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Mardi 4 octobre 2005

**Standing committee on
estimates**

Ministry of Training,
Colleges and Universities

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère de la Formation et des
Collèges et Universités

Chair: Cameron Jackson
Clerk: Trevor Day

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 4 October 2005

Mardi 4 octobre 2005

The committee met at 0900 in room 151.

MINISTRY OF TRAINING,
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John O'Toole): Good morning. I want to call to order the standing committee on estimates, as we begin the review of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. I'd like to welcome Minister Chris Bentley and be the first to congratulate you on your appointment as minister of this important area. You have half an hour to address the committee with your remarks.

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I thank the members for your attendance and for the invitation here today, and I look forward to your questions. Permit me to make a few introductory remarks. I'm sure we will get into some further details during the course of the day.

It's interesting; it's an era these days where the workforce must be as well trained as ever in our country's history. We need a post-secondary education and training system that will meet the demands not simply of yesterday, not just of today, but of the future, and the future demands for our society are enormous. I'm pleased to come before the committee and highlight some of the programs that we'll be involved in over the course of the next while, hopefully, with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

The Minister of Finance outlined our government's approach and rationale in the recent 2005 budget when he said that education is the "prerequisite for prosperity" and that "an investment in post-secondary education today is an investment in jobs tomorrow." He said these words in announcing Reaching Higher: The McGuinty Government Plan for Post-Secondary Education. That's a plan that provides the most significant investment in post-secondary education and skills training this province has seen in more than 40 years. It is not simply an investment today; it's an investment in the future, it's an investment in the people of Ontario, it's an investment that will create the foundation for prosperity in the future. It is indeed an unprecedented investment in post-secondary education and training.

So why do we need it? I alluded to that briefly in my first few comments. You can always borrow your capital, you can buy your resources, but it's the people of Ontario who are our real strength. We're investing in the people

of Ontario. We're investing to ensure that they are well trained and knowledgeable and that they have the skills to adapt to the future, skills the likes of which they have never before had. That's the point of the investment.

You can reduce the benefits from these investments down to costs. Studies show that, on average, a person who leaves high school without graduating earns \$14,000 a year less than someone who achieves a certificate or diploma in a trade or college program. So to society as a whole there's a benefit and to the individual there's a clear, quantifiable benefit from post-secondary education, whether it's college, university or skills enhancement or trade of some description.

To meet the challenges of the future, we need everybody not simply to achieve what they might have achieved yesterday, but to achieve more. That's why the program is a Reaching Higher plan. It's to provide the ability for Ontarians to achieve levels they might not have aspired to in the past, to achieve training they might not have been able to in the past, to indeed reach higher.

There are three parts to the Reaching Higher plan: access, quality and accountability. When we talk about those three, we're talking about improving the access for Ontarians, improving the quality of the education and establishing and improving the accountability for the funds that the people of Ontario are expending in post-secondary education and training. Let me just touch on a few of the points.

Greater access: What we're determined to do through the Reaching Higher plan is improve access for all Ontarians to post-secondary education and training opportunities, and it comes in many different ways. First of all, to meet the demands of the double cohort, we're going to increase the number of spaces available to the people of Ontario, not simply in undergraduate education but in graduate education.

Let me address the graduate education piece just a little bit. When you compare the rate at which Ontarians decide to enter master's or Ph.D.-level programs, we're considerably less than a number of jurisdictions with which we compete economically. That's not a good foundation for success for the future. What we're determined to do as a province is be able to compete. What we're determined to do is ensure that our people have the skill levels that exceed those of competing jurisdictions.

Our goal, which we will achieve through the Reaching Higher plan, is to ensure that the number of graduate students increases by 12,000 per year by the year

2007-08 and by 14,000 by the year 2009-10. This will require a significant expansion of our capacity, a significant investment both in operating and capital, but it is essential if we're to meet the demands of the future.

But that's not the only level at which we might want to discuss access. Less than half the people of Ontario actually decide to go on to post-secondary education. We need more of them to consider the opportunities, and we're going to be developing plans to encourage people to indeed reach higher and achieve what they might not have thought possible or might have decided wasn't necessary in the past.

In particular, we're going to reach to a number of groups that have tended to be underrepresented in post-secondary education and skills training opportunities. For example, we have established a specific fund to give an extra boost to access opportunities for all Ontarians, but in particular aboriginals, francophones, persons with disabilities and people who happen to be the first generation of their family to consider post-secondary opportunities. Indeed, we have established or are establishing committees in three of these areas, not to expend money but to provide strategic advice on initiatives that we might follow to expand access to the people of Ontario.

Another part of the access agenda is to ensure that people located throughout the province have access to post-secondary education. What you'll find when you take a look at the statistics is that people in remote areas—actually, people outside of very urban areas—tend to be far less likely to access post-secondary opportunities than those in the heavily urbanized parts of the province. That's an issue we need to address and deal with. We need to come up with strategies—and we're determined to do this—to ensure that all Ontarians have access; not necessarily a campus at every doorstep, but the opportunity for Ontarians, wherever located, to have access to post-secondary opportunities.

Access has another aspect to it as well, though, and that's the aspect of being able to afford to go on to post-secondary education opportunities or training. For many years, the student assistance programs in this province were not improved. They did not change with the times and they did not change with the costs. Fully a quarter of the \$6.2 billion we are investing in the Reaching Higher plan is for improved student assistance; that's 1.5 billion extra dollars over five years.

We started the student access assistance initiatives by freezing tuition for two years, and now we're working with students on a framework for a tuition approach that will follow. But before you implement that framework, you have to invest in post-secondary education, which we're doing, and you have to improve student assistance, which is what the \$1.5 billion is designed to do.

In fact, this year we had the opportunity to implement the most extensive changes to the student assistance program since its inception, highlighted by the access grants for low-income students. Some 32,000 students in first and second years will be able to receive a tuition grant—not a loan, but a grant—toward their tuition, up to

the full cost of the tuition in first year, and up to \$3,000 in second year. It's the most significant initiative in terms of access since the grants were eliminated. These access grants were eliminated in the early 1990s. It is indeed a student's ability, not what's in their wallet, which should determine access to post-secondary opportunities.

0910

I'd also like to highlight the improvements in terms of quality. For many years, post-secondary education institutions did not see their funding for operating expenditures from government increase much or at all. In fact, some years were characterized by decreases for some post-secondary education institutions. This had a profound effect. It meant that the institutions were forced to look where they could for money, and that was usually in the pockets of students and their families. It also meant they weren't able to hire the faculty that they would have liked to have hired, to provide the student resources and the library resources that they would have liked to have provided.

So we're making the most significant increase in operating expenditures in the course of this Reaching Higher plan, and that will enable the institutions to hire more faculty, to provide extra faculty-student interaction, to increase student resources, such as library or student support resources—indeed, to improve the quality of the education that students receive at our colleges and universities.

We're going to do this in a number of different ways, but we're going to do it in a way that is accountable. We are absolutely determined that the money we invest—and it is investment by all of the people of this province—will achieve the results that we outline. That is a slightly different approach that has been taken in the past. There will be long-term accountability agreements that will begin next year that will give the institutions time to plan, will give the institutions knowledge of the expectations, and will provide for accountability, so that when the people of Ontario, through the government, provide money to institutions to achieve certain results, we'll be able to ensure that those results are in fact achieved. We're working now on that accountability framework.

I want to say that we are also investing to ensure accountability in a specific area and direction. We are determined to ensure that our northern universities and colleges and our rural colleges and universities are fully and absolutely supported. We will be doing that through the quality fund that we have established and by working very closely with our colleges and universities. We have established a specific fund for northern and rural colleges. That fund will grow to \$20 million by the end of 2007-08, and again, it is designed to ensure high-quality, accessible education at those institutions.

The challenges of northern colleges and rural colleges are significant because sometimes they don't get the economies of scale that a heavily urbanized college can get. We're determined to ensure that students attending those institutions can find a full range of programs, a high-quality education. It's part of an access agenda, yes, but it's also part of the quality agenda.

In terms of health and human resources, we're determined to ensure that the people of Ontario have the professionals they need when they need them. I was pleased to attend the opening of the new Northern Ontario School of Medicine just several weeks ago—a huge investment by the people of Ontario in northern medical education. It will not only ensure that we have extra medical school graduates—it has already begun at two campuses, Lakehead and Laurentian, with 56 students—but it will also ensure that those students have special knowledge of the challenges and the opportunities of practising medicine in the north, in remote regions.

Studies show that when you are trained close to a particular region, you tend to stay in that region once you graduate. That is certainly the expectation of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine graduates. It is a significant investment by the people of Ontario and it's a very important investment by the people of Ontario in the future of the north and the future of the health care of the people of the north.

In addition, we're investing money in nursing initiatives throughout the province to ensure that the health care needs of the people of Ontario are met and, in particular, that we have enough nurses. Decisions made in the past actually reduced the complement of nurses. Our determination is to ensure that we have enough nurses, and our contribution to that is to provide the funding to support the programs. We have a goal of 4,000 new nursing spaces this year.

In summary, the Reaching Higher plan is an investment in the people of Ontario and an investment in the future. It's an investment to ensure that the economy can grow; an investment to ensure that the people of this province have the skills and the knowledge they'll need to compete, not simply within Canada or within North America, but throughout the world.

The Reaching Higher plan of an extra \$6.2 billion over five years is the most significant post-secondary education investment in more than 40 years in quality and accessibility with accountability. It is an investment in the future, and I look forward to your questions.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much, Minister. With that, the normal schedule would say that the official opposition now has 15 minutes to respond.

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Thank you, Minister. Let me as well congratulate you on your new posting. Having come from labour and with your legal background and now Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, you're eminently qualified to help advise this government on moving forward on an aggressive agenda. I'm delighted at that, and I look forward to participating with you as your critic.

Having some current and past experience with both the community college system and the university system, I'm very proud of McMaster University—I'm an alumnus—Sheridan College, Niagara and Mohawk, where I attended certification courses for my professional career. My daughter is currently enrolled at Sheridan, so when we talk about tuition and preparing our young

people for the next economy, I share that interest with many members of the House on all sides.

But the challenge of integrating post-secondary education in all of its diverse forms to better serve the needs of students, the labour market and our economic prosperity has never been, in my opinion, greater than it is today. There are a number of significant hurdles that Ontario must get over in order to meet that challenge that demand creative, visionary models of post-secondary education management. We must have sufficient courage and determination to break with past assumptions and former methods of dealing with post-secondary education—and secondary school education, for that matter—and its funding, if we are to ultimately succeed. We must move forward in the knowledge that Ontario's future economic well-being ultimately hangs in the balance.

Before we move forward today, we must build upon the success of the past. It was under the previous government that the challenge of adequate post-secondary education funding received infusions about \$2.6 billion in capital funding between 1995 and 2003 for the expansion of our colleges and universities. Our government committed a minimum increase in operating grants of \$443 million from the year 2000 to 2001. We said that we would fund every double cohort student that colleges and universities accepted.

Under the watch of the Ontario PC government, campuses through Ontario saw their capital funding dollars begin to work for them. By the time of our 2003 budget, the government increased capital funding for colleges and universities over a four-year commitment to \$3.1 billion in 2005-06, or an increase of its previous amount by \$500 million, an increase of over 20%.

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The \$2.6 billion that went to expand colleges and universities resulted in 135,000 new spaces for Ontario students. We also invested \$60 million toward the establishment of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Durham, which was Ontario's first new university in 40 years.

In 1999, we also moved to cap tuition increases and income-contingent loan repayment measures, which received tremendous policy focus in Bob Rae's report on post-secondary education—Ontario: A Leader in Learning—and that's found on page 33. We entered an agreement with the federal government to work on loan harmonization, while making loan repayment more sensitive to the actual income of the students; again, actions endorsed by the recommendations of the Rae report earlier this year.

In that same spirit of enhanced student assistance, we increased students' maximum interest relief from 30 months to 54 months for Ontario student loans. Our government required all colleges and universities to set aside 30% of revenue from tuition fee increases to support low-income students; again, a policy initiative noted and endorsed in the Rae recommendations. I'm pleased to say that your government has so far seen fit to continue with

that, as well as the focus on reducing the parental contribution of middle-income families and their students. You have also increased weekly loan amounts from \$110 to \$140 a week for single students and other funding that the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance has strongly approved of.

Our government created the Queen Elizabeth II Aiming for the Top Scholarship program and awarded almost 12,000 scholarships to students attending college or university in 2002-03—over \$40 million. Again, we're pleased to say that your government is continuing with this program. We also created the Ontario student opportunity trust fund to provide \$600 million in support for 185,000 students. We increased the value of each Ontario graduate scholarship from \$11,859 for three terms to \$15,000 for three terms.

Our government established annual Ontario student opportunity grants for students to limit the maximum annual debt incurred by students to \$7,000 annually and delivered a tax credit to help graduates pay the interest on their student loans; again, programs that I believe your government intends to continue.

As Scott Courtice, the executive director of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, recently said, "High student debt often impacts the very career choices students make in order to pay that debt off in a shorter span of time. Accessing post-graduate degrees is also more difficult as a result of student debt."

We likewise provided students with a simpler loan system and improved loan repayment measures for students, including 54 months of interest relief. All of these measures, designed to give strong financial support to post-secondary students and to help ease the burden of student debt repayment, have also been accepted by and are directly reflected in the Rae post-secondary education report recommendations, and this is also why I say we must move forward by building on the successes of the past as well as the current government's.

Our 2002 budget committed to increase our support for enrolment at colleges and universities by an additional \$75 million more than the multi-year commitment of \$293 million announced in the 2001 budget.

With respect to additional capital investments, our government demonstrated its commitment by investing \$40 million more, which brought its total capital investment to \$337.5 million since 1999, for the renovation and renewal of existing post-secondary facilities through the ministry's facilities renewal program.

Operating funding levels for Ontario universities increased by \$134 million between 2001-02 and 2002-03, for a total of \$1.87 billion.

We announced \$16 million in additional funding to colleges and universities operating in northern and rural communities, with an increase to the northern grant by 50%, to \$6.6 million. In October 2001, we announced our commitment to the development of a northern medical school, with sites at Laurentian University in Sudbury and Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. As you have noted, Minister, they opened on September 13 of this year.

The northern and rural college grant received \$7.8 million for those colleges that receive geographic and economy-of-scale adjustments through the college operating grant funding mechanism, and \$17.9 million for enrolment growth was applied to the general purpose operating grant to ensure that colleges are able to accommodate all willing and qualified students.

The college equipment and renewal fund provided colleges \$10 million per year for five years, beginning in 2002, to equip their classrooms and other teaching facilities with new technologies.

As we know, post-secondary education is comprised of three components, all equally important to our economy: universities, colleges, and apprenticeship. A skilled workforce is essential to Ontario's competitiveness and economic prosperity. As 70% of jobs now require some post-secondary education, it is imperative that a better integration of all necessary components involved with apprenticeship training and skills be achieved.

In my government's 2003 budget, we announced several initiatives to support innovative approaches to training and increased investment in it. Our budget proposed an apprenticeship tax credit to encourage Ontario businesses to hire apprentices and help increase the availability of skilled workers across key sectors of the economy, such as manufacturing and construction. We are pleased that your government is taking these tax credits and promoting them, but we must confess that much of the work that was developed by the previous government was developed by the assembled group of bureaucrats who are around you today. We commend all of them for their hard work in this area but this is a program we can all be proud of and we can all take credit for.

We introduced a new diploma apprenticeship model that will add flexibility to the apprenticeship system and respond to employer needs, better attract young people to apprenticeship and enhance the profile of apprenticeship training, also a key component of Bob Rae's recommendations on enhanced apprenticeship training. That was found on page 47.

We also provided \$5 million to launch a second round of TVO's lifelong learning challenge fund, which focuses on apprenticeship trades. We note, however, that the new government has transferred TVO's role from training, colleges and universities over to education, at a time when TVO has had its budget cut by \$3 million by the current government. I would be anxious to engage the minister in a discussion if he is satisfied that TVO will continue its prior mandate with a focus on apprenticeship training, after now being captured by the special interests that seem to influence the Ministry of Education.

We announced a further \$90-million investment in high schools for four years to renew technological equipment, train teachers and develop partnerships with employers and colleges. It was our government, in its second-year commitment, that increased funding by \$33 million, to double the number of new entrants into

apprenticeship programs. We also introduced the apprenticeship enhancement fund, which will provide \$50 million over five years for updating college facilities for apprenticeship programs. We committed \$10 million a year for five years, but I note in these estimates that this year the government has committed only \$9 million for this fiscal year.

We enhanced the Ontario youth apprenticeship program and increased promotion of apprenticeship to make apprenticeship training more attractive to young people so that more would enter the skilled trades, something the Rae report has also borrowed and similarly underlined by way of policy recommendation.

In the 1998 Ontario budget, we addressed the serious shortage of computer science and high-demand engineering program graduates by investing \$150 million over three years in the access to opportunities program, or ATOP. In our 1999 budget, we committed an additional \$78 million in start-up funding to increase the number of ATOP spaces by almost 40%, from 17,000 each year to 23,000.

Our government invested \$130 million in the strategic skills investment, SSI, program over seven years to leverage a total of \$500 million for strategic skills training.

All these initiatives on behalf of apprenticeship training that the Bob Rae report agrees with and recommends that Ontario build upon were undertaken by that government as a serious way to respond to the shortage of skilled trades in our province. In an alarming report published in September 2005 by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, it is noted that Ontario will face a shortage of about 100,000 skilled trades workers in the manufacturing sector over the next 15 years, largely due to retirement.

0930

I quote from the report:

“There are currently over one million people employed in Ontario’s manufacturing sector who produced over \$99 billion in manufacturing GDP in 2004. As noted, some 8.5% to 9% of that workforce, or ... 100,000 people, are expected to retire over the next 15 years.... If that sector’s employment is reduced by 8.5% to 9%, then Ontario’s manufacturing output will consequently drop” by that amount “over the next 15 years.... Such a loss translates into a drop in GDP by 2020 of \$8.4 billion to \$9 billion.... Manufacturing output will gradually decline from \$99 billion in 2005 ... to about \$90 billion by 2020. Should Ontario lose the full 100,000 workers, the net present value of the total manufacturing production lost due to these retired workers” could be as high as “\$43 billion.”

Ninety per cent of the in-class training of apprentices goes on within Ontario colleges. Toward this end, the Ontario chamber proposes that colleges be funded with this core business in mind. Ontario colleges represent a unique role in being able to offer a clear, primary pathway to becoming an apprentice and are key partners in apprenticeship training in Ontario. Currently, only 53%

of the 25- to 34-year-olds in Ontario have attained a post-secondary education. To meet the demands of employers today, post-secondary institutions must attract and graduate more students. As Ontario colleges especially have long been telling us, an important issue that we need to constantly address is the general way that post-secondary education tends to be immediately associated with a university degree alone, while ignoring the often greater viability and the attractiveness of a college applied degree or diploma, combined with apprenticeship training.

A skilled Ontario workforce is also a more easily adaptable one in the changing conditions of our labour market. Recently, 1,100 layoffs in Windsor were reported as part of the Canadian Auto Workers’ negotiations with Ford. Another report announced 2,500 potential layoffs at DaimlerChrysler. These are all significant layoffs that will bear economic ripples throughout our province. As the former Minister of Labour, you appreciate better than most that these are not just cold figures; these are persons who are highly skilled at what they do and who suddenly find themselves unemployed, with families to raise and bills to pay. What kind of strategies does this ministry have in place to retrain them and hone their skills to increase their marketability in other areas of our economy? What will the ministry’s approach to assisting colleges and their apprenticeship training components be to better enable them to do the job that they were originally created to do and assist these people and others like them?

In addition, Ontario’s increasing immigrant population, from which most of our future population growth will derive, are coming here already armed with many skills that should be put to best use on their behalf and on behalf of our economy. What are the ministry’s plans for credential recognition for new Canadians, who often experience great frustration in their struggle to gain that recognition, so they can become an integral part of our workforce? What are the ministry’s plans to support our colleges to be better prepared to deal with these challenges, also very well set out in the Bob Rae report?

The Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario and the College Students Alliance, especially Tyler Charlebois, the CSA director of advocacy, have commented extensively on the important use of credit transferability. As the Rae report recognized as well, Ontario needs reforms that make it easier for college and university students to transfer from one post-secondary institution to another, in order to help students further their knowledge and skills. Currently, when a student wants or needs to transfer to a different college, there are no clear standards for recognizing the credits already completed, wasting the student’s time and creating unnecessary expense for not only the student and their family, but the province. As the Rae report said, “It is simply wasteful of public resources to require students to repeat courses covering the same material because of an exaggerated sense of self-reference by any college or university.” That’s on page 73.

By way of an example, Seneca College has an agreement in place with York University that allows for credit

articulation and transferability, yet a student from another college, such as Humber, would not be able to have his or her credits transferred since it is not party to that agreement, which only exists between Seneca and York. This is simply unacceptable, and it requires an overhaul in our thinking of the relationship between colleges and universities.

With respect to college funding, Ontario's colleges need enhanced support to better meet the challenges outlined by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, as just one example. We need to reinvest in college education and re-examine traditional, outdated funding models involving both college and university funding. Funding to colleges in particular does not compare with other levels of education. In 2003-04, Ontario colleges operated with less per-student revenue than either secondary schools or universities.

For one year in university, government will pay \$6,600 per student, with that same student paying about \$4,184 in tuition. For one year in high school, the provincial government will pay \$7,900 per student, but for one year in a college, our government will pay only \$4,800 per student, who will also be required as a student to pay a further \$1,820 in tuition.

That government today will pay \$8,000 per student per year—projected to go as high as \$9,000 in two short years—in high school but only \$4,800 for the same year for a college student is simply an unsustainable situation, or, as Bob Rae has said, “We have a system that is in some jeopardy.”

The fallout from inadequate funding of Ontario colleges has included reduced instructional time for students, increased class sizes, fewer full-time faculty and staff, reduced academic support services, and constrained investment in learning resources and information technology. In 2005-06, every Ontario college will face a dramatic revenue shortfall, ranging from \$2 million to \$8 million, based on the January 2005 ACAATO survey.

There is a backlog of overdue repairs to college buildings and facilities, and the colleges face the prospect of further faculty, administrative and staff reductions. One Ontario college, according to ACAATO, may have to eliminate about 80 full-time positions in the 2005-06 budget, while 50 full-time positions are threatened at another college.

These staff reductions are occurring at a time when colleges should be hiring more faculty and staff to meet the tremendous needs and challenges Ontario faces with the lack of skilled trades. Ontario simply cannot afford to erode academic and support services for students, investments in information technology and instructional equipment at our colleges.

The Ontario government's increase in transfer payments to colleges in 2004-05 was \$39.8 million. That included \$6.4 million to compensate colleges for lost revenues due to the government's freeze on tuition rates. It also included \$25 million in one-time stabilization funding for college sustainability, which was appreciated. While the one-time \$25-million stabilization funding

enabled some colleges to avoid fully implementing the anticipated reductions in programs, curriculum and student services, the Ontario college system had to implement a range of serious expenditure reductions in the 2004-05 fiscal year because of the system's revenue shortfall.

In addition to the various funding and student assistance overhauls needed to assist colleges to meet their basic mandates, the Rae report also proposed that colleges be mandated to reach out to the 50% of high school students not going on to further studies and to lead the formation of K-16 councils, comprised of educators at all levels as well as industry and local leaders, to promote learning and facilitate the transition to higher education.

Furthermore, it is recommended that apprenticeship be formally recognized as a post-secondary destination. Toward this end, it is recommended that colleges take over the government's role in administration and outreach to employers where colleges deliver the in-school portion of apprenticeship training.

The ministry must also clearly take steps to achieve greater transparency and fairness regarding post-secondary credit recognition and transfer between institutions. This last recommendation is critical in ensuring that duplication of course work that is paid for by taxpayers is stopped and a more streamlined model of seamless post-secondary education is adopted.

0940

In 2003-04, Ontario colleges served 53% more students than 15 years earlier, with 22% fewer full-time faculty and decreases in all other staff areas. Smart investments in our college system will pay attention to ensuring that the quality of college education is strengthened and enhanced to include consistent curriculum delivery, greater interaction between faculty and students, and greater responsiveness to student and employer needs.

As the Ontario Chamber of Commerce report highlighted so conclusively, the ministry must assist Ontario colleges with the responsibility to work closely with employers and industry associations as they are ideally positioned to design and deliver applied education and training for value-added market sector specializations such as manufacturing, networking and information technologies.

As part of the overall paradigm of producing greater numbers of highly-trained graduates, Ontario colleges must reach greater numbers of people and provide the most updated training and education possible. College programs need to further integrate elements of e-learning into their curricula, since Internet-based education offers more flexibility to students and overcomes geographical and other barriers. Industry partners expect Ontario colleges to adapt to the knowledge economy, and this means that Internet resources in the colleges must be updated and enhanced, especially by ensuring that government investments in colleges support current industry-standard instructional equipment. The post-secondary review comes at a time that could allow Ontario to emerge as a

leader in higher education in Canada, if not globally. The elements of successfully meeting that challenge involve accessibility, affordability and quality within post-secondary education in consultation with educators, students and the workplace.

Another critical factor is the redefinition of post-secondary education to include a stronger emphasis on the place of Ontario colleges in providing the necessary training and professional development for many future opportunities in trades, and their integral partnership with industry and business in a renewed focus on apprenticeship, as underlined so strongly in both the Ontario chamber report and the Rae report.

On behalf of our leader, John Tory, and the PC caucus, I wish to affirm our commitment to work with you on a vision of post-secondary education that reflects the strong historical ability of our universities generally, and our colleges more particularly, to adapt to the current challenges and the future economic needs of our province.

The post-secondary system needs to undergo ongoing changes that will make it both vital and sustainable for future Ontarians. The process of change in this environment is one that offers us a unique opportunity to examine the historical silos of our education system while meeting the crucial challenges we face, especially the significant dropout rate of Ontario high school students.

It should be clear to us that if post-secondary education is to remain viable in our society and economically relevant, it must be redefined within a context of the three post-secondary streams: universities, colleges and apprenticeship training.

The time has come, as the Rae report on post-secondary education and the chamber report agree, for the government and the private sector to develop a strong and focused plan of development of the role of colleges and apprenticeship training in developing the kind of skilled workforce Ontario needs, now and in the near future. Now is truly the time for us to take action.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you. That pretty much wraps up your time. With that, the third party. The Chair recognizes Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Welcome, Minister and ministry staff.

It's interesting that every time we do this and we look in the audience, we see all of the staff of the deputy minister, and it's hard to know how many the minister has here. But if we were in a boxing ring, it would seem like you had a fight between 10 people and one. It's like 20 hands to two. It seems like an unfair kind of brawl to me. It seems that way. If the minister needs some help, there's someone right there saying, "Here you are, Minister." And here we are. I know I've got the opposition on my side, and that helps. The government Liberals are on the other side, yes. Doesn't it seem like an unfair fight to you? Yes or no? I just wanted to put that on the record.

I also wanted to say that I like Cam Jackson. I didn't like his party, but I like Cam. Just to hear him say—the

initial words were, "We invested \$2.6 billion in our post-secondary education system." It's unbelievable, Cam. And then he had a whole list, half an hour of things, including some questions I agree with. There was a half-hour list of all the great things that they did. Hearing Cam, you would say, "Man, the Tories were really, really good, and they probably solved all the problems we had in the post-secondary education system with the injection of all that money." We could have done so much more.

It reminds me a little bit of what the Liberals are doing, to be frank with you. I know you don't like that, but because I've got a couple of minutes to chat with you and whoever is watching, it does remind me a little bit of what the Liberals are doing. We hear announcements from both this minister, with all due respect, of course, and from the Minister of Education, Mr. Kennedy, about "all the billions of dollars we're spending on education." You say that proudly, of course, and you'll defend it, naturally, as Cam did just a few seconds ago. I'm reminded of Minister Kennedy and all the billions of dollars he's spending. The system should be fixed with all that injection of money into the system.

As I look at all the issues that are of importance to me, I say, "What's happening in the field of special ed?", just to start there and come to you. In the field of special ed, we haven't received a cent. Our boards have not received a cent in two years, in spite of the claims the Liberals are making. Kennedy, last year or a year and a half ago, whenever it was that he made that announcement—last July—said that he was injecting \$100 million into special ed. In July he announced this, when the school year was over. In August, he announced that he was clawing back from the boards, from their unspent reserves for special ed, \$100 million.

You follow the logic, right? You announce \$100 million, you claw back \$100 million, and we're at a zero-sum game in terms of expenditures here, and no money spent.

Then he announces that there will be a new application process. Remember, the Tories had a system in place where you fill out the application, and presumably the money should flow based on the application process, which has a psychologist signing off. So you'd presume that the money is going to flow. The Liberal government says, "We're going to demand that a new application be done." That that new application after the August clawing-back of the money, would be available some time in November. So we wait for November, thinking, "OK, we lost \$100 million but maybe there's some new money coming," some new money of the \$100 million he stole.

Come December, there is no new application process; come January, there is no new application; come February, no new application; come March, no new application. We don't hear a beep from the minister. Sometime at the end of March, by doing a little digging—remember, we don't get any information from the ministers or their staff, because they're not allowed to or because we just don't get it—we find out that the

deputy minister is urging people to apply for some of this money. Understand that there is no application process that I'm aware of, but they can apply for this money at the end of March. We're close to the end of the year—last year—and we don't know how much money has been doled out on the basis of that supposed new application that was never done. So for two years, no new money.

On the transportation front, we expected the ministers to say, "A new funding formula, and new monies coming." Kennedy simply takes from 30 boards and gives it to the other boards. The minister denies this, of course, as Cam was doing just a few seconds ago. Minister Kennedy denies all of that, but he's just taking money from 40 boards and giving it to 30, or the other way around. It doesn't really matter; the effect is the same.

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On the capital front, we had Minister Kennedy announce, a year and a half ago, \$200 million for capital projects, and then, six or seven months ago, he had another press conference, saying that \$250 million will now be put for capital expenditures. When asked by the media what had happened to the \$200 million he had announced, he said, "That was not intended to be spent. That was simply a warning for principals that the money was coming." I thought he was amazing. He got away with it, it seems. He actually said that in the press conference. He was just announcing it so that people would know about it and so that they could get ready for the next, bigger announcement of \$250 million for capital expenditures.

Remember, the \$200 million he had announced the previous year was going to raise about a couple of billion dollars of capital expenditures because the money the government gives is to leverage more money. You advance an amount of money and you are able to borrow more to be able to construct.

I predict that pretty soon this year Minister Kennedy is going to announce \$300 million, as opposed to \$250 million, as opposed to the \$200 million, and that will raise \$6 billion of capital expenditures. Do you see how that number grows? We just invent numbers. We just announce money. And then, as this Liberal government is fond to do, they pre-announce, they announce and they reannounce, and it's all the same stuff, recycled. It's great for recycling. The ability that the government has to do this shamelessly is amazing.

On the test front, by the way, the government says that 75% of our student body will now be able to read at the standard, which is an incredible increase. I thought, "How is this government going to do that?" We discovered a little while ago, and soon the test results will be made available to the public, and they will show, lo and behold, that the results will be higher. Students are achieving a greater rate of success in that standard. How do they do that? We simply manipulate the test. Students are now able to bring their calculators into the classroom. They'll be able to have the whole day, if they want, to finish the test, not within a prescribed time. More time is

allotted. We've simplified the test. Lo and behold, we achieve a better rate. You see how easy it is to do that? It's just like magic.

There's so much more, but why talk about elementary and secondary when we're here to talk about post-secondary? At the post-secondary level, the minister says that we've got six billion bucks coming. Is it \$6.2 billion, Mr. Bentley? Give or take. It will be doled out, as the federal Liberals love to do now, because nothing is given in the year or two that you're in power; we're going to give it out into the future—into 2009, give or take? It's not 2007, which is your term, which is however much you're going to give. You're now going to extend this six billion bucks into the future, beyond your mandate, because you've got to get another mandate in 2007. So we'll see whether or not you'll be re-elected to spend the money you claim you're going to spend. It's all money that's announced now, and it gives the effect to the public that it will be \$6 billion worth of expenditures, and it's all at some time in the future, doled out slowly as we go, maybe.

Part of what I'm discovering at the elementary and secondary level is that we announce money but we have no clue about whether it's being spent. I'm waiting for the Minister of Education at the elementary and secondary level to give me the expenditures that have gone on in capital projects because I have no way of knowing. Some other Liberal MPP said on a television program, "Just go around to the schools. You'll see the signs that say how much capital building is going on." I said to her, "I don't want to go around Ontario; it's a big province. It takes a lot of money to get around. Can't you just show me the numbers?" It would be so much easier to see it instead of having Marchese travel around the province to see the signs that we're building.

Interjection: You're going to have to drive.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Not at 30 cents a kilometre.

Mr. Marchese: If I did that, yes, I suppose I could get mileage out of that; you're right. John, I'd love to come into your riding and just check it out, but I just don't have the time. Wouldn't it be easier just to send me a little form saying, "Marchese, here are the numbers; here's what we spent. Liberals said that we spent \$75 million over the summer, and this is how much money has actually been doled out"? Then I'd be able to look at the list and say, "Ah."

Interjections.

The Vice-Chair: Through the Chair, please. One speaker.

Mr. Marchese: I don't want pictures; I just want the numbers, if you could help me with that, because you're close to the minister.

We're going to get from this minister another \$6 billion worth of money to help the post-secondary system. We'll just wait and see how it doles out. Maybe one day we'll be able to get the numbers, and that would be really great, because it's so hard. We have such limited research power, versus all this man- and womanpower that I see behind this room, to be able to help the minister out.

Minister, I have a particular interest in tuition and tuition fees. I think it's something you should worry about that I'm worried about, and I worry about the level of tuition fees a great deal. I just want to see, based on the questions I'm going to ask you, how much you feel or how close you are to this topic.

The 2005 budget reserved the question of tuition policy for some future date, following your government's review of current tuition policy, and your government is in its second year of a two-year tuition freeze, which you made abundantly clear with all the press conferences you and the previous minister, Chambers, had. In this release of May 13, the Premier's office stated that the government would "work immediately with students, colleges and universities on a new tuition framework to be in place by September 2006." Is that work complete?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much for the question about tuition—a very important topic, a very significant cost to students. What we recognize is that over the previous 12 to 14 years, tuition had gone up enormously. During the years in which the NDP were in power, it went up 50%. Subsequently, it went up significantly as well.

What we decided to do was to freeze tuition for a period of two years to accomplish several things: first of all, to enable everybody to stand back and take a look at the system and figure out how to properly fund it and improve it. The Premier appointed Mr. Rae to conduct his report and listen very closely, and as a result of that report several things happened.

First of all, we announced the Reaching Higher plan in the May budget: \$6.2 billion extra for post-secondary education, a significant amount of money over any number of years. Of that \$6.2 billion, fully \$1.5 billion is destined for increased student financial assistance—the most significant improvements in financial assistance since the program, as I understand, was launched 25 years ago.

We also said that we would work with students, the institutions and all other interested parties to develop a proper tuition framework to follow the freeze. The freeze ends at the end of this academic year. So we're engaged in the discussions at the moment with students, with the institutions, with all other interested persons and institutions, to develop that tuition framework. We're in the middle of those discussions, and they're going to continue until we are able to come up with the appropriate framework.

Mr. Marchese: Thank you. Just to remind you, Minister, that the NDP did raise tuition fees; you're quite right. We don't hide from that. But even in the midst of a recession, we managed to keep the per-student funding above the national average and tuition rates below the national average. Now it's the opposite. We're below the national average on per-student funding and above the national average on tuition, for your information, assuming you're interested in that.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Actually, I'm enormously interested.

Mr. Marchese: Of course you are.

Let me ask you a question based on the previous question that I had asked. So you are working on a framework with students, colleges and universities. Are you directly involved in that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I actually am directly involved. I think it's significant to note, yes, that you did raise tuition by 50%. I don't remember what you campaigned on in 1990, but I suspect it wasn't a 50% tuition fee increase. At the same time that you raised tuition by 50%, you eliminated the upfront tuition grants to the neediest students in the province of Ontario. I don't think it's much comfort, frankly—it wasn't much comfort—to those neediest students and their families that they were above or below some notional national average. The issue for the students is what they can afford. Can they have access to post-secondary education? That's why our approach is so fundamentally different than the one you actually practised when your party was in power.

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Mr. Marchese: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I know you want the answer, because you're interested in tuition. Our approach is to invest in post-secondary education, invest in financial support, freeze tuition for two years and sit down and work on the framework to ensure improved access, improved quality of education. We're in the middle of those discussions, and we will be continuing with those.

Mr. Marchese: You're talking about notional averages, as if somehow "notional" means nothing. When we say we're below the national average on per-student funding and above the national average on tuition, it means we're in trouble, Minister. It means that the funding, even under your government, isn't there to get us to the national average. It means that we're not investing very well in our post-secondary education system. That's what that means. It's hardly notional; it actually means something.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It is notional to the individual who had the opportunity to have an upfront tuition grant before you eliminated it; notional to the individual whose family doesn't have enough money to assist him or her to get a post-secondary education. If you allow tuition to increase and then you take away the grants and say, "Go get a loan," it is cold comfort to that person, to that individual—young man, young woman, old man, old woman, whoever they happen to be—that you say, "Oh well, we're OK with the national average." The question is access to the individual. National averages are important as benchmarks; they're important to give us an idea of how we're doing compared to the rest of Canada—provinces and territories; but for the individual to whom access matters, we've got to worry about them, and that's what our access plan does.

Mr. Marchese: Let me ask you a question, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It improves financial assistance to those individuals.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, remember, this is questions and answers. It's an opportunity to ask you questions, if you don't mind.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I want to make sure that you have the full answer—

Mr. Marchese: No, no, you're doing enough. You're doing a great job.

Just let me ask you, on the issue of deficits: You didn't like the fact that the NDP had a huge deficit, is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I don't know that I publicly expressed an opinion at the time.

Mr. Marchese: But your party did. If you were there, would you have said, "Oh, what a terrible deficit we have"?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I wish Ontario could have had those five years to do over again because I think the economic management of the province could be rather significantly improved, but we didn't.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, help me out.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I suspect there are many out there who, if given the opportunity, would have addressed issues significantly differently than you did.

Mr. Marchese: Minister—

The Vice-Chair: One at a time, please. Let's have a dialogue here.

Mr. Marchese: You've got to try to help me out, because we're asking questions. If you don't do that, if you get into long answers that don't relate specifically to that question, then it drags it out unnecessarily.

It's a simple question. Liberals didn't like the fact that we have a huge deficit. I get the sense that you would agree that it was a huge deficit, right?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: If you're asking me whether I would do things differently than the NDP did between 1990 and 1995, absolutely.

Mr. Marchese: We're not getting anywhere. Here's the beauty about Liberals: Liberals love to attack two things simultaneously, as only you people can do so very well. So Liberals say, "We wouldn't have racked up such a huge deficit; we just wouldn't do that." Then, simultaneously, they say, "You didn't spend enough; you eliminated grants." You see how beautiful you guys are? You would have presumably kept the deficit down by spending more, which is similar to the claim you made in your election promise that you would not increase taxes and increase services. Do you follow what I'm saying?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: If that was a question—

Mr. Marchese: That wasn't a question, because I realize we're not getting anywhere with questions. Let me get to the specific question—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: But I think it's an important point—

Mr. Marchese: Minister, I didn't ask you a question.

The Vice-Chair: One at a time, please.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think if you're going to make a statement—

Mr. Marchese: But Minister, I didn't ask you a question.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: But I should have the opportunity to respond.

Mr. Marchese: No, you don't, if I don't ask you a question, if you don't mind.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Well, why don't I respond when you ask me the question.

Mr. Marchese: That's good, Minister. That's exactly what I was wanting to get at.

Do you have any expectations about that tuition framework that you're developing? What are your expectations, if any?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Our expectation, first of all, is that when difficult financial circumstances accrue to parties, such as yours during the mid-1990s, you wouldn't look first to the poorest Ontarians to find money to reduce the deficit.

With respect to the tuition framework, my expectation is that we'll be receiving a lot of good advice on what should happen at the end of the freeze. We don't have a position at the moment and we don't have a framework designed at the moment. We're looking forward to the advice that we're receiving from all parties.

Mr. Marchese: I've got it. On Friday, the Premier said that tuition would be rising, which seems to indicate he's made up his mind. Have you made up your mind?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, not at all. In fact, the Premier said on Friday virtually the same thing he said last February for all to hear, and that is, the freeze is a two-year freeze. It ends at the end of this coming academic year. It's the first time I could find in history—in Ontario history anyway—that tuition had been frozen for two years. It didn't happen under your watch. It's ending at the end of two, and at the end of the freeze, tuition is going to go up. The question is, what is the framework? What are the conditions? What are the necessary pre-conditions? What are the investments that have to be made before that happens? We've outlined—

Mr. Marchese: OK. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'll just finish the answer, though, because I know you're interested.

Mr. Marchese: No, but you did a good job already. You already answered.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Investments need to be made in both the operating, the capital and, frankly, the student assistance side of the post-secondary education budget. We've outlined those in broad terms. Now we're speaking with the parties about how the framework will look.

Mr. Marchese: How you are going to do that. Right. I got it. Thank you.

When I said that on Friday the Premier said that tuition will be rising, you said no and then you said yes. What is clear is that you—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Excuse me? No, I did not. You asked me about the framework. We haven't got the framework yet.

Mr. Marchese: No, Minister, that was in the second question. I said that on Friday the Premier said tuition would be rising, which seems to indicate he's made up his mind on the fact that it would be rising. I know the freeze is on for this year, we know that, but he said the

tuition freeze will rise after this year. The question is, how much. Is that not the case?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The framework has not been designed. The Premier clearly outlined on Friday, as he did last February, that tuition would be going up. You asked me whether I'd made up my mind about the framework; I have not. The government has not got the framework.

Mr. Marchese: Right. So tuition fees will rise. He did say that.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Absolutely.

Mr. Marchese: He said that last year, and Chambers said as much as well in one of the meetings I attended, even though—well, let me give you a quote from her in terms of what she said at the time. Last December, I asked your predecessor, Minister Chambers, whether your government planned to increase tuition after the two-year freeze, and she said: "I'm really surprised that the member from Trinity-Spadina is playing this little game. I have no idea where he's coming from, because the Rae report is not available until January and his recommendations have not yet been tabled."

In hindsight, was I wrong to assume tuition fees would be rising or was the previous minister wrong?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: What I can tell you is that the Premier, in February, indicated that the tuition freeze was a two-year freeze, that tuition would be going up at the end of the freeze. It's not mandated, but at the end of a freeze, if institutions have the ability to increase, I think it's natural to assume that it will be going up. He repeated that on Friday. We've got a framework process in place. We're going to design the framework. The question is, is it going to be going up like the NDP allowed it to go up: 50% over the course of your term? Is it going to be going up like the previous government allowed it to go up? Is there some other framework?

The approach we've taken is fundamentally different than that followed in the past. First of all, we're investing in colleges and universities. Your government, toward the end of its mandate, was decreasing its investment on a per-student basis. We're investing in increased student financial assistance. Your government decreased student financial assistance at the same time as the cost of the tuition was going up. We've taken a different approach.

Mr. Marchese: OK, I got the documents. You answered my question.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We have the two-year—

The Vice-Chair: Minister, you will have 30 minutes at the end of Mr. Marchese's period to wrap up.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Just let me finish the sentence. We've got the—

Mr. Marchese: Minister, I have other questions for you.

The Vice-Chair: Are you satisfied with that answer?

Mr. Marchese: You'll have plenty of time of your own to make your statements about what we did or didn't do.

Students at the moment are paying 44% of tuition fees toward their own education. That translates, in a regular

program, to about 5,000 bucks, excluding the fact that some of them have to live in another city, that they have to buy their own books. In my view, it's a lot. What do you think about students paying 44% and the fact that tuition fees will go up? Do you have any points about where you think you should go, what you think is reasonable, what isn't reasonable? Think of the future and let me know what you're thinking about, what a reasonable norm for students is.

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: What we need is a tuition framework that's going to improve access for all Ontarians and is going to allow the quality of the education that they get to improve as well. The tuition freeze, as a two-year freeze, has given us all the opportunity to stand back and make certain fundamental changes and corrections to the system.

As far as what an appropriate level is, I won't speculate on that. I don't know that your numbers, in terms of percentages, are quite correct, but in terms of the cost of education, the figures are out there. For colleges, the cost of tuition is around \$1,820. The average cost of a university-level program is a little under \$5,000. It is a significant amount of money by any standard. The question is, what are you getting access for? Students want access to the highest-quality education possible—education of improving quality. Are there going to be enough spaces in the programs that you're interested in, and are students in need, in particular, going to have the appropriate level of financial assistance so that they are able to access—

Mr. Marchese: OK.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —I'll just finish the sentence—the education they need and not be prevented from doing so by reason of financial barriers?

Mr. Marchese: OK. I understand your points about quality and will there be enough spaces; I understand all of that. I suggest to you that the \$5,000 tuition in a regulated program is quite a lot for students and families. It's an incredible burden.

By the way, I'm a parent of three young people, one of whom has become a teacher. The other two are still in university. Minister, it's a heavy load. I don't know what your experience is, but I'm just sharing mine with you and I'm telling you that quality matters, and tuition fees matter to me a lot. That represents 44% of the cost of their own education, and that's an incredible burden. Do you think it's a burden, or are you going to stick to the same answer of "quality matters" and whether we have enough spots? I'd like you to respond to the question of whether you think the debt is a big one.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: As somebody who pays tuition now for two students in post-secondary institutions, I am quite aware of the costs. One is in residence and one is not in residence. But it is an investment in one's future. What we have to do is get the framework right so that we have enough spots created in the province of Ontario in the various programs so students can get the education they want, so that the institutions have the money—

Mr. Marchese: I got it, I got it.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —to improve the education—

Mr. Marchese: No, I got the answer.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —and that those in need have the assistance they need.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, you already answered. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair: You have one minute left, Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Marchese: If a family earns \$32,000 or less, they have access to grants. That means that if two people work for minimum wage at Wal-Mart and they earn \$33,000 or \$34,000, they won't be eligible for this grant. That means that these poor working people won't have any grant support whatsoever. What do you think of their struggle?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: What I think is that with our announcement this year, 32,000 Ontario students are going to have access to the grants that your government cut. What I think is that the \$190 million extra that we're investing in student support has supported not only the grants but increased interest-reduction assistance, a reduction in the amount families are expected to contribute to the education of their—

Mr. Marchese: But specifically to my question, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's exactly what I'm addressing. I'm addressing the position—

Mr. Marchese: If someone is earning \$34,000, they have no access to a grant.

The Vice-Chair: Mr. Marchese, your time has expired.

Minister, you now have 30 minutes to respond to both the opposition parties.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much. I'm going to make my response maybe a little shorter than 30 minutes. Let me start with the critic for the Progressive Conservative Party. I thank you very much for the remarks. Yes indeed, I look forward to working with you. I would just like to make a couple of observations, maybe a little by way of a reminder.

There was a long list of initiatives that you outlined, some of which were contained in a budget that was never passed, and some of the funding commitments were outlined in budgets but not actually implemented. As a background to those, it must be remembered that when we arrived, we inherited a deficit that was likewise not outlined in those budget documents, and we've been dealing with that deficit ever since. That meant that the pool of money available for investment in areas like post-secondary education was significantly less than what the people of Ontario had been led to believe before October 2, 2003.

Notwithstanding that, we have found a significant amount of money to invest in post-secondary education. Although you outlined a long series of initiatives, you were the government for almost nine years, and it was after that nine years that former Premier Rae was able to look back at the system and figure out where it had ended up.

The very essence of the Rae report is not to be found in the acknowledgement of its author that there were some programs that had been done during the previous years that were actually beneficial for the people of Ontario; one would have been surprised if there hadn't been any. The very essence of the report is the fact that the post-secondary education system had been substantially underfunded by governments past, and that that underfunding was undermining the ability of the system to meet demands, not just of today but of the future. That's the essence of the report. That's why it calls for increased and improved funding.

The essence of the Rae report was also that students, so often talked about by so many, had not seen financial assistance—had not seen their access opportunities— increase over time. In fact, although the number of spaces had gone up, financial assistance for many of the neediest, including those of working families, had not risen, and in some cases decreased over time. So the Rae report essentially recommended a significant infusion of money for the operating and for financial assistance. That's the message that we picked up, and that is the essence of the Reaching Higher plan: improved access, improved quality, but also with accountability.

I note with interest your allegiances, your affinities and ties, to McMaster, Mohawk and Sheridan. I've spoken with the presidents of all three.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: And Niagara.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: And Niagara. I'm making a longer list. I have been to McMaster not only to meet with students but to make an announcement about student assistance. I visited Sheridan for an opening-day rally that they were having in the cafeteria, and I have spoken with the president of Mohawk on a number of occasions, actually, and hope to get there quite soon.

I make this observation about the college system: You're absolutely right that the college system is uniquely positioned to not only provide improved and increased access to the people of Ontario to post-secondary opportunities, but also to help deliver on the skills agenda that our government has clearly outlined. I do make the gentle observation that that knowledge about access and that knowledge about the skills agenda has been around for some period of time, and there was an opportunity for previous governments to seize those opportunities and to make sure that our post-secondary education and skills system developed in a way to meet the challenges that we foresaw in the future.

I note in particular your comments with respect to the college system, about the needs of the college system, and I was particularly struck by your outline of the per-student funding analysis, comparing universities and secondary school education and college education. In fact, I heard that comparison in a number of different ways, a number of different times. I actually heard it before the election of October 2, 2003. Of course, it was the government of which you were a part in the mid-1990s that substantially cut the operating funding to colleges; in fact, cut it by a huge amount—it was

between 10% and 20%—a cut which was never restored. Indeed, the per-student funding never got back to its original level in the college system during the course of the Progressive Conservative mandate.

I simply make that observation, because now we are faced with the challenge and the opportunity of making sure that colleges indeed can achieve the potential that you quite eloquently outlined for them and that it's a natural potential. We are determined to do that, and this substantial infusion of operating funds in the Reaching Higher plan will enable us to do that in the months and years to come.

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But I do look forward to working with you. I absolutely look forward to building on the initiatives that have been taken by previous governments, including the one of which you were a part, that have been beneficial to the people of Ontario. That's the essence of good progress: You build on what's worked in the past, you fix what's broken, and you make improvements to the system. We'll absolutely be working with you to do that to ensure that the post-secondary education and skills training system that the people of Ontario rely on meets the demands that we're all aware of, but haven't yet been funded until this budget of May 11 outlined the Reaching Higher plan, and now they're going to be funded.

I say to the NDP critic: Likewise, I look forward to working with you and listening to your questions and providing answers during the course of today and in the weeks and months to come.

I am enormously interested in post-secondary education and the cost of post-secondary education, not simply from the perspective of the future of the province, because ultimately we need to improve access for the people of Ontario to post-secondary education opportunities, but also I have, as I outlined, a personal perspective because I happen to pay for two students exercising those post-secondary opportunities.

What we will not do is take the approach that previous governments, including yours, took to the question of access. We will not allow tuition to rise without properly investing in the quality of education. You have to invest in quality; otherwise tuition will just rise wherever it can and you never get the quality improvements. You can't talk about changes in price, changes in tuition, without improvements to student financial aid. To allow the price to increase, as it did between 1990 and 1995 by 50%, without improving student financial assistance essentially says to those students who would be affected, "You might be denied access." You eliminate grants and you might well deny access to the students who need them. That's something we're not going to do. That's why fully a quarter of the Reaching Higher plan is improvements to student financial assistance and that's why, frankly, we froze tuition for two years so we could step back, improve the quality and improve the access to opportunities.

We are implementing the approach that we outlined in the election and will continue to do so. At the end of the approach, we're going to have a system that is more

accessible to the people of Ontario and financial assistance that is both more complete and more readily available to the people of Ontario than when we inherited office, so that we improve access for all Ontarians.

I look forward to discussing these issues and others with you. We are getting some excellent advice from those who are participating in the tuition framework discussions: the institutions, colleges and universities, and the student groups. They may not all approach it from exactly the same perspective initially, but at the end of the day there is a common denominator for all: These discussions are all about access to high-quality education, how we achieve that and get that approach right.

I might say that many who are involved in these discussions might not—might not—be used to them, because I don't recall this process being undertaken before the tuition rises over the past 12 or 14 years, including the tuition increase of 50% between 1990 and 1995. I don't recall that process. I don't recall that type of input. If it was given, I gather it wasn't followed. In fact, my understanding is that the NDP actually had some discussions with interested parties on what to do with respect to student financial assistance in the early 1990s, around 1991, and then decided later on not to improve student financial assistance but to eliminate the grants and make some other changes.

At the end of the day, affordability is absolutely part of access—that's what increased student financial assistance is all about—but let's not forget the question: access to what? You cannot forget that question. What our students are asking for is access to high-quality education; otherwise there is no point in paying any price for it. It has to be high-quality education. You can always get your Internet degree for a few hundred bucks. The question in Ontario is how to ensure that our publicly funded institutions, our colleges and universities, provide the highest-quality education to the students who attend them, and how to ensure that that education is accessible for all students and that individuals aren't prevented from accessing educational institutions in the province of Ontario because of financial issues.

We have started this year; we have started the improvements to student financial assistance in the ways that I've outlined. There is more work to be done and, with the \$1.5 billion, we'll be able to do some more.

With those comments, thank you very much. I look forward to the questions.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much, Minister. We'll start the next round. It will consist of 20 minutes of questions and responses from each of the parties. With that, the Chair recognizes Mr. Jackson.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Minister, it's generally helpful, if we have technical questions, to do those up front, so that your staff who are here can assemble information that we require to complete the estimates and get them into the clerk's hands, who can then distribute them to all members of the committee so that we can have responses to our questions.

Let me make a general observation first. I think it would be extremely helpful in future estimates if you

were to talk to Management Board and encourage them to allow you to break out, in these rather small estimates—because they are—the numbers that are dedicated to colleges and those that are for universities. The fact that they're lumped together makes it very difficult, and we will be trying to navigate through that over the course of the morning. I would appreciate very much having those breakdowns in more detail.

When I was doing some of my reading, I noted that everybody gets to play with statistics, but one of the statistics is that when we combine a number for the per capita expenditure, when we blend colleges and universities together, we drop like a stone. But when we take colleges out, our median position moves rather dramatically. Without getting political, it's unfair to any given government of the day that we allow those stats to happen. Maybe that's partially because we are preconditioned to just lump colleges and universities together.

I very much am going to want to receive those breakouts in just about every category, and as we proceed with a series of questions, you will get a sense as to why I'm interested in pursuing that.

If I might go to page 9 of the estimates, I notice that the 2005 budget book says that MTCU would be receiving \$4.916 billion in total with the combination of operating and capital, but the printed estimates only reflect \$4.824 billion. So I guess my first question is, what happened to the \$100 million? I'm sure there's just a really simple, short answer that I'm missing here.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We're finding the answer for you. Why don't we get your next question?

The Vice-Chair: I would ask the persons making responses to identify themselves for the purpose of Hansard.

Mr. Kevin French: Kevin French, assistant deputy minister, corporate management and services, Training, Colleges and Universities. We'd be happy to provide you with that answer shortly.

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Mr. Cameron Jackson: Shortly? OK, thank you.

On page 15 of the estimates, I note that the 2004-05 actuals in capital were \$417,261,000. In 2004-05, the estimates were \$167 million. This year, we're estimating \$130 million. Therefore, capital spending year over year is down by \$277 million. Could there be someone come forward to give us some details of the capital and what—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Why don't I take a stab at that, if you don't mind?

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I'm actually looking for hard stats in terms of where the money has gone. The capital was multi-year commitments. It was a public policy decision on the double cohort. It required massive investments, which I referred to in my opening statement. We are interested in tracking capital and student tuition support and operating commitments from previous governments to see if those levels are greater than or less than the previous multi-year commitments. I think Mr. Marchese made a very cogent argument that commitments made in the fifth and sixth years when the govern-

ment only has two years remaining in its mandate are worthy of close scrutiny.

Here we have a situation where those multi-year construction contracts were committed, the funding guarantees approved, and the auditor recognized those as solid commitments. But it is a rather dramatic drop and, although I appreciate the narrative, I'm really looking for the hard numbers of where this money went and what projects remain. Ultimately, I'm asking where the \$130 million that you have estimated will be spent—in which institutions.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The difference between the sets of figures comes in a couple of different ways. First of all, there was an additional \$250 million that became available at the end of the last budget year for expenditure by this ministry, not from within. That was expended. It was noted in the budget document and was expended: \$200 million to all colleges and universities through the facilities renewal program to assist in addressing issues such as deferred maintenance. That money is being expended now by colleges and universities. I visited a number of the campuses. Some of these expenditure projects are completed; some are taking place; some are about to start: to address, substantially, issues like deferred maintenance but also some new approaches to learning in different campuses, some new approaches to energy efficiency and the like. I can go into some detail with some of the projects, if you like.

An additional \$240 million was provided to the colleges to assist with their equipment renewal needs. That was money given directly to the colleges. As you know, there are some equipment and renewal funds that the colleges can access directly. That is the biggest series of expenditures.

The difference between the year-over-year estimates from last year to this year is that a number of the projects which you have talked about—the ones that were started three years ago through a multi-year funding process; the smallest amount of money in the first year, the larger amount of money in the second year, and then again a reduced amount of money from the second year and the third year—are proceeding, but because the third year is smaller than the second year, the overall amount is being reduced. That's why you see that \$36-million decrease, that significant percentage change. The training and equipment of the estimate is the same as the estimate last year. Again, there was an extra \$10 million that became available at the end of the last budget year from outside. That was put into that particular fund for the colleges.

Over the past couple of weeks, the announcements about the specific colleges and universities that benefited from specific amounts have been made just about everywhere in the province.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Not to sound like Mr. Marchese, but I really don't want to look at a series of 25 press releases. I would suspect that you've got a spreadsheet and you've done this in an orderly, accountable fashion, and that's the manner in which I'd like to receive it.

Minister, one of my concerns was that you've alluded to the issues about managing a budget at a half-way point. We are today in these estimates where you were as government two years ago, where the budget wasn't approved. Of course the budget wasn't approved; neither has the budget in front of us been approved, and won't be approved for some months, probably. However, as I recall from that period of time, some of the monies which were budgeted, which you indicated helped form part of this deficit, were earmarked for colleges and universities at levels greater than that which you ultimately ended up spending in the first year of your mandate.

If I wanted to offer up a commentary, I guess my concern was that personally, I didn't feel that paying off part of the stranded debt of Hydro or paying off a futures contract in Hydro in the hundreds of millions of dollars was a priority over, say, honouring the multi-year commitment for colleges and universities. That was not a decision that you would have participated in directly because at the time you were the Minister of Labour, but your predecessor did accept those recommendations from the Treasurer in terms of where the money should be spent. We are looking for continuity with the budgeted commitments, year over year, not only from ours, but from yours. That's why my interest in these numbers, to see if we are going to stay on track with the levels of commitment that were promised by the previous government and that they mirror and reflect or, to be very fair to you, where you actually enhance and build upon, in most cases. There are some shortages in the first year and in the first two years, in one instance at least, of your mandate. In fairness, your 2005 budget made the commitment, and here we are well into the 2005-06 budget.

My next area—I've only got a few moments left here, so I just want to get some of these questions on so that staff can pull out their briefing binders and provide us with a copy that the clerk—and that will assist us in completing our work today.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I just make the general observation that I appreciate the reference to the previous Tory budget that—you're right—was never approved. It was a budget premised on a balance in the system. When we inherited a deficit that wasn't outlined for the people of Ontario, that means that the funding base from which you made your commitments was not as complete as outlined in the budget.

There will not always be a linear progression from your promises to what's able to be delivered, given that your promises weren't backed up, unfortunately, with some money.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: With all due respect, that's your subjective view. The former retired auditor, as a private consultant, gave you an opinion, in a dipstick measurement, of what the exposure for the government was on a given day. He measured on a specific day. Had he measured that four days later, when federal transfers had come in, the amount of monies that he proclaimed we were short would have been reduced by over \$1 billion. It's well documented, the sleight of hand that

occurred with respect to the management of those numbers.

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Had you had the privilege of sitting in estimates yesterday, that was enunciated from the last Liberal budget prior to this government, which engaged in conduct unbecoming a Minister of Finance, who delayed the transfer to the teachers' pension fund of half a billion dollars by three seconds and spilled it over into a new fiscal year, with a \$75-million penalty. It was a brilliant move, but the auditor caught it after the Liberals were defeated.

In the last 75 years, the Liberals have never balanced a budget in this province. So I just want to reassure you that you come from a political heritage that is well known for the way in which it adjusts and presents numbers to the people of Ontario.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I reject the characterization. I absolutely reject that.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: That's fair enough. I was characterizing Bob Nixon and what we inherited after his government was thrown out.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm quite pleased with my heritage, coming from a family where my mother balanced the family books on the backs of used envelopes. That's my heritage and that's the one I'm proud of.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Listen, we can compare stories. I was one of 11 children born and raised in the north end of Hamilton. If you want to have your stories and throw them on the table, fine, but the truth of the matter is that Bob Nixon certainly knew how to play games with the optics of how to balance books.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm sure Mr. Nixon would be more than happy to debate with you were he here.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I am now led to believe that I have more time.

The Vice-Chair: You have four minutes.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: We should have gotten into some serious questions here.

On page 33, Minister, salaries and wages for your staff are going up by 17%, or \$1.4 million. Could we get a bit of an explanation as to why that's occurring and what are the deliverables for that? Is it just new hirings?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No. Remember, they come from a very small base. Those increases in personnel are to support a couple of specific areas, one of which is the bookkeeping with respect to the consolidation approach, the accounting issues. As you know, in particular the college books are being consolidated on to the books of the government. This requires additional personnel to assist with the various and other accounting issues. And there were some additional hirings that were necessary in order to implement the agenda of the government, the Reaching Higher agenda.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: On that same page, grants for university operating costs are \$157.3 million and grants for college operating costs are \$3.5 million. Is there a reason why the amounts are so markedly different?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There are two substantial baskets of money that will assist university and college institutions in Ontario. The operating cost increase is one, but also the post-secondary transformation at the bottom is another.

With respect to the college operating costs basket, that includes a number of different baskets. Increase for undergraduate enrolment growth is one of the things that provides. Funding for the tuition freeze is something that provides. But there was a reduction from that basket because last year it was outlined that there was a \$25-million college sustainability one-time payment, so that comes out of there.

Also, some expenditures for health human resources are actually found in the grants for health human resources; for example, increases for the funding of the new nursing spots. That's where that's found, whereas previously it was found under the college operating costs basket, but it's not.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: The \$243,700—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's \$243 million.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: The \$243 million, rather, is the total cost of—I'm on page 33—all of those initiatives?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, no. That's in addition.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: That's what I thought. So what I'm asking for is a detailed breakdown of each of those expenditure items.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There isn't a detailed breakdown—

The Vice-Chair: Your time has expired, Mr. Jackson.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: That's a request for information, Mr. Chairman. I want to make it clear: I don't want a narrative; I want a detailed breakdown of what those expenditures are. There's half a million dollars.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: And I'm happy to answer. That's not available at the moment because many of the issues, such as the exact cost of tuition freeze compensation, enrolment growth funding—those figures won't be made known until the actual figures are provided by colleges and universities. In some months, when they become known—I think that's at the end of November, beginning of December—we'll be able to work out those figures, but they're not available at the moment.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I'd ask for the 2003-04 figures in these categories so we'll have a template on which to analyze the figures that will be forthcoming in November. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair: With that, the Chair recognizes the NDP.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, I just want to get back to some of the questions I was asking earlier. We understand the grant you've introduced to those children whose families' income is less than \$33,000. That's a positive step, by the way, in case I didn't say it or you think I'm not in agreement, so you don't have to repeat it. What I was asking is, if someone is earning a family income of \$34,000, or two people are working at Wal-Mart, let's just say, or some other place like that, and

they earn \$34,000, their children don't get a grant. Do you have any comment about how those students would be helped, or those families, for that matter?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Three different areas. First of all, thank you for the comment with respect to the restoration of the grants. That is a positive sign, and I thank you for recognizing that.

Secondly, in the course of the OSAP improvements that we announced this year, there were a number that directly assist all families, particularly the middle-income families you outlined. For example, there has been a reduction in the expectation of need on the part of the families of students, by 50% in many cases. For example, whereby a family might have been expected to contribute to their child's education to a certain amount, whether or not they had the money, there's a reduction of half in a number of cases, depending on the income level or the need.

There is, at the same time, an increase in the amount of assistance students can get. Yes, that's a loan, but it ties into the last thing that I'll say, the third part of this. There is an increase in the weekly loan amount. Both Ontario and Canada have increased the weekly loan, so you get up to \$75 more in the amount you're eligible for. There's a recognition of costs that were never recognized before: computers—I'll just wrap up. But there is no increase in the limit for OSOG, the Ontario student opportunity grant. That remains at \$7,000, so even though the amount you're borrowing increases, there's a max of \$7,000. So what will happen for many students is that the amount that's forgiven actually increases. But I would say, remember that this is the first year of a five-year plan, and we look forward to making further enhancements in the future.

Mr. Marchese: At the moment, I know that the limit is \$65,000. So if a family earns \$65,000, those students are not eligible to get a government loan. What that means is that those students have to go to a bank immediately and they start paying interest right away. So if you're making 65,000 bucks and over, you're not eligible. What do those families do?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We'll actually get the specific figure for you.

Mr. Marchese: As I understand it—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The maximum is much more than \$65,000. In fact, in many cases you can still be eligible with a family income of up to about \$90,000 under the current approach. In fact, the expected contribution for a family earning about \$70,000, I think it was, has been decreased from about \$4,200 to \$2,100. That's the more than 50% decrease in expected contribution that I outlined. So it is much more than \$65,000; it's \$90,000.

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You have to remember something else that is very significant—Mr. Jackson, the critic for the Progressive Conservatives, outlined it earlier—and that's the tuition set-aside, which is a substantial amount of money that's taken out of the tuition revenue that the institutions get. That is used on top of the assistance that the students

otherwise receive through the OSAP program for unmet needs. Some is in grant form, some is in work-study form; there are a number of different forms. So that is in addition for those students.

Mr. Marchese: The basic argument is that many of them will have access to greater student loans. I understand.

You talked about the framework that you're working on. When I think about the framework, I think that it probably has some parameters. We're looking at a freeze or a reduction or an increase. Does your framework have any parameters beyond the three that I'm mentioning, or is this a fluid process in terms of what you're looking at?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Clearly, we have implemented the freeze and we're in the second year of the freeze, and that's going to end. So it's not a freeze.

Mr. Marchese: We know that. Yes.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We never campaigned on or committed to a reduction. That is simply not an approach that is sustainable for the people of Ontario in the future, as previous parties that became governments that campaigned on reductions have found from time to time.

With respect to the framework, though, if it's not going to be a reduction or a freeze, the question is, for what programs, under what conditions? What are the expectations of government; what are the expectations of institutions? There are those parameters and many more. What type of approach are you going to take to a tuition framework?

We've been getting all sorts of advice from the participants and from others about what it should look like. In designing the framework, you have to have regard, as I indicated before, to the overarching questions: improving access, both specifically and generally, and improving the quality of the education. At the end of the day, it's access to something; it's access to excellent post-secondary education opportunities that we're trying to achieve.

Mr. Marchese: I want to get back to access in a moment.

Most students we're talking to didn't have a sense—or at least they believed that tuition fee increases are something that would be debated or possibly discussed, and they didn't necessarily think or believe that tuition fees were automatic after the two-year freeze. As far as you know, did students know that increases were coming after the two-year freeze?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I don't want to speak to what students knew or didn't know. I will speak from our perspective. We outlined that the freeze would be for two years.

Mr. Marchese: We know that. They know that too.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: And the Premier made clear on a number of occasions, including a speech in February, that not only was the freeze ending at the end of the second year, but made it quite clear in the course of those remarks in February that tuition was going up. We've just signalled a number of times, and you've outlined some of the—

Mr. Marchese: Quite right, in spite of the fact that Ms. Chambers denied the fact that this was going on. So we know they said it, but they were denying that it was going to happen.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, no, and I'm not going to get into a back-and-forth about who said what and in what context, because we don't have the parties here to provide their version of events.

Mr. Marchese: I'll give you a quote.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: What I do know is that we outlined a two-year freeze, we're in the second year of the two-year freeze, and the Premier outlined that the cost of tuition would go up as early as February of this year, and repeated those comments—

Mr. Marchese: OK; that we know.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Now what we're looking at, if I might, is—

Mr. Marchese: But the question is, did students know? As far as the two-year knowledge, were students aware that this was happening, or did they believe, in your discussions with them, that somehow tuition fee increases would be debated, discussed or possibly avoided?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'll let individuals speak to their particular knowledge. It won't be for me to—

Mr. Marchese: By "individuals," do you mean students, others in your ministry, or what?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The students and every other person who has participated in the discussions.

You ask, "Will fees be debated and discussed?" Of course they will. When you design a tuition framework, obviously quantum and conditions of quantum are essential issues. Applicability of quantum to program—essential issues. Preconditions before any increase, if there is to be one—

Mr. Marchese: I understand that. My point of the question wasn't that. My point of the question is that some students probably believed, as I did, that you could be contemplating a further freeze. I certainly thought that that was in the cards, and I think students thought that was in the cards. In your mind, were students wrong in believing that, or was it always clear that tuition fees were going to go up? Was it always clear to them, based on your discussions with them or someone in your ministry?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Again, I'll let the students speak for what was in their mind, but the Premier made it quite clear last February that the fees were going up, that the tuition freeze was a two-year freeze. Parties at the table have been very, very ardent in advocating what government should do. Some institutions have an approach which they have pushed; some student groups have an approach which they have pushed; and nobody is limited. I made it quite clear that when you come to the table, you're not limited in what you say. Some students have argued that a reduction is appropriate, which is something that we have never outlined was a possibility.

Mr. Marchese: I understand. So when students, colleges and universities are working on this new frame-

work—did this discussion start already, by the way, and when did it start?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes. It started in July, when we had the first meeting.

Mr. Marchese: In July. OK. So when students came in July, in their first meeting—how many meetings have happened?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There have been three.

Mr. Marchese: Three meetings. Was there any discussion in those three meetings that tuition fees were going up, and it was just a matter of discussing how?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: What we've been discussing is the framework in all of its aspects. So what does a tuition framework look like? At various times, individuals have argued for all sorts of approaches. I think we just about covered the waterfront in approaches. The discussion has been encouraged not simply to go to the endpoint of what people would like to see but to begin to address the various aspects of what the framework will look like. So, for example, should we have a simpler approach to financial assistance, whatever the tuition system looks like, in order to assist students and their families to determine the cost of education and what financial aid might otherwise be available to them?

Mr. Marchese: So in relation to this—because you've talked about access three or four times now in relation to some things that I've talked about—when you're talking about improving access, what do you actually mean? What does that look like in terms of support for students? Is it more grants to the same students who are now eligible, or is it to more students who are not eligible at the moment, or is it more loans? Higher loans? What are you thinking of? What is your view of this?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think that's an excellent question. We now have more grants than when we started. We now have more financial assistance than when we started. We now have more students eligible than when we started. In fact, I think the improvements to the financial assistance that we made this year have assisted an additional 135,000 students, depending on how you measure, in the province of Ontario—very significant improvements.

Now, what will the future look like? I would like to see an improvement in financial assistance. What it looks like, I'd be happy to take great advice on. Some have argued for an extension of grants. Some have argued for further debt relief. Some have argued for improvement in loan limits. Some take one to the exclusion of others. There is a range of initiatives, and I think what we'll want to do is take the advice from all to come up with a stronger system, because at the end of the day what we want to ensure is that a student who has the ability and the determination to go to post-secondary won't be prevented for financial reasons. So it's a question of what combination of improvements will help that student get to post-secondary, where they might not otherwise—

Mr. Marchese: Sure. By the way, would you put any limits in terms of how much students can borrow? Is there an acceptable limit to you or an unacceptable limit, or is that just fluid at the moment?

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: We haven't actually addressed limits on the borrowing. But what I would say, and you'll be aware of this, is that the Ontario student opportunity grant says that no matter how much you borrow through the OSAP program, you're indebted to the total of \$7,000. We also have, as you would know, opportunities, once you complete your post-secondary education—in fact, three different occasions—where you can get the debt that has accumulated over time reduced—in three separate stages. So you have the \$7,000 limit, no matter how much you borrow—

Mr. Marchese: I was just wondering if you thought there was a limit in terms of how much students should be able to borrow and whether, in your mind, there should be any limits or not.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: If you're asking me if I've come up with the magic number, no. I suspect it will depend on the student and the student's circumstances, to some degree. For some students, a large loan might be manageable; for some students, any loan might be a significant problem, and that is what we have to measure as we develop the student assistance part. Now, remember, student assistance—

Mr. Marchese: Let me ask you some other questions related to all this.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Sure.

Mr. Marchese: Families in the middle- or lower-income range are already struggling with a decade's worth of rising tuition fees—I'm just going to make a statement and then ask some questions. From 1990 to 2002, tuition as a share of university operating revenue more than doubled, climbing from 21% to 43%—I must have said "44%" before; it's 43%. The share of college operating revenue accounted for by tuition jumped from 17% to 31%.

While tuition has been increasing in every province in Canada, its shift in Ontario puts the province substantially out of step with the rest of Canada. A recent Statistics Canada study shows that enrolment dropped for students from middle socio-economic backgrounds after Ontario allowed deregulation and a tripling or quadrupling of professional program tuition fees. That didn't happen in provinces that froze tuition during that time period. I suspect you all know that; at least, many of us in the field know this.

My question is related to the social, cultural and economic implications of allowing tuition fees to continue to rise. I know you don't have them put a limit in terms of what that framework might look like; it could be 2%, it could be 3%, it could be 4%. We don't have a clue. You're not commenting, and we won't know until it's released, or until next September. But I have some serious concerns, and I'm wondering whether you want to tackle them. Has your government researched the impact that your announced tuition fee increase will have? We don't know what the tuition fee increase is going to be, but the Premier said it's going to go up. Have you researched the impact that that will have on

enrolment of students from middle and lower socio-economic backgrounds? If so, if you have any documentation, would you share that with us?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, we haven't researched something that has not been decided. But what we do have access to is the materials that were provided to the Rae commission, the distilled research of the Rae commission, the many studies—one of which you speak about today—which have spoken to this issue in various forms, and there are many out there. Some material has been brought to the table, the tuition framework table, discussing the issue. What we're determined to do is to improve access for Ontarians. But we have some specific initiatives and some general initiatives to do that.

Mr. Marchese: All right. So, other than the study that I'm referring to, your ministry hasn't done any of its own research to understand the implications that—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, I wouldn't say that. I would say that the ministry has probably been looking at access issues in various forms over the years. I wouldn't want to preclude the fact that they have done that. I haven't seen any material—

Mr. Marchese: But they're right beside you. Do they have any studies that they want to share with you or us?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No. We have access to studies prepared by others, which would be, I suspect, publicly available. What we need to do is take the information from all sources and make sure that the program we come up with, of which tuition is part, improves access.

Mr. Marchese: I agree and I understand. But the study that I refer to shows that enrolment dropped for students from middle socio-economic backgrounds after Ontario allowed deregulation. That's what that study shows. Does that worry you?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes. The study that was outlined indicated enrolment in professional programs—it outlined three—for middle-income families where the parents had obtained up to one post-secondary degree, not a higher degree than that, and it showed an enrolment drop. What I'm taking a look at in the study are the specifics about the enrolment drop. What is it tied to? What were the factors? Was it the increase itself? Was it the rate of increase? Was it the lack of financial assistance? Was it sticker shock? Who knows? That's why we have to do some more work with respect to that, but that's one of many that are out there.

Mr. Marchese: Sure. I understand. With respect—

The Vice-Chair: You have one minute left, Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Marchese: Sorry?

The Vice-Chair: One minute.

Mr. Marchese: Holy cow.

With respect to deregulation, what is your view of that—the merits or lack of them? Do you have any views on that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I don't have a position on what the tuition framework should look like. I know that, deregulation or no deregulation, we've seen substantial tuition

fee increases under both scenarios. In the early 1990s there was regulation, but 7%, 8% and 10% increases.

Mr. Marchese: What is your view of deregulation? Do you have one? Should it be off the table or on the table? Is it good or bad?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm taking advice from the people who are at the tuition framework table, and I don't want to preclude receiving that advice and considering it all. I think that at the end of the day we need a system that is accessible. That is the goal.

I'll just say that we need an accessible system. I'm not sure—I'll simply say that accessibility is the goal and there are a number of huge concerns that arise, if you have some sort of completely deregulated system, about how you would guarantee accessibility. So if you're asking me for the extremes, it's not one that I find very attractive personally. I certainly will take advice. I don't think that you'll try to convince me otherwise. But I think we need to design a system for access.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much, Minister. Now we move to the government. The Chair recognizes Mr. Leal.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Welcome, Minister. It's good to have you with us today. My particular case, the riding of Peterborough, is the home of Trent University, which I'm a graduate of, and Sir Sandford Fleming College. The founding president of Trent University, Tom Symons, is still very active in the community. A former Premier of Ontario, Les Frost, was the first chancellor at Trent University. The founding president of Sir Sandford Fleming, the late David Sutherland, was the husband of our current mayor, and, of course, there is Bonnie Patterson, who is the president of Trent today, and Tony Tilly.

Minister, I just wanted to touch upon a couple of things that are going on in the riding of Peterborough. The first one, as you know, is we that have a site where there has been active construction going on for the past 90 days. We have over 100 construction workers on site each day. We have one truck loaded every minute and a half, resulting in over 76,000 cubic metres of soil removed from the site. We have over 300 tonnes of rebar installed in concrete and over 3,800 cubic metres of concrete poured. We have two cranes on-site and two more cranes are coming next week. We have a Web cam operational so that the folks in Peterborough can see the activity. Oh, I'm sorry, Minister; that was the new hospital, where we started construction on June 27. I just got a little carried away for a moment, but I do have a question for training, colleges and universities.

Minister, you know that the McGuinty government, with its Reaching Higher plan, is making the most significant investment in education in the past 40 years. A \$1.5-billion investment in student support will see 135,000 students in our province receiving enhanced support. Significant investment will ensure that students are receiving better education in our province. The McGuinty plan will see more students having access to higher-quality education.

Minister, in addition to these investments, I'm interested in knowing what has been done by the government to ensure that students are in a safe and appropriate physical environment and to ensure that they have the best equipment necessary to prepare them for a globally competitive, knowledge-based society. In addition to the general initiatives, could you tell me what specific improvements students who are attending school in my riding will see at Sir Sandford Fleming College and Trent University?

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much. Congratulations on the hospital. I know the people of your community will benefit greatly.

Mr. Leal: Minister, I just want to correct the record. I believe that at estimates on September 26 there was some erroneous information that was provided, so I wanted to get a chance to set the record straight. But please answer my question on Fleming and Trent.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I absolutely will. It's a fascinating process this, where I get to hear about education and health at the same time as training, colleges and universities.

I'm looking forward to visiting your riding, the Peterborough area, and visiting the campuses of Trent and Sir Sandford Fleming—wonderful post-secondary educational institutions providing opportunities for the constituents not simply of the Peterborough area but, frankly, from all around Ontario and beyond the borders of Ontario. Their reputations extend far beyond the borders of the province of Ontario.

You make a very good point. We are making huge investments in the post-secondary education system, but when the students come, they have to have a safe, appropriate place for learning. Unfortunately, from time to time, although we've heard lots of talk about investments in new buildings, the question of renewing existing buildings has not always received the attention that it might over the course of time. At the end of the last budget year, this government was able to announce a very substantial investment in achieving just the type of goal that you outlined is necessary for the students attending your fine post-secondary institutions.

This government announced a \$250-million investment through its facility renewals program to do a couple of things. First of all, it was an investment to assist universities and colleges, because every institution benefited with money from this fund and it was designed to address deferred maintenance, renewal of teaching spaces that needed not only renewal in terms of physical appearance or outlay but renewal so that they could be up to date. For example, an up-to-date classroom today is a little different than a classroom 30, 40, 50 years ago: investments to ensure that you could have energy-efficient heating plant processes, which in many cases save institutions a significant amount of money, and investment to ensure that the issues of deferred maintenance are addressed so that when students come, they have

clean, healthy, appropriate spaces which actually enhance and make more effective the learning experience.

I'm pleased to report that both of your institutions benefited from these programs. In fact, Sir Sandford Fleming benefited from the additional \$50 million on top of the \$200 million, its share of that, because \$50 million was made available to colleges to support investments in equipment, equipment acquisition, equipment renewal and other types of resources that are necessary for the enormously important skills mandate that our colleges, in particular, have. As you know, Sir Sandford Fleming and so many other colleges throughout Ontario are really on the front lines of meeting the demands for enhanced skills in the province of Ontario.

Specifically, Sir Sandford Fleming benefited from approximately \$4.2 million from these funds, and Trent from almost \$2.2 million from these funds. Sir Sandford Fleming has used the money to, among other things, update a welding shop that's used by some of the trades—probably some of the trades that are now going to be working on that hospital that you outlined, because, of course, you can be a journeyman or an apprentice to be working on a project. They were also modernizing a training lab with respect to the food program that they have there. Those were just some of the many ways in which it was used.

Trent, I know, has been using and continues to use its funds to update its facilities. The fact is that these monies—some have been expended already, some are being expended as we speak and some are for projects that are about to launch.

It's an enormously important investment. We look forward to continuing to support all institutions, and I look forward to getting to yours in the near future.

Mr. Leal: Thanks very much, Minister.

The Vice-Chair: Further questions from the government side? The Chair recognizes Mr. McNeely.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): Thank you, Chair. I didn't realize I was next.

Minister, one of the members mentioned earlier that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce recently released a report that projected a shortage of 100,000 skilled trades workers in the manufacturing sector in the next 15 years. What measures are you taking to ensure the province will have enough workers in the future?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think that's an excellent question. The chamber of commerce's recent report outlines what chambers have been saying for years in several different ways. First of all, the chamber has been very active in saying that the government of Ontario should be investing in our post-secondary and skills agenda. They said that years ago. They said that under previous governments. We're delivering on that advice given. We're delivering on a commitment to the people of Ontario.

The skills shortage is going to be a significant one. This is not something new. People of Ontario have known about it for years. But our plan will enable us to meet the demands that the skills shortage will place on our economy and the productive nature of it. We have a

determination to improve specifically the number of skilled trades in the province, and, in order to increase the number of skilled trades, you've got to increase the number of apprentices. We have several initiatives out there right now to specifically address those facts.

First, we have launched the apprentice training tax credit, which provides up to \$5,000 for an employer to hire an apprentice; \$5,000 a year for three years. That helps defray the cost of training and taking on an apprentice. The more apprentices you get out of the classroom and placed, the more skilled trades you're going to have in the future.

We are going to provide \$11.7 million annually by 2006-07 to support more apprenticeship opportunities. Of course, there are many players that come together in an apprenticeship. There is the employer and there are the trainers. Both colleges do a lot of training, and we have a number of non-college trainers, such as our labour sector, that provide a great deal of training in many facilities, some of which I've toured over the past while.

We have some specific initiatives both to support apprenticeships and to encourage people to get into apprenticeships. As early as high school, through the OYAP, the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, we encourage people to take a look at what an apprenticeship would look like, get a little taste of what the trades are. The trades are an enormously fabulous occupation. You get steady work, you get a great income, you could work on some of the most sophisticated equipment with some of the most sophisticated processes you'll find in any workplace in the province of Ontario. We need to encourage more people to take a look at this, an area that has, sadly, not received the attention it should for many years. This year we expect to have more than 20,000 in our OYAP program.

We have pre-apprenticeship programs. We have addressed some specific programs to students who have left secondary school, to bring them back through our scholarship and bonus programs. So, if you've left high school, you come back, you take the upgrading to the GED, the grade 12 that you need, we'll give you a bonus as an individual and we'll give an employer a bonus if that individual then signs up with the employer. We really encourage students who have left the system to come back, reconnect with the trade and get on.

We recently announced a co-op diploma apprenticeship program, which is a new approach to entering an apprenticeship. It means you don't have to choose between getting a diploma or entering an apprenticeship. In fact, what you can do is have both; you can have the best of both worlds. I know that we had some figures specifically related to the co-op diploma apprenticeship program with respect to Algonquin College and La Cité, and I will just find the figures for that. What this program essentially does is provide the opportunity to obtain both a diploma and an apprenticeship. You start with the college, you start getting the training necessary through the college, and then you get placed out with an employer. Depending on the program, it takes two, three or

four years. At the end of the process, you have not only your diploma, but you also have your apprenticeship well underway. Algonquin College has always been a substantial participant in these programs, and they participated in this. It's the type of program that is really necessary to ensure that all of the people of the province of Ontario have the opportunity to enter the trades.

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In the cook/culinary management area, Algonquin College has 24 new persons starting; in the automotive service area, they've got 30; and in the general machinist/mechanical area, they've got 30. In fact, they have one of the biggest numbers. That college, I understand, is right in your backyard; a fine educational institution. They have almost 100 new co-op diploma apprenticeship students starting. It's an expansion of the program. We started last year—almost 1,000 across the province. It's another way we're going to meet our goal of 26,000 new apprenticeship registrations by the year 2007-08.

If you get new apprentices registering, you're going to get new journeypersons at the end of the process. So I'm very excited about that. It looks like Algonquin College benefited to the tune of a little over \$1 million in that program: an enormously good investment for the college but, more importantly, a great investment for the students and an important investment for the people of the province. Those are just some of the areas where we're looking to meet the need that you outlined.

Mr. McNeely: Thank you, Minister, for that. I was pleased to be at the University of Ottawa for the launch of that new general-purpose building three or four weeks ago. Algonquin and La Cité collégiale are certainly excellent institutions in our area.

We'll be having the education minister in here in the future, but the attempt to keep kids in school until they're 18: How does that overlap with what you're doing, because it would seem that they can move to your colleges and still be part of that policy.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: You're absolutely right. In fact, the Minister of Education and I are working increasingly closely together on initiatives that will encourage students not simply to remain in school till they're 18 but to have a destination after they leave. That is the key. Central to the Reaching Higher plan is to encourage people to reach a level of skills attainment and education that they might not have before. If you're going to get there, you have to find ways of encouraging people who've not learned as well as they might in the traditional settings—the classroom with the teacher and the usual supports—to look for other opportunities.

We've got a number of different initiatives. I mentioned OYAP, our youth apprenticeship program. We're giving an opportunity to more than 20,000 students to get a taste of what a trade will look like within the high school setting. That's a great springboard for future apprenticeship opportunities. We have some youth-at-risk opportunities that we announced just the other week. We're going to give almost 100 individuals, who could

be those who've left high school without obtaining a GED, the opportunity to enter these pre-apprenticeship programs, which combine upgrading with work preparation skills with co-op placement with an employer to obtain knowledge about steady work, about getting a trade, about what an apprenticeship could look like. Again, it's a springboard for people who wouldn't otherwise have this opportunity to get into a trade and have a place to go.

As the Minister of Education outlines and develops his opportunities for learning to 18, the key part of that, as I say, is what happens after. So when we get the co-op diploma apprenticeship program that I spoke about, when we have the increased pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities for the future, when we take the student scholarship and the employer bonus programs, when we enhance the training that colleges can do in terms of apprenticeship preparation or other skills enhancement programs: These are all different pathways that students can take from secondary school education to something that goes beyond that, and it's a question of strengthening the pathways. That's the key to ensuring success for everybody in the province of Ontario.

The Vice-Chair: With that, we'll go to the opposition. With the time remaining to finish, we're going to go to 10-minute rotations.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Minister, was your staff able to find the data I requested in their binders?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Sorry; the 2003-04, or the 2004-05?

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I have a series of five requests for information.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I haven't seen those yet, so if I could see those, that would be great.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: They were verbally put on the record through the Chair, and research has them. I know your assistant deputy minister has them. I want to make sure we can complete today, so the co-operation of your staff is invited here.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much, but I'd like to see the questions before you otherwise engage the staff in finding information.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Let me explain the process, as the Chair of estimates. It's a verbal process, and we've made a request for information. It is now on the record. We would appreciate receiving them during the course of the estimates. I simply asked if any of the—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I haven't heard them yet.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I'm sorry?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I haven't heard what the request was, so I wouldn't mind hearing what the request for the information is in order to ascertain whether we're in a position—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Let me ask your staff if they're aware of the questions. I requested them. Certainly, the researcher has them. You have about 12 or 15 staff here.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's great. I'd just like to know what they are before we engage the staff in the process of

finding the information or determine whether we're available.

Do you have them?

Mr. French: I've got some preliminary numbers here.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: While the minister is getting caught up here, I just want to indicate that in our last estimates with Minister Chambers, she was extraordinarily helpful, as were her staff, in their level of professionalism. I also put on the record at the time that the Minister of Education, who Mr. McNeely has referenced will be before us fairly soon, was asked a significant number of questions, and we have not received a single one of those answers one year later.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I just wanted to know what you're asking, just for my assistant. He's got the answers right here, so if we could turn them over to him, he can provide—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Thank you. Chair, I will just make sure—I'm still trying to explain the process to the minister. These are documented. We will dialogue with the staff and our legislative research department, which is charged with the responsibility of making sure that the material that we ask for on the record is forthcoming.

In our efforts to try today to be completed in our estimates before the end of the day, we invite the ministry to bring that information forward now and not have us come back tomorrow to look at that information—"tomorrow," if it takes that long. I simply asked the assistant deputy minister if his staff had any of the responses from their binders ready to share with the committee at this time. I suspect the answer is no.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Actually, I think he does have some of the answers. I just simply asked, as a process, since I'm here before the committee and otherwise answerable to the people of Ontario, that I have a copy or get to see the request that you've made verbally through somebody else before the staff engages in the process of finding information.

The Vice-Chair: Just a clarification here. I think what happens traditionally is that the staff are listening attentively to the questions that are raised during the process, as is the researcher as well. Normally, they're enunciated in writing by the researcher and/or your staff and responded to to the committee for all members to share. That's been kind of a tradition.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: If staff are having difficulty following the hearings verbally, that's not a problem.

Mr. Marchese: Staff was very clear.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I think they are, but as I say, if the minister wishes to finish today, we'd like to invite the full co-operation of his staff.

I wanted to return, because I'm requesting specific statistical information: Minister, what are this year's allocations for universities, and have we formally notified the universities what their allocations are? What date will that occur? Are there agreements with these universities and colleges signed as yet? If not, when will they be signed, and when will they be available for the committee to examine?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Just as a preliminary, not to use up your time, I hadn't seen what the information that you had requested was, but you had indicated earlier what it was. I think they're quite hopeful in terms of getting the 2003-04/2004-05 breakdowns sometime during the course of the day.

With respect to the allocations, we said in the budget that we were going to increase the amount of money we're spending for access and for quality, but there would be accountability. That accountability will require that, as we expend the money, we know the results that we're going to achieve. So we've been working very hard on the accountability part of the process, because this is a little different—a lot different, actually—than the process that has been followed in the past.

We're working with the institutions, the universities and the colleges, to determine how the money can be flowed to them in exchange for results that we're going to see for the expenditures. The people of Ontario, after all, would expect to see results.

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There are really two parts to the process.

For the future years, we will have accountability agreements between the government and the institutions that will outline certain expectations and will also outline the funding that will attach to the expectations. The level of detail is something that we're talking about. The precise expectations are things that we are currently discussing. What the approach to funding actually looks like is something we're still discussing.

The funds for this year: I suspect that a number of the institutions have probably done their own quick math, after seeing the budget, about what was going to be roughly going out the door. We're working with the institutions on an ongoing basis, I hope sooner rather than later, to be able to flow the specific numbers to them, but the allocation letters have not yet gone out.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Mr. Chairman, I guess I'm asking, what are this year's allocations? You have those. My first request—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No. We don't have the allocation amounts.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Please let me finish, Minister, while I have the floor.

This year's allocation: We have a global number in estimates for colleges and universities. My first request was that I'd like that broken out for colleges and universities. I don't want to be repeating myself, but that was my first request. I suspect that that's the number, if the colleges and universities have it, that they're working on as a global number for all universities and a global number for all community colleges. I'd like to have those numbers, and I'm sure Mr. Marchese would like to have those numbers, so we can track them.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We don't have those numbers. We've broken them out—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: You mean you've announced post-secondary funding in this budget year and you do not know the difference between how much will go to

colleges and how much will go to universities at this point?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The precise breakdown depends on the allocation of a number of different baskets, such as for tuition fees, enrolment—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Fair enough. I'm simply asking. You cannot give me a number today, even though the academic year began three, four weeks ago. We do not have a breakdown between colleges and universities.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We've not finished the process. No.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Thank you. Then, will you need legislation in order to implement the accountability agreements, as have other ministers in your government who have brought in accountability agreements with hospitals and with school boards? You will not require legislation in order to enforce those accountability agreements.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's certainly something that—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Is it a yes or a no?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's a question that has been raised. It's something that we're taking a look at. It's something that I suspect we'll determine in the course of our discussions with the colleges and universities and in the course of how we can ensure that we achieve the results that we want to with the investments.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Thank you very much. And a ballpark figure? You obviously have a process in place that now is a form of a negotiation in terms of institutions' ability to manage their envelope. Are we talking about finishing that before the end of this calendar year?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: OK. And they will take the form of separate agreements that we've not heretofore been using in the province?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's right. We haven't been using this approach before.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Thank you. That's the answer to my question. I appreciate that very, very much.

How much time have I got, Mr. Chairman?

The Vice-Chair: You've got three minutes left.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Minister, a general question: You have announced multi-year dollars for universities, as I understand it, but not for colleges. I'm trying to reconcile the fact that when I talk to the university sector, they say we are aware that we have a multi-year commitment and they have a rough idea of what monies they might anticipate in year two, year three and year four of your budget announcement of 2005.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We haven't announced multi-year numbers for one and not the other. We've not announced anything other than what's been found in the general budget documents.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: So you may be working toward a multi-year plan, but at the moment we don't have one on the table.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's right.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: OK. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We're trying to get the interim agreements done, and the advice from the interim agreements will feed into the process for the multi-year.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Are the interim agreements what you were referring to earlier as the accountability agreements?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There will be interim accountability agreements; yes.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Do the colleges and universities currently have the framework in which those interim agreements will be cast?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Not in the detail that we hope to be able to provide very shortly. It's been an ongoing discussion process at the moment as to our expectations and what they would like to or can deal with in terms of this accountability process. It is, as you correctly outlined, a new process for all, so we're working as quickly and diligently as we can to reach the conclusion of this process.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Some of these questions come from concerns raised by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. Their researcher, Trish Hennessy, wrote me, as the critic, with information. I just wanted to get a couple more of those on the record. To you as the former Minister of Labour: They've raised a question about how the delay of the legislation on mandatory retirement has already meant that one cohort of university professors was forced to retire at age 65. I know this is a subject near and dear to your heart, so could you give us a glimpse as to where we might be going with this and how this might impact positively on our university sector? The faculty association is kind of anxious here.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Do you know what? I had the pleasure of introducing that legislation and tabling it for first reading. That was not too long ago, so I'm not sure about the delay. We didn't sit during the summer, and I know my colleague Minister Peters will be looking forward to addressing the issues in various forms in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: But you are aware that the sector is quite anxious to see that.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It has been expressed to me by the sector and by faculty members that they were looking forward to seeing that. I was very pleased to have been able to introduce that bill.

The Vice-Chair: The Chair recognizes the NDP. You have 10 minutes.

Mr. Marchese: I want to get back to deregulation and tuitions in general. But before I do that, I just wanted to raise an issue that you touched on having to do with the Ontario student opportunity grant. I'm concerned that the federal government gives students money for their education and then the provincial government takes a major portion of it before the student can use it. This is the situation facing many Ontario students due to the current arrangement between the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation and the Ontario government. The millennium fund awards scholarship is based on need,

but in an effort to trim budget expenses, the Ontario government is using the scholarships to subsidize already existing provincial loan programs, or the Ontario student opportunity grant.

Under the current Ontario student loan program, students have any amount over \$7,000 forgiven from their regular loans. But in Ontario, when the millennium money is awarded to students, it will cancel out the loan forgiveness portion of the program. So if the student borrows \$9,075, let's say, \$2,075 of it will be forgiven. If you are an Ontario student who has received \$3,000 from the millennium fund and have also been offered \$2,075 in loan forgiveness, the millennium money gets paid directly to the bank. As a result, Ontario students could be left with only \$925 in debt relief rather than the \$3,000 they thought they could use. Many students are then being taxed on the full \$3,000, leaving them with laughably small sums after taxes are paid from the \$925. Students report receiving \$125 after all the deductions were taken away. It is estimated that this duplication results in a saving of close to \$100 million to the Ontario government.

My question to you is this: Does your government think it's OK that part of your scholarship, which is awarded based on need, ends up in the pockets of the provincial government instead?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Actually, it doesn't. The federal money comes to the province, and because of the arrangement between the province and the millennium foundation with respect to the grants, money is flowed back through other enhancements.

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I'm going to let one of the staff address the specifics of the OSOG program and how it interacts with the grant money, but I do note that the \$7,000 figure is one that started at \$5,700, I think, during the NDP years. The NDP increased it to \$6,000 retroactively—

Mr. Marchese: I'm just talking about the clawback of the millennium money. That's all I'm talking about.

Hon. Mr. Bentley:—and is now up \$7,000.

With respect to the alleged clawback, Richard, why don't you—

The Vice-Chair: Give your name for Hansard, please.

Mr. Richard Jackson: My name is Richard Jackson. I'm the director of the student support branch at the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

The arrangement that Mr. Marchese was describing was outlined in the agreement we signed with the millennium foundation about seven or eight years ago. It was well known by both the province and the millennium foundation when we signed that agreement that the funding the millennium foundation wished to provide Ontario students would displace funding that would normally have been provided by the province. As a result of that, there was a clause in the agreement that requires the government of Ontario to reinvest those savings on behalf and to the benefit of post-secondary students in Ontario. This is quite consistent with the arrangement in other provincial and territorial jurisdictions.

Mr. Marchese noted \$100 million in displaced funding; it's actually closer to \$80 million.

Mr. Marchese: Sorry, we're off a bit.

Mr. Richard Jackson: Yes, but just to set the record straight.

Mr. Marchese: Sure.

Mr. Richard Jackson: And in each year of the agreement, the government of Ontario—current and previous governments—has fully met the reinvestment expectations of the agreement.

Mr. Marchese: I got it. Minister, does your government plan to put a stop to this or do you think this is OK and we'll just keep going the way we are?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: My understanding with respect to the access grants is that they are not actually clawed back as you outlined, that they're a net benefit to the students.

With respect to where we intend to go in the future—

Mr. Marchese: Sorry, your name again?

Mr. Richard Jackson: My name is Richard Jackson.

Mr. Marchese: Mr. Jackson just said that it's part of the agreement. This was made very clear.

Mr. Richard Jackson: No, I was talking about the Canadian millennium bursaries that have been in existence—I believe this is year seven of that.

Mr. Marchese: Right.

Mr. Richard Jackson: The agreement that the current government signed around the time of the provincial—

Mr. Marchese: Seven or eight years ago, right.

Mr. Richard Jackson: No, this year. As a result of that, the millennium foundation, because they had made a better return on the investments of their endowment, approached individual provinces asking them if they would deliver additional grant programs on their behalf, which we did. We are partnering with the millennium foundation. The value of the grants will be approximately \$25 million this year, with the millennium contributing approximately \$19 million and the province the other \$6 million. In addition to that, the province of Ontario has been able to deliver a second-year grant.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's not clawed back, though, right?

Mr. Marchese: Mr. Jackson, the minister is saying that money is not clawed back, as you described it. As you described it and as I understood, it was part of the agreement that said that money would be reinvested. The money that's clawed back—you didn't say "clawed back"—would be reinvested to help students, presumably.

Mr. Richard Jackson: I'm trying to distinguish between the two millennium bursaries, one being the Canada millennium bursary, where there is a displacement of provincial student assistance funds, where the province is committed and has reinvested those savings on behalf of Ontario students.

Mr. Marchese: That's what I was talking about, isn't it, Mr. Jackson?

Mr. Richard Jackson: I'm not sure if you're talking about the grants that were announced by Minister Bentley several months ago or the grants—

Mr. Marchese: No, I was talking about the old system.

Mr. Richard Jackson: I'm explaining both of them to you, I thought.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much, Richard.

You asked me, with respect to the future, what we intend to do—

Mr. Marchese: Minister, sorry; are you still claiming it's not a clawback?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Sorry, you asked me—

Mr. Marchese: Are you still claiming it's not a clawback? You said it's not a clawback. Are you still saying that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I was asking the question to him, and I think you got the answer. It's not a clawback—it complies with the agreement.

The Vice-Chair: Mr. Marchese, are you satisfied with the answer to you?

Mr. Marchese: He's just playing lawyer all the time he's here.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It complies with the agreement the previous government signed to make sure the money is not going to be held by us.

Mr. Marchese: Are you going to change that agreement?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Well, if it's a net loss to the people of Ontario, I'm not going to rip up the agreement. At the moment, we get the benefit of the investment—

Mr. Marchese: If it's a net loss to students, will you rip it up?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —and we get the benefit of the money displaced. So I think we want to be careful.

Mr. Marchese: So things will go on as they have, presumably. That's the answer I'm getting.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We're going to continue to improve the system.

Mr. Marchese: Of course you are.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: If we can through that way, we will, but we'll look for other ways as well.

Mr. Marchese: Of course you will.

With respect to deregulation, the Rae report recommended complete deregulation of tuition fees. When I asked you earlier what you thought about deregulation, you said you were going to listen to people and so on. Mr. Rae had recommended a complete deregulation of tuition fees. Are you thinking about that? Is your staff giving you advice about that? Are you going to reject it or are you just going to be listening to people and see what you're going to do?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We're taking advice from all quarters. There was some advice outlined in the Rae review. There's been some different advice outlined from the different student groups. There has been some advice outlined by the various institutions. What we are determined to do is to distill that advice and come up with a framework that actually works for all the people—

Mr. Marchese: I got it.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —to improve the access.

Mr. Marchese: Yes, it's pretty clear. To get back to the whole impact of tuition fees on students and—

The Vice-Chair: One minute left, Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Marchese: —I'm going to ask you and your staff to help me out. Have you studied whether high debts due to high tuition fees puts a heavy economic and psychological stress on graduates?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I can't imagine that any debt would not cause some discomfort, anxiety or stress to anybody, for whatever reason. I would think that was natural. The issue is, what are people getting access to, what are they—

Mr. Marchese: No, no, I understand that.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: What are they able—

Mr. Marchese: Minister, that part I understand.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —what are they able to pay, how are they able to afford it, how do we ensure that the system itself is sustainable? Part of sustainable is making sure—

Mr. Marchese: Minister, I understand that part; I agree. You answered it before. But there have been no studies, and you're not interested in doing any studies, to assess the psychological and economic stress on students—or are you?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The economic stress has been outlined in a number of different studies that we have access to, the increased debt from 1990 on, the increased costs from 1990 on. That's part of the access discussion, which is, how do you deal with the debt—

Mr. Marchese: I understand, Minister, but would you be interested in doing a study from 1990 on? I accept that, sure.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —and how do you deal with the debt in designing the tuition framework as part of a broader access strategy?

Mr. Marchese: All right, let me ask you another question. Do you know whether student debt burdens lead to a student delaying normal life stages such as marriage? Have you researched that, by any chance, or does that even concern you at all?

The Vice-Chair: There's about half a minute left, Minister, if you'd care to use that time or go to your rotation.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much. The government's determined to improve access, and part of access is to ensure that people are not prevented from accessing post-secondary opportunities—

Mr. Marchese: I understand, but that's not the question I asked you.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —by reason of financial barriers. As we improve the financial student assistance program, as we make more spaces available, we're determined to come up with the fairest, most reasonable system possible.

Mr. Marchese: And the answer to my question?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The answer to your question is, we're working very hard on the best system for people—

Mr. Marchese: Does student debt burden lead to students—

The Vice-Chair: Thank you. That ends this rotation, and there will be more time. With this, the Chair recognizes the government party.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I want to add my formal congratulations to the minister on assuming the new portfolio, although we've had a chance actually to interact in his new role. The minister has visited my area twice, both times to go to Conestoga College, which is one of the three post-secondary institutions we have in our region. I was pleased that the first time you came to Conestoga College, Minister, you came to meet with representatives of the college student federations from across the province, I think sending out a key signal that at the end of the day this is about students, first and foremost. I'm certain that, as well as coming back to Conestoga College, you're also going to be visiting the other two fine institutions we have in Waterloo region: obviously the University of Waterloo, which was recently ranked by Maclean's as the number one university in the country, and Wilfrid Laurier University, which is always not very far behind. I think it was ranked third or fourth.

I want to spend a minute asking you about Conestoga College, which, again, takes no back seat to any community college in the province or to a similar institution in the country, and has a huge impact on our local economy. In fact, a recent study showed that 50% of people who live in Waterloo region have an association with the college. If they haven't studied there formally, they may have taken a continuing education course or have been involved in some other way. In fact, if you go around and ask people, so many people have benefited from it.

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One of the leading areas that it's involved with is apprenticeships. I heard your answer to Mr. McNeely, but I wanted to zero in on some of the costs that are associated with the programs. One of the approaches that Conestoga College has is something called the skills consortium. Actually, on the day after budget day, I had a chance to sit with the board of the local skills consortium at Conestoga College. It's a group of individuals—business owners, skilled tradespeople from the community, Conestoga College staff and student representative—who run this program. They act as advisers and work with the business and skilled tradespeople to develop the program curriculum and the program placement. In a sense, they're going out to the future employers and saying, "What are the needs in the community? How can we design a program that meets them? How can we also make sure that these students have a proper placement?" I was quite blown away by the level of co-operation and interaction from the businesses and the students and, of course, the staff representatives.

One of the problems, though, is that in so many sectors in post-secondary education, as the old joke goes, it's sort of chalk and talk, but in apprenticeship it's about machinery, and as we're getting into more sophisticated programs and approaches, they really do need money and funds for equipment, especially because you can't train

someone on a piece of machinery that hasn't been used in 20 years and then expect them to go out into the private sector. I just wondered if you could comment a bit on where we're going in terms of equipment and machinery in the apprenticeship field.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much for the question. You outline an extremely important issue that faces colleges specifically, but our post-secondary education system addresses our ability to meet the skills shortages in the future. I have been pleased to be at Conestoga College on a number of different occasions. In fact, I think if I'm there too much more, they're going to charge me tuition for the programs. I think the last time we were there was to announce part of the money that Conestoga received, as well as Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier received, through that capital investment that I mentioned was made at the end of the last budget year, the \$250 million that was made specifically.

I remember at Conestoga we were walking through the power plant and up on to the roof of Conestoga College, looking at what the investment for Conestoga had actually purchased. It's not the usual thing that you talk about in terms of ribbon-cutting or announcements. It was a restoration and an improvement of their physical plant structure, which really meant for Conestoga that they would be able to separately heat and cool some individual classrooms, particularly important for Conestoga because, as you've told me on a number of different occasions, they not only have full-time students; they have part-time students coming in at all different hours, during the weekends as well. What they've now acquired, through this program, is the ability to separately monitor and moderate the temperature in these classrooms, new classrooms built with the money as well, in a way that doesn't require they crank up the whole heating plant on a weekend, for example. This saves them an enormous amount of money that can be reinvested into other programs.

Now, how do you ensure that the programs they deliver are not just, as you say, chalk and talk, but actually address the specific needs of the students? You have to have up-to-date equipment, technologically advanced, and enough equipment for the students to actually learn on and learn with, because it's not enough if you take it off the blackboard; you've got to use it. We have college equipment and apprenticeship enhancement funds. This year we are providing \$10 million for the update of equipment for the colleges. That's available for all the colleges. Part of it's an allocation, and part of it will be a competitive tendering process. I know Conestoga benefited from this type of program last year. They got a rather significant amount, as I recall, last year in these equipment enhancement funds through the competitive process. That's a fund that will enable the colleges to continue to renew equipment, continue to acquire new equipment to support apprenticeship and other skills development programs.

I mentioned the \$200 million that went out at the end of the last budget year. There was an extra \$50 million

that went out specifically to Conestoga and other colleges to support equipment improvements, equipment acquisition and equipment renewals. This is the type of investment that the province made in order to fully support the classroom training of various skills programs, such as the one you outlined.

The future requires that we have our students acquire ever greater knowledge and ever greater baskets of skills. Colleges are uniquely situated to deliver on the skills agenda. We're determined, as a government, to support the colleges in meeting that and their other agendas, in part through the substantial investments in operating funds, but also in part through making sure that they have the tools and equipment they need to properly and completely teach the students they take.

We look forward to future visits to the Kitchener-Waterloo area.

The Vice-Chair: The Chair recognizes Mr. Arthurs.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): Minister, again, congratulations on your appointment. I look forward to working with you, as I did with your predecessor, Minister Chambers, on matters of mutual interest, in particular as it relates to UOIT, Ontario's newest university, an area that certainly Mr. O'Toole and I are very familiar with in Durham region.

In the context of your opening remarks you did make some references to persons with disabilities and the barriers that they face, both financial and the lack of understanding by staff and faculty about special challenges that they face in pursuing higher education. In particular, there are some strategies that are being recommended and that you're moving forward on to assist this group of students, both from the standpoint of additional funding for institutions to meet their obligations as to interpreters and transcription services, outreach, recruitment activities, career counselling and a post-secondary advisory committee on disabilities to provide advice on how to support increased participation. I find this very encouraging.

My personal, family-related experience is one where a member of my family went from the secondary system to the post-secondary system. Whereas there was a very high structure in the secondary and the elementary system to support students with special needs, it came as a bit of a shock and surprise to us that the post-secondary system didn't have that structure around it and, more to the point, with the level of independence that they have as institutions, that they weren't as well-equipped to address the needs of students with disabilities. So I'm very encouraged by this.

With the limited time we have available now, I'd be very interested in hearing any comments, any encouragement you might provide. Should the opportunity present itself later during the time that the ministry has, I'd also welcome the opportunity then to explore this whole area in more depth. I think that it's crucially important to a part of our community that deserves and needs the support of the system, particularly moving into the post-secondary area of colleges, universities and training.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much for the question. The work that we're doing through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is building on the groundbreaking initiative taken by this government in passing legislation that will ensure that we're going to make all of our institutions accessible to persons with disabilities over the coming years.

It really has commenced a conversation on accountability for all institutions to achieve what has been talked about so many times, which is access. What we're trying to do is provide persons with disabilities, whatever those disabilities happen to be, with access to the opportunities that post-secondary education provides. The Premier is determined to achieve this, and that's why part of the Reaching Higher plan has specific, targeted money to improve access for a number of different groups and a mechanism for achieving strategic advice.

Within the budget, we outlined that we would be setting up a number of committees to provide strategic advice on access issues. One of those committees, which already met with my predecessor in June, is a committee to provide strategic advice on how to improve access for persons with disabilities. I look forward to meeting with the committee. I look forward to being in a position to receive the strategic advice on how we can alter, amend or improve our approach to post-secondary education and skills enhancement in a way that will specifically improve access for persons with disabilities.

Now, of course, we'll do that generally, but there is a specific basket of money outlined in the money—it starts at \$10 million and it grows to \$50 million over five years—for specific initiatives to increase and improve access. I'm looking forward to this additional money to result in some direct access improvements. That's not all the money that would be expended, of course. Even during the facilities renewal investment that I spoke about before, there were some improvements that I was able to tour at various colleges and universities in the past with respect to making buildings more accessible. For example, when we were at Conestoga, one of the things that—

The Vice-Chair: Minister, your time has expired. It's very interesting. Thank you.

The committee stands recessed until 12:30 p.m.

The committee recessed from 1200 to 1232.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Phil McNeely): The committee is called to order. The first questions will be from the official opposition.

Mr. O'Toole: Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you for sitting in the chair.

I just want to put on the record, as Mr. Arthurs did as well, that I'm very pleased and supportive of Durham College and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology and the important contribution they make to our local economy, as well as the access for students, primarily, and for enriching the quality of life, as universities and colleges are known to have done or do. Really, at the end of the day this is all about students, in my view. As such, they offer us a better quality of life going

forward. In that respect, I had about four areas I wanted to comment on, and then maybe we could get into some questions.

One is, I want to compliment past and current government. The Ontario youth apprenticeship program is part of the Durham College campus in Whitby. It's an extremely successful program working in partnership with students as well as prospective employers. I would strongly encourage continuation of that program and other certification programs for apprenticeships and apprenticeship training. But this is a real opportunity for young students to experience the skilled trades area. I think we're all responding not just to the chamber of commerce but to the knowledge of the demographics in societies as the aging workforce issue is upon us.

As well as changing some of the reference points in the whole apprenticeship review that needs to occur of multi-skilling persons for emerging technologies and skills, where computers basically run a lot of the equipment today, they've got to have multi-skills, not just singularly vertical skills.

Another thing I'm very interested in is the whole idea of transitions in learning, the e-learning environment complementing the social and other developmental experiences that occur on campus. Each of us at some time has had, I'm sure, a time in post-secondary—I realize that this is a very important part of an individual's development, the social interchange with academics and students. It's extremely important—probably as important, sometimes, as the classes themselves. But the complement to the e-learning would be disrespectful to the amount of information and resources that are available today, as they weren't available in my time at the University of Toronto.

The idea of tuition fees is certainly a bit of a minefield of trying to explain how and when. We saw the response today on some of the federal-provincial programs and the confusion they offer to students as to what it really means. Five of my children attended university and some post-graduate school. We had three in university for three consecutive years, so I know full well what the experience is. But I've also found that students who work perhaps during their academic year—one was in engineering and is now a lawyer, and worked all through his university. I have a daughter who's now a high school teacher in England, but she worked all through her university as well. I think it enriches. She didn't work for income, specifically, but she had never been a teacher. She didn't develop those work skills and social skills and balancing time that are incumbent upon students today. So the tuition is another thing.

We've seen in the papers last week a lot of information about students' perhaps false expectations. It is a busy world; it's a multi-tasking world. That's the reality. Dumbing down the curriculum is not good for students. It may fit the numbers that we want to work, but it doesn't really embrace the reality of the world of work.

The double cohort, I think, as Mr. Jackson pointed out this morning, when we were government was touted as

the unmet challenge of the government of the day. But in fact it was seriously met with a lot of capital, a lot of innovative partnerships that built much of the infrastructure, which would include the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, and growing the number of opportunities, accessibility being at the top of that list for all the students—willing and qualified students, that is.

There's a question there, if there is too much emphasis by those outside the sector, if post-secondary only means university. I've found even in my own family that most of them had to be job-ready by taking, after graduation, courses that made them job-ready. The reality is, as you said, the end-game here. What is the end focus? It's a tragic reality in some interpretations, but in fact it's a real reality that most training and learning is for a job—or for your own personal development. You can define that as a job or living or earning your own way or however you want to describe it—not to dismiss the importance of reading Tolstoy and these various things that we should do and experience in life. I'd say that that should be ongoing for life. That's lifetime learning, learning about the Internet, having access to the huge amount of information that we have around us today. That's ongoing. It's ongoing in the reality of the world; it's as important as reading the newspaper, or at least articles, to keep you abreast of the profession you're in.

I think of all the careers that are changing. I look at my son, who is in his fourth year of practising law for a senior firm, as you've done, and most of the rulings are online. These journals that they have in the office are just for pictures, basically. They are quite often looking at important Supreme Court decisions that are available almost instantaneously, in terms of research, that new students would be much more comfortable with at that new university.

I think of the UOIT. Thomas Coughlan, the president of the student association: “For students, the biggest post-secondary challenge is cost,” said Thomas Coughlan, president of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology and Durham College student association.

“Students are going into debt beyond their control and beyond recovering from it even when you're done,” said Mr. Coughlan.”

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There are a couple of articles today in the papers that I can cite. I'll do that; just cite them. More recently, in an October 3 article here in the London Free Press, it says, “Although McGuinty had announced in February that the freeze would end next September, he caught many students off guard by confirming the bad news in a speech at Carleton University in Ottawa.

“Yes' tuition will go up 'and the price of milk, bread, rent, mortgage, houses will go up. The issue is by how much,' McGuinty told students.”

So the idea during the election of saying or giving the impression that you're going to hold the line on student costs while the other emerging costs are the reality—it's important to be honest with the electorate, specifically with students. That even came across in some of the

articles in the clippings today, actually, specifically talking about these exit exams or entrance exams for post-secondary study. There's a lot of rancour about the literacy level being a prerequisite. I support that. Without being able to read, you can't use the Internet. You can't access the information unless you are literate at a certain level. It doesn't dismiss a person from achieving personal success in life, but it certainly would indicate to them what medium, what forum, what work destination they have in mind. If you're having difficulty reading, you certainly wouldn't want to go into a heavy research area where you've got to review journals and understand the content of those particular articles that you're critiquing.

At the university, I want to thank Gary Polonsky for the work done by him. As you know, he's retiring. He's a very innovative person, a pioneer in trying to make this whole transition between college and university a reality. In fact, I think many of the traditional universities—Western, University of Toronto—were not really in favour of that new model of governance. A lot of it had to do with these transitions of credits and prerequisites and these other transfers between institutions. It's still problematic. Prior learning assessments are, and should be—if someone has extraordinary abilities, are we not just paying for credits to keep X number of academics in work? In fact, that's the e-learning model too. We need to demonstrate, through some method of testing and evaluation—peer review or whatever of learning—an ability to fast-track some young people so they don't accumulate this huge debt just because they've got to do this 20-course load of material with so many credits that aren't related to their area of study.

I've really gone on here, because I'm depending on our critic, Cam Jackson, to really carry the ball. I'd say that—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: If you give me the microphone, I will.

Mr. O'Toole: Certainly I'd like to use most of the time.

A couple of things: I'm having trouble when I review the estimates, and this is probably my eighth year sitting on these. If I look at the estimates, it's hard to capture the numbers. I don't say I blame you or us, or anyone else, for that matter. But if I just look at one area in your ministry estimates under “Student Support”—and I see that's the big part of the Rae thing—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: What page?

Mr. O'Toole: I'm on page 30 of your estimates. I'm also looking at the estimates in the large estimates book, and it's on page 362, I think—student support. It shows the vote number, and it will be on the number of \$109,197,400. Then there's \$3 million for administration, which is taken off. It's \$106,197,400. That's your student support, the full amount for this year, as I understand it. Maybe you could clarify it for us, because even in your book it doesn't break it down, as Mr. Jackson has mentioned a few times, between college and university and for other programs that may qualify, whether it's the private institutions or whatever. Could you perhaps, if

not in your response, give us some indication? That's just one line on this \$4-billion budget that is probably getting more attention at the end of the day for students not going because of financial reasons. They have been represented here this morning. That is the central question. It was mentioned by the president of the UOIT student body, and most of the articles in the media cover that whole thing. We understand that this tuition freeze was a temporary thing, but the exit strategy really comes down to Mr. Marchese's question on regulation or deregulation of tuition fees.

We did get into that. You said earlier that there were no prior studies. One of the best studies you should have a look at is the Smith report, done by the past president of Queen's University. It's an excellent report. It should be looked at in terms of the ongoing commentary. What we really believed, I think, in a philosophical sense, was that those undergrad and grad programs that ended up with disproportionately higher incomes would certainly fall into the deregulated category.

I would say to you that I have five children, all university—and a couple have post-graduate studies. I have two uncles with Ph.Ds. One was a math prof here at U of T—very exceptional. But today in my own family, there are three with Ph.Ds. Unbelievable. I don't mean minor; I mean microbiology and these sorts of very intense, technical degrees. We need more of that.

If you look at deregulation and at what the market needs, is there any relationship with deregulation strategy to deal with what they need for the market? If you need more people, I would regulate that and say, "OK, if you want to take this degree," and we need more pharmacists or whatever it is you need—bingo, I'd lower the tuition—not the standards, but the tuition—so accessibility is not an issue.

I've rambled on a bit in the 20 minutes that Cam has been so generous to give me. I think he's generous. I'm not sure he's happy about it, but—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: You're doing fine.

Mr. O'Toole: Yes. Those are a couple of things. We've all said that our joint and common prosperity will be dependent, in a knowledge-based economy, on an educated workforce from the three streams, which would be: field of work, hopefully skilled work, which would include apprenticeship and transition; the college, which is work-ready and can be dovetailed into additional university through credit transfers; and of course university and post-graduate studies in some area.

I think we're all into lifelong learning. Quite technically, it's here. It's not something that's going to happen; it's here. In fact, when I'm finished here, in probably another 10 years—that's what I figure—I'd like to go to law school. I didn't finish my master's degree, but I'd like to go to law school, because you've done so well, obviously. The road not taken, you know. I meant, as a lawyer; as a minister, I don't know. The ruling's not out.

Interjections.

Mr. O'Toole: No, I'm very much an advocate type in terms of people's needs. Our job as MPPs really is to be

the door to government, regardless of ideology and, as such, to know what resources and solutions are there and what decisions have to be made by government. It's when you get into trying legislation, what's in regulation, what can be amended, what's within the power of the civil service to change without, as Cam mentioned this morning, legislative change—if you're going to build in accountability, like we did in elementary and secondary school—they have no room to move. It's all enrolment-based. If you have declining enrolment, you have a serious problem here. Otherwise, you don't need these directors making \$250,000 a year. Do you understand? If they're not making the decisions, let's get somebody who will, whether it's the ministry or the associations of professional teachers.

My wife's a teacher, so I'm very much a supporter of public education, and very much more supportive of the parents' role in education being bumped right up. All of these roles take a family. It takes a family and a community to raise a child, and this continues.

When they're actually paying tuition, as you said earlier, I think it's a good deal. The beauty of enriching your life through knowledge is just valuable. You can't place a dollar amount on that. If it's all based on an income, you should be directing yourself. You should get the 10 top career incomes and just track down the orthopaedic surgeon or the neurologist and get at it, at 15 or earlier. Without going on too much, the question I've asked is for some explanation of the student support, to bring some clarification to that. Thank you, Minister.

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you for the comments that you've made and the suggestions you've provided, particularly in reference to Durham and UOIT. They're fine institutions. I've had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Polonsky. I've not yet been out there, but I look forward to doing so.

Mr. O'Toole: Give me a call. I'd like to attend with you.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That would be wonderful.

With respect to student support, let me zero in on your specific question. You asked about the change in estimates from the 2004-05 estimates of \$102 million. I'm looking at page 40, which gives a little bit further breakdown. It's not broken down between colleges and universities or private career colleges there. It's obviously based on the number of students who apply and where they happen to be going.

We're very pleased to have announced this year some of the most significant enhancements to student support in 25 years. I've outlined those before. We have more to do. There is a substantial investment in financial assistance in the budget. I think that some of the suggestions you make are helpful, and we'll certainly consider those as we march to improve a student financial assistance system.

To the specific question, no, it's not broken down. We don't allocate student financial support by institution; it's

by the student. That's what we expect the increased expenditure for the enhancements this year to be.

The Vice-Chair: Very good. With that, normally the rotation would go to the NDP, but Mr. Marchese is not here. With the indulgence of the committee, I would refer the next question to the government side.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Can I add something for you? You might find this helpful.

The Vice-Chair: Certainly, yes. Absolutely.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: This is not the breakdown for this year, but for 2004-05, some 55% of the OSAP went to university-bound students, 32% to college-bound students, 5.6% to private career colleges, and then 7.4% to what's called the basket of "other"—that's out-of-province and others in Ontario such as agricultural colleges and the like. I don't know if that's helpful, but I thought I'd—

The Vice-Chair: That's very helpful. I appreciate that very much. With that, Mr. Kular.

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Minister, I want to join my colleagues in congratulating you on your appointment as Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

As you know, I'm an internationally trained medical doctor. When I came to this country in 1974, it was very hard for an internationally trained medical doctor to get a residency position to further train in their area of the profession. But from what I have seen over the last couple of years, the McGuinty government has done a lot to help internationally trained physicians get into their own areas of the profession.

A lot of my constituents who are not physicians but who have come to Canada as new Canadians are internationally trained professionals, whether they are pharmacists, nurses or engineers. The question I have for you is, what is your Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities doing to further assist them in getting into their professions?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much for the question. It really strikes to the heart of the experience of so many in the province of Ontario. As you know, a lot has been done over the past 18 months—about 20 months now. We're determined to do even more to ensure that the province is accessible to all people in Ontario, not least those who come from out of the province.

The most recent action by the Premier to ensure that we could take the next step in terms of accessibility is that the specific responsibility for foreign-trained professionals and individuals would be transferred to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, and in the course of the budget there were some enhancements provided to those program areas. The reason for the transfer was specifically to ensure that that area obtained not only the enhanced focus that it has been provided since we formed the government but even greater focus. Minister Colle is responsible for those program areas now and will have the opportunity to devote a substantial portion of his responsibility to ensuring that we take the next step.

One of the steps that we have already, since becoming the government—and I know you have had a huge amount to do with this, having been part of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration as the parliamentary assistant for some period of time and having worked, I know, very closely with the minister, my predecessor, with the Premier, and with others on the full accreditation and integration of all people with ability, not the least of whom are foreign-trained professionals.

What have we done so far? In the area of foreign-trained physicians, as you know, both the assessment process and the accreditation enhancement process have had increased attention and focus, and actually they've been able to assess and now train far more graduates. We've more than doubled the number of spaces, through the efforts of the IMG process, from 90 to 200. To ensure that foreign-trained physicians who are assessed and are found to need a little bit of extra training for whatever reason, they have the opportunity to get that quickly, because in the province of Ontario we need access to these skills.

The province of Ontario has always had as one of its founding themes that you come to Ontario with your ability and you get to use your ability to then develop as an individual to the extent that you wish or desire to, not bounded by any artificial limitations. So in the foreign-trained physician area we've made those enhancements.

We started a number of bridge training programs. I know you've been involved in a number of different capacities, not the least of which is your excellent advice in identifying areas where we need to make improvements and enhancements and in helping to develop those bridge training programs. So in engineering areas and some health areas, we've developed some additional bridge training programs so that people in some of the health disciplines, for example, who have foreign credentials, are able to come here, get assessed quickly and get to work much faster than was possible before.

There are still quite a number of barriers. As a result of that, a report was commissioned and has reported in. The report was commissioned to determine how we could bring all the professional bodies to the table to get their best advice on removing further barriers in terms of the accreditation of foreign-trained professionals.

As you know, many professions, such as mine—law—are independently regulated. The Law Society of Upper Canada independently regulates law. We want the regulatory bodies to make sure that they enforce the appropriate standards and other measures. We don't want them to be a barrier to foreign-trained professionals accessing their profession in Ontario, so this report was commissioned to see what barriers existed and how to eliminate them as quickly as possible. I know that Minister Colle will be energetically working on the results of that.

I think we can celebrate the improvements that have been made over the past 18 to 20 months. There's more to do. With the great advice of all, particularly you, who has been such a strong advocate of this, I think we'll be

able to make the type of progress we'd all like to make so that it will no longer be said in the future that there is any barrier to a foreign-trained professional coming over and practising in Ontario as long as they have the appropriate level of skills that we demand of those trained in this province.

So, lots done, lots still to do, and a program to do it. Minister Colle, I'm sure, will be anxious to speak to the details.

1300

Mr. Kular: Minister, I really want to thank you on behalf of the internationally trained professionals for what you are doing for all of them.

The other area is that three of my four children are just finishing university at the University of Waterloo. They were in a co-op program, and the Ministry of Training, Universities and Colleges is providing a lot of help for these students. The best investment the McGuinty government has made is in post-secondary education. In my riding of Bramlea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, there are some youth who are at risk, and I was pleased to see that very recently you introduced five programs for at-risk youth so that they can have pre-apprenticeship programs. I definitely feel that will help give options in life for youth at risk, or not at risk. It will help them to realize their dreams and their missions. The question I have is, can you tell me how these programs are going to work? At the same time, I was wondering what the province is doing generally to make it easier for all the youth in Ontario, whether they are at risk or not. I think it will also help them to make the right career choices. Could you comment on that, please?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I did have the opportunity just a couple of weeks ago to attend an event in Scarborough at a resource centre to make an announcement that we're expanding opportunities, in particular for youth at risk, opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have had, to enable them to enter a program which can upgrade their academic skills, to provide some skills in terms of employment, to provide some work preparation skills and to get a placement. It's the type of co-op placement that your family has had the benefit of, so that they can experience first-hand what working in a particular trade is. Through these programs, which vary in length of time, they can become ready for either a pre-apprenticeship or an apprenticeship program. They are really remarkable springboards for people who wouldn't otherwise have had an opportunity.

For example, I heard from a young person who benefited from the program last year, a program set up by the carpenters. He spoke very eloquently. In fact, the room was silent when he spoke—a room full of providers of assistance for people, young and old, who have worked on the front lines, who have seen the struggles of many young people, who have realized the hope and opportunity they have for the future and the ability young people have if only given the chance. This room was silent while this young man spoke about the struggles he'd had in life, about the opportunity he'd been given

that he never expected; how he'd taken that opportunity and made the most of it and was now involved in a regular apprenticeship program with the carpenters. It was a very moving experience to stand there and listen to what he had to say. It confirmed for me, if any confirmation was necessary, how important these programs are and what an enormous difference support programs can make if they're available and if people are given the opportunity, because the goal in life is to find the opportunity so that a person's ability can come out. These programs are absolutely fabulous. There were five of them that I announced: one for brick and stone masons, two for construction craft workers, one for cook-assistants and one for general carpenters. They provided opportunities for a total of 100 young people—just five for 100 people who might otherwise have been at risk—to have a future they might not otherwise have imagined.

This is but one piece of a very big picture. We are absolutely determined as a government to provide opportunities that haven't heretofore been available to people, young and old. The Learning to 18 initiative that my colleague Minister Kennedy is involved in is all about not giving up on people. We refuse to give up on people. We know there is ability and skill in everybody, and the challenge for us is in providing that ability with the means to come out and flourish.

The Ontario youth apprenticeship program, OYAP, the pre-apprenticeship programs that we have, the apprenticeship support programs through colleges, are all some examples of how we are providing opportunities particularly for young people to take that positive leap at a much more advanced level. Many of the co-op programs at the University of Waterloo provide individuals who are involved in very intense, very rigorous university degrees with the opportunity to actually apply their knowledge in the work setting. It can strengthen and enhance the value of a university education.

In the same way, co-op placements, whether they're through youth apprenticeship programs or this youth-at-risk pre-apprenticeship project, allow individuals who might not learn as well as others in the classroom or in a more formal setting to experience what work is like in a particular trade, benefit from that and form a connection with some employers, with some good influences out there.

I look forward to working with Minister Kennedy and with you in developing further opportunities for young people to experience these programs and to springboard on to some very positive work experiences.

The Vice-Chair: We'll move to the NDP through the rotation. You have 20 minutes.

Mr. Marchese: I want to continue with the questions connected to student debt and I want to re-ask the same question I asked you in the last few seconds that we had in our exchange. The question I had asked you was, do you know whether student debt burden leads to students delaying normal life stages such as marriage? It's a serious question for me and, I suspect, for many people who think about this. My suspicion is that you haven't

researched that, but have you thought about that in terms of the social implications it has on a generation of people?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think debt is obviously not a good thing, in most cases. I can't think of any offhand where it would be a good net benefit. The question in post-secondary education is how to provide the most opportunities for the people of Ontario to access the skills and training in post-secondary institutions, how to ensure access to the greatest number of people and how to ensure it in a fair and reasonable way so that people are not unduly burdened with debt, so that people aren't denied the opportunity to access high-quality post-secondary institutions. It is a very important question. It has many aspects; you've raised some of them this morning and again this afternoon. It's important for us to keep all of those issues in mind as we develop the appropriate approach for the future, which I think will be based on increasing the spaces, increasing assistance—

Mr. Marchese: Yes, I've got it.

Hon. Mr. Bentley:—keeping in mind these issues.

Mr. Marchese: I have that. OK. Here's another question: Do you know whether a high debt burden forces young people to delay having children? Are you concerned about that? Does it have any social implications?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's an interesting question. I wouldn't tell you that I have studied that specific question. I do know that it is a general observation I have heard and read about that many people, not only in Canada but in the States and Europe, are in fact delaying having children for a number of different reasons, but I wouldn't presume to be the social demographer on that one. It would be interesting on this—and I suspect the other issues you're going to raise—to find out what the research shows, what the issues are, whether they are particular to students in post-secondary institutions or more generally felt across society, and figure out how those factors affect developing an access agenda, of which tuition is a part—but only part—to improve access and quality.

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Mr. Marchese: My sense is that we don't have a minister who addresses these kinds of issues, and I think it's sad, because the effect of all these problems such as high debt is leading to the questions I'm challenging you with, and unfortunately nobody's thinking about it. I think you should, as the minister directly connected to this, but I'm saddened that nobody is thinking about that particular problem.

I generally believe that high debt forces students to make that difficult choice of asking, "Can we afford to get married and, if so, when?" I have no doubt that marriage between couples is being delayed for economic reasons. Not only is marriage being delayed and it's affecting how many children they have, but I also believe that high debt forces students to decide that, instead of three children, they might have two, or instead of two, they might have one. Given that we have such a low birth rate in Canada—and it's worse in some other countries

like Italy, for sure—are we not concerned about it, through the policy changes that we would make that could help to deal with that problem? I'm sure you are interested, as I am, in making sure that we do have a child birth rate that is higher than it is at the present moment, but we're doing very little to encourage that. What I'm suggesting is that high student debt is encouraging young people who get married to have fewer and fewer children.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you for that. I am very concerned about debt. If I was misunderstood, that's unfortunate. I'm very concerned about student debt generally and as it relates to access in particular. That is precisely why we have made the most significant improvements to the financial assistance landscape in 25 years. We reinstated the access grants precisely so that students who otherwise would find it very difficult to go to post-secondary institutions, if they could even consider it, would be able to have access, so they wouldn't accumulate the debt that they'd otherwise have to pay for the \$6,000 first-year tuition and the \$3,000 for second-year students.

That's also why we have improved interest relief and maintained the Ontario student opportunities grant at \$7,000, even though we increased access to assistance for students. All of these and other measures are designed to reduce the burden of debt where it's going to affect access. As we continue to make improvements with the \$1.5-billion investment, I think we'll be able to do more to address debt, which will have whatever spillover benefits—the research that you might be alluding to would—

Mr. Marchese: Thank you for the repetition of those things.

I know that the high debt that students are incurring, beyond those poorest of students who are going to get some grant, will create difficult choices in terms of their ability to afford to buy a house, for example. It will not just delay marriage or not having children or only having one instead of two, but it will also complicate their economic choices around their ability to buy a house. Have you thought about that particular issue and how that might affect the economic health of the province?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think that as we address the access and the opportunities issue, what we all recognize, as I outlined at the beginning, is that those who are able to access post-secondary education are earning \$14,000 a year on average more than those who either cannot or do not access that opportunity. Our determination is to ensure that people are aware of what post-secondary education presents and that they have the opportunity to do so and are not prevented from doing so by financial barriers.

That does mean, of course, when you talk about access, you can talk about any price you like, but if there aren't spaces and if the spaces are not at high-quality educational institutions, then access really is a meaningful conversation at any price. What we're determined to do is increase access. Financial issues are part of that equation—a very important part—but we have to have

the spaces at high-quality institutions with no financial barriers in order to ensure that students benefit financially, as well as in other ways, from post-secondary education.

Mr. Marchese: That was great; thank you. In terms of issues of access and opportunities, my daughter said to me a couple of years ago when I talked about tuition fees for entering law or medicine—you know that entering law here at U of T is about \$17,000 or \$18,000. God bless the university. People like you love it, and it's great to see that. I also mentioned to my daughter that to enter medicine would be about \$14,000 or \$15,000, depending on the institution. At that time, a couple of years ago, she was interested in medicine. She no longer is, but, "If I were," she said, "and I had to pay that kind of money to get into that program, I would never get into that program, because of the high cost of tuition fees."

Have you studied that? Is your ministry studying that? Have you guys thought about it? Does it mean anything to you, or are you going to talk to me about opportunities, spaces and access again?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much for the specific reference to medicine. We have already outlined that we're going to have a separate discussion with respect to access to medical school, a separate discussion which will involve separate considerations of any barriers that exist, including, particularly, financial barriers. So that is separate from a tuition framework that we're talking about. We haven't started that yet, but we will be having it.

Mr. Marchese: Because you are considering something about medicine, let's just say that it was law, and the fees are \$17,000 to \$18,000 for just tuition, and that my daughter was interested in law. She says, "If I had to pay that kind of money, I would never get in." What do you think about that? What do we do?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think one of the things that we're looking at in the discussions about the tuition framework is where the barriers are. Do the barriers to access exist? What are the costs of different programs? Obviously, some programs are much more costly than others.

There's a joint benefit whenever you go to access a program in post-secondary institutions. Part of it is a societal benefit, and part of it is a personal benefit. So if you graduate from a law school and you're able to attend an articling and subsequently a full-time regular position as a lawyer with the firm and are earning a significant salary, maybe that is a factor that should be considered as well in the appropriateness of the types of fees that are presented or that have to be paid.

All of these issues are on the table in terms of the discussion about access in the context of the tuition framework. I think we have to consider all of the issues and come up with the best possible. Students accessing law school will come from many different economic backgrounds. The question is to ensure that all students, regardless of their economic background—

Mr. Marchese: I hear that all the time. Yes, I understand that.

Hon. Mr. Bentley:—can get in on the basis of—

Mr. Marchese: My daughter's a middle-class child, with incomes from both parents, not some kid whose family only earns \$33,000. I'm asking you how you help someone like that, whose choices have been taken away. My daughter says, "It wouldn't be a choice. I wouldn't get into that program."

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Well, I hope your daughter didn't shy away from law for that reason. I think that's one of the issues. That's why we're having this conversation—a conversation that really hasn't been had in the same way over the past number of years when tuition issues have arisen. That's why we're having it: to make sure that we can give access to people who weren't at the table before.

I would say very directly that we're at the table with the students and the institutions. You know, in the early 1990s or at other times, students weren't there.

Mr. Marchese: That's great. I'm glad they're there, and I'm glad you guys have close contact with others. You talk to them and they talk to you, and there's no misunderstanding. It's great to see that.

Can I move on to the federal funding issue? Amendments to the federal budget under Bill C-48 could secure new post-secondary education funding aimed to bolster provinces' efforts at training or, God forbid, tuition reduction. Are you in contact with your federal counterparts to find out when this money is flowing?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: As you will recall, the amendments which would provide for additional funding were amendments that were contingent on a number of different conditions occurring. We don't know whether those conditions have been deemed to have been met, and we haven't been advised, to my knowledge at least, when that money will be flowing.

I have been asked on a number of different occasions what the government of Ontario would do with the money. What you have to remember is that when you invest it, you want to get the biggest bang for the buck. If you invest it, for example—

Mr. Marchese: Let me get to the questions, because I've got questions that lead to those answers.

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: Excellent.

Mr. Marchese: I am convinced that a whole lot of people just want to know where we are with these negotiations. The Canadian Federation of Students, of course, in our discussions with them, is very keen on this. I'm very keen on this. I would have thought you would have been very keen on this particular issue because, as you know, you guys are going constantly to the federal government, pleading, begging, genuflecting, to say, "We need money; you guys owe us \$20 billion," that this would be part of a serious discussion, that you would be there saying, "When is this money going to flow?" When you say to me, "We haven't been advised," what it suggests is you're not actively involved; you're simply waiting for them to advise you. Is that the case?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's not the case at all, of course. There has been quite a number of discussions between

this government and the federal government. In fact, the Premier has been outspoken in standing up for the position and the rights of all Ontarians to ensure that we receive the proper degree of investment in our infrastructure and programs that we should receive. That was the subject of a number of different discussions this past May, and I know that various members of the government are very active in their day-to-day discussions with respect to the various programs in the federal government. They are probably the best ones to speak to those details.

As far as I am aware, I don't know when we're going to receive the funding from the various initiatives the federal government took in the spring with respect to the increased funding for universities. I haven't been advised on when that's going to come.

Mr. Marchese: Why don't you insist on knowing? Why don't you call them and say, "We want to know. We need to know today, not next year, after the election"?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The government of Ontario is having ongoing discussions with the federal government about a number of issues. This happens to be one. At the Council of the Federation, for example, in August, it was determined that there would be two conferences. I am in fact leaving for one at some point in the next day or so.

Premier McGuinty and Premier Charest will be present in Quebec City with the finance ministers, ministers of education and labour market ministers to talk specifically about post-secondary education. The focus for the provinces and territories is on post-secondary education. That will be followed up by a summit that the Premier is hosting in Ottawa on post-secondary education and training issues.

Obviously, the question of the federal government's participation in post-secondary education investment is high on the agenda. It's probably number one on the agenda, because we put our money on the table, and the question will be, not simply when the federal investment outlined in various initiatives in the spring is obtained but to what extent the opportunities that are presented by post-secondary education should be funded and by whom. We will be looking, as the Premier said, on a number of different occasions to our federal partners to provide—

Mr. Marchese: Minister, thank you. I'm glad to hear it's number one on your agenda, and I'm glad of the fact that your members are very active and your Premier is very active. It's number one on his agenda. You haven't been advised of when this money is going to flow. I'm glad you're actively involved to know nothing about this file.

OK. Provided that the budget that passes in this legislative session—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I reject the characterization.

Mr. Marchese: I know you do. Of course you do.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Come on.

Mr. Marchese: Here's the next question: How much does Ontario stand to gain from this agreement between the NDP and the Liberals at the federal level?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I've been constantly asked how I would spend \$600 million.

Mr. Marchese: Six hundred million, right? Is that what you just said?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's the rough figure that I would anticipate.

Mr. Marchese: Have you heard about, if it indeed will flow, at whatever point it will flow, based on the agreement between Jack Layton and Martin, how that money would be disbursed?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I did remember reading just a couple of months ago a discussion between the NDP and the federal government, where the NDP thought that the money was going to flow immediately and the federal government indicated that it wasn't going to flow immediately. It's very difficult to spend money. In fact, you shouldn't spend money before you actually have it. I'm invited constantly to spend whatever money flows as a result of that agreement. My position is, we're going to implement the Reaching Higher plan, because that's money we know about. If and when the money from that agreement becomes available, then we can assess our priorities on an ongoing basis and make sure that that money is used to the best effect.

Mr. Marchese: It makes sense to your members on the other side; it doesn't make sense to me. We're talking about \$600 million through an agreement that was arrived at by Jack Layton and Mr. Martin. I would have thought you would be pushing for the federal government to disburse it quickly and that you would want students throughout Ontario to benefit right away through the increased access that they would get. Why would you not have a plan in place to deal with these funds? You're saying, "We don't have the money, so therefore we are not making any plans." You're not planning at all, or you're not expecting any money? Or are you saying, "No, we're not even thinking about it and we're not doing anything about it until we get it"?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm a little bit surprised that you wouldn't simply phone Jack Layton up and find out what agreement he had with the federal government as to when the money was flowing. He was right there and made the agreement and voted in favour.

Our position is that we're determined to ensure that the federal government fully and completely funds post-secondary education.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, thank you. I just want—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's why I'm going to the conference some time soon, and in Ottawa—

Mr. Marchese: I only have about 30 seconds and I wanted to ask you this last point. I'm in contact with Jack Layton. They're the fourth party in terms of numbers. I would have thought you would have a better connection with your Liberal counterpart and the Prime Minister.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I have already told you the government has been in touch—

Mr. Marchese: You said to me, as an opposition guy, "Why don't you call Jack to find out?"

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I've already told you the government is in constant touch.

Mr. Marchese: Martin is the Prime Minister, you're a minister with a Liberal government, and you're saying, "We're actively involved and we know nothing."

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I've already told you, the government has been in constant touch with the federal government.

Mr. Marchese: And you know nothing.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: But I have not got a schedule on when the \$600 million will flow in here with the agreement.

Mr. Marchese: And you feel good about that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That is contingent money and we don't know the conditions.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Wayne Arthurs): Minister, your time has elapsed on this round. If you could hold those thoughts for a subsequent round, the floor now goes to the official opposition.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Mr. French, perhaps you can help me understand. Could you show me in these estimates where the federal transfers of dollars occur?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Which transfers are you referring to?

Mr. Cameron Jackson: The federal government transfers to the province for post-secondary education. Could you help direct me to the estimates? I have a hard time pinpointing them. Do you have a finance person here? Kevin?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That money might come in in a number of different ways. For example, the OSAP program receives—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I'm looking for a specific line on a specific page. Generally in estimates, the revenue stream clearly identifies—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We have—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Could you please identify yourself for the record?

Ms. Carol Lawson: Carol Lawson, director of planning and expenditure management branch. The monies from the federal government come into the consolidated revenue fund and go out through the college operating grants and the university operating grants.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Let me rephrase my question so you understand it. Where in the estimates book can I see that number?

Ms. Lawson: You cannot see—that number is imbedded within the college operating grant line.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Thank you. Can you give us the breakout of that number so that we can determine the amount of money which is coming from the federal transfer and that which is coming from consolidated revenue as provincial dollars?

Ms. Lawson: I do not have that number.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's Canada social transfer money and it's not specifically broken out.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Minister, how is it then that we can hold the federal government accountable for the amount of monies they provide for post-secondary education, colleges, universities, apprenticeship training or tuition support? How are we able to track that, whether

we know we're getting our fair share from the federal government? Do you personally, as the minister, have a handle on those numbers?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Part of the work that's going on right now between all the provincial and territorial ministers and their various staff is to take a look at issues such as the Canada social transfer, compare it to where it was a decade or more ago, and figure out what it applied to then, what it applies to now and what it should be.

Part of the reason it's been challenging getting into this discussion is that, as you know, the Canada social transfer has been changed over the years for different reasons. So what we are doing is not simply trying to follow a flow of money but looking at the post-secondary education and skills agenda and figuring out who should be at the table and to what extent they should be at the table.

1330

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Fair enough. Having sat on Management Board, there would be a discussion about the Canada transfers in terms of where they're earmarked, because that's the way in which the feds transfer them. They're transferred by commitments, via a series of agreements that fall underneath the overall agreement. That's how it's constructed. So you're saying that currently, the Treasurer and Management Board don't have an accurate handle on the breakdown of those costs from the federal government. Otherwise, you would be in a position to—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, I'm not saying that at all.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Well, I asked if you were aware of them. Does Management Board have them but they don't give them to you?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: What I don't have is the breakout by the line in the estimates item as to what might have come in through the Canada social transfer. What I do have in front of me is something from the public accounts, 2004-05, under "Government of Canada," certain investments and expenditures in a number of different line items totalling \$104 million for things such as official languages in education, college initiatives, special agreement, post-secondary disability funding, Canadian millennium scholarship administrative fees and the like.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: You'll be able to table that with the committee?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We'll get a copy of that.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: So, in your opinion—ballpark—what kind of dollars are we getting from the feds as you jump on a plane to Quebec City to discuss this?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's one of the challenges. When the money comes in through the Canada social transfer and is re-designated in a number of different ways, one of the challenges is to actually reach the determination of what they are investing. And the more important question is what they should be investing. That's the real challenge. It's not simply a question of going back to where they were, because post-secondary today, as you know, is much different than post-secondary might have been 10 years ago. The question is, what are

the costs and opportunities today, who's going to fund them, and who has the ability to put more money on the table?

Mr. Cameron Jackson: That's a fair question for Quebec City. The fair question for today is whether or not our government understands fully where this money is coming from and what the federal government assumes it's going toward, and that's what I was trying to get a better handle on. It strikes me, as a former minister who has had to negotiate federal-provincial agreements, that we generally go to the table knowing whether or not we're getting our fair share relative to other provinces, or we're getting our fair share relative to what the federal government has stated.

I'm not going to pursue Mr. Marchese's line of questioning because we have a fragile minority government federally and I think you have to be cautious about spending money you don't have yet, even though they've promised it. That contrasts rather dramatically with the situation you found yourself in when you formed the government two years ago, when the federal government was a majority government and it had clearly indicated that Ontario was going to get an additional \$1.2 billion in transfers for health, which your paid private consultant insisted he didn't have to account for when he calculated what the projected deficit might be for Ontario if the government changed. So there is a clear distinction between monies that have been legislated to be transferred and monies that are still sitting out there in the ether as an election promise.

I don't want you to respond to that; I just want to put forward my understanding of the issue and relieve you of the notion that you have to have all that money planned for and accounted for, because if there's a change in the federal government, there's no guarantee we're going to get it.

Having said that, I want to talk about the dollars that we're guaranteed of getting right now. I'm a little concerned that we don't have that tied down to the same degree.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Can I just help you with that in 30 seconds—or I'll wait for your question. I was going to give you a 30-second answer.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: That would be fine.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'll hold it to a 30-second answer. As you know through your experience, the Canada social transfer isn't specifically designated into parts. It goes into consolidated revenue and then the government of the day decides how much is going to be spent. It was out of that consolidated revenue that we came up with the \$6.2 billion extra.

That was 20 seconds.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I want to say that one of my requests for information will be to go back and look at the federal transfers to Ontario, to the best of your ability, to determine what dollars you believe your ministry was allocated, year over year. There was a—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We don't have that. That analysis isn't done. Your government didn't do that analysis either, to my knowledge.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: We were in the process of negotiating with the government as well in terms of the Canada health transfers, and we were successful in obtaining additional health dollars. It was the severe cuts that occurred two governments ago to the overall budget which negatively impacted on colleges and universities. It strikes me that it would appear that governments have been in a position provincially to say that the Canada transfers have been cut back, and therefore we're not going to make health pay; we will chisel away and lessen or lean out the dollars that are going to post-secondary education. This is something that was done in most provinces. In fact, most provinces hemorrhaged much harder than Ontario did, even though we hemorrhaged in the billions of dollars in terms of these cuts to our federal transfers for health care. But colleges and universities suffered as a result of those cuts. We are ramping back at a snail's pace. Perhaps we'll have to put this as a question to Management Board, which would probably have a better handle on that. So I will lift the question at the moment and try and attempt that as an order paper question.

I really think, for you to go to Quebec City to argue our case—yes, you were trying to put it into a framework and hold the government accountable federally, but the college system, the university system and the student unions are all of a united mind that until we can get some clarity on these transfers, we're not going to be able to hold the federal government accountable for the transfers that each of the provinces is providing.

I'm going to ask you a very specific question about one of these one-off MOUs between your ministry and the federal government. This question comes from Scott Courtice, who is with the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. He's been in the paper recently with this question:

"International students are not allowed to work off-campus, but on-campus only." That was a concession that was just won for them not too long ago. I know we participated in making that decision. "Their costs are very high and they need to offset them by working wherever they can find work. Beyond offsetting costs, allowing international students to work off-campus will help integrate them into Canadian society, and increase the likelihood that they will stay in Canada after graduation. The federal government announced in April they would begin negotiating a 'memorandum of understanding' with provinces to allow international students to seek work off-campus. On June 14, then-TCU minister Mary Anne Chambers"—your predecessor—"sent a memo to stakeholders indicating negotiations had begun and that Ontario would aim to have the MOU in place by the beginning of the academic year." To our knowledge, that remains unsigned.

Could you give us a brief update on where you are with that and if you are going to be raising that with the ministers in Quebec City?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The federal minister won't be there in Quebec City, so I won't be raising that particular

issue. But that's OK; that issue is constantly being raised, I can tell you, every minute of the day, with the federal government, because it's part of the broader immigration agreement that we've been working very hard to have implemented so that Ontarians actually receive their fair share of federal immigration settlement funding for all those who come to Ontario. It's part of the ongoing discussions we have with the federal government.

I think you're quite right: I won't be able to answer the specific questions you ask with respect to the Canada social transfer breakup, but you're going to defer those, as I understand, to Management Board.

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One of the main points of Quebec City is to continue the focus, the determination of our government, to improve post-secondary education and skills training. We know that people need to come to the table not only with ideas but resources. The Ontario government is at the table with resources very substantially. So the question is how to get the feds there. Some will be talking about specific amounts of money; others will talk about baskets of opportunities. I'm going to be talking a lot about opportunities that exist and then how to fund the opportunities.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: And I support you in that endeavour, Minister, but we need to disentangle this monolithic Canada health transfer fund, which is not serving post-secondary education in its current form. Whether past governments have failed to nail this fog to the wall isn't the issue; the issue is, in order for us to ensure that the federal transfers do not fluctuate at the whim of the federal government and that there's some sort of consistency to honour the commitments in the spirit of the Canada health transfers, that we somehow have some kind of pan-Canadian strategy on post-secondary education. I would hope that not only are we going to look at areas in which we can endeavour to secure additional resources; we need an accountability framework—the same one we are asking our colleges and universities and our apprenticeship training infrastructure to accommodate, we should be demanding of the federal government in order that we can track it.

We were gutted by the federal Liberal budget cuts by Treasurer Paul Martin in 1995. They hurt us badly—and in post-secondary. It's fair to say that you have made a substantive commitment of a multi-year nature, but you will not be able to honour that commitment if the federal government doesn't (a) maintain or (b) enhance its out-year commitments. So there's a lot hanging on the importance of tying this down. When you're talking to the Premier, you might impress upon him—and I understand that you've got your back to the wall on health care, but by the same token, if we are going to position Ontario credibly and securely for the future, we're going to need this tie-down.

So let me ask you this: Do we have access to the agenda for which Quebec and Ontario are meeting to discuss these matters, given that the federal government isn't at the table? Are all provinces represented at this short conference in Quebec City?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: In Quebec City there are a couple of meetings going on. The Council of Education Ministers will be meeting—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Right; post-secondary.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Ministers of education, so it does include both. Some wear the same hat; some don't. They meet tomorrow. Then Premier Charest and Premier McGuinty will be meeting with the finance ministers and the education/labour market ministers on Thursday. They are not, as I understand—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: From each province.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes. They are not, as I understand, open meetings. But they are to further the initiative the Premier has been leading, frankly. He's been speaking about post-secondary education and the needs of education generally—post-secondary education and skills training. That's why we had the Rae report, that's why we've had this substantial investment in the budget, and that's why he's been leading the charge to make sure Ontario gets its fair share. That's why it was an issue at the council—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: That's fine. I wish we could lead a charge knowing how much money we could count on from the federals—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'll just finish this. I think you make a very good point with respect to accountability and changing the approach that has historically been led. I would only join issue with you a little bit when the decisions made by the federal government were made and the consequences flowed to various provinces and on to municipalities through the provinces. Different provinces were then positioned in a different way to meet the challenges. Ontario prospered for a number of years—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Minister, I don't need a history lesson, and you want to get out of here by 4 o'clock today. So let's move to the next question, please.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We might not have gone the tax-cut route.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Well, the federal government seems to have been quite comfortable with it.

Let me, in the brief time that I have left: Who on your team is responsible for developing the accountability framework in discussions for colleges and universities? Who is the staff person assigned to that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Ultimately, I'm responsible.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I asked you which staffer you've assigned it to.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We have a number of staff working on those issues in a collaborative fashion.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: This is really not a confrontational question, Minister. Listen, if you want 27 order paper questions next week, you're welcome to them. I don't think this is a state secret. You have someone working on the project. Rarely have I seen a minister afraid to tell us what his staff are doing.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's not that at all. I just want to know what the question is because I'm ultimately the one who has to answer for—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I'll repeat it for the third time. The question is, which member of your staff is working on developing the accountability—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There are quite a number. The one in charge—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: That's what my first question was: Who's in charge?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The one in charge would be the deputy minister. We have an acting deputy who is in Quebec City right now. The ADM who would be in charge under that is Janet Mason, and she's sitting beside me.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Thank you very much.

Having, with the previous government, worked on accountability agreements in the education system, and your government has assembled them for hospitals, can you tell this committee which areas of accountability, in your opinion, are problematic? Whether in the areas of fluctuating enrolment, faculty renewal, new technology or capital equipment, what areas of accountability are giving you cause for concern that require you to establish a framework agreement similar to the ones that your government did with hospitals or similar to the ones that we did with school boards?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm not sure if—

The Vice-Chair: We've run out of time on this round. You could put that as a question that could be responded to in the next round, perhaps, on the government side.

With that, the Chair would recognize the third party.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, I'm just going to make a statement on the transfer payments, and then I have a question vis-à-vis Bill C-48. Transfer payments have plagued us for a long time, and it shows how much we are at the mercy of the federal government, in the same way that cities are at the mercy of provincial governments. In 1990, the Tories changed the rules, just at a time when we faced a recession. It used to be 50-50 shared programs in the area of social services. In 1990, Mulroney decided to change that. We got whacked seriously. We lost a whole lot of money that we could have used in that recessionary period to deal with our welfare payments, which went from \$1 billion to \$5 billion.

It's a real problem in terms of how you're able to control a government when it decides to change the rules, because we have no control. When M. Chrétien got elected in 1993, there was a lot of hope that all those things would change again, and they didn't; they got worse. In fact, under M. Chrétien, all of our transfer payments were further decimated in spite of the fact that our province was being wrecked and whacked by a recession. It was interesting to note that the Tories and the Liberals provincially used to say of the NDP, "You don't have a revenue problem; you have a spending problem."

I say that because, no sooner did the Conservative government get elected but they started whining about how little money they were getting from the federal government. When we tried to point out as seriously as we could that that's not what they used to say in opposition, they made fun of that as well. The Liberals used to

attack the Tories in the same way in opposition. When they got into government, they simply started whining about the fact that there was a \$21-billion shortage of money that we're paying into the federation and not getting back. You understand what I'm getting at.

We do get whacked by the federal government often, and while it is true that some of this money has started to flow in the last couple of years, it is not at the level that it ought to have been if both the Conservative government in 1990 and the Liberal government in 1993 had given us the support that we needed.

I offer that as commentary. I don't know if you want to respond briefly. I just wanted to make a statement. If it's a brief reply or comment you wanted to make: Please.

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'll await your question.

Mr. Marchese: I was interested to hear Mr. Jackson's reasoning, which is very much your reasoning, around Bill C-48 that would have the transfer of \$600 million to the province. Mr. Jackson is saying, like you, "Well, the money isn't legislated to be flowed; therefore there's not much we can do about it." That's what you said, pretty well. My point around what he's saying and the point you've made is that Mr. McGuinty has had no problems making an argument for receiving more federal support based on what we put into the Canadian federation, which is in the order of \$21 billion, he argues. He's not shy about that. He's not shy, you're not shy and most of you are not shy to say, "We need more support." There is no bill in the works federally that is contemplating giving you more of that \$21 billion, but we do have an agreement federally between the Liberals and the NDP that says you should be getting 600 million bucks.

As much as you say that McGuinty is a leader in this and it's the number one priority, and you're connected, I'm puzzled as to why you are not making this an issue, given that there's an agreement in place, and why publicly neither you nor the Premier is saying, "We need this \$600 million today, before an election gets called." If I'm puzzled, imagine what other people are thinking. I don't know what you're thinking, but I would prefer to see you out there in the trenches saying, "Where's the 600 million bucks?" But I haven't heard that. Why?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Actually, discussions are going on between our government and the federal government on quite a number of issues, including investment in post-secondary education. It's not simply a means of achieving the outlines in the federal budget agreement; it's a means of achieving a much broader sustainable investment in a number of areas, including post-secondary education and skills training.

That's why the Council of the Federation in August highlighted it as an area. That's why there are meetings in Quebec City. That's why, frankly, there's going to be another summit in Ottawa. That's why the Premier has made a request of the federal government to put post-secondary education and skills training on the agenda at the federal, provincial and territorial meeting at the end of November. It's not a question of saying, "Oh, yeah;

\$600 million. Well, I guess that's it," and then we go away with one-time funding. It's a matter of ensuring that investment in post-secondary education meets the needs not simply of the system, not simply for today, but into the future.

Mr. Marchese: I understand.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'll add the time I didn't use up before in making a statement just here. All I'll say with respect to the \$600 million is, absolutely am I concerned. Any money that can flow, I want it. But what I won't do and what I don't have an interest in doing is engaging in a conversation about how to spend something that I don't yet have, and I've been invited to.

Mr. Marchese: These are the questions I'm going to ask you. These are the questions that are coming. The point I was making is that you're not raising a fuss about not getting the \$600 million.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We are. We're raising a big fuss.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, yes, I'm hearing it all over.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Sometimes negotiations aren't best played out on the front page.

Mr. Marchese: Here's my problem. This \$600 million is in the works based on an agreement, and you're saying, "Well, it should be part of a broader discussion." There's an election coming. This \$600 million that has been agreed to could be lost after the next election, because we don't know what's going to happen. You're saying, "We're putting off something that we can get today on the basis that we've got a broader agenda," and I'm saying to you if that there's an election, we don't know what's going to happen.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We're clearly not saying that. At no time have I ever said that. As you know, the agreement itself, the one that was negotiated, has a number of contingent requirements.

Mr. Marchese: Yes, and I want to get to that. Let me ask you this—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We're asking constantly for the federal government to invest in post-secondary education and skills training in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Marchese: Yes, that I know. My questions are very specific, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: To suggest that I have no interest is simply not the case. We have a very determined—

The Vice-Chair: One at a time, please.

Mr. Marchese: My question has been answered.

The Vice-Chair: Are you satisfied with the answer?

Mr. Marchese: I'm very satisfied with the answer.

I have tabled a motion to ensure that, once the provincial government receives Bill C-48 funds, once it receives it, whenever it receives it, they would be used for the intended purpose. The motion I've put forward reflects the agreement, and I want to know whether you will do that. So let me ask you: If you do get the money, whenever you get the money, will you use it to reduce tuition fees for all post-secondary education programs?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The two-part answer is that, first of all, we haven't decided how we will use the money, if and when it comes. Secondly, as you would know, in-

vesting a fixed one-time amount to either freeze or reduce tuition fees only takes you for a very limited period of time. So it might be the purpose of your bill to invest in a one-time or two- or three-year freeze for a number of students—

Mr. Marchese: So you're not interested in reducing tuition fees.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —but then what happens at the end of that period of time with the money? If you're going to fund the institutions—and maybe you're not going to—for the consequences of the freeze, a fixed amount of money, one-time, gives you limited relief.

Mr. Marchese: I understand your argument.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Those are some of the things that we have to factor in in any determination of how to spend a fixed amount of money, including the \$600 million when it arrives.

Mr. Marchese: When and if it comes. I understand.

I am reflecting, through the motion I'm introducing, the spirit of that agreement, and I'm just asking you whether or not you will keep up to that agreement. Based on the answer to A, you're saying, "No, we're not going to do that. It's one-time money that's not going to be helpful to freeze." You didn't comment on reduction of tuition fees, so I'm assuming you're not going to keep to the spirit of A. Let me ask B, spirit B.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I would have thought the spirit of the investment was to ensure that the people of Ontario have an extra \$600 million to invest in the quality of and accessibility to post-secondary education, because that's what I take to be the spirit of that funding.

Mr. Marchese: Sure. I know what you're saying. I'm only reflecting the spirit of the agreement, and the spirit of the agreement includes what I just read out to you, which was A.

The spirit of B is this: Will you use Bill C-48 funds, assuming they come, when they come, to support increased access to apprenticeship training programs?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There are actually two parts to that. We're going to use any funds received from the federal government in the best interests of the people of Ontario, and in the area of post-secondary education we'll determine where the priorities are and where the specific needs are when we receive the money. But the second part of that answer is that we've been working very hard to implement the labour market development agreement that the federal government agreed to implement in the spring with the Premier. We're working very hard to do that, and part of that agreement would involve additional investment in areas such as apprenticeship training and skills—

Mr. Marchese: I have some questions on that in a few moments.

The spirit of that agreement, which is part C, says, will you use Bill C-48 funds to establish a needs-based grant program for post-secondary students?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Would you assist me with where the specific words are with respect to the spirit of the agreement that you're referring to?

Mr. Marchese: These are the three that I'm reading out to you.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Where did the spirit come from? Where was that outlined?

Mr. Marchese: From the agreement between Mr. Layton and Mr. Martin.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: But who actually outlined it? Is that contained in the words of the agreement, which I don't have in front of me at the moment?

Mr. Marchese: I'm sorry—your title? I forgot. You were nodding. Do you want to help out? No. OK.

That is what we know to be the spirit of that agreement. If you don't know about it, that's fine. I'm just asking you the questions and asking you to respond to them.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: OK. So that's what you understand to be the case, but it's not necessarily—

Mr. Marchese: Yes, and I'm asking what you understand to be the spirit of the agreement. Do you know?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: And the third basket that you were asking, whether I would use it to—

Mr. Marchese: To establish a needs-based grant program for post-secondary students.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The good thing is that we have restored grants for the neediest post-secondary students in Ontario, those with the lowest incomes. We started that process even without an additional \$600-million investment. So we're leading the way on that, and, as I said with respect to my answer to financial assistance, we will continue to find ways to improve financial assistance out of the basket of \$1.5 billion. If more money becomes available, there are other opportunities.

Mr. Marchese: I understand. It would be useful for you to look at the spirit of that agreement between the two parties federally and then reflect on the questions I asked you, because we might come back to this another time. You never know.

On apprenticeships, before the last election Dalton McGuinty promised to get rid of the classroom fee for apprenticeship brought in by Mike Harris. Dalton McGuinty said, "Ontario Liberals will get rid of the \$400 'classroom fee' that was imposed by the Conservatives. We believe this acts as a disincentive to potential apprentices." How are the plans to get rid of this fee progressing?

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: Well, we're not quite two years into the mandate. I've actually been very concerned about apprenticeships and ensuring that we have the strongest possible recruitment and training system. That's one of the reasons I announced about a month ago that we would be convening a round table of those on the front lines of apprenticeships—so labour, business, educators—to get some good advice on what's working and what's not; what are the barriers, and you mentioned one possible barrier; and how we improve the system. As part of that discussion I expect the \$400 fee will be discussed, and I'll receive some very good advice from those on the

front lines. But we're certainly working to improve access and apprenticeships in every way we can.

Mr. Marchese: I understand. But McGuinty was very clear. He's your leader and he's your Premier. I quoted him. He says, "Ontario Liberals will get rid of the \$400 classroom fee." You're asking for advice. You're two years into the mandate; soon it will be three, and soon there will be an election. Do you have a sense of whether or not this is important to you and McGuinty? Do you think it should be eliminated based on the promise you made, or are you just taking advice now from different people?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, the advice is with respect to how to make the entire system a stronger one. The Premier was very clear in his comments with respect to the \$400 fee, that in his view it does act as a barrier, and that's the advice I have received from a number of different quarters—so to bring that advice to the table with the experts, the front-line people, and find out how we address a stronger system. I know I'll have more to say about that fee in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Marchese: Sure. But my point is that McGuinty said, "We're going to get rid of it."

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We've still got more than two years to do it.

Mr. Marchese: He wasn't waiting for advice; he wasn't waiting to talk to experts; he wasn't waiting to talk to the front line. His promise was, "We're going to get rid of the \$400 fee." Are you in agreement with him? If so, when are you going to get rid of it?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I am always in agreement with the Premier.

Mr. Marchese: When are you going to get rid of the fee, then?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We're not even two years into the mandate, and we will be delivering on all of our commitments as quickly as we possibly can.

Mr. Marchese: OK. When you got into power, you got rid of the private school tax credit. It took you very little time. Why is it taking you so long to get rid of this fee even though you are in agreement with your Premier? He is the Premier, he said he's going to get rid of it, and you're saying, "We're taking advice." I don't get it.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I don't know; I just got here. But I've got an action table set up that will be meeting, hopefully, within the next couple of months. We'll get some good advice on the apprenticeship system. I think the Premier has outlined one of the barriers to entry in apprenticeship programs. I'm looking forward to getting that advice and building a stronger system.

Mr. Marchese: Right. I appreciate that you just got here; quite right. But do you agree that the fee is a disincentive, or do you agree with the Premier that the fee is a disincentive?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: As I said, I always agree with the Premier.

Mr. Marchese: You always agree with the Premier. OK, that's very good. Well, you've got some time, obviously, and the civil servants know about this promise.

They'll help you out and remind you that it's a promise you've got to try to keep.

Many people who train apprentices also feel that the Conservatives' decision to scrap wage requirements for apprentices was a bad idea. Does the ministry have any plans to reinstate those requirements?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I appreciate your question, and I think that's one of the issues I will raise at the action table, to find out whether that action in eliminating was appropriate and what the consequences are.

That's one of the good things about convening an action table of experts. I personally haven't gone through an apprenticeship, unless you call articling as a lawyer an apprenticeship. It's a little different; similar in some ways, but a little different. One of the reasons you call to the table people who are actually on the front lines is that you get their front-line perspective.

Mr. Marchese: So you're going to be considering that.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: You probably have a list of things you want me to consider, and that will be helpful, because I can bring those to the table.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, is there such a thing as an "action" table versus a "passive" table? Does the table have a name?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes. Lots of people talk, but we like to take action, just like those action groups—

Mr. Marchese: Just like getting rid of the \$400 apprenticeship fee?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's actually like the action groups we had in health and safety. We got experts together, and then we were able to launch a plan to increase the number of inspectors to a higher level than they had ever been in the province, develop a health and safety system, and a number of other things.

Mr. Marchese: But on the point of getting rid of the \$400 classroom fee, we're sitting on a passive table, then?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, we're sitting on a very active table, and that's going to be right at that table—

Mr. Marchese: When does that table scream for action?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The reason we're having it is because we want to take action. We'll be setting up the meeting in the not-too-distant future.

The Vice-Chair: That ends the time for this round. Now it goes to the government side.

Mr. Milloy: Minister, I wanted to talk about—I'll call it "your empire": all the different things that your ministry is involved with and the interaction between them. We look at some of the job training supports that you have, some of the more basic skills and literacy programs. You have many different apprenticeship initiatives within your ministry, and then, of course, you can add some of the post-secondary programs, both at the college and university levels. It seems that there's a lot for people who are coming into the system, and I'm thinking particularly of some of the issues involving new Canadians and also young people in general who are

trying to look at this menu of different programs and how they fit together. I'm just wondering, are we undertaking measures to try to assist people to navigate through the system and to come up with a program that's best for them?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: You just made a fabulous point, and that is that there are so many activities by the government of Ontario, by private providers and by the federal government. How is somebody who needs some assistance, whether it's literacy assistance, integration assistance if they're a foreign-trained professional, whether it's skills upgrading—how are they to figure out which door to access? That is why we're establishing our one-stop training and employment system.

One-stop really is a way of connecting up all the good work that's going on out there in the areas of skills development, skills training and skills enhancement to ensure that, no matter which door you access, whether you go into the Job Connect service, whether you have a literacy issue, whether you have an apprenticeship or a pre-apprenticeship issue, you can go in, find out all the information you need to find out, get the assistance you need, either at that location or a referral to the specific location where you can get the assistance, and have the offices coordinate so that you don't have long waits between getting the services; in other words, develop a seamless, integrated information system.

It's so simple that you wonder why it hadn't been implemented before. We're determined to do that, and when we get to the labour market development agreement with the federal government, we'll be in a position to make sure that all the services really can speak under one roof. That's the goal of the system. We're working very hard on a platform to connect up our provincial services at the moment. There has been a lot of work done already; I met with a group of stakeholders just the other week. It's not a system designed from the top down; it's a system designed from the level of the one who has to access the system up. We're building on the great network that is in existence in a number of communities—not in others, but in a number of communities. We're building on the strengths of a localized approach to local issues. We're building on the networks that have already been developed. What we're going to do, as we create this one-stop system, is connect up people who aren't connected, build on the strengths of the networks that already exist, but take advice on where the gaps in the system are. Different communities, again, might have different gaps.

As you connect up the points, you're able to build a much stronger foundation for an employment system. This will be great for the person—let's say they have a literacy issue. They happen to go into an MTCU office where the people are experts in a number of different issues, including apprenticeship. The applicant should be able to get some information about literacy supports that are available, where they can get an assessment of what they really need as opposed to what they think they need, how to get themselves scheduled into the courses or classes that are available, and then how to go from that to

the next step, because literacy, if it's going to lead to employment, must lead to a next step. So do you go from literacy into, for example, a pre-apprenticeship program? Do you go on to a college diploma program? Are you in a position, given your level of skills, to go into some other program, whether it's a college degree or university degree etc? The whole goal is to connect up, build the foundation, fill in the gaps, and enhance one-stop, no-wrong-door access for all.

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Mr. Milloy: Great. That was very helpful. I'm going to take a step back and switch gears slightly. I want to talk about access to post-secondary education. Obviously, there's been a lot of debate and discussion that you've had, particularly with Mr. Marchese and others, about fees and encouraging students and assistance and all that.

What's interesting is that when I talk to many university presidents and senior people, obviously these issues are all top of mind, but what's also top of mind is going back earlier. I've had many university presidents say, "You've got to start when children are five, not when they're 17." It's a very broad question, but as you take over the reins of this huge task, I just wondered about the sort of priorities that you have as a minister to reach out to very young people who aren't traditionally headed toward that direction.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think you make a very good point. It has been observed before that around half of the people of the province actually go on either to post-secondary education programs or to other levels of skill enhancement. That means that half don't, and if we're to meet the challenges of the future, we have to have an increased skill level and knowledge level as a province.

The fact of the matter is that our human capital is the only thing that we can't borrow or buy from somewhere else. We're competing with jurisdictions that, in some cases, graduate more of certain necessary professions than we do. In some cases, they have more Ph.Ds and masters than we do, or, in some cases, they can compete at a much lower wage level than anybody in the province of Ontario would want to. In order to meet those challenges, you need to enhance productivity at every level. To enhance productivity, the key goal is to enhance knowledge and enhance skills.

How do we get the other half of the province to consider skills enhancement or college or university? Let me just talk about a couple of initiatives. The Reaching Higher plan specifically references these issues. Inherent in the substantial investment we're making in operating dollars for colleges and universities—the type of investment that they are not used to receiving—is the development of places not now available for undergraduate but also for graduate students, the development of programming opportunities in areas that might not otherwise have been available. So operating will support access.

We also targeted in the budget a specific initiative for groups that tend to be underrepresented in our post-secondary education and skills placements; for example, aboriginals, persons with disabilities, francophones and

students who happen to be the first generation of their family to consider a post-secondary education. How do you get greater access for all, but in particular and maybe firstly among those groups?

We're going to start with some strategic advice, so we're setting up three committees. I outlined one of them that has already started up. The persons with disabilities committee has already met with my predecessor. We're going to have a couple of other committees with respect to aboriginal issues. Also, on francophone issues, I've been working with my colleagues Minister Ramsay, who's responsible for aboriginal affairs, and Minister Meilleur, responsible for francophone affairs, with respect to those committees. The idea here is not simply to spend money or come up with ideas to spend money but to give us some strategic advice. What should the access agenda look like over the coming years to ensure that more and more persons generally, but in particular from these groups, can access the post-secondary agenda?

There's also money attached to that for some additional enhancements over and above the other things that we're going to be doing. It begins at \$10 million and goes up to \$50 million over five years for those extra access projects.

I would say that we have a large number of people, maybe in remote communities, maybe in isolated communities—I'm thinking particularly but not exclusively of the north—where you don't have a post-secondary education institution on your doorstep or even within a road commute or any other reasonable commute. So how do you get access to that? There are some Internet e-learning initiatives that have already been undertaken by various colleges and universities in the north. We're going to start developing an even more creative approach to the future, one which will look at obtaining access for individuals who'd never thought of having access to post-secondary education in the past simply because of the remote nature of their communities.

We're going to have to get creative. As I say, we can't recreate a college or university on every doorstep. The Internet will be part of that answer. The Internet alone, I suspect, is not the only answer because ultimately you need that interaction between student and faculty, but we're going to be developing an access agenda to reach out.

"What about students in elementary school?" you mentioned—an excellent thought—"who've never thought of going and, in particular, whose parents have never thought that their child should go on to a college?" One of the things that our society has done over the years—and it's not a direction we've actively taken; it's just a direction that has passively occurred—is place so much emphasis on universities that we might have forgotten about the great work that can be done through our college system.

My friend MPP O'Toole mentioned Durham College. My colleague MPP Jackson mentioned Mohawk and Niagara and Sheridan. I'm sure MPP Marchese was

about to ask me about all sorts of colleges in the GTA, such as Centennial, George Brown, Humber and others.

Mr. Marchese: There's so much to ask.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: And there's so much to ask and so little time to answer.

The Vice-Chair: With that, I think we're interested in moving on. If you just want to wrap up that one, we'll move on to the questions.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much. There's so much to say, so little time, but you get the idea. I appreciate that.

The Vice-Chair: With that, we'll now move to the official opposition.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Minister, let me finish with the accountability framework. I had put the question on the table that—I guess there's a general, brief question: Why are you entertaining an accountability-type framework with consequences and penalties and so on that have been structured in this province for school boards and hospitals and now for this group? What is the reason we need to create a new accountability framework, and what problems have you identified that need to be included that currently don't exist in the memorandums of understanding that are signed between the government and each college and university annually?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thanks for that; it's a very good question. Accountability is to ensure that the additional investments that the people of Ontario are making through the Reaching Higher plan are going to achieve the results for which we're making the investments: access and quality. I understand that there are a number of reports that are already made by colleges and universities on a yearly basis with respect to accountability. We're developing a model—and we're starting from scratch—for accountability to ensure that these new investments achieve results.

You mentioned a couple of possibilities, such as previous accountability agreements with respect to school boards, or agreements with respect to hospitals, but we haven't reached a decision on our approach because we're just into the discussions with the colleges and universities on what it should look like. The goal is to provide the appropriate degree of accountability so you achieve the goals you're after, whether it's increased faculty, increased student interaction, increased resources, without placing the institution in too tight a restraint or constraint that would inhibit their own differentiation or flourishing.

So we are developing these agreements, and I wouldn't say that it's a question of identifying problems in the past; I wouldn't say that at all. It's to ensure that there is the requisite relationship between the investment the people are making—and they are investing in post-secondary education as opposed to something else—the legitimate expectation the people of Ontario have that every dollar they're investing is going to achieve some measure of improvement and the ability to make sure that the investments actually achieve the improvement. That's the purpose of the accountability.

This year's interim agreements are going to look different from future years', simply because we're trying to get it done as quickly as possible. We want accountability, but we understand that it will be a less complete conversation with the institutions than it will be for the future.

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Mr. Cameron Jackson: When do we normally have our agreements in place with the colleges and universities and their funding is cleared to them? What month do we normally have that matter tidied up? I think that's more of a staff question.

Interjection.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: So between May and August, for the record.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes, and last year I think it went out in August.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I have asked you the question earlier, and you indicated that you hoped to have that done by year-end, because colleges are currently spending.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes. By calendar year-end, you asked me, I think.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Yes, by calendar year-end.

I was the colleges and universities critic and the skills development critic back in 1986, I believe it was, when Lyn McLeod was the minister and brought in the envelope system. Could you share with us to the best of your ability just how the modified envelope system will impact on the accountability framework? In other words, I've had colleges and universities talk about how the system penalizes based on enrolment that fluctuates beyond a predictable factor. That's a safe way of putting it.

That'll lead into a discussion I want to have with you about the transition from regular schools and various other issues. I'm trying to get a sense of how the accountability framework is going to overlay the issue of enrolment fluctuation, because some universities and colleges will tell you that they feel punished by it and others feel they are able to take advantage of it. I'm sure you've been briefed in this area, and I just wanted to engage you briefly for a sense of knowing where you stand on it or if you're sensitive to it and if you're monitoring it, because there are a whole series of things you and I want to talk about in growth.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It is an issue that has been brought to my attention in a number of different ways for a number of different reasons by many different institutions. Institutions that have taken on extra students may feel that there are some funding inequities as a result of taking on these extra students. Students are taken on for all different reasons; you'd get a variety of different reasons. I'm very interested in finding out what the effects are of those funding inequities in the system, so we're having a discussion about that. For example, what are the effects in terms of the student experience, faculty-student interaction and the types of resources? We signalled, in some previous discussions with the institu-

tions, that we would be in a position to address some of these funding inequities.

One of the things we're looking at in terms of the interim accountability agreements—that's this year's accountability agreements—is how to address that and a number of other issues at the same time as getting accountability for the infusion of additional funds through what was called the transformation money, which you saw at the bottom of page 33 of the estimates.

That's why this conversation is a bit of an extended one. The institutions have spoken for years about these funding inequities. You'd have that funding inequity based on the example you gave. Northern and rural colleges, for example, have come forward in a number of different ways and are having discussions about their funding challenges. You mentioned that the previous government had instituted an enhanced northern grant in one particular year, I'd guess probably to address some of those issues.

There are funding issues between colleges and universities about what the appropriate distribution of money should be, and everybody puts up a very forceful argument. Within the college basket or the university group, the institutions themselves might have discussions, arguments of their own.

I'd just wrap up my answer by saying that I'm having those discussions. We're determined to improve the system. How we do it is the reason we're taking a little longer to have the discussions than we might have in prior years, because so many things have come to the table at once. It's great to have these discussions if there's no money, but then you only have discussions. This year, because there's money, the discussions are taking on a little bigger life because we're able to breathe life into addressing some of the issues through the infusion of funds.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Minister, you referenced the post-secondary transformation dollars of \$243 million, and I referenced the grants for university operating costs of \$157 million compared to grants for college operating costs at \$3.5 million. Can you, roughly, articulate what the breakdown might be of the \$243.7 million on the post-secondary transformation—just a ballpark, at least?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think that's a two-part conversation. We haven't finally determined what the allocations will be.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: And you've said that. I just find it unbelievable that your staff doesn't have ballparks for that.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm going to give those to you.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We've signalled in some prior correspondence that the amounts would be \$87 million for the colleges and I think \$124 million for the universities, and there are some other expenditure items.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I was just going to say, who gets the balance of the \$28 million?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That is to support things such as additional enrolment growth, graduate expansion and some other baskets.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: All right.

Minister, we've identified at length the issue around transferability/portability between colleges for credit transfers and universities. We have a patchwork of agreements. In what framework are you addressing this problem? Who is at that table, what are your expectations, and what is your timeline?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's one of the areas that has been brought up by a number of different institutions and individuals. We've started the discussions. I think it's a very important area to have a much more complete discussion about.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: With whom?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think we need to have a discussion with the colleges, with the universities—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: But you said you've already begun them. We've identified the problem. We're all in agreement. I'm asking you, do you have a framework for these discussions? Have you notified the colleges and universities that, "This is a commitment of my ministry to resolve this issue in one, two or three years. Here is the framework in which we are going to have those meetings"? If you haven't begun that, that's fine. I'm not going to put a value on it; I'm just asking if you have begun that in any formal way.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No. I've had some very preliminary discussions in my initial meetings with both the colleges and universities. I don't think it would be quite correct to say that all are in agreement, and you probably didn't mean it in that way.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Of course not. This is a turf war, to a certain degree; however, I've heard you say you agree that we should be streamlining this issue to the best of our ability, because some institutions seem to be able to achieve agreements and it's working well, and others do not. Let me ask you—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: One of the things—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I'd really—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: OK, fire away.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: We can really understand the issue here. I'm just trying to determine where your priorities are for the coming year. May I ask you, will you put that or parts of this question into the accountability agreement?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I haven't made that decision, but I suspect not into the interim accountability agreements. Whether that issue is on the table in a more complete way for the others is an interesting question.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I suspect you will have enrolment leakages, if they're tracking carefully, that would cause concern, because these are revenue issues, they're student loan/debt loan issues and so on and so forth.

Let's see, what did I want to get into next? Can I ask the same kind of question around the removal of the tuition freeze on behalf of student organizations both provincially and nationally? They would like to know, have you put together a consultation framework, and if so, whom will you be consulting with? What are the terms of reference? When do you expect a deliverable? What are your deliverables?

We understand the issue of the cap, and I've not commented on it because I understand the Rae report and I understand what the Premier has said. I'd rather move forward on what you plan to do to navigate that minefield over the course of the next six months, a year or whatever.

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: We have started those discussions directly at the table at the moment. We have the three student groups—two university and one college—we have the colleges and we have the universities.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: And the time frame in which you hope to complete your consultation?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The institutions in particular would like us to make a decision sooner rather than later. What I've said is, we're going to keep having the discussions and continue them until we get it right. Obviously, everybody wants to know in time for the next academic year what the approach is going to be, so we're working as quickly as we can. The discussions aren't limited, obviously, to those at the table, because there are quite a few others who want to participate in some way, shape or form—and they are. They signalled their intent and they will be participating.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Student organizations have indicated very clearly that they want stability and predictability, and you've acknowledged that. They are also anxious to determine the level of federal government support that's dedicated in this area, first of all so that they can have accurate comparators between provinces, but also to predict the ratio of tuition to program costs, which seems to be a substantive benchmark that's used by organizations.

I wonder to what degree you will be able to extract from the federal government a commitment to a multi-year agreement to ensure stability in this area, so that we will have a foundation on which to build our tuition policy, more so than we have in past years. This is the way I'd like to frame that.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Obviously, it would be ideal to have a multi-year funding agreement by the federal government to infuse money into post-secondary education and skills training. That would help our general investments and of course further inform the tuition framework. I don't think we can wait for that. I think we have to develop our framework in time for the end of the freeze. Then, if additional monies are available, we'll take a look at the post-secondary education system and figure out where those additional monies should be invested.

If some of the federal money is specifically targeted, then that obviously affects the consideration, but I think you make a good point about having a multi-year agreement. That would be great, because it gives you much more flexibility in terms of where you invest the money than if it's only a one-off agreement.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I'm going to shift to a couple of other areas that I raised very briefly in my opening statement.

The Vice-Chair: You have three minutes.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Three minutes in this rotation? Very good. I'll finish with a simple one.

I'm a little concerned about TVOntario moving out of your ministry. I have a whole list of reasons why I think TVOntario should be repositioning itself to address lifelong learning and I don't think that is the purview of a K-to-12 minister, if I can put it that way. I really feel it's a powerful instrument. Aside from the political comment that its budget has been slashed by \$3 million—in that size of budget, I'm not sure that's that significant. What I think is more significant than the budget cut is the transfer, because there was a concerted effort to move more in terms of targeting, preparation, transition for dropouts to go into post-secondary education, to promote apprenticeship training, language difficulties and under-represented organizations with programming support. No minister likes to see a program taken away, but I guess it's my way of saying, how are you going to vigorously fight to make sure that you get your fair share of air time based on your mandate, which in my view is incredibly important?

The younger cohort is bombarded with all manner of things on television. Your mandate is not commonly found on the airwaves, to put it that way. I really felt that was a huge loss. If you want to share with us some of your concerns or what you might be doing to ensure—I went so far as to say “before the programming gets hijacked by special interests.” Yours doesn't. Your ministry has not found itself in the awkward position that some ministries find themselves in, and that's good, but the one it's in now generally becomes an instrument for various other agendas and not necessarily something as direct and important as you had. I just share with you my disappointment. I hope you find some mechanism to tether your ministry's objectives to it, because I think that was a serious loss for TVO, for the ministry and for the Premier's overall agenda here, frankly.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Just briefly, although it was \$3-million cut out of our budget, TVO's overall money went up by 8% last year, I think, from \$54 million to \$58.8 million. The minister will speak specifically to the TVO issues. While it was in TCU, there were a number of initiatives that both our ministry and the Ministry of Education had that involved TVO. I think there is an opportunity for education generally to improve in TVO, both for adults and youngsters, and I'm sure the minister will be addressing that very specifically. I look forward to working with him and to using every means available, including TVO, as a way of getting the adult education message out. I'll stop at that.

The Vice-Chair: Now it's time for the rotation to the NDP.

Mr. Marchese: I want to go back to the apprenticeship issue, but I was reminded about something that Mr. Jackson raised, so I thought I would ask it now and then move on to apprenticeships. I was thinking of your framework table around tuition fees. That's an active table, right? The Canadian Federation of Students is calling for a freeze of tuition. The Ontario Undergraduate

Student Alliance is calling for a 30% cap on tuition fees, on the overall cost of education, so tuition should not go beyond 30%. How are you going to get them to that active framework table to discuss the matter of tuition fees going up?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Actually, the CFS has made it quite clear—and I know that you know—that not only do they want a freeze, but they have long called for the reduction of tuition fees, and I have heard that message loud and clear. OUSA and the College Student Alliance are at the table. The point of the table is not to tell everybody before they sit down that they have to agree to something, not to say, “You can only come in if you’re going to talk about certain issues,” but to get the best advice on what the framework should look like. Obviously, people start at different points of departure and they will give advice without giving up their point of departure. I’m not asking anybody to say, “You can’t give advice unless...” What I said is, “OK, I hear you on whatever issue it is you’re talking about, whether you’re an institution or the College Student Alliance or OUSA or CFS. Give me your best advice on issues such as predictability, transparency, how to improve the system generally and how to develop a framework that will work best.”

Mr. Marchese: I understand. I know these positions to be strongly held by these two organizations. I share both of their concerns. We, as New Democrats, called for a 10% reduction in tuition fees in the last election, so we’re on the same track with the students. I’m assuming that you’ll have a vigorous discussion at the active table, and I just thought I would raise that with you.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: An active discussion at the active table.

Mr. Marchese: The labour market development agreement: How much revenue is the ministry hoping to obtain from the labour market development agreement with Ottawa?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There are two parts to that. The labour market development EI part II issues are \$500-million-odd that the federal government expends every year in Ontario. Our position has been that we want a transfer of that to the province of Ontario.

You will remember that the agreement outlined between the Prime Minister and the Premier in May also called for an additional infusion of \$314 million a year into the province to support Ontario’s programs in certain areas, to recognize the fact that Ontario historically has received less than the national average in terms of federal transfers.

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Mr. Marchese: OK, so the Premier asked for more money at the May 7 meeting. Martin and McGuinty agreed at that meeting that that agreement would be reached or a deal would be reached within 30 working days. That was over 150 days ago. Do you know what happened?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I am working very hard to implement that agreement.

Mr. Marchese: You’re new to the job. “We don’t really know.” It’s hard.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I am working very hard to implement that agreement.

Mr. Marchese: Have you been screaming at that active table to get this thing moving and that kind of stuff?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think you could say that I’ve been very active at that active table.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I’m not sure I did the shoe-off thing, but—

Mr. Marchese: But you’ve been active. In terms of being active at that table, do you know what the status of those negotiations is?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I’m working very hard to get that agreement implemented. I’m not trying to be difficult, but you’ll appreciate that sometimes negotiations proceed better when they’re not done publicly.

Mr. Marchese: I understand. I was just reminded earlier that when the Premier of Ontario wants to make a point, he doesn’t get dissuaded by whatever it is that federal members might be saying, including the Prime Minister. It surprises me, given the agreement the Premier had with Martin that an agreement would be reached within a month, that we haven’t and that we’re silent, on the basis perhaps that silence is a better prescription to getting an agreement. I’m just puzzled a bit.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I’m not sure silence is a better prescription. I think you can take it that we are very actively working at every table to implement that agreement, to get the labour market development agreement for Ontario. These are active, minute-by-minute involvements.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, I feel the energy. Do you have a sense of what ministry programs and initiatives are currently on hold because of these stalled negotiations?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No initiatives of our ministry are on hold as a result of not having a labour market development agreement. What we aren’t able to do is integrate federal programs into our one-stop system, but we’re proceeding with our one-stop system. What we aren’t able to do is directly benefit from the additional infusion of funds that is outlined in the agreement until they actually start flowing. It’s like other “may” agreements. So we’re very actively working to have these funds flow so that we can all benefit from the opportunities.

Mr. Marchese: You understand how relieved I am that all of you are so actively working on it.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I can sense the relief.

Mr. Marchese: Before the election, Dalton McGuinty said that this agreement was extremely important. He criticized the former government for not reaching a deal. He said, “The Harris-Eves government was too busy fighting with the federal government to partner with them on a skills strategy for Ontario.” What do you think?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: You know, the Premier has stood up for Ontario. He made the \$23-billion gap an issue.

Notwithstanding that some might have looked askance at the issue when he first raised it, he outlined the issue clearly, articulately and made the case. It's not a question of eliminating the gap; it's a question of achieving fairness for the people of Ontario. We continue to be very dedicated to doing that. It's an ongoing thing; it's not a one-off argument or issue. The Premier's working very hard, as are the rest of us, in achieving not only fairness for the people of Ontario but, in my particular case, the infusion of funds for post-secondary education and training and specifically the labour market development agreement that you asked about.

Mr. Marchese: If I replaced "McGuinty" and put, let's say, "John Tory," and I say, "John Tory says that the McGuinty-Martin governments are so busy fighting with each other that we are not able to achieve a skills strategy for Ontario," what would you say?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think that you were on me a few minutes ago—

Mr. Cameron Jackson: You'd be saying he put words in Tory's mouth.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes, I think you were commenting earlier that you weren't hearing the yelling from the rooftops with respect to a number of different issues. I think that our position is to be firm, fair and resolved to achieve a better deal for the people of Ontario. That has been the Premier's approach generally and specifically. How others would react, I'll leave for others to speak for themselves.

I note that the \$23-billion-gap issue was supported by all three parties in the Legislature of the province of Ontario. I would be surprised if it hadn't been. It was supported by all three parties.

Mr. Marchese: I don't recall the Conservatives and Liberals siding with us during the recession. The federal Liberal government in 1990 slashed the transfer payments from 50-50 agreements. Then in 1993, when M. Chrétien got into office, he made further slashes.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: We did vote with you on that.

Mr. Marchese: You did?

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Yes. I was there. I've been here 21 years, and I remember.

Mr. Marchese: I remember Stockwell getting up, and I remember Monsieur Gary Carr and so many others. You weren't there at that time. "You don't have a revenue problem; you've got a spending problem," you'd say. I thank you for your support, even though we didn't have it.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: You have the advantage on me, in that I wasn't there at the time. I was busy practising law in London, Ontario.

Mr. Marchese: A better thing—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: A different thing.

Mr. Marchese: —at that time.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The Premier will continue to be very determined, and progress has been made. It is an issue. We've got the feds to the table, and we've got them talking. We have the May agreement, and we're going to get that implemented.

Mr. Marchese: In his report, Bob Rae recommended that colleges be made responsible for the entire apprenticeship application and intake process. Is the ministry planning to act on this recommendation?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's an interesting recommendation. I took a look at that, and my first question was: What do all the other people who are involved in apprenticeship training think about that—the businesses, labour organizations and unions?

I had the opportunity just a few days ago to go down and speak at the building trades convention in Kingston, and received some advice on that. I think that one of the things that our action table on apprenticeships will be able to address is how to build a stronger system. You bring all the people who are involved in it together. You get them talking about the issue together. You think about how to build a stronger system. Are there ways of doing something differently than we have done them to make it stronger? As my colleague MPP Jackson said earlier, I don't think you necessarily stick to the way it has always been done. You say, "Let's look at how it has always been done. Why? How do you make it stronger?"

As to the specific recommendation, I think I'm looking forward to some good advice on how to build a stronger system.

Mr. Marchese: My sense from what you just said is that we're probably getting a commitment from you that before you do anything, you are likely to bring to this active table the stakeholders, including the industrial and building trades, OPSEU, the colleges and teachers' unions, before any changes are made. Is that my sense of the commitment you're about to make?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We have announced an action table. We'll be bringing labour, business, trainers and educators to the table to talk about how to improve the apprenticeship system. When I struck the health and safety action groups, I was actually struck by how many people wanted to be at the table. It's not always possible to have everybody at the table. What you do is you bring a representative sample to the table and get some good advice.

I say to everybody who wants to provide advice, please, don't wait. Please, give us advice, such as you're giving me here today on program directions we might consider taking. Give us advice on what it should look like. We haven't decided on the representation of the table.

Likewise, on that specific recommendation, that is an idea out there. It will obviously, I suspect—I shouldn't say "obviously," because I'm not going to dictate the agenda to that extent, but I suspect that will be an issue on the table for this action table to consider.

Mr. Marchese: You've announced a target of 7,000 new apprenticeships registered under your plan every year, to a total of 26,000 each year by 2007-08. What steps are you taking to make sure that this goal is met?

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: A number of different steps. Let me highlight a few: first of all, the apprenticeship training tax credit. This provides support for employers to

take on apprentices. Apprentices are an enormous resource for employers. Sometimes they're an additional training cost to an employer to take them on, especially at the very beginning. So an apprenticeship training tax credit provides an employer \$5,000 a year, up to \$15,000 for three years, to take on an apprentice. The word about this is getting out. It's not everywhere. I'm a bit surprised, but it's not everywhere. We're developing some strategies to get the word more actively out. We need employers to know that they can get a direct benefit from this type of credit.

Secondly, programs such as the co-op diploma apprenticeship program encourage individuals to look at apprenticeships in a different and creative way. Our funding support for colleges in particular will enable them to enhance some of the apprenticeship and related training programs they have—the spots.

Our approach to one-stop will help to demystify the training and apprenticeship system in particular. We're going to be having some information initiatives in the secondary schools to make students more aware of the opportunities that the trades can present and that apprenticeship opportunities in particular can present. We're investing additional monies in our training system, particularly in the apprenticeship area, to make sure we can grow the system so that we can come up with those extra 7,000. I expect that at the action table I'm going to get some more advice about opportunities to look at so we can improve, enhance, our apprenticeship system and get our extra 7,000 individuals. Those are just some of the areas.

Mr. Marchese: OK. I've got a couple more questions. What steps have you taken to create placements for these apprentices, as opposed to simply registering them?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Employment placements. I think the apprenticeship training tax credit is one of the most significant. I think the point has been made on a number of different occasions that it's great to start them in the course work, but they actually have to have a place to go. The apprenticeship training tax credit encourages employers who might be concerned about taking on an apprentice to do so or to take an extra one on. It also encourages employers to release those apprentices for their in-apprenticeship classroom training, whether it's day release or a multi-week release. I think one of the things we have to do—I'm just taking a look. The scholarship and signing bonus for students who've left secondary school, go back and get their education upgraded and then sign on as an apprentice: There's actually a signing bonus of \$2,000 for the employer to take that individual on, so that's a direct incentive to an employer.

One of the other things we have to do, though, at this table and in the discussions that will surround it and come out of it is take a look at why some employers don't take apprentices on. Some of them don't sign up apprentices at the beginning. Some of them are happy, as I heard over the last weekend, to poach from others after the apprentice has been in the system for a year or two. Some wait until they're journeypersons. We need to

figure out what is going on and why, and what everybody at the table can do—not just government, but everybody—to improve the system.

Mr. Marchese: Right. That's what I was thinking. So you're not waiting for the employers to access the tax credit, because you obviously realize that some are not, as you've just pointed out. So because some are not, you and your ministry staff are looking at some strategy to make sure the word gets out, and that's it, basically?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, no, no.

Mr. Marchese: Please explain it to me so I know it better.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: What I said was that there is an investment in the apprenticeship area. It's going to grow to \$11.7 million annually by 2006-07 to support apprenticeships. When we get the labour market development agreement, there's specific agreement that was reached in May for funding to enhance apprenticeship opportunities in all aspects. As we continue to grow the OYAP program in high schools—it's now over \$20,000 a year—it will encourage more to become involved in apprenticeships. The Learning to 18 initiative will present many opportunities for young people to retain a connection with education of some description and then move on—some—to apprenticeships.

Mr. Marchese: You'll remember that my question was, what steps have you taken to create placements for these apprentices, as opposed to simply registering them?

The Vice-Chair: The time has pretty well elapsed for this rotation. We'll now move to the opposition.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Minister, I want to revisit some of the concerns being expressed by ACAATO, the colleges of applied arts. They have indicated on the tuition fee policy that they would recommend that you fund increases from government grants and not tuition fees; however, if you are required to do that, that they be done in a predictable manner. Then they go on to talk about how the boards want to have greater authority in setting fees by expanding the deregulation fee environment. They go on to ask that future tuition fee policy not include the tuition set-aside provisions—I assume they mean by that the set-aside increases that were earmarked for low-income students.

Could you respond a bit in terms of where you're coming from? I know you are going to be doing this in an open consultation manner, but I can tell you that I feel very strongly about the provision of access for low-income students, so I may not necessarily agree with ACAATO. If that continues to be the framework, I would want to hold on to that.

Let's take the microscope up for a moment and just ask you about some issues about the principles here of differentiated fee schedules based on program, on the principles of lower fees for lower-income students and/or those who have not had access to the system historically, and, in particular, if you have difficulty with the tuition set-aside provisions.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: ACAATO has brought a number of different issues to the table, and, I might say, par-

anticipated very completely in the discussions that we have been having, and they're ongoing discussions. I did mean it when I said that we haven't yet designed the framework, so I'm actively taking advice on what it should look like. I think we have met the number one requirement by very actively investing in post-secondary education through the Reaching Higher plan; that's bringing money to the table to support it. The question is, does the system need a further infusion of funds, and where is it going to come from?

Based on achieving a system that has improved access and improved quality—let me address the access issue, because it is one that you particularly highlighted. I've already said today that we introduced the grants for low-income students for both colleges and universities. That was specifically to ensure that students who might have been prevented by sticker shock and unwillingness to incur debt would have access to post-secondary education. I think it was a very important initiative. Can we build on that for the future? Absolutely.

The set-aside monies, which were instituted under your administration, I believe, provide a rather substantial basket of money for the institutions to provide sometimes work opportunities, sometimes bursaries, sometimes grants, over and above the OSAP provisions for various students. We're having some discussions about the set-aside. We've only just started those discussions about what it should look like, about whether it's working as everyone would like it to work. We're going to continue those discussions; we haven't made any decisions about the framework generally or about the set-aside in particular.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Very good. Minister, as I track various annualized fees, whether it's park admission or Ontario drug benefit—there's a whole host of these, and they all have different determinant frameworks. Cabinet approved some; minister's discretion—are you prepared to look at multi-year commitments? Are you prepared to put that on the table: that, if you're going to do multi-year funding to universities and colleges, you would consider doing multi-year lock-ins for tuition? You haven't taken that off the table?

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: No; not at all.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: But you're prepared to look at that.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Absolutely. We haven't gotten into what that framework would look like.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: OK. It has been mentioned by some of the student organizations that they want to look at multi-year predictability—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: In terms of tuition?

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Yes.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I should say that, in fact, that's one of the things that we have been able to find as being very positive, that there should be predictability in the approach.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: All right. Then let me proceed—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: But that is a little different issue than a multi-year tuition framework.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: It's just so that students know whether you're going to tie it to a cost-of-living index or if you're going to tie it to performance, or what. Whatever you're going to do, I'm just simply saying that the history in Ontario is to announce it on an annual basis, like we do rent control, based on some loosely defined formula that may or may not have political intervention by cabinet. So hopefully we'll move outside of that framework, which hasn't done really well, from my recollections sitting around the cabinet table.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think that's good advice, and we'll certainly strive to achieve that type of stability.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Thank you. Minister, earlier—or no, late last week; Friday of last week—I attended what was loosely defined as an opening for John Stewart University in my riding of Burlington. It exists as a unique collaborative project by virtue of legislation brought in by our government in the year 2000 that allowed for private universities. There was considerable excitement on the faces of 118 student candidates who were screened out of over 550 applicants to attend that private university in order to gain their teachers' certification. And they're paying \$15,000 each for that privilege. Most of them said to me, "You know, it's cheaper here than it is for me to go to the States, and I can't get into an Ontario teachers' college. I cannot get into one in New Brunswick," which is where a lot of my constituents who don't get in try and get into.

I was struck by how well-received the whole process was. In fact, I must have talked to eight retired teachers from the Halton separate and public school boards who all now have wonderfully paying jobs and are very happy. The school boards are there endorsing it, and so on and so forth.

I guess my question to you, Minister, is: Prior to your arrival at Queen's Park, your party had a lot to say in opposition, condemning these kinds of proposals. So I'd like to know if your party's position has changed very much now that it's in government, or if you are going to process further applications much in the same way as the previous government did under the enabling legislation.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's a very interesting question. I very much appreciate it.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I'm sure you do.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: My focus in the couple of months that I've been here is really on implementing the Reaching Higher plan, which is additional funding for our publicly funded institutions. I haven't yet addressed my mind more completely to the other issues, which I certainly will, other than, unfortunately, to say that I wasn't able to meet with the new president because of this and a number of other commitments this week.

I was asked the same question a slightly different way by a slightly different group of individuals a couple of weeks ago, and it is a question to which I will address my mind in the near future.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Minister, are there any current applications or pending applications before your

ministry in this regard? The legislation still is in effect. Are there any of those, and which individual on your staff is responsible for that program?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There are a number of them. Some are on the way to PEQAB, I think, and some have gone through PEQAB.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Could we request formally a list of all applications and their status since the program inception in 2000? That would be very much appreciated.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: For the teacher ones?

Mr. Cameron Jackson: No, my question was generally about all applications.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Just a second here.

Actually, there's apparently a PEQAB Web site that has all of them on them.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: It's good to know that you and I are both learning about it for the first time.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: And I was about to say the same thing.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I would be surprised to learn if the pending applications are sitting on there. There's some confidentiality—but they are. I'm getting all sorts of incredible nods.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Obviously, I haven't looked at it.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: No, no, that's OK. Neither have I, actually, but I've been contacted by various groups who are seeking accreditation and then the ability to charge Ontario residents and other students the same.

In no apparent order—just in the time remaining—another position that your party used to take in opposition was that of the gulf between what an international student pays for tuition and what a domestic student pays for tuition. I wonder if your position has changed very much or if you're concerned about the gap.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Again, I wasn't here during the opposition days. We are working to implement the immigration agreement, which will give students from outside the ability to work. With respect to the Reaching Higher plan, my focus, to be perfectly direct, has been on implementing the plan. I haven't begun to address issues such as the one you just outlined.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Then may I ask another question? I recall when Premier Harris returned and we were discussing the Premier's round table, similar to the one that you're about to engage in. Amidst a bunch of other provincial Premiers complaining about transfers and the time-honoured view that Ontario has everything, I recall vividly the sort of abrupt conversation between the then Premier of British Columbia and our Premier, who was pleased to share with him, "Please be aware of the fact that a disproportionate number of BC students attend university in Ontario, where they're heavily subsidized, versus the number of Ontario students who attend BC institutions and receive different treatment in terms of the netting out." We have a formal agreement that exists when these matters occur under the Canada Health Act. We have no such system for students.

My question to you, Minister, though, is: What kind of a handle do you have on the imbalance between students

who come from outside the province and who are attending our institutions, and those who are obtaining their education in their own province? This is not done to inflame anybody. If we can enter the debate on inequities between provinces, it's important to put on the record that—when we were trying to sell the issue of the double cohort, I oft-times said that I wished I was born in Saskatchewan, because I could have entered the work-force one full year earlier than I could because I was born in Ontario, and for some reason, we're the only province that feels that we need one more year of education than the rest of the country. Putting that facetious comment aside, it is true that we were receiving 17-year-olds into our university from Saskatchewan when we were all 18 or 19 going into university. Are you on top of that statistic? Does it give you any concern? Is it an issue which you're prepared to raise in the context of the importance of getting fair and equitable funding treatment?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, it's not something that I'm looking at in terms of the fairness and equity issue. I think my approach to the issue would be this: We want to make sure that there are opportunities for all of the students in the province of Ontario. For that reason, we're growing the system. We're producing greater opportunities.

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But you know, those who come from somewhere else, whether it's within Canada or from outside Canada, bring something extra or something special to the table. They bring their own background, their own experiences, their own knowledge, their own approaches to issues. That type of infusion of students into the province of Ontario can only enrich the educational experiences that all Ontarians receive at our publicly funded institutions.

I think it's important in addressing the question—in the way that you're addressing it, and I quite appreciate that—that we understand it's sometimes not simply a question of adding up the dollars but a question of taking a look at the other benefits that many others bring to the table. For example, when a foreign-trained student comes to one of our institutions, they bring their background, and then, when they leave, they take with them knowledge of Ontario—a great idea to set up future trade and other relationships.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Minister, I think we've both addressed this previously in statements. I just wanted to know if you were tracking this statistically; yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: You're not. OK, thank you.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I personally am not.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I know you're not sitting at your desk doing numbers. I'm not seeing any nods from your senior bureaucrats that you're tracking this in any fashion. OK. We are tracking, though, domestic versus international students because of the substantive fee differences? OK, thank you. Could we have that breakdown as a statistic, please?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We don't have a figure at hand.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: You don't have it at hand? OK.

Minister, I'm going to spill over into your former ministry, but this is something I've got to get off my chest, because I was unsuccessful in all my years in cabinet at getting it fixed. It affects your ministry, and let me tell you how.

We have a summer employment program in this province and we dole money out to ministries and so on and so forth. If you are attending a post-secondary institution, you get paid at one fee rate, but if you are a graduate of high school and have enrolled in a university, you get paid at the lower rate. I think that's discriminatory and I would ask if you could speak to whichever minister that affects, whether it's at Ontario Place or young people working in our parks. As a former labour minister, I think you'd see the fairness of what I'm raising, but as Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I suspect the importance is amplified of treating students who are entering university at the same pay rate as students. The issue, as I understand the genesis of the program, is that it has more to do with helping them pay their way through university than compensating them for their specific skill set. If I could just leave that with you and if you could make that one of your little projects, it would be wonderful.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you for raising that with me.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: I'm running out of time. Minister, you received a considerable amount of experience in the Privy Council as the Minister of Labour. You mentioned earlier that you'd heard this concept of poaching for the first time recently. I want to ask you if, as the Minister of Labour, you had considered any of the concerns being raised by trade unions and employer groups as well, and now, wearing the new hat of Training, Colleges and Universities, if you've looked at any strategies that deal with poaching. There are known to be three or four different strategies to deal with it. Is this something you're prepared to look at fairly quickly to ensure that we can stabilize the environment around which employers are making current decisions with new dollars from your government, but doing them with a slight bit of trepidation?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Gosh, they shouldn't be making any decisions with any trepidation. We're determined to improve the system. When we talk about poaching, that is a piece of advice I got from the business council I met with some months ago, that some employers are borrowing permanently, if you will, apprentices started by other employers.

The question is, looking at it soon? Yes. Am I confident that we're going to have the answer to the question? Gosh, I don't know that I could say that. I think you're right that we need to start with employers, at the businesses, and find out what the real issues are. Why do they take apprentices who are a couple of years in, for example? "Poaching" is not the best word to use for it, but why do they do that? Why do some employers only

want apprentices for a couple of years, don't want to finish them off? That's the flip side.

I think we need to have a more complete discussion. I won't promise you that I'll have the answer in a couple of months, but I'm certainly going to start the discussion.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much, Minister. Now the rotation will return to the NDP. I recognize Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, back to apprenticeships: Education assistants, child and youth workers, and early childhood educators must register as apprentices now. Some have speculated that there are potentially as many as 20,000 of these workers registering. Will you count these toward your target of 7,000 new apprentices?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Obviously, all apprentices in recognized apprenticeship programs will be part of the apprenticeship basket in the province of Ontario. The reasons you have an apprenticeship are manifold. You have it to ensure that you can provide the appropriate level of training, the appropriate knowledge and the appropriate ability to interact in various work environments.

Mr. Marchese: Right. My point is that these people already have a degree and, under normal circumstances, they could go out there and get a job. Now they have to get an apprenticeship. I'm asking, will they be counted as part of the 26,000 you want to have as your goal to get into this program?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Actually, the one you outlined is not a compulsory trade, so they don't have to register as apprentices.

Mr. Marchese: So education assistants, child and youth workers, and early childhood educators don't have to register as apprentices?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: They're not compulsory trades.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Would you mind just saying that for the record? Identify yourself.

The Vice-Chair: Identify yourself, please.

Ms. Sandie Birkhead-Kirk: I'm Sandie Birkhead-Kirk, the assistant deputy minister of the labour market and training division. In each of those areas, apprenticeship is an option. They can choose the apprenticeship route or they can choose the post-secondary route. They're not required to register; it's not compulsory.

Mr. Marchese: So if they already have this degree, why would they want to—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: They don't have to get the apprenticeship.

Mr. Marchese: Yes. She just said it's an option. My question is, why do we make it an option? What's the point?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: An apprenticeship can offer different opportunities in a number of different ways. An employer looking at somebody who is not an apprentice—take a carpenter, for example. You don't have to be an apprenticed carpenter, but an employer knows that if you're an apprenticed carpenter you've got a certain common core of training, including health and safety

training, you've been trained by people who are experienced in the area, and you have an easy ability to blend into most places—

Mr. Marchese: I understand. But let's take the example of early childhood educators, because my daughter went through that program and she's now a teacher. She did a lot of training on the job, which would be considered an apprenticeship. Why would they want to do it again? I don't understand the benefit of that.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think that these are options.

Mr. Marchese: But why make them options? I'm not understanding it. I know you were trying to explain it, but I'm saying that early childhood educators get that apprenticeship program, so why would you make it an option for people like that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: An apprenticeship in these areas is an option for a student who wants to enter the workforce but doesn't have the diploma or the degree that others have. It's not a question of taking a degree in the area and then going into an apprenticeship; it's an option for someone coming out of, for example, secondary school with a diploma and saying, "Do I want to go on to a diploma or a degree at a college or university, or do I want to enter an apprenticeship in this particular place?" They have that option.

Mr. Marchese: So if an early childhood educator who's got her or his degree already decides, "Here's an option. I can go and get my apprenticeship," they count as part of your numbers. Is that the point? Is that correct?

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: Well, they would count, but I can't imagine that they would want to then register as an apprentice, because they would already have the knowledge.

Mr. Marchese: That's what I was saying to you. That's the argument I was making. Your point was that it's an option for them, if they want to. But not for them—ah, so now I understand. It's an option for some, but not for them.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, no, no. Somebody coming out of high school can take a number of different routes to whatever their ultimate destination is. Some will enter college or a diploma program knowing they want to end up in the profession you've outlined; some will not. For those who do and get the degree or diploma they want, they can then go to work with the benefit of that degree or diploma. Someone coming out of high school who doesn't wish to enter a formal college or university degree or diploma program can enter an apprenticeship in a number of different areas, including this one. It's an option. It's another route to success.

Mr. Marchese: I understand the idea of another route to success. Maybe you understand it better than I, but I'm just trying to be sure that we're clear on this. You're giving me an example of some high school student who drops out and comes back and says, "I want to get into this apprenticeship program."

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Or doesn't drop out.

Mr. Marchese: Or doesn't drop out. But if you have an early childhood educator who's already gotten her

degree, we assume that these people probably wouldn't opt in to this apprenticeship program.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Right. I think that's the right assumption, and they won't be counted.

Mr. Marchese: Is this my misunderstanding of what might be going on out there in terms of our understanding of this, or is it just a confusion?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: If somebody completes their degree or diploma in early childhood education and wants to do an apprenticeship, we're not going to stop them. I can't imagine that most would want to, but there will always be exceptions to every assumption.

Mr. Marchese: Right. So the people I've mentioned—early childhood educators, education assistants, child and youth workers—can, if they want to—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's not a compulsory trade. That's right.

Mr. Marchese: I see. OK. Moving on: In a release on September 13, the ministry brags about creating the apprenticeship training tax credit to, as you say, "encourage more employers to hire and train apprentices." Is your ministry sure that credits are only granted to applicants providing a registered skilled trade?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There are a number of listed apprentices to whom the credit will apply. The Ministry of Finance, in conjunction with our ministry, constantly updates the list.

Mr. Marchese: How big is that list, by the way?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There's—

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Over a hundred, so it's hard to ask you to list them all.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I suspect it's a public list.

Mr. Marchese: On the Web site?

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: The question was, does your ministry ensure that credits are only going to applicants providing a registered skilled trade?

The Vice-Chair: Pardon me, Mr. Marchese. If persons are going to be speaking from the floor, would they come to the table and identify themselves? It's for Hansard primarily. If there's a specific request, Mr. Marchese, you could ask for a staff person and then the minister could respond.

Mr. Marchese: Of course.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The answer to the last question was yes; she tells me it's on the Web site.

Mr. Marchese: Given the yes, how do you do it, s'il vous plaît? Confer with the minister, and then answer. She can answer for you, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's on the Ministry of Finance Web site. You can access that information.

Mr. Marchese: If you don't mind, Minister, could we get her to tell us how that works? If you don't mind, that is.

Ms. Birkhead-Kirk: Sandie Birkhead-Kirk, labour market and training division. When an apprentice is registered, there's a contract that's filed with us, and the

employer shows a copy of that when they file their income tax. They can also check it with us.

Mr. Marchese: So they have a contract with you—

Ms. Birkhead-Kirk: It's filed with us. The contract is between the employer and the apprentice. It's filed with us.

Mr. Marchese: How do you know that the work actually happened or that the apprentice actually got to be apprenticed or that the person actually did the work or got paid? How do you really know those things?

Ms. Birkhead-Kirk: Because we have field staff who do the registration and monitor the contracts.

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: Chair, if you don't mind, it's getting harder for me, because I'm getting older and it's hard to hear when people are yapping.

The Vice-Chair: Would the government members respect who has the floor? Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Marchese: With all due respect.

Sorry, I got interrupted so I couldn't ask you the follow-up question. I don't mean to put you on the spot, by the way. That's not my intent. So how many field staff do we have?

Ms. Birkhead-Kirk: About 100.

Mr. Marchese: Was this number specifically created for this particular program?

Ms. Birkhead-Kirk: It's part of the apprenticeship program field staff, and the tax credit was one of our new initiatives.

Mr. Marchese: Have we always had 100 people as part of the apprenticeship programs?

Ms. Birkhead-Kirk: About that, in terms of field staff, yes.

Mr. Marchese: With the addition of these new programs, we still have the same number of people going out in the field?

Ms. Birkhead-Kirk: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Marchese: Do you think that's—that might not be fair to you.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much. I'll take the "do you thinks."

Mr. Marchese: Minister, what do you think of that, the same number of field staff dealing with 26,000 more people getting into these apprenticeship programs? Do you think you've got an adequate number of people to oversee this program?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Actually, the ministry has, as I understand it, always monitored the contracts between employers and apprentices. This would go back many years; probably during the NDP years as well. The monitoring is the same that has been going on. If there are suggestions that it should be done in a different way, I'm always happy to hear them.

Mr. Marchese: It's not a matter of whether I have a different suggestion. My question was, given that you now have introduced a new program with a new number of apprentices who are going to be in place, it would seem to me that field staff would have additional work. Are you concerned?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm always happy to hear about workload issues and others. As we make sure that the one-stop system develops across the province, we'll have a greater opportunity to even out the workload for any who have a significant amount of extra to do at any one point in time. I'm not aware that there are issues with respect to the apprenticeship field staff other than that I know they will work very hard, as it has been my experience that all of our public servants do in the course of their employment.

Mr. Marchese: I don't dispute that these folks are working hard; that's not the point. There may be problems out there, and at some point, when we have the opportunity, we'll bring those out to you. But I think you should be worried, because I suspect there are problems in this particular sector. I think we probably don't have enough field staff, based on the new programs, and I'm not certain and feel secure that we have the proper oversight. What you're telling me is that you feel OK.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm not aware of the issues, and if they're brought to my attention, I certainly—

Mr. Marchese: Well, the staff seems to be comfortable with that. Very good. There will be another opportunity for us to bring this issue to you.

According to an August 13 article in the Ottawa Citizen, Dell Computers is claiming the apprenticeship training tax credit for training staff in their call centres. I was just reading this article a little while ago. I've got it here with me, by the way. I think they're going to be training 500 people. What registered skilled trade might these employees be learning?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The Dell agreement reflects the fact that we're prepared to make sure that our training and employment division actually adapts to the needs of a changing workplace. The fact of the matter is that we have to look at strengthening our existing training network and developing opportunities to train people in new and different ways. One of the things that Dell and other high-tech companies offer is the ability to train people with their own up-to-date, most modern equipment and—

Mr. Marchese: Let me ask you another question. The apprenticeship training tax credit: It says, "The apprentice is in a qualifying skilled trade approved by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities." Is what Dell is providing by way of a trade part of the 100 trades listed?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The answer is yes.

Mr. Marchese: Could you read from the sheet she sent you what trade this appropriately fits into?

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: There are actually three that I have here: network call specialist—

Mr. Marchese: Network cabling.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Sorry, network cabling specialist.

Mr. Marchese: What else?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Help desk analyst and IT analyst.

Mr. Marchese: Health desk analyst?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Help desk analyst.

Mr. Marchese: Yes. That's two. What's the other one?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: IT analyst.

Mr. Marchese: IT. The company wouldn't get a credit for all 500 people; they would just get the tax credit for the trades that are identified in your 100 list, which is network cabling—what is that, by the way, Ms. Birkhead-Kirk? Maybe the minister knows.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, I don't actually; but what I do know is that we have an arrangement—

Mr. Marchese: I know about the arrangement.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —with the industry so that they can benefit from the tax credit opportunities to increase the skill level of people who will be employed in Ontario, specifically at Dell in the Ottawa area. It's a very important investment for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, I know that.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: And it's a very important investment for the people in the Ottawa area.

Mr. Marchese: I know that, too.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's the type of approach that I think we'll really want to take a look at and see whether it works, to make sure that we can continue to meet the skill needs of employers in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Marchese: By the way, McGuinty was very excited by all this. It must have helped him. It's a big deal.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's an excellent opportunity for the people in Ontario.

Mr. Marchese: So you would be giving these apprenticeship dollars to only those people who are connected to the network cabling, help desk analyst—what do they do, do you know?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, I don't, actually.

Mr. Marchese: And IT. Do you know what they do?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, I don't.

Mr. Marchese: OK. Well, we'll have an opportunity to come back. You'll be able to be briefed by Ms. Birkhead-Kirk.

The Vice-Chair: We have about three minutes left.

Mr. Marchese: Three minutes on that 28-minute round?

What we understand is that—based on my little note from my little researcher, by the way—this is a wonderful staff you have there. I love the way those sheets come forward; it's just so easy. Dell admits that it takes three weeks to train, not three years, in this case. Is that the case?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I don't have that information.

Mr. Marchese: Ms. Birkhead-Kirk?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: She wouldn't know the specifics of the Dell program.

Mr. Marchese: She wouldn't know either, eh?

Here's the point I'm making: Dell admits that it takes three weeks to train them, not three years. So presumably Ms. Birkhead-Kirk and your political staff are working this out to make sure that they only get three weeks of apprenticeship dollars rather than three years. Is my understanding correct?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The program requirements are outlined for all to see. It's a tax credit. It's there for the opportunities. I don't have the specifics of the agreement

in front of me. This is an opportunity to ensure that we provide an opportunity for individuals to get training they wouldn't otherwise get and for a company to establish and hire people they might not otherwise hire.

Mr. Marchese: I understand that, Minister. Could I get a commitment from you or your staff, in writing, that I have an undertaking that you will let me know whether the training of these people takes three weeks or three years, so that you and I have a good understanding of this particular issue?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I don't know that I would want to undertake to tell you what another company is doing in the detail that you may—

Mr. Marchese: You are not interested in learning about this?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: An eligible trade qualifies for the apprenticeship training tax credit. If they are an eligible trade, then there is more training. If they're an eligible trade, there is a period of training that is outlined. It generally would be for a lot longer, I would think, than three weeks.

Mr. Marchese: So I can't get an undertaking from you to review, for me and you, that this training of these people will take three years, possibly, or one year or six months or three weeks?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: My understanding is that the training that is being done at Dell complies with the requirements of the apprenticeship tax credit.

Mr. Marchese: So you're not interested in working this out with me to find out how long this training actually takes and to put that in writing for me?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm very interested in ensuring that the requirements that are contractually obligated have been met and that the apprenticeship training tax credit is being used for the purpose for which it was intended.

Mr. Marchese: Mr. Chair?

The Vice-Chair: You've got one minute left.

Mr. Marchese: You see, this is what I was interested in. When I was talking about oversight, I was not only concerned about the issue of the field staff, but I'm also concerned about your interest in making sure that we're spending public dollars—taxpayers' dollars, by the way—wisely. What you just told me is that these people apply as part of the agreement, and I'm asking you, could you get something in writing that says the training is actually three weeks or six months or three years, and you're saying, "I'm not interested in doing that," because they fit into the program, they'll get the money, and that's it.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm very interested in ensuring that people's taxpayer money is appropriately spent. That's why the purpose of the Reaching Higher plan is to incorporate accountability agreements. No, I don't think I'm going to get into a process whereby we'll go through every single trade and every single possible agreement with the ministry that the ministry has, which are probably your follow-up questions. We will investigate those and determine what the training requirements actually are.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Wayne Arthurs): Your time has expired for this one.

Mr. O'Toole: It's limited to 10 minutes this time. Mr. Jackson is not here; he's out making an inquiry, so I may have to share some time with him. I am going back to the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, which is in my riding of Durham. It's just a wonderful facility for students from Durham region as well as beyond.

Part of the cost of university, or post-secondary—let's put it that way—is tuition. It's a very important and relevant discussion here today, and will be as you attend your meetings in Quebec City as well. You'd think, when you look at a university close to home—there are two sides, or maybe more than two, to every issue, but there are certainly accommodations. All five of my children went to different universities. I had talked, as part of financial planning, about buying a home in London, Ontario, for instance, because I had one go to Western; she was on the student body there. I would like to have bought a home there and use that to somehow accrue some equity on their behalf or my behalf or something. But they all went to different schools and you get into all kinds of different—trying to transfer between institutions. But having a university in Durham means a lot to parents of modest means, and that would certainly include me. More than half the cost is actually—I had one in Kingston. You have to pay for the whole year, and they're only there for a number of months of the year, although many of them like to stay there year-round or at least maintain their residence there, which is another expense. Having a university locally and distributed across is extremely important to offset the costs.

I go back to the article when Premier McGuinty was in Ottawa speaking at Carleton. Jesse Greener, the Ontario chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students, said he was completely surprised by the announcement that there would be tuition increases. I know we're dwelling on that; I just want you to carry that to Quebec City. Parents—at some point in time, all of us are, and they're going to be students—have a certain amount of responsibility. I'd like to see more aggressive tax measures for incenting parents to save for post-secondary education. In fact, that's probably an important way of engaging the whole family, as this is a worthy and worthwhile investment. You said that accessibility is a big issue. Through tax measures, people of modest income should also have access. That's where indeed it has to be really focused. A student coming from a prosperous family isn't faced with the same challenge; those who don't maybe dismiss that opportunity.

I read an article in the paper today that many students are taking more than four years to finish their degree. I know people who have accelerated a four-year degree into three by taking summer courses; they became a four-year honours commerce grad in three years. But what happens when you extend the school time? I sometimes wonder why they don't make it easier for students who are capable to be more flexible, to finish a degree in three years as opposed to the mandatory phasing of it in four years. That lost year of income is another \$40,000 of lost

income. There are students from a range, personally and socially etc., who could probably handle it, so it would be saving them \$40,000.

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There are a lot of strategies here that need to be focused on. If we do what we've always done, we're going to get what we've always gotten, and that means student debt is growing because the student is expected to share a greater cost of the operating cost. What are those operating costs? Professors argue about class sizes, the same as they do through the whole system. That all comes down to faculty protecting their turf.

I need to put that on the record, because I think innovation and the transition between college and university programs are new ways of looking at it. The traditional universities, probably the big four or five, would be opposed to major changes for a lot of various reasons—an institutional kind of thinking, I think—but some of the more innovative universities need to be respected. I think the University of Ontario Institute of Technology is one of those. As Gary Polonsky leaves, probably they'll have a new president for both the college and the university, so there's another half a million dollars tossed out the window for administration, another half a million tossed out for a new office and an executive assistant and all that stuff. Really, this is about students. Quite honestly, they don't want to upset the faculty by saying that it's all numbers. In general, undergraduate programs—I remember having 200 and 300 in a lecture many, many years ago on certain courses, perhaps literature and courses like that.

One of the things the students asked me—on this I'm referring to Thomas Coughlan, who is the Durham College and UOIT student president. He said there's 3,100 students at UOIT with laptops and 5,900 students in Durham College with laptops—two thirds of all the students. It's a wired institution. I commend them for the innovation, because it involves e-learning, distance learning, picking up lab material, being able to interact with the prof or the tutorial leader, whatever. He tells me that the least cost is \$1,600 per year per student. That should be included in students' cost. It's not just the tuition fees. It's the rest, as has been mentioned, the books etc. that need to be part of that.

Now that Mr. Jackson's back, I'll expect your response and give Cam a couple of minutes. He hasn't had much time today. Really, he's had all of it, but—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Do you want me to respond quickly? This year, for the first time, we recognized computer costs to the tune of \$500. They'd never been recognized before. We'll certainly take advice on how to improve the financial assistance system in the future.

Mr. O'Toole: Great. Thank you.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Minister, in the very brief time left I want to read into the record a series of questions, which I'll then circulate.

I'm going to close with a concern I have, and that concern comes from having been a public school trustee for 10 years in the board and watching secondary education

in this province, consistently over the last 20 years, absorb more and more of the total dollar committed to education. This has been remarkably tracked. It has not helped the elementary system with its inequity. It hasn't helped the post-secondary system with those inequities. Without getting into the politics of the past, there were public policy decisions to try to right that. Personally, I want to tell you that I watched that very carefully. It's not just the per-pupil investment by students; it permeates all aspects of how we educate in a lifelong learning environment.

Really, I'm asking you to test the degree of sensitivity to this issue, because one of your responsibilities is to fight for post-secondary education at the table, and sometimes one of those fights is with the Minister of Education because it's part of the large education envelope. I'll give you a quick example. I was quite disturbed and concerned that the Minister of Children and Youth Services is funding an education program to sensitize teachers, teach them coping skills for children with autism. I simply say that I find it awkward and unusual that a children's ministry is moving dollars outside of its mandate to assist education. There's a graphic, clear example. It happens in far more subtle ways, and I'm concerned about that.

There is a growing trend among public school boards to continually grow and engage in adult education that sometimes seems to be pressed up against the mandate for colleges and universities. This trend has grown rather substantially. This trend has also created some unclear and fuzzy borders between issues that deal with federal training dollars, federal English-as-a-second-language dollars—a whole series of programs. We've watched school boards take monies that should be in the classroom for their elementary and secondary students, and we're seeing a diversion toward adult education.

I see community colleges, because we have so many of them and they are well-situated around the province—we could maybe geographically do a little better job, but truthfully, they've been well-positioned for growth and rural and northern issues. But I'm concerned that I'm seeing school boards feeling they have a huge opportunity to move in this area. When I see TVO being moved to education, when I see other ministries' budgets being moved into education—I'm not saying yours is—

The Vice-Chair: Mr. Jackson, you've run out of time.

Mr. Cameron Jackson: Have I run out of time? Then I need to put on the record—I think the minister gets where my commentary was taking me. I certainly will want to sit down with you at the next estimates, or if we're ever asked to debate the issue, but I want the Minister of Education and your Premier and you to see if you can't do a much better job of ensuring that our universities, our post-secondary institutions, are more directly engaged in these outcomes and that our secondary schools stay focused on SSGDs and so on and so forth.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much for that. Minister, at the end, you may have a chance to wrap up.

The Chair now recognizes the third party.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, just to remind you, the Ottawa Citizen, on the very issue I was talking about, Dell—it's in the business section, written by Andrew Mayeda. He says, "The province has generally included IT call centre workers in the apprenticeship plan, subsidizing their wages by allowing Dell to collect a tax credit of \$5,000 per employee for three years. The actual training period for all call centre workers is two to three weeks, Dell says." Any comment? Quick.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No comment. I'll take a look at that. Thank you very much.

Mr. Marchese: I'm glad we have strong oversight on that active table.

I'm moving on to a few other matters, so I'm going to try to be quick.

I'm reading from another article around the issue of the deal that Martin and Layton made. It says, "The proposed deal includes \$1.6 billion for affordable housing construction, including aboriginal housing," and then it goes on to say, "a \$1.5-billion increase in transfers to provinces for tuition reduction and better training through EI." For your information, in Nova Scotia all three parties agreed with the three elements of this agreement that I pointed out. I just offer it to you in case you haven't had an opportunity, given the newness of your job, to review that agreement. I just put that on the record.

Now I want to get to faculty hiring. On May 12, 2005, the former MTCU minister, Mary Anne Chambers, said: "Students will have more interaction with professors and instructors, improving their overall post-secondary experience, through the addition of 3,300 new faculty members." Can we get details about what funds you have set aside to hire those 3,300 new faculty?

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's anticipated that the colleges and universities will be enhancing what would otherwise have been their hiring requirements over the course of the years through the increase in operating grants, and particularly the transformation funds. One of the reasons we're going to have these interim and, ultimately, we expect, long-term accountability agreements is to ensure that the additional money we're making available actually achieves equality improvements, including increased numbers of faculty.

Mr. Marchese: So you say you are enhancing what otherwise would be regular hiring. What does that enhancing constitute by way of numbers?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We are working out the details of that at the moment. It will be, I think, a multi-part plan. To what extent details are included in the interim agreements or not is an interesting question. But certainly, with the longer-term agreements, one of the things we want to be sure of—

Mr. Marchese: You're going to have to be brief, because we're running out of time.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We want more faculty in the future, so that will be in the agreement.

Mr. Marchese: Of course. Here is my problem: Often governments, Premiers and ministers make statements, and everybody believes these things are actually going to happen. When I ask you and you say, "Enhancing, but we're working out the numbers," I get nervous. I get concerned. When you make a statement boldly saying "We're hiring 3,300 more," but then when I ask you where they are, you say, "We're working out the details," it worries me. How many new faculty members did you hire last year, presumably based on this enhancement?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'll be interested to get the numbers.

Mr. Marchese: Your staff: Can she or he help me, or anyone else in the room?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We don't have those at the moment. I'll be interested in finding out from the institutions: When they saw that there was additional funding in the budget, what decisions did they make for hiring additional faculty?

Mr. Marchese: All I'm asking is, last year, how many faculty members hired were additional to regular hiring? I'd like your staff to give me a number. We're talking about last year, not this year.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I don't have that number.

Mr. Marchese: Does your staff? Would you like to ask them?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We don't seem to have that number.

Mr. Marchese: Could we request that of your staff, minister? Can we get a commitment from your staff to give us that number at some appropriate time?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I don't know how and in what way that might otherwise be available.

Mr. Marchese: I'm fascinated by those answers, because we're talking about past years.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We have some overall numbers. You're talking about last year. We have a total number for 2002.

Mr. Marchese: Could I get your help to give me that number at some future date, whenever you like?

The Chair (Mr. Cameron Jackson): Excuse me for interrupting. Minister, it's extremely helpful that we allow the civil service to advise us in this regard. When you use the words "I'm not sure," it would be helpful if someone could come forward and advise us.

Mr. Marchese: It would be helpful, especially given that we're running out of time, but if it's going to take too long to confirm, Chair—

The Chair: No. We'll take the necessary time until this is done right.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: What we have are numbers up to 2002-03. Those are the numbers. Generally, the numbers would be provided by COU for universities with respect to the hiring, and we don't have those at the moment.

Mr. Marchese: So in terms of your commitments and your period in government, we have no numbers. Presumably, for this year we don't have any numbers either, because it's this year.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We haven't received a whole range of numbers at the moment.

Mr. Marchese: Well, how long do you think it takes to get those numbers? Do you have a sense of that? Does your staff have a sense of that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes. During the accountability agreement process, during the regular report process that colleges and universities already have with the ministry, we'll be receiving a lot of information about the hiring they've otherwise done. That information isn't in our hands at the moment.

Mr. Marchese: I understand. My sense is that before you go to an election, we might get those numbers, but at this moment, we won't. It's interesting.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No. I think the—

Mr. Marchese: No, Minister. I haven't got time. I have a few more questions to ask you.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The accountability agreements will help you with that.

Mr. Marchese: Bob Rae estimated that 11,000 new faculty need to be hired by 2010-11. I'm assuming you agree with that.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That was his advice, yes.

Mr. Marchese: Right; his advice. Whether you're committed to that number is something you can't—you have to talk to people, get advice and so on at the active table.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes.

Mr. Marchese: If the government fully funded the BIUs, then universities would have the resources to hire more professors. Does the government intend to fully fund BIUs?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: What we've been talking to institutions about at the moment is the funding inequities that I'm told exist between various institutions for a number of reasons, one of which is that the funding mechanisms didn't always keep track of the number of students an institution was taking on. We're involved in a discussion right now. We are going to be addressing these funding inequities, and one of the things we're doing during the discussions about the accountability agreement is to work out how we address the various funding inequities that have been brought—

Mr. Marchese: Right. You talked about funding formula inequities between institutions, but the point I'm making is that each student is worth a different BIU, depending upon the program.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Well, it depends on the institution; it depends on the program. There are in fact funding inequities between institutions, for various reasons that I'm told have arisen over the years. That's one of the challenges in working out these interim accountability agreements, that we're dealing with a lot of issues that have been bubbling for many years, and we're trying as quickly as we can to—

Mr. Marchese: Right. So your intent is to get rid of these inequities. Is that it?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Our intent and our commitment is to address the inequities, and we are determining in what measure we are in a position to do that.

Mr. Marchese: OK. Is this issue on the active table?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's part of the discussions that we're having right now with the various institutions. In terms of—

Mr. Marchese: When can we hear from you in terms of a resolution on this matter? Do you have a timeline?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's part of the interim accountability discussion. I already advised the Chair that we expect to have that concluded by the end of the calendar year with respect to the interim accountability agreements.

Mr. Marchese: OK. When your government put together budget allocations, what was the plan for the faculty hiring?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Budget allocations? Sorry, I'm not sure I understand the question. I wasn't around when we put together the budget. I'm dealing with the numbers. I expect that the substantial amounts we're going to be providing in increased operating to colleges and universities will enable them to hire—

Mr. Marchese: So your staff have no numbers in terms of the what the allocation for faculty hiring was last year or this year? We don't have that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: What we're doing is providing operating dollars to institutions, as we've traditionally done, and out of that, they hire faculty or provide additional student resources or library services or otherwise run the institution. One of the things we will accomplish with the accountability agreements is to make sure that the additional monies actually result in specific increases, for example, in additional faculty, additional student interaction with faculty, additional resources. That's the reason we're going to have interim and longer-term accountability agreements.

Mr. Marchese: When the former minister, Mary Anne Chambers, said—and I know you can't speak for her, but this is what she said: "Students will have more interaction with professors and instructors, improving their overall post-secondary experience, through the addition of 3,300 new faculty members," how could she say that, based on all that you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: You know what? She was here for many more months than I, and I'm sure she has the—they had outlined what would be possible with the post-secondary education transformation money. I suspect that's the goal that we will be driving toward, and the accountability agreements will be to make sure that the money we're investing actually results in extra faculty hiring.

Mr. Marchese: OK.

The Chair: Mr. Marchese, do you have those in a printed form, or would you be comfortable submitting them—

Mr. Marchese: Two more questions.

The Chair: If you'd like to just put them on the record, that would be helpful to the committee.

Mr. Marchese: The current student-faculty ratio is 24 to 1. It's the worst in Canada. What student-faculty ratio are you planning to move toward? Has your ministry done any research on this issue, and if so, can you share that documentation?

Do you think he has time to answer that? It's the last question.

The Chair: I think you'll get one in writing, which is infinitely preferable. Yes, we will. I suspect that when this committee reports to the House about one of the ministers, who has taken a year to respond, there won't be a problem getting written responses. I've no evidence that this ministry is going to do anything but respond to us.

Are there any other questions that members wish to get on the record? I indicated that I have a series of 23 questions here. If there is unanimous consent not to read those into the record, then that will be acknowledged and will form part of the estimates. We will be pleased to hand that over to the minister and his assistant deputies and that will form part of the responses. No problem, so it's unanimous. Then I won't sit here and read through 23 questions.

Mr. Marchese: It would be nice, normally, to hear them.

The Chair: I know it would be.

Mr. Marchese: I'd hate to have to, at the last moment, put those questions to this group now. Normally, it would be appropriate to hear them, but I'm prepared to go ahead.

The Chair: You will get a copy and you will get the benefit—this is not like an order paper question. This will go to every member of the committee. So we're asking for this as a committee, and that's the spirit in which it's presented. When there is a non-response, it's a non-response to all of us.

We have sufficiently covered this ministry in the time and, by agreement, we will now call the votes. That is understood by everyone.

Shall vote—I apologize. Minister, would you like to take 60 seconds for a wrap-up? It's something that I do out of courtesy, but we're racing to be completed today so you can get on a plane and do great work for us in Quebec City.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister, and to all your staff, who have been most helpful. We'll proceed now with the vote.

Shall vote 3001 carry? All those in favour? Opposed, if any? That is carried.

Shall vote 3002 carry? All those in favour? Opposed, if any? That is carried.

Shall vote 3003 carry? All those in favour? Opposed, if any? That is carried.

Shall the estimates of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities carry? All those in favour? Opposed, if any? That is deemed carried.

Shall I report the estimates of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to the House? All those in favour? Opposed, if any? Then it is carried.

We're meeting with the estimates of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. We will reconvene tomorrow morning at 9 a.m. This meeting is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1602.

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