

OPTION:

Alter Staffing Pattern in Emergency Medical Service Advanced Life Support Ambulances

Savings: \$7 million annually

The fire department's Emergency Medical Service (EMS) currently staffs about 225 Advanced Life Support (ALS) and 450 Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance tours each day. The latter are staffed with two emergency medical technicians (EMTs); in contrast, two higher-skilled and more highly paid paramedics are deployed in ALS ambulance units. This option proposes staffing ALS units operated by the fire department with one paramedic and one EMT as opposed to two paramedics. Budgetary savings would result from lower personnel costs as the number of fire department paramedics is allowed to decline by attrition while hiring additional EMTs to take their place.

New York City is the only jurisdiction in the state where Advanced Life Support ambulances are required to have two paramedics. Regulations governing ambulance staffing in New York State are issued by entities known as regional emergency medical services councils. The membership of each council consists of physicians from public and private hospitals as well as local emergency medical services providers. There is a council with responsibility solely for New York City, the New York City Regional Emergency Medical Advisory Council (NYC-REMSCO).

In 2005, the city unsuccessfully petitioned NYC-REMSCO for permission to staff ALS ambulance units with one paramedic and one EMT, with the city contending "there is no published data that shows improved clinical effectiveness by ALS ambulances that are staffed with two paramedics." In January 2009, the Bloomberg Administration again expressed its intention to approach NYC-REMSCO with a similar request, but thus far the double-paramedic staffing policy applicable to the city remains in place.

PROPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE, as the fire department did in 2005, that staffing ALS ambulances with one paramedic (accompanied by an EMT) would not jeopardize public safety. They might also argue that rather than seeking to attain the full budgetary savings associated with allowing paramedic staffing to decline, the fire department could instead take advantage of having the flexibility to staff ALS ambulances with only one paramedic and thereby boost the total number of ambulances staffed with at least one paramedic without requiring the hiring of additional paramedics. This in turn would enhance the agency's ability to deploy paramedics more widely across the city and improve response times for paramedic-staffed ambulances to ALS incidents. During the first eight months of calendar year 2015 only 56 percent of ALS incidents were responded to within 10 minutes by a paramedic.

OPPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that the city should not risk the diminished medical expertise that could result from the removal of one of the two paramedics currently assigned to ALS units. They might also argue that a more appropriate solution to the city's desire to deploy paramedics in a more widespread manner would be to increase their pay and improve working conditions, thereby enhancing the city's ability to recruit and retain such highly skilled emergency medical personnel.

OPTION:

Consolidate Building, Fire, Environmental Protection, and Housing Inspections

Savings: \$17 million annually

Several agencies are charged with inspecting the safety of city buildings. The Department of Buildings (DOB) inspects building use, construction, boilers, and elevators under its mandate to enforce the city's building, electrical, and zoning codes. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) inspects multifamily residences to ensure they meet safety, sanitary, and occupancy standards set forth in the housing code. Fire department (FDNY) inspectors evaluate buildings' standpipe, sprinkler, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems as part of their duties to enforce fire safety requirements. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) inspects sites where construction work might disturb asbestos-containing materials to ensure air quality standards are maintained.

All together DOB, HPD, FDNY, and DEP currently employ around 1,300 inspectors at a cost of \$85 million in salaries (excluding fringe benefit and pension expenses) to ensure that building owners and construction crews are meeting safety requirements. In fiscal year 2017, inspectors from these agencies performed more than 1 million inspections. While inspectors at each agency are trained to check for different violations under their respective codes, there are areas—inspections of illegally converted dwelling units or the demolition of buildings with asbestos containing materials, for example—where responsibilities overlap.

Under this option, the city would consolidate the various inspection functions now housed in DOB, HPD, FDNY, and DEP into a new inspection agency while the agencies' other functions would remain unchanged. This option would require legislative changes to the city's Administrative Code and charter.

Because inspectors from each agency currently visit some of the same buildings, there would be efficiency gains by training inspectors to look for violations under multiple codes during the same visit, although some more specialized inspections would still require dedicated inspectors. If the city were to reduce the number of inspections by 15 percent, the annual savings—after accounting for additional executive and management staff required for a new agency—would be about \$17million.

PROPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that consolidating inspections would streamline city resources and increase the consistency of inspections while allowing DOB, HPD, FDNY, and DEP to focus on the other aspects of their missions. They could point out that other major cities, including Chicago and Philadelphia, centralize building inspections in one agency. They might also argue that public safety may be improved by eliminating the need for cross-agency coordination. Also, most of HPD's inspections are funded through a federal grant, which has been cut repeatedly in recent years. Increasing efficiency, therefore, is especially important as fewer federal dollars are likely to be available for housing code inspections in the future.

OPPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that inspections and code enforcement are too closely linked with each of the agencies' missions, making separation into a single agency difficult. There is also a limit to efficiency gains because some inspections, such as elevator inspections, are highly technical and would still require specialized staff. Some interagency memoranda of understanding already allow for one agency to issue certain violations for another.

OPTION:**Eliminate City Dollars and Contracts for Excellence Funds for Teacher Coaches**

Savings: \$21 million annually

Coaches work to improve teachers' knowledge of academic subjects and help educators become better pedagogues. Instructional expertise is an important goal because research indicates that of all factors under a school's control, teacher quality has the greatest effect on student achievement. When coaches are successful, they give teachers the ability to help students meet challenging academic standards and they also give teachers better classroom management skills. Under this option the Department of Education (DOE) would essentially eliminate city and unrestricted state funding for teacher coaches and rely instead on other professional development programs to help teachers improve their performance.

Coaches are one piece in a large array of ongoing professional development programs in the city's schools. The DOE provides a variety of opportunities to teachers at all levels including "model" and "master" teachers, lead teachers, after school "in-service" courses, and (online) staff development. DOE continues to work to align teacher support and supervision with the demands of the new Common Core curriculum and also to use technology to support teacher effectiveness. Some professional development activities are school-based while others are administered citywide.

In 2016, \$32 million from a variety of funding sources (down from \$39 million in 2015) was expected to be spent on math, literacy, and special education coaches. Sixty-three percent (\$13 million) of these expenditures are funded with city dollars. There is also nearly \$8 million in state Contracts for Excellence money dedicated to coaches which can be redirected for other school needs.

PROPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that city funding for teacher coaches is not necessary given the DOE's myriad professional development offerings and funding from federal grants like Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title II—Improving Teacher Quality, which is intended for professional development. Similarly, they could point out that although in New York State the federal government has waived the specific set-asides from a school's Title I allocation for teacher development, those funds can still be used to support coaching positions.

OPPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that if professional development is a priority then it should be supported with adequate city funding. Opponents can also argue that reliance on grants could put these positions in jeopardy if the funding disappears over time. They can also say that the schools are supposed to have a high level of autonomy and should have many options for providing professional development to their teaching staff.

OPTION:

Eliminate City Paid Union Release Time

Savings: \$26 million in the first year

Most, if not all, of New York City's collective bargaining agreements contain provisions relating to union release time. In most cases they mandate that Executive Order 75, issued in March 1973, governs the conduct of labor relations by union officials and representatives. The Executive Order delineates union activities eligible for paid union leave (such as investigation of grievances and negotiations with the Office of Labor Relations) and other union activities eligible only for unpaid leave. The Office of Labor Relations determines who is eligible for paid union release time. In 2016, approximately 156 employees of city agencies were on paid full-time union release, such as unions' presidents and vice presidents. Another 53 were scheduled for part-time paid union release. In 2015, 2,243 additional employees were approved to take paid union leave on an occasional basis. By far, the New York City Police Department had the most employees on preapproved union leave with 52 on full-time and 14 on part-time city paid union leave.

Under this option, the city would no longer pay for union release time. Union release time will be granted, but without pay. If this option were to be adopted, unions would have to decide whether to compensate their members who take union release time. This option would save the city \$25 million in 2017, with the savings increasing by about \$700,000 each year thereafter. Implementation would require collective bargaining with the municipal unions, an amendment to Executive Order 75, and a change in the Administrative Code. Changes to the state's Taylor Law might also be necessary.

PROPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that the city should not subsidize work performed by its employees for any private entity, including a labor union. Others might argue that it is inappropriate to ask city taxpayers to fund paid union leave because some activities of those on leave, such as political organizing, may not serve the public interest. Some might argue that forcing unions to bear the costs of their activities would motivate unions to make their operations more efficient, benefitting union members, in addition to the city. Finally, some might argue that it is unfair for the city to pay for union leave time when nonunion employees do not have city-funded individuals to address their grievances and concerns.

OPPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that the 40-year tradition of granting paid leave to union officials has been an efficient arrangement for addressing union members' concerns and conflicts with management—less costly and less time-consuming than formal grievance arbitration. They might argue that if unions were to compensate those on union leave in lieu of city pay, this option would result in higher costs to union members through increased union dues. Finally, others might argue that eliminating city-paid union leave time would undermine the union's effectiveness in responding to grievances and in bargaining matters, which in turn would hurt worker morale, reduce productivity, and add other costs to unions' operations.

OPTION:

Eliminate the 20-Minute “Banking Time” For Certain Education Department Staff

Savings: \$1 million annually

About 3,500 Department of Education (DOE) nonpedagogical administrative employees covered under collective bargaining agreements receive a 20-minute extension of their lunch period each payday (every two weeks) to transact banking business. Unlike lunch, however, the extra 20 minutes is paid time, whether or not it is devoted, as presumed, to banking transactions. Only administrative employees who work in DOE’s central or district offices and not in specific schools—about a third of the department’s administrative staff—receive this benefit.

By eliminating this benefit to eligible DOE employees, productivity savings would accrue, as these employees would now work seven hours on paydays instead of six hours, 40 minutes. On a yearly basis, eliminating subsidized banking time on paydays would yield approximately 8.7 hours of additional productive labor per employee, saving approximately \$1.1 million annually.

Implementing this option would require a change in the DOE Rules and Regulations Governing Non-pedagogical Administrative Employees (Rule 3.7) and may also require negotiations with the respective unions.

PROPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that no other city agency grants this benefit, as most city full-time employees work a full seven hours on paydays as on other workdays. Moreover, this benefit is virtually unheard of in the private sector. The availability and increasing popularity in recent years of direct deposit, automated teller machines, online banking, and other forms of electronic funds transfer have minimized the need for city employees to visit banks in order to make banking transactions, making this benefit of banking time obsolete. In most cases the benefit simply extends lunch on payday. Finally, granting a 20-minute extension of the lunch hour to some DOE employees—only those unionized, those in administrative positions, and those who do not work for a specific school—but not others is inherently unfair.

OPPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that this benefit is needed because not all eligible employees have bank accounts for automated deposits, and thus, some need this time to conduct business at other nonbank locations, such as check cashing stores. Moreover, even for those who have bank accounts, the 20 minutes allotted for banking may be needed for transactions other than check deposits. Cash withdrawals may be needed by the employee, and the extra 20 minutes allows employees to go to their own bank and escape automated teller fees charged by other banks to those without accounts. Finally, it could be argued that this paid time was accrued as an employee benefit and thus, with the consent of the applicable unions, was used as a trade-off for other givebacks. Thus, if one were to eliminate this benefit, it should be offset by providing another city benefit to eligible workers.

OPTION:

Establish a Four-Day Workweek For Some City Employees

Savings: \$20 million in first year

Most of the city's civilian employees work seven hours a day for five days—a total of 35 hours—each week. Under this proposal, city employees in certain agencies would work nine hours a day for four days (a total of 36 hours) each week with no additional compensation, which, in turn, would result in an increase in productivity per employee. As a result, the city would be able to accomplish a reduction in staffing without decreased output, thereby generating savings.

Employees at city agencies involved in public safety, transportation, code enforcement, and other critical operations would retain the current five-day workweek, as would all employees of schools and hospitals. Additionally, this option would not apply to small city agencies, where a reduction in staffing would be extremely difficult to do. Under these assumptions, the change would apply to agencies with a total of about 24,600 employees currently working a 35 hour week. If these employees were required to work one additional hour per week, 663 fewer employees would be needed. We assume that the reduction in staffing would take place over three years through attrition and redeployment of personnel to fill vacancies in other agencies.

This proposed option requires the consent of the affected unions.

PROPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that workers would welcome the opportunity to work one additional hour per week without additional compensation because of the desirability of commuting to work only four days a week instead of five. Although affected city offices would be closed one weekday, they would be open two hours longer on the remaining four days of the week thereby allowing for more convenient access by the public. Although not factored into our projection of potential savings, keeping city offices open just four days a week is also likely to reduce utility, energy, and other costs. Lower energy consumption would support the sustainability goals of the Mayor's OneNYC initiative.

OPPONENTS MIGHT ARGUE that adding an additional hour to the workweek without additional compensation is equivalent to a 2.8 percent wage cut. They might further note that many employees have commitments, such as parenting, that would make a 10-hour workday difficult (nine work hours plus the customary lunch hour). Opponents might also argue that predicted productivity savings are too optimistic for at least two reasons. First, workers' hourly productivity is likely to be lower when the workday is extended by two hours. Second, when employees are ill and use a sick day, it would cost the city nine hours of lost output as opposed to only seven under the current rules.

OPTION:

Have the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Administer Certain Civil Service Exams

Savings: \$4 million annually

This option, modeled on a recommendation included in the January 2011 report of the NYC Workforce Reform Task Force, involves giving the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) responsibility for developing and administering their own civil service exams for two affiliates: NYC Transit (NYCT) and MTA Bridges and Tunnels. Currently, the city has responsibility for civil service administration for about 200,000 employees, including around 40,000 who actually work for these two units of the MTA. Transferring responsibility for the civil service exams to the MTA would require a change in state law.

The city's Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) develops and administers civil service exams for these two units of the MTA, with some assistance from the transportation entities themselves. DCAS has estimated that it costs about \$4 million per year to develop and administer the tests. The MTA is willing to absorb this cost, if given full control over the exams. The New York State Civil Service Commission would continue to have ultimate jurisdiction over these employees.

Before the MTA was created, NYCT and MTA Bridges and Tunnels (then known as the Triborough Bridge & Tunnel Authority) were operated by the city. Both entities became part of the MTA, a state public authority, in 1968. However, state law currently stipulates that the city maintain civil service jurisdiction over these transportation providers because of their original establishment as city agencies.

PROponents MIGHT ARGUE that because NYCT and MTA Bridges and Tunnels are not city agencies, the city should not be in charge of the authority's civil service exams. The MTA is well-equipped to develop and administer the exams, something it already does for its other affiliates.

Proponents could also note that the MTA argues that if it controlled the process, it could fill vacant positions at NYCT and MTA Bridges and Tunnels more quickly because it would have greater incentive to process the exams promptly.

OPponents MIGHT ARGUE that having a third party, in this case the city, develop and administer the civil service exams keeps the process more impartial. Some union representatives and state legislators have expressed support for the current arrangement given the often-contentious state of labor-management relations at the MTA. Opponents are concerned that giving the MTA more administrative responsibility for civil service at these two units could make it easier for the MTA to move titles into "noncompetitive" status, which offers no statutory protection against layoffs.

OPTION:

Increase the Workweek for Municipal Employees to 40 Hours

Savings: \$196 million in the first year, growing to \$664 million in three years

This proposal would increase to 40 the number of hours worked by roughly 66,800 nonmanagerial, nonschool based, full-time civilian employees, currently scheduled to work either 35 hours or 37.5 hours per week. Uniformed employees and school-based employees at the Department of Education and the City University of New York would be excluded. With city employees working a longer week, agencies could generate the same output with fewer employees and thus save on wages, payroll taxes, pension costs, and fringe benefits.

If all employees who currently work 35 hours a week instead work 40 hours, the city would require 12.5 percent fewer workers to cover the same number of hours. Similarly, increasing the hours of all employees who currently work 37.5 hours per week to 40 hours would allow the city to use about 6 percent fewer workers. Controlling for the exclusion of small city agencies as well as work units or locations that would have a hard time producing the same output with fewer employees, IBO estimates that 7,067 positions could be eliminated if this proposal were implemented—or about 11 percent of nonmanagerial, nonschool-based, full-time civilian positions.

Assuming that the city would gradually achieve the potential staff reductions under this proposal by attrition as opposed to layoffs, savings in the first year could be \$196 million, increasing to \$664 million annually by in three years.

This proposal would require collective bargaining.

PROPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that the fiscal challenges facing the city justify implementation of this proposal calling for increased productivity on the part of thousands of city workers. They might also argue that many private-sector employers require 40 hour work weeks, as does the federal government and numerous other public-sector jurisdictions. They also could point out that, on a smaller scale, there already is precedent in New York City government for this option. Since August 2004, newly hired probation officers work 40 hours per week instead of the previous 37.5 hours per week, with no additional pay—a provision agreed to in collective bargaining with the United Probation Officers Association.

OPPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that requiring city workers to work an increased number of hours per week without additional compensation—equivalent to reduced pay per hour—would simply be unfair. They might also argue that lower productivity could result from worker fatigue, which, in turn, would keep the city from achieving the full savings projected from implementation of this option.

OPTION:

Institute Time Limits for Excessed Teachers In the Absent Teacher Reserve Pool

Savings: \$84 million

Excessed teachers are educators who have no full-time teaching position in their current school. Teachers in the absent teacher reserve (ATR) pool are teachers who were excessed and did not find a permanent position in any school by the time the new school year began. Current policy dictates that ATR pool members are placed into schools by the Office of Teacher Recruitment and Quality in teaching positions matching their license area. Reserve teachers remain in schools on monthly assignments and can also perform day to day substitute classroom coverage while seeking a permanent assignment. Using teachers in the ATR for short- and long-term vacancies that might otherwise be filled with substitute teachers generates savings for the Department of Education (DOE). Revised provisions concerning the ATR were put in place under a 2009 agreement between the DOE and the United Federation of Teachers; these have been modified at number of times, most recently in 2017. The current agreement is slated to remain in effect through the 2018-2019 school year.

Principals only have to consider up to two candidates from the ATR for any given vacancy in a school term before hiring a substitute teacher from outside the pool. Additionally, there is no minimum amount of time that a teacher from the ATR may remain in an assignment and the principal has the power to remove an ATR teacher at any time. Any further changes to the ATR policy would likely need to be collectively bargained.

Under this option teachers would be dismissed after a year in the ATR pool without obtaining a permanent position. This year, the city is on track to spend \$120 million on 1,210 excessed teachers in the pool; within this group, 837 teachers earning a total of \$83.8 million in salary and fringe benefits had also been in the pool in the prior year.

If teachers are dismissed after a year in the ATR pool, the reserve pool would shrink. Moreover, some teachers in the pool would be more aggressive in seeking permanent positions. The estimated savings account for the extra costs that would be incurred by schools forced to use more per diem substitutes due to fewer teachers in the ATR pool.

PROPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that the DOE can no longer afford to keep teachers on the payroll who are not assigned to the classroom. They can also argue that an agreement to go on interviews while drawing a paycheck does not create the same urgency to find a permanent position as does the possibility of losing employment if not rehired within a specific time frame.

OPPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that ATR teachers are no longer sitting idle—they are being used as substitutes. They could also argue that being excessed is not always the individual teacher's fault and they should not be further penalized with time limits because ATR teachers have little control over how quickly they can find a new position. Opponents could also argue that ATR teachers are distracted from seeking permanent positions because they must work as fill-in substitutes and clerks. Additionally, many in the pool are more experienced so they are at a disadvantage in competing for open slots because they earn higher salaries that must be paid out of the principal's school budget.

OPTION:

Require Police Officers to Work 10 Additional Tours Annually by Reducing Paid “Muster Time”

Savings: \$131 million annually

Police officers are contractually required to be scheduled to work a specific number of hours each year before subtracting vacation days, personal leave, and other excused absences. At present, police officers work shifts that are 8 hours and 35 minutes long. The paid 35 minute period added to each otherwise 8-hour shift, often referred to as muster time, essentially provides operational overlap—including time for debriefing and wash up—as officers concluding one tour are relieved by officers coming in to work the next tour.

This budget option proposes that only 15 minutes at the end of each tour be reserved for muster time, thereby allowing the police department to schedule officers for an additional 10 tours of duty per year. This in turn would result in the department being able to preserve existing enforcement strength with roughly 1,050 fewer officers, generating annual budget savings of about \$131 million. This option would require collective bargaining.

PROPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that the current 35 minutes allotted for muster time is excessive. Scaling this period back to 15 minutes would allow the police department to generate budget savings for the city by requiring police officers to work what would amount to only a relatively small number of additional tours each year.

OPPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that the current allotment of 35 minutes for debriefing and changing clothes is legitimate. They might also argue that a reduction in this period of paid duty would reduce police force cohesiveness and morale.

OPTION:

Share One Parent Coordinator and General Secretary Among Co-located Schools

Savings: \$37 million annually

Over the past 13 years, many large public schools in New York City have been closed and multiple smaller schools have opened in their place, often sharing space in the buildings that formerly housed single large schools. In the 2015-2016 school year, there were 1,579 schools located in 1,142 buildings. These schools typically have space sharing arrangements for rooms such as libraries, gymnasiums, and lunch rooms. Under this option, multiple schools located in one physical building would also share certain noninstructional staff, such as secretaries and parent coordinators.

New York State education law 100.2 specifies that each school must have a full-time principal who oversees the appointment and supervision of school staff. However, the law does not specify that an individual school must have its own secretary or parent coordinator.

The city's fiscal year 2016 budget allocated about \$93 million for almost 1,600 parent coordinator positions. The average salary plus fringe benefits is about \$58,400. If the city hired only one parent coordinator per school building, about 452 positions would be reduced, saving about \$26.3 million. In the 2014-2015 school year, schools employed approximately 1,300 secretaries who perform general services. Schools also employ additional secretaries who perform payroll, timekeeping, and purchasing duties. General services secretaries have an average salary plus fringe benefits of \$71,893, so if each school building employed only one, savings would add up to more than \$10 million. Together, savings from sharing these noninstructional staff among schools in shared facilities could save the city \$37 million.

PROPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that many new small schools have opened in large school buildings that previously housed only one school and in most cases was served by only one general services secretary and one parent coordinator. They could also point out that some co-located schools already share other staff such as librarians and that the Department of Education has allowed the elimination of parent coordinators at certain schools in the past. In addition, they might also argue that because other types of secretaries employed by individual schools also perform various administrative duties, more than one general services secretary per building is redundant.

OPPONENTS MIGHT ARGUE that maintaining these positions for each school in a building helps those schools maintain their own identity. Sharing positions would also create uncertainty in terms of the supervisory chain of command and might undermine the DOE's mandate that each Principal be the "CEO" of their school. It would also result in schools being treated differently, with those not sharing facilities having an advantage over schools that are co-located since they would not be sharing personnel.

OPTION:**Use E-Learning When High School Teachers Are Absent for Just a Few Days****Savings: \$9 million annually**

Under this option, high schools with a teacher who is absent fewer than three consecutive days would no longer use per diem substitutes but rather assign students an “e-learning” period for the affected class session. Use of per diem substitutes would decline, producing savings for the education department. While teachers from the absent teacher reserve pool are used for longer-term absences, schools continue to use and pay for per diem substitutes for short-term and unplanned absences. In the 2015 school year, high school budgets included a total of \$23.7 million for per-diem teacher absence coverage, \$15.5 million of which was funded with city funds.

Over the course of the 2015 school year, teachers in city high schools missed a total of 96,000 school days due to absences of three days or less. Such short-term absences account for 97 percent of all classroom teacher absences; 84 percent of absences were for a single day. Currently, the Department of Education is required to cover every teacher absence with an appropriate substitute. Under this option, rather than a school calling in substitutes who are paid on a per diem basis, students would instead be directed to online assignments. Online lessons during teacher absences would ideally be related to the current class syllabus, credit recovery, or extra credit. The material could also be a way to improve software and programming skills. Implementation would probably require collective bargaining with the teachers union.

If this option were fully implemented, the only high school per diem substitutes needed would be those engaged for a full term. Based on a per diem rate of \$155 per day, the total cost of covering one-, two-, and three-day absences in high schools was \$17.4 million. We estimate that up to half of the savings associated with eliminating these hires would be offset by costs for technology such as connectivity, broadband/bandwidth requirements, software licensing, and hardware. Given that there is much to learn about the effectiveness of such instructional material and the logistics of having students using it on a regular basis, the program could be run as a pilot in a subset of high schools to gain experience and assess its viability. If the option were implemented as a pilot, the estimated savings would be lower.

PROPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that online learning is effective and flexible for instruction in many subjects. Moreover, given that in many cases of unanticipated short-term absences, there are few lesson plans available for substitutes to use in preparing to teach a class on short notice, the e-learning alternative may be pedagogically equal or even superior. Providing a choice of online learning topics might increase student satisfaction, attention, participation, and attendance. Schools would not have to worry about getting substitutes to come in to cover unscheduled absences, reducing stress on school administrators and other school staff who scramble to work out class coverage. Independent e-learning can also teach students life skills such as time management.

OPPOSERS MIGHT ARGUE that the logistics of such a policy would have to be well thought out. Schools would need a monitored common space or other appropriate setting to implement independent e-learning. There could also be collateral costs to maintain infrastructure to support e-learning over the longer term. Finally, the need to ensure student safety and attendance would likely require assigning school staff to the e-learning space, which could leave other school functions short-staffed.