

10-02-24 Hansard Debate on Bill 242:

Speech given by Rosario Marchese

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to divide my time as best as I can into three parts. The first part will speak to our support of full-time JK and full-time SK, and support the arguments that the member from Brant was getting at in terms of what the research says. The second part is to review the bill as much as I can and make some comments with respect to that. The third is to raise a whole lot of questions as to the implementation of the bill, which the member from Durham actually spoke to as well, in part. That's why I said I agree with some of the concerns he raises, because there are many concerns that I have.

If we do not implement this well, not only will it threaten the learning that we hoped would happen in the full-time JK-SK, but it could threaten some of our child care programs, which we never anticipated might happen. But based on the way I read this, I have a very strong sense that we could get this wrong, and I'm profoundly worried.

The first part is to simply say that in 1999, in that election, the New Democrats had put out a policy announcement that said that we would, if elected, introduce full-time JK and full-time SK. It was a promise that the Liberals picked up in 2003, and that's okay. We think it's good. When parties borrow from the other parties because they like some of the ideas, we think it's a good thing.

We believe that offering JK and SK on a full-time basis provides the opportunities to students to be able to do better in their academic years. If we prevent problems in the early years, the benefits are amazing-academically, emotionally, intellectually, psychologically and economically. Some of us know this, and some possibly choose to deny it or simply, out of ignorance, not know anything about it.

But the research on this is quite powerful. The evidence documents the economic benefits from public spending on quality early childhood programs: "University of Toronto economists showed a 2:1 payback on public funding for developmentally enriched child care created from the increased taxes paid by working parents, coupled with reduced social service and compensatory education costs.

"Over 40% of the public cost of Quebec's early childhood program is covered by the tax revenues from mothers who otherwise would not be working if low-cost child care was not available.

"A Manitoba study reveals that spending on early childhood programs has an economic multiplier effect on local economies, generating up to \$1.7 dollars for every \$1 spent.

"The Ypsilanti, Michigan, study has spent 40 years tracking the cost benefits of a preschool and family intervention program on a group of inner-city minority children. It

calculates \$17 in health, justice, and social welfare savings for every \$1 spent on the program.

"Heckman calculates a 7:1 return on public investment for programs for young children compared to a 1:1 payback from adult education.

"There is a growing body of evidence that some of the greatest returns on taxpayers' investments are those targeted to Canada's youngest citizens. Every dollar spent in ensuring a healthy start in the early years will reduce the long-term social costs associated with health care, addictions, crime, unemployment and welfare. As well, it will ensure Canadian children become better educated, well adjusted and more productive adults,' says Dr. David Butler-Jones, Canada's chief public health officer.

This is the kind of evidence that has been built up over the years that we believe we can't ignore.

I know the member from Durham made reference to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo as a former educator, a former trustee, chair of the board and former Minister of Education, as if to suggest that with that authority, they could simply oppose this bill, or at least what is being tried, by virtue of experience that she brings to the portfolio. My argument is that I disagree with her, of course respectfully. The argument she put in the Focus Ontario program we did is that we simply can't afford it. She did raise some issues of concern that I will speak to, but they seemed secondary to the primary argument, and that is, we simply can't afford it. The point I put to her was that the United Nations has told the world that Canada lags behind in early childhood education programs, both as it relates to Ontario and as it relates to Canada. It's not something that I think we can be proud of. We are not spending very much on early childhood education programs, whose benefits are clearly obvious to anybody who wants to see them. The studies are there. Sometimes we use these studies to make a point, but then in reality, when it comes to what we are actually doing, we are short of all the things that governments could and should be doing, in spite of the intentions, in spite of what governments say. We're lagging behind. Much more could be done in those early years to ensure that we have a better-educated young man and young woman who will save us so much money down the line because of what that education gives to that young man and that young woman.

Ideology should not enter into the picture, but it does. As political parties, we bring different political ideas to different social issues. As a party, New Democrats support early childhood programs because we believe they are good for men and women and they are good for children.

Both men and women are required to work these days. Even when some of them would like to stay at home, women do not have the luxury to do so. Men do not have the luxury, even when they would like to stay at home to take care of the children, to stay at home and watch the children. There is no such luxury for most of the human beings I know and relate to. Even among wealthy people, who can afford to have one of the partners stay at home, many of them choose to work. That is fine by me. But in order to give the

protections to men and women that they so desperately need, to give them the security they so desperately want, to give them the opportunity for affordable programs so that they could go and work, in order to be able to help them to do that, we need to provide those programs. This is the type of program that can be very beneficial to students, to parents and to society in general.

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So I'm going to go through the bill and review aspects of it that I think need a comment. Then I'm going to review, with the Liberal members who are willing to listen, the many concerns I have about the bill, which I believe, if not properly implemented, will actually hurt their intentions and not benefit them and/or the young people they're trying to serve. I'm going to be reading from Bill 242. On page 2 of the bill, subsection 2(2):

"Subsection 8(1) of the act is amended by adding the following paragraph:

"Letter of permission, early childhood educator position

"10.1 grant a letter of permission to a board authorizing the board to appoint a person who is not an early childhood educator to a position designated by the board as requiring an early childhood educator if the minister is satisfied that no early childhood educator is available...."

I state my concern immediately. We realize that the letter of permission is not a new concept. But it has been overused in the past, when we actually hired teachers who didn't have the qualification, at least not the teacher requirement that people have to go through here, and accepted many on a letter of permission. In many cases, that would have been fine; in some cases, it might not have been such a great idea. But we hired them because we needed them, and we hired them because they were cheaper than to actually send would-be teachers to the faculty of education.

This plan provided by this government, this bill, is predicated upon having qualified early childhood educators in every kindergarten classroom. It's incumbent, in my view, upon the government to make certain that we have enough qualified people now and at every point in the rollout of this initiative. We will be monitoring the number of times the boards resort to this clause, and we suspect we will not be the only ones.

But the most significant point that I wanted to make is that as we begin, in the description of what's contained in this bill on page 2, we immediately have a section that says, "Grant a letter of permission to a board authorizing the board to appoint a person who is not an early childhood educator," signifying to me, from the very start, that we're probably not going to have early childhood educators in every school and that we're likely to have in every school someone who is not an early childhood educator. That worries me. If we believe that early childhood educators are good, as I believe indeed they are, and I have to argue-not argue, but I dare say, as a former teacher, that early childhood educators are as good as teachers at doing the job that is being asked of them. But to fall back on a

position that says, "If we can't find them," immediately, in the first page of the bill, suggests to me that the government is looking for a cheaper way to provide support to the teacher in those programs. I wanted to state that for the record.

Page 3 of the bill: "Planning or delivering extended day programs, allocating resources to them, evaluating or monitoring them or detecting, monitoring and preventing fraud or any unauthorized receipt of services or benefits related to them."

Section 3.2: "Providing for financial assistance related to extended day programs, evaluating or monitoring the provision of the assistance or detecting, monitoring and preventing fraud or any unauthorized receipt of benefits related to the assistance."

Like all the programs your government comes up with, you take the credit for the announcement and then leave all the tricky parts to the boards to work out. Extended-day programs within the Education Act are a brand new concept which will require adequate funding and constant oversight. Boards will require support, not only for the implementation but the administration of this plan. They will also require a lot more specific guidance than this bill provides.

In the past, when this government has been short on specifics, it is because they have been short on support and resources. I state this at the very outset: We are worried from the very beginning about what boards will be required to do because this says to the board what it is that they will be required to do, and immediately in my mind and in the minds of many chairs of boards across Ontario-public and Catholic and French-language boards-their question will be, "How much support are we going to get?" or, "How much of our resources will we be forced to divert from the programs we are providing at the moment to be able to support this new program?" That's the question I put to you, Speaker, as a member of the government, and the question I put to the two parliamentary assistants who are here today and to whoever else in the Liberal backbench is listening.

On the same page, subsection 4(1): "Governing all aspects of the operation of junior kindergarten and kindergarten, including regulations,

"i. respecting the schools at which junior kindergarten and kindergarten are required and are not required to be operated,

"ii. respecting the hours during which and the days on which a board is required and is not required to operate junior kindergarten and kindergarten in one or more schools of the board, and

"iii. respecting curriculum and programs for junior kindergarten and kindergarten."

The concern I have: We would like to see the details of this, particularly the programs, and we hope that they will be reasonable, appropriate and available well in advance of the actual commencement of the first programs.

On page 5 of the bill:

"Provide education and accommodation

"6.1 subject to payment of fees charged under section 260.1, provide education and adequate accommodation for pupils enrolled in extended day programs operated by the board....

"6.2 subject to paragraph 3.0.0.1 of subsection 8(1) and paragraph 6.1 of subsection 11(1), operate full day junior kindergartens and kindergartens on every school day, other than professional ... days, in every elementary school of the board."

How long-is the point I make-before parents get to know what the fees will be and what criteria and conditions are attached to each extended day program? That's the question I put to the government.

Page 6: "subject to paragraph 3.0.0.1 of subsection 8(1) and paragraph 6.1 of subsection 11(1), designate at least one position in each junior kindergarten and kindergarten class in each school of the board as requiring an early childhood educator." How is this going to work? That's the question I ask. Is the one early childhood educator going to handle before and after class as well? Is the ECE, the early childhood educator, going to work from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. to cover the need? If not, who will be handling the extended day program? What if the school can't find anyone else to fill the position?

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Also, I suggest that many will not have the early childhood education qualification contained in that section, which worries me. This is the section I referred to on page 2, which talks about not having early childhood educators but rather getting people who have a letter of permission to do this work. We have a lot of questions connected to this that the government hasn't spoken to, that the parliamentary assistants have not spoken to and that the minister has not spoken to yet. We hope that at some point down the line, and hope the point will be soon, we can satisfy those who have these questions that their questions will be addressed so as to give them the comfort they're looking for. Otherwise, they will be asking these questions, educators will be asking these questions, I'm assuming the various federations will be asking, and of course I will be asking as often as I can.

On that same page of the bill, "An early childhood educator appointed to a position under paragraph 12.0.2 of subsection (1) shall be in addition to the teacher assigned or appointed to teach the junior kindergarten or kindergarten class." The question applies: Since the class sizes will be significantly increased, will there be a supply early childhood educator network set up to deal with sickness and absences to guarantee that classrooms will not have to function with their teacher alone? No one has spoken to this-not the minister, not the parliamentary assistant, not any staff of the ministry-so we really don't have a clue how they're going to handle this particular issue. If someone should fall sick,

is the teacher required to do this alone? This would be absurd. I'm assuming the answer would be no. But what are the provisions that the government is making to deal with this particular problem that I have raised?

On page 7 of the bill, "appoint persons to supervise teaching staff and persons in positions designated by the board as requiring an early childhood educator and every appointee shall hold the qualifications and perform the duties required under" the act. Will the province provide support to the boards every time they make a request to the board that they are required to do something, such as appoint persons to supervise teaching staff, or will the board be left alone with another bill and many more obligations and requirements to meet without the adequate financial support? My fear is that they will be left alone to do this with more and more obligations that they will have to address on their own and limited funding, which they've been getting for many, many years, in spite of the remarks made by my friend for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, who claims that more money has gone into the system than ever before.

On page 8, "Subject to the regulations, policies and guidelines made under this part, every board shall operate extended day programs in every elementary school of the board, on every school day, other than professional activity days, outside the time when junior kindergarten and kindergarten are operated in the school...."

My point is this: Exactly how are these limited and irregular times going to be covered, by whom and at what pay rate? If the government is going to establish a pay rate, as I believe they want to do, will the boards be stuck with the cost or will the government determine what that cost will be earlier on in the game so that boards know exactly what they're dealing with and what financial support they're going to get? Who's going to cover those programs? By whom and at what pay rate? This is the question I put to those who will be responding to what I have to say.

Page 9, section 260.1(1): "Every board shall charge the fees prescribed under clause 260.6(1)(b) to parents of pupils enrolled in extended day programs...." Are the fees going to reflect the full cost, including the cost of space, maintenance and utilities? Will the fees be charged on a usage basis or as a package for care for the year of the term? The question speaks to the point that if a parent only needs two days, are they going to be charged for the usage of those two days or will it be done differently? Are the fees going to reflect the full cost, and are parents going to have that full responsibility or will boards be subsidizing that? If the subsidies are going to be in place, who will be getting that subsidy and/or will boards be required to pick up some of that cost of the subsidies?

These are questions that I ask, and hopefully, the parliamentary assistants and others will be given notes to be able to respond to them. The ministry has many, many staff at the back there behind the Speaker taking notes as I speak. I know that and I see that. I'm hoping that whoever's taking notes there is quickly going to go to the civil servants to get some of these answers so that, as I ask them, she or he-the parliamentary assistants-can help me and make me feel better about how they're going to handle some of these questions that I've been asking.

On the same page-

"Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), the right to attend a school of a board under part II, section 167.1 or section 293 does not confer a right to be enrolled in an extended day program operated by the board." What does this mean? To the staff of the ministry at the back, what does that mean exactly? If a child is in the full-day kindergarten program, is enrolment in the extended day program not automatic, or is it, and if it is, what does this mean?

For your benefit, I'll reread it: "Every board shall charge the fees prescribed under clause 260.6(1)(b) to parents of pupils enrolled in extended day programs operated by the board to recover the operating costs incurred by the board." Then, "Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), the right to attend a school of a board under part II, section ... does not confer a right to be enrolled in an extended day program operated by the board." What does it mean? is the question I ask you.

The same page: "Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), the minister may issue a policy or guideline under subsection (1),

"(a) respecting the schools at which extended day programs are required and are not required...;

"(b) respecting the hours during which and the days on which extended day programs shall or may be operated;

"(c) respecting content for extended day programs;

"(d) requiring a board to establish criteria and conditions respecting which pupils may be enrolled in extended day programs...;

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"(e) specifying criteria and conditions that a board must establish and that a board may establish under clause (d);

"(f) authorizing a board to enrol children in extended day programs...;

"(i) the children have registered to be enrolled...."

Actually, I'm skipping some stuff.

Mr. Mike Colle: Good. Skip a lot.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The point I want to make to my friend Mike Colle, from Eglinton-Lawrence, is that these are all important details, as the member from Eglinton-

Lawrence knows, but until we see these details, parents have no idea what they're really getting into or not getting into.

The whole thing is sitting in limbo, is one question. But the other point I wanted to make-I was getting tired, just reading all of the new obligations the board has to shoulder-

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Embrace.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: -and embrace, whether they like it or not. I'm thinking to myself, "Poor boards. As if they didn't have enough. As if they didn't have any deficits to worry about; as if they haven't been slashing programs to make ends meet, to balance their budgets, as is required by law, they now have this to worry about."

My good friend from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock might be able to answer some of these questions, because he was a former big shot in the OPSBA organization. What are boards going to do? What things will they have to put aside in order to be able to do this right? Remember, I spoke in favour of this bill. I speak in favour of the intent of having full-time JK and full-time SK. But when I read the bill and I read the obligations of boards and what they're required to do-how are they going to do it when they're constantly saying, "Don't give us any more. But if you give us more to do, give us the money so that we can do it well"?

Mr. Mike Colle: "Show us the money."

Mr. Rosario Marchese: "Show us the money," is the question. "Show us the money and the support so we could do this well."

By the way, Mike, that was a long page of "the board shall do this, the board shall do that." I'm going to go to the next page, because there's more.

"The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations,

"(a) governing all aspects of the operation of extended day programs;

"(b) governing the amount of fees that a board may charge...;

"(c) governing the time of payment of fees...;

"(d) respecting operating costs for the purposes of subsection"-this is another repeat of number 8.

Are the fees going to reflect the full cost, including the cost of the space, maintenance and utilities? Or are boards going to have to pick up the extra cost? Will the fees be charged on a usage basis or as a package for the care of the year or the term? We don't know. No answers have been given.

Further, on that page:

"(3) In making a regulation under clause (1)(b), the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall recognize that the fees to be charged by a board must bear a reasonable relationship to the operating costs incurred by the board."

The question to my buddy from Haliburton is, what does "reasonable relationship" mean? Is the government worried that the boards might charge a little more than they should? Is that what it means? Or does it mean something else? I don't know. It would be nice to define what "reasonable relationship" means, because I don't know. Will this "reasonable relationship," in terms of fees paid, vary from board to board?

By the way, who qualifies for subsidies? We don't know.

The ongoing question is, will the minister pay the full load of these programs?

Further, on that page:

"The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations respecting the provision of financial assistance to persons who are charged fees ... including regulations,

"(a) providing for such positions as the Lieutenant Governor in Council ... authorizing the minister and such other persons or entities as may be specified in the regulations to appoint persons or entities to the positions referred to in clause (a)...."

Mike, from Eglinton-Lawrence, it's another long list. You see, I'm losing my voice. I'm just getting tired of all the things the board is required to do. Another glass of water would be very helpful. Thanks so much.

"Respecting the powers, duties and functions" of this and that, "designating geographic areas for the purpose of managing the provision of the financial assistance ... respecting agreements that may be entered into by the minister...."

Mike, do you get the point? If I were the director of education, I would simply-will I have enough hair at the end of this; will it be grey or will it disappear? Those are the questions that every director would be asking, irrespective of gender. Will the hair be grey or will it disappear?

Here's the question I want to ask on that. The provision of financial assistance is a very sensitive and time-consuming task that cannot be dumped on school boards.

Mr. Mike Colle: T.S. Eliot's Wasteland. It's called The Wasteland.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm not sure it was The Wasteland.

What will be the responsibility of schools and boards, and who will make the final call on this? Will the amount available to each school or board be capped? Will the amount available in the province be capped the same way special education funding is capped, regardless of need? These are serious questions that I put to my friend from Haliburton and others who are about to get into the debate. We'll see. I'm not quite sure who is speaking, so I don't know.

There is more. There is so much more. I'm trying to get through the bill, you understand.

On page 14 of the bill:

"It is the duty of the following persons to coordinate the matters listed in subsection (2) and to co-operate with each other with respect to those matters:

"1. Teachers.

"2. Temporary teachers.

"3. Designated early childhood educators.

"4. Persons who, under the authority of a letter of permission, are appointed by a board...."

"The matters referred to in subsection (1) are:

"2. Observing, monitoring and assessing the development of pupils in junior kindergarten, kindergarten and extended day programs.

"3. Maintaining a healthy physical, emotional and social learning environment.

"4. Communicating with families.

"5. Performing all duties assigned to them by the principal with respect to junior kindergarten, kindergarten and extended day programs."

Mike Colle, my friend from Eglinton-Lawrence, do you feel the weight? David from Brant, if you were a principal, and, Mike, if you were a teacher-and you were a teacher; we have no directors in this place-think of this. If you have to do all this-I'm just reading all the extra stuff you do.

Mr. Dave Levac: I had a daycare centre in my school.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. The Toronto board is full of child care centres, and many other boards have them too. Not as much as we did-I was there as a trustee on the Toronto board.

Just think of the additional obligations you now have. Same pay, with all the duties and responsibilities you have, and now you're taking on something else. You, as a principal, might say, "This is good; I like it," but are you going to get the resources to do the job well? That's the question. Or will you have to leave something else in order to do this? That's the other question.

Legislating a duty to co-operate hardly recognizes the complexity of the actual situation that this legislation is creating. The success of this program will require that the ministry assume more responsibility than simply legislating co-operation. Isn't it beautiful that a minister, with the former parliamentary assistant of education, could simply legislate and then have boards, some of whom were there as chairs of OPSBA and others, deal with all of the obligations that come with yet another responsibility that you have to undertake? It's tough.

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It's easy to legislate. "You shall do thus," and then you're done; then you clean your hands. Then, in typical Liberal fashion, you say, "Oh, but we provide so much money. Oh, they're just so loaded with money they should be able to do the job. In fact, we've given \$5 billion extra. With that \$5 billion, my God, you should be able to do everything." Boards are facing deficits every year and we keep saying, "But they got \$5 billion more than ever before." They're barely maintaining what they've got and they've been cutting programs everywhere in Ontario to balance their budgets. The money's simply not enough.

This is a good program, and that the money is not going to be there is my fear.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's why I agreed with you in some parts of what you said. I did say that. I did say that the member from Durham raised some good questions and some good concerns and that I would speak to them; I did say that. I am raising many more concerns than the member from Durham raised, but they supplement what he was trying to get at: We are in disagreement with the fundamental premise of what they're doing. But you raise some good questions.

On page 16 of the bill-you see? It's long. If you want to do a good analysis, you've got to go through it. Otherwise, people will simply say you're blah, blah, blah-ing; you're not saying anything, right?

Page 16: "Subject to the regulations, every board may establish and implement an induction program"-

Mr. Mike Colle: What's that?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They're professional development kinds of days. It's training, induction programs-"for its new designated early childhood educators."

This is what will be required of them:

"1. An orientation for new designated early childhood educators.

"2. Mentoring for new designated early childhood educators.

"3. Professional development and training appropriate for the new designated early childhood educators.

"4. Such other elements as are prescribed."

Young teachers have been telling us for years that this type of support is sadly lacking. If the government wants to provide worthwhile induction for early childhood educators, then there will have to be more of a commitment than just listing the elements. Expertise, time, coverage and resources will have to be provided. I fear, my friends from Brant and Eglinton-Lawrence-former educators-that your former educators are not going to get the support they need. That's my fear.

I know that you want to say, "I don't know. I'm not sure it's true." You'll want to say that because you want to be optimistic-and besides, you're a member of the government, so you have to be positive about this initiative. But I can tell you, based on my experience as a teacher, a school trustee and a critic for a long time, we're not giving the support to teachers and boards that is desperately required, and I really, really am worried about it.

There's more in the bill, but I'm going to leave the bill for now and get to some other points of contention.

The concern I have is that the McGuinty government continues to make highly publicized announcements that are long on media and short on substance. We totally support all-day learning, but we expressed many concerns when the government rolled out this program, and this piece of legislation does little to alleviate our concerns and the concerns of parents and care providers around the province. The announcement does commit a fixed sum of money to the creation of full-day kindergarten classes in Ontario, but the actual mechanisms to make it happen are not specified. There has been, in my view, a serious lack of attention paid to the actual implementation of this program.

We have waited for a long time for this. Many families will wait for five more years. Even though Monsieur Pascal recommended three, you obviously determined that you can't do it in three. You will do it in five, even though the minister, in her remarks, said the other day that we're going to have to act and act now. In spite that of comment, this program will be unfolded over the next five years-

Mr. Mike Colle: Naples wasn't built in a day.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But your minister said we're going to do it today. But it won't be done today, it'll be done in five years, and that will put many children behind, assuming

that it would be rolled out fully in five years. And I predict, by the way, it will be rolled out in more years than five. May I dare suggest that it will be at least seven, and it will go to 10. That is what I suggest.

Now, if, God forbid, you should be re-elected, we'll wait and see what will happen. But on the other hand, I'm profoundly worried that if the Tories get elected, that will create another headache vis-à-vis this particular program. So it's hard to say-who do you want there, right? Who do you want there? The best option would be New Democrats. If you want this program to be implemented, you would have to count on New Democrats, and I would be happy to be that minister, to be able to do it. I would be happy to take on that job.

The question we ask: Will the funding for the initial rollout be distributed equitably across the province or will it go where there is space? Will the programs approved in the first few years be needs-based or just space-based? Sadly, I believe that this government is moving quickly to prove that it's doing the job of getting these programs under way, and it will not be needs-based; i.e., where you've got socioeconomic issues that you want to address, where you want to be able to provide the compensatory education programs that you should-and as a result you lose out on the possible equity issues as a way of making sure that you're seen to be doing well in your first year, and therefore you're going to put the programs where there is space and it's easy. That is fundamentally wrong, and I believe that's what you're about to do in your first year.

There will not be any equity, I guarantee it, in the first year because you want to get it out the door and you want to go outside the province as best and as quickly as you can without spending a dime on capital expenditures and prove to the public that you've started and you're doing it right away, but will it not be needs-based. That, I put to you, is wrong in terms of who needs the program more than others.

If we have a middle-class school with middle-class professional kids, they don't need that program as much and as fast as those kids who have economic issues to deal with, who have poverty issues to deal with, who have problems of all sorts, whether it be mental illness, substance abuse or any other kind of problem that families have to face.

We are concerned profoundly that the class size-the average class size, is what you've said-of 26 is an average, I repeat, and our concern is that class sizes may become too large, like many of our current grade 4 to grade 8 classes where there is no cap. Where you capped primary grades at 20, what happened, from our sources, i.e., teachers, is that the class sizes in grades 4 to 8 jumped through the roof. You track conveniently how many of your schools have capped the students at the primary grades, but you refuse to track what the class sizes are in grades 4 to 8, and we know they're large from parents who tell us how big some of those class sizes are. This is about to happen in this program as well.

I put to you that an average of 26 means many classes will be higher. Even with two adults, there are practical problems caused by having 30 four-year-olds in one space.

You have to consider snacks. As the member from Durham raised, based on the experience of his spouse, who obviously knew what she was talking about, you've got to consider snacks.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Snacks. Nap time. Washroom accompaniment etc.

See, you haven't thought this through. You want to save some money, so you want big class sizes. That's why you want not necessarily to have early childhood educators, but people who have a letter of permission. That's why you started with that bill on page 2. I understand what you're getting at.

Large class sizes for four-year-olds is simply not going to work. If you want a learning environment, if you actually want kids to learn, and you have 30 four-year-olds in that classroom, not much learning is going to happen, and the effect of it is that it will be worse than having those children in a child care centre. It will be worse. If you have 26 or 30 or 32 kids in that classroom, no learning will take place with those four-year-olds. When you take into account the incredible pressures that the teacher will have on how you manage four-year-old kids who need to sleep, who have different sleeping patterns, who get sick and need to be taken care of, who need to go to the washroom, and you're going to have an early childhood educator accompany that one child, or maybe accompany two or three, and the teacher will be left alone with 27 students—the minister has not thought about this. The parliamentary assistants have to think about this. The government has to speak to this as a problem. And I am left with little assurance from anyone that they actually know what they're doing or that they actually have a handle on this.

Parents expect this to be all-day learning, not all-day babysitting, which might turn out to be the case if we don't deal with the concerns I'm raising. From an instructional point of view, the large numbers will limit learning. Many parents will discover that their children did more learning in the daycare they were in before this program.

Charles Pascal called for an Early Years division in the Ministry of Education to develop and implement a coordinated policy around child care. We are sure that this announcement stops well short of the completely integrated child care plan put forward. We are still awaiting the details of the actual form which the typical class will take. We want to see the actual distribution of workload between the teachers and the early childhood educators. The government is dumping all of these details on the school board and teachers' federations, and there are few specifics in this bill to alleviate the concerns felt by many.

Many boards are already claiming that the government is not providing adequate funding to pay the going rate for early childhood educators. The government's pitiful education funding formula already places boards in a position of having to take from one program

to pay for another. The question now is what programs will have to be cut to pay for an inadequately funded all-day learning program, and that's the fear that I express today, that if we do not fund this properly, in spite of your protestations to the contrary, i.e., that you're going to spend \$200 million or \$300 million, as if somehow this is going to be enough-in spite of those protestations and statements that you're making, it will put boards in a position to have to cut other programs to be able to deliver on this program.

Consideration must be given to the potential loss of revenue for daycares, which may put them at risk or drive up costs to parents whose children remain in daycares.

We are worried that when you take these children from a child care and put them in a classroom, you put that child care centre in a position of liability, in a vulnerable position of not being able to sustain itself, because if they don't get the funding they need from these extra programs and are left with very expensive programs to manage, they will not be able to stay open. That is a fear that all child care centres are speaking about, speaking to. They have legitimate concerns that this government has not dealt with it.

In addition to this worry is the worry that the \$63 million that the federal government released four years ago on the Best Start program will have dried up by the end of this year. Once those dollars have dried up, thousands of programs across Ontario will disappear. In Toronto alone, they estimate that 5,000 subsidized child care programs will disappear. That is a huge loss to this board. Windsor is closing some programs immediately-and already-as a way of dealing with these problems, because cities do not have enough money to be able to continue with these programs.

There have been some suggestions that daycares should be allowed to lower standards and increase the number of children permitted per caregiver to cope with the changes. I want to read quickly from that article written by Laurie Monsebraaten from the Toronto Star, who says, "Ontario is considering regulatory changes that would allow fewer staff to care for larger groups of young children in daycares as the province moves to all-day kindergarten."

What is that about? That is about wanting to save money, but it puts at risk the relationship that those early childhood educators have with the children they're caring for. It's a relationship that has been finely built over the years, a ratio that has been put in place to protect the educator and those children and what they're trying to do. The government is talking about increasing those numbers as a way of saving money at a time when the government wants to introduce full-time JK and SK. It's wrong, and we're moving in a dangerous direction. That's what I put to Liberals.

This is why I support Mr. Pascal's comments when he says, "The current fragmented patchwork of early childhood services too often fails the best interests of our children, frustrates families and educators, and wastes resources." He's fundamentally correct, and that is a warning he was putting to you in the report that he submitted to the government.

That is why Pascal talked about the need to create a continuum of early learning, child care and family supports for children from the prenatal period through adolescence under the leadership of the Minister of Education: because he clearly understands that you can't take this little piece, because, as you're doing it, you're putting at risk many other programs. He understood, and he knew this is what would happen if you don't do the full continuum.

He also says, "The Ministry of Education should establish an Early Years division to develop and implement an Early Years policy framework that will create continuity of early learning experiences for children from zero to eight years of age." He also says, "The Early Years policy framework should also guide the transformation of programming for Ontario's youngest learners. Municipal authorities, with the necessary resources, should be mandated to plan, develop, support, and monitor an integrated network of Best Start child and family centres providing families with:

"-flexible part-time/full-time/full-year early learning/care options for children...;

"-prenatal and postnatal information and supports;

"-parenting and family support programming, including home visiting, family literacy, and playgroups;

"-nutrition and nutrition counselling;

"-early identification and intervention resources...."

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Pascal has it right. If we do what we're doing, we're entering a fragmented approach, a patchwork, a cherry-picking that may sound good from a political point of view, but if you don't have the continuum of services, if you don't provide the services that are required, as he explained, you could be putting into jeopardy some of the programs that I made mention of, and you put in jeopardy the very programs that I support. I am a strong supporter of these programs, but I worry profoundly about the potential to do this wrong. And if we do it wrong, it's not me who will lose; it's not even the Liberal government that is going to lose; it will be the children we're trying to serve and protect and help, and it will be their parents who have high expectations of you and what it is they hoped you would do.