analysis of the government’s funding announcement for 2003-04 shows a shortfall of \$1.4 billion compared with the amount that would be required for full implementation of the Rozanski recommendations.... If Rozanski’s benchmark updates were phased in over three years, as he suggested,” which you support, “the analysis shows 2003-04 funding \$666 million short of what would be required in the first year of the three-year implementation plan.”

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Marchese, you make a wonderful presentation. Your time is up.

**Mr Marchese:** We’ll come back. In the meantime, to Mr Gooch, the deputy and the minister, it’s called “The Ontario Alternative Budget; Telling Tales Out of School: How the Ontario Government Is(n’t) Funding Education.” Get a copy.

**The Vice-Chair:** We are adjourned until next week, Tuesday, immediately after routine proceedings.

*The committee adjourned at 1751.*





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