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of Ontario



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Lundi
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 6 May 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 6 mai 2024

The House met at 1015.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning. Let us pray.

Prayers.

REPORT, OMBUDSMAN OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following document was tabled: a report entitled *Rights Unrecognized: Mia's Story: Investigation into the Adequacy of Services Provided by York Region Children's Aid Society to "Mia,"* from the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JEAN-YVES LALONDE

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: Je me lève en Chambre aujourd'hui pour rendre hommage à un politicien de ma région qui nous a quitté récemment à l'âge de 76 ans, M. Jean-Yves Lalonde.

M. Lalonde a été maire de la municipalité d'Alfred et Plantagenet de 2003 à 2014. Il a occupé le poste de président des comtés unis de Prescott et Russell à deux reprises, soit en 2007 et 2011, en plus d'œuvrer à l'avancement de la francophonie ontarienne à titre de président de L'association française des municipalités de l'Ontario, l'AFMO.

Avant de faire le saut en politique municipale, M. Lalonde a œuvré pendant 33 ans dans le domaine de l'éducation. Il a été tour à tour enseignant, conseiller pédagogique aux services consultatifs de la langue française du ministère de l'Éducation et directeur d'école. Il a également été membre fondateur de l'Association francophone pour l'éducation artistique en Ontario, l'AFÉAO.

M. Lalonde était un vrai fier Franco-Ontarien, monsieur le Président. J'ai eu la chance de côtoyer M. Lalonde durant son mandat de maire de la municipalité d'Alfred et Plantagenet, et je peux vous assurer qu'il était dédié à sa municipalité et au bien-être de sa communauté.

Plusieurs politiciens peuvent prendre exemple de M. Lalonde, qui avait une excellente formule quand ça vient à trouver le bon équilibre entre le travail de maire et son devoir de père de famille. On mentionne qu'il avait accompli de grandes choses; sa famille demeurait, de loin, son plus bel accomplissement et il était tellement fier d'eux.

À M^{me} Lalonde, aux enfants, aux petits-enfants et à toute la famille, nos sincères condoléances.

1020

SIoux LOOKOUT BOMBERS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: The Sioux Lookout Bombers are a two-year-old Junior A hockey team from Kiiwetinoong. They were named in honour of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's fleet of Canadair CL-415 water bombers, the planes we exclusively use to fight wildfires.

The Sioux Lookout Bombers recently captured their first Bill Salonen Cup as champions of the Superior International Junior Hockey League. In just their second year in the league, they swept the defending champion, Kam River Fighting Walleye, in the final series of the playoffs.

The Bombers support their community, and the community supports our local hockey team. They took the time this season to visit the nearby First Nations like Lac Seul and Slate Falls First Nation to engage with local youth and share their knowledge and love for the game of hockey.

The Bombers were undefeated in every home game when they played in the Hangar, the Sioux Lookout Memorial Arena, to sell-out crowds for their entire playoff run.

This week, the Bombers are travelling south to Oakville to compete against the other champions of the eight member leagues of the Canadian Junior Hockey League for the Centennial Cup, the Junior A title.

Congratulations and good luck to the Bombers. We will be cheering you on. Meegwetch.

NORTHERN ONTARIO SCHOOL OF MEDICINE UNIVERSITY

Mr. Kevin Holland: It is indeed a privilege to rise today in recognition of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine University, locally known as NOSM U.

NOSM is Canada's first independent medical university and one of the country's greatest education and physician workforce success stories. More than just a medical school, it was purpose-built in 2002 by the Ontario PC government as a strategy to address the physician shortage and health care needs of the region. Born of a grassroots movement, NOSM is a made-in-the-north solution to regional health care inequities, which requires strong ties and engagement with over 500 organizations in over 90 remote, rural, Indigenous and francophone communities.

Today, more NOSM University-trained students from across the north choose family medicine as a career than

any other medical school in Canada. Since its creation in 2002, NOSM U has trained 902 doctors. Eighty-eight per cent of those doctors who did both their undergraduate and residency training have stayed in the region and serve the people of northern Ontario.

I take this opportunity to extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Sarita Verma for her leadership, passion for serving our people of the north and sincere willingness to collaborate with me in advancing the NOSM vision. Enjoy your well-earned retirement, but don't go too far.

We look forward to what the future holds for NOSM and our communities.

HEALTH OUTREACH MOBILE ENGAGEMENT BUS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: On Friday, London MPPs had the chance to tour the Health Outreach Mobile Engagement, or HOME, bus as part of RNAO's Take Your MPP to Work day. It's an impressive collaboration between CMHA Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services, London Cares Homeless Response Services, London InterCommunity Health Centre, Middlesex-London Paramedic Services and Regional HIV/AIDS Connection.

In 2021, these partners came together to improve the health outcomes and health equity of highly marginalized individuals in London. The team meets clients where they are, offering low-barrier yet full-scope primary and acute care, follow-up care and referrals to other wraparound services.

The bus is tight but incredibly efficient. What struck me most was how nimble this brilliant program was. On the team of nurse practitioner, registered nurse and community worker, the RNs spoke about how this allowed them to work to their full scope of practice.

This model builds trust and relationships, re-establishes connections and provides access to vital wraparound supports to help people get their health and lives on track. No one gets turned away.

A quote that will remain with me was, "There are no hard-to-serve people, only hard-to-access services."

Hard-working RNs and the team at LIHC were clear where provincial funding comes up short. What is missing is wage parity for nurses. It's the not-so-well-kept secret that nurses are dramatically underpaid for home and community care. They receive a fraction of what long-term-care and acute care nurses are paid. Additionally, community health centres have not seen a base budget increase in over a decade.

It's time this government stopped attacking nurses and front-line workers. Respect them, thank them, pay them properly and invest in the community-based health care that community health centres provide.

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Winston Churchill is famously quoted as saying, "We make a living by what we get. We

make a life by what we give." This spirit of generosity and selfless service was honoured in Niagara West at two local award ceremonies hosted last week.

At the Good Citizen awards ceremony, hosted by the town of Lincoln, 28 local recipients were honoured for their outstanding achievement, commitment and excellence in our communities. At the Paul Harris awards evening, hosted by the Rotary Club of Lincoln, three local recipients were honoured for their outstanding community service: Jennifer Toews, Sheila Laundry and Martha Kraft.

I highlighted the common commitment of Jennifer, Sheila and Martha to family, education and the performing arts at the Paul Harris awards event in Vineland last Tuesday. Jennifer was celebrated as one of the 50 Faces of Lincoln in 2020 and has served as artistic director of the Lamplighter Tour of the Rotary Club of Lincoln, bringing local history to life. Sheila has scripted 15 plays for the Lamplighter Tour, and as an experienced teacher and lifelong learner, earned a master of education in 1992, continuing to serve her community as an active volunteer and also as a member of her local church. Martha has touched the lives of hundreds of children and youth as a preschool program coordinator at the Grimsby Co-operative Preschool, as well as opening her home to Rotary exchange students and vulnerable women and children through the YWCA Niagara Region transitional housing program.

Martha, Sheila and Jennifer, thank you for demonstrating "Service above Self" and helping to build a strong community spirit in West Niagara. From lake to lake, it's people like you who make Niagara West one of the most vibrant communities to live in in Ontario.

GOOD NEIGHBOUR AWARDS

Ms. Chandra Pasma: On April 19, I was very pleased to be able to host the second annual Ottawa West-Nepean Good Neighbour Awards. These awards celebrate the people in our community who brighten and sustain the lives of their neighbours every day in ways big and small. They are all nominated by members of our community.

Some of them, like Shannon, Zoë, Jennifer, Maryam, Rana and Tricia, are amazing volunteers for local community organization like Matthew House; the Caldwell Family Centre; the Nepean, Rideau and Osgoode Community Resource Centre; and the Ottawa Valley Brain Injury Association. They are all doing incredible work supporting newcomers, low-income communities and people with concussions.

Others, like Neil, Leeanne and Paul, show up every day for people in their community, helping with moves, child care, shovelling driveways and lending a helping hand to newcomers and people living with disabilities.

Bill and Jeannie are teachers, sharing their wisdom and life experience with our community. Laura is a school librarian who tirelessly advocates for reading and connects kids with books.

Murray, Joyce, Jayne and Margo are community builders, bringing people together, forging connections and

creating social networks that support and sustain one another.

David brightens the lives of his neighbours every single day with a positive message, and Pam supports her neighbours in adopting ecologically sustainable practices.

In a time when there's so much in the world that can make us feel anxious or concerned, these neighbours remind us that we are always surrounded by goodness and there is always someone there to lend a helping hand. Thank you so much to each one of you for being a good neighbour.

WOMEN'S HEALTH WEEK

Mr. Matthew Rae: Today, May 6, marks the beginning of Women's Health Week. Women's Health Week, anchored by Mother's Day, is celebrated annually to raise awareness and engagement about lived experiences in women's health.

I'm proud to be part of a government that this fall announced an expansion to Ontario Breast Screening Program. Beginning this October, women ages 40 to 49 will now be eligible for Ontario Breast Screening Program, improving the odds for early detection.

I would like to highlight the outstanding work of the Women's Health Coalition in advancing a movement to speak openly, learn and engage, to address barriers, gaps and biases in menstrual, reproductive and sexual health through all the ages and stages of a woman's health experience. The Women's Health Coalition works tirelessly to advocate, communicate and connect on these very important issues.

I am proud to be an ally of the Women's Health Coalition and women's health in general, Speaker. The Women's Health Coalition is a diverse network of women and families, health care professionals, community organizations and business leaders who have come together to advance women's health. Women's health matters to all of us, in our homes, our communities, and workplaces across Ontario.

1030

Speaker, I encourage all my colleagues to join me in celebrating Women's Health Week and the Women's Health Coalition for their remarkable contributions to a healthier, more inclusive society.

COMMUNITY CLEANUP

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I rise today to proudly highlight an event that speaks volumes about the values and sense of community within the riding of Markham-Thornhill.

Last week, I had the privilege of hosting a community litter cleanup event with the residents of Markham-Thornhill. Markham residents understand the importance of taking responsibility for their environment and take pride in keeping their neighbourhood clean.

April was Earth Month in the city of Markham, and it was amazing to witness first-hand as over 50 residents,

especially children and youth, came together to participate in our cleanup event. Together, we rolled up our sleeves and set out to beautify one of our amazing local parks, the park called John Daniels Park.

This event was a testament to the power of community collaboration and civic engagement. It showcased that, working together, we can create positive change and make a lasting impact on our surroundings.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of the volunteers who dedicated their time and energy to this worthy cause. Mr. Speaker, the commitment to our community is truly inspiring, and I am immensely proud to represent such proactive, caring and creative constituents.

MAY IS MUSEUM MONTH

Mr. Dave Smith: It's an honour to rise today to encourage members of this House and the people of Ontario to take part in May Is Museum Month.

Organized by the Ontario Museum Association, this month-long celebration honours more than 700 museums, galleries and heritage sites in Ontario, along with their 11,000 employees and 37,000 volunteers.

For 24 years now, May Is Museum Month has celebrated Ontario's rich cultural heritage. This year's theme, museums for education and opportunity, underscores the crucial role of Ontario's museums as hubs of lifelong learning, innovation and cultural understanding.

As we mark this month, it's fitting to announce that the Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough opens its doors to visitors on May 13. Our government proudly supported the construction of this new institution, which represents a vital part of Canadian heritage and history.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario's museums make substantial social and economic contributions to our communities, enhancing the quality of life for residents and attracting visitors from both near and far. These institutions bring people together to serve as platforms for conversations about our past, present and future, and foster connections that enrich our local economics and highlight our diverse stories.

I extend my gratitude to the OMA and all of its members for preserving our history and curating dynamic educational content. I also recognize Ontario's many museum volunteers and thank them for their dedication to the communities that they serve.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes our member's statements for this morning.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to say that we have some very special guests with us here in the lower gallery, a delegation from the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

I would like to introduce them individually. Joining us today are the Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George,

Speaker of the House of Representatives; the Honourable Adrian Leonce, minister in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development; Dr. Rishad Seecheran, who is a member of Parliament; Senator Deeroop Teemal; and Chantal La Roche, director of legal services. Once again, please join me in warmly welcoming our friends from Trinidad and Tobago.

Applause.

Mr. Kevin Holland: It's my pleasure to welcome, from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, Dr. Sarita Verma, Ray Hunt and Joanne Musico. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Jill Andrew: I'm proud to welcome Fairbank Public School to Queen's Park. They're going to be singing the national anthem and God Save the King. Welcome, guys.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour today to rise and welcome all members of the Ontario landscape architecture association who I had a chance to meet with this morning.

I want to give a special shout-out to landscape architect and Guelph city councillor Ken Yee Chew, who is here today, as well as to my neighbour in the township of Centre Wellington, Mayor Shawn Watters, who is also a landscape architect.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I would like to welcome siblings from my riding of Simcoe North who are here visiting us today at Queen's Park: Gabrielle Gillespie and Jacob Gillespie. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I have two introductions. First, I want to welcome the 2024 cohort of the Ontario Parliamentary Friends of Tibet's summer student program. We have Nawang Garzey, who is placed with the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore; Kalsang Tashi, placed with the member from Toronto Centre; Tenzin Phuntsok, placed with the member from Niagara West; and Shedrup Choepel, placed in my office.

Second, I'd also like to welcome Shannon Baker from the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Happy spring, everyone. I too would like to welcome the association of Ontario landscape architects to the House. They're doing much work on climate action and sustainability measures—specifically, beautiful Beaches–East Yorkers jazzy Jane Welsh, marvellous Matthew Perotto and sensational Sherry Bagnato, and neighbouring riding Toronto–Danforth's bubbly Bryce Miranda. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to welcome James Neven and Jan VanderHout from the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance. Just a reminder that they're having a reception this evening.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to welcome Steve Barnhart from Niagara Parks Commission and President Stefan Fediuk from the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects.

Speaker, I'd like to apologize, but I got stuck in traffic, and it was a three-and-a-half-hour drive here this morning.

So thank you, and I'm looking forward to meeting with you later on.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'd love to introduce, from the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, some friends of mine: Timothy Dobson, Glenn O'Connor and Afshin Ashari. Welcome to Queen's Park. It's always a pleasure to have you here.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I would like to welcome a few people from the Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicle Clubs: Shari Black, who is the executive director, and my constituent Shawn Ellenberger, who is the president of the board; as well as, from the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, my constituent, Stefan Fediuk, who is the president. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'd like to welcome my constituent from my riding who is here with the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, Justin Whalen. Welcome to your House.

As well, a group compiled from Citizens' Climate Lobby: We have delegates from For Our Kids Toronto, CAPE Ontario, Seniors for Climate Action Now Toronto and Toronto East End Residents for Renewable Energy, specifically 11-year-old climate advocate Robert; Mary Blake Rose, deputy project manager for Citizens' Climate Lobby; and Grace Kuang, medical student for the University of Toronto, here today to speak about the negative impacts of fossil gas energy. Thank you and welcome to your House.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to welcome the 283 Air Cadets from Vaughan who are with us today. Thank you for your service and your love of country. Welcome to Queen's Park.

1040

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to welcome riding association members from the Brantford–Brant NDP who are coming here to question period today: Lukas Oakley, Ben Pickles, Harvey Bischof, Fatima De Jesus, Chris Powles and Shelagh Finnigan.

I'd also like to welcome and introduce the secretary-treasurer of the Ontario Federation of Labour, who is here with us today: Ahmad Gaied.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to introduce a constituent from my riding of Ottawa South, who is also here with the association of landscape architects, Cameron Smith.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): If there are no objections, I'd like to continue with introduction of visitors.

Mr. Matthew Rae: It is my pleasure to introduce MPP-elect Steve Pinsonneault and MPP-elect Zee Hamid after their historic election victory last week.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's my pleasure to add my voice of welcome to all those members from the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, including some allies and friends who have joined us this morning for the reception. This includes Steve Crombie, who is the senior director of public affairs for the Ontario Road Builders' Association; Andrew Hurd, executive director of the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies of Ontario; Joe Salemi, the executive director of the

landscape architects; Lisa Kelly, the business development manager of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce; as well as Susan Wiggins, executive director of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, and Jane Welsh, who is a friend and former colleague at the city of Toronto. Thank you very much for all of your work.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Today, I have the honour of welcoming some youth from my great riding of Newmarket–Aurora: Trifen Marcos, Mahta Gharaei, Maha Ishfaq Khan, Destiny Som, James Madore, Daniel Goutovets, Nadia Hansen, Daniel Zhang, Novelette Graham-Hart and Blake Koehler. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the privilege of welcoming a couple of constituents today: Andrew Hendriks from Hendriks Greenhouses and Jan VanZanten, the president of Flowers Canada Growers. Also, Steve Barnhart is here with the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, and I also understand that Tenzin Phuntsok, who is working in my office for the next few weeks as an intern with the Ontario Parliamentary Friends of Tibet group, is here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Robin Martin: It's my great honour today to introduce our page captain for the day, Alexander Seo Rose, and his parents are here: Beth Seo and Kevin Rose, up in the gallery.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: In the east visitors' gallery behind us, I'd like to introduce, from my office, Heather Potter, my chief of staff; Leah Mulholland, deputy chief of staff; Nuri Kim, the director of policy; Desiree Godin, deputy director of policy and our auto lead, and all of our team. This is my ministry's part of the team who have landed Honda, the largest Canadian auto deal in history.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I'd like to welcome Kevin Post, a constituent from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, who is also here today with the association of Ontario architects. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's my pleasure to introduce members of the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, whom I had the pleasure of hosting this morning at a breakfast. From the OALA council, we have Stefan Fediuk, Steve Barnhart, Cameron Smith, Justin Whalen, Matthew Campbell and a constituent of mine, Shawn Watters.

From their practice legislation committee, we have Glenn O'Connor, Shannon Baker and Tim Dobson.

From the OALA staff, we have Aina Budrevics, Angie Anselmo and Sherry Bagnato.

Hon. Doug Downey: I want to welcome Matthew Collier, Jenny Collier, and their children Stella Collier and Alex Collier, who are here with no organization or cause. Welcome to your House.

Mr. John Jordan: I want to welcome Teresa Hebb and Colleen Carbert of the Ontario federation of ATVs. They will be holding a reception tonight. I hope to see you there.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: And last but certainly not least, I'm pleased to say TOGA is in the House today. In addition to representing the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance—we heard about Jan and James—but I'd also like to welcome Rick Mastronardi, Albert Mastronardi and

Richard Lee. We look forward to seeing you in the dining room from 5 to 7 this evening.

Hon. Michael D. Ford: And hopefully last: I'd like to take a moment to welcome the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center as well as their chief executive officer, Michael Levitt, to the House, as we are observing Yom ha-Shoah today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I just have to say welcome to Dr. Sarita Verma and Ray Hunt from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. She has been fantastic in my community. She is leaving us, but thank you for being here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe that concludes our introduction of visitors this morning.

I want to acknowledge that we're meeting on lands traditionally inhabited by Indigenous peoples. We pay our respects to the many Indigenous nations who gathered here and continue to gather here, including the Mississaugas of the Credit. Meegwetch.

This morning, we have with us in the public gallery the Fairbank Public School choir, from the riding of Toronto–St. Paul's, to perform O Canada and God Save the King. Please stand and join them in the singing of our national and royal anthems.

Singing of the national anthem / Chant de l'hymne national.

Singing of the royal anthem / Chant de l'hymne royal.

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member from Peterborough–Kawartha has informed me he has a point of order he wishes to raise.

Mr. Dave Smith: Yesterday was Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day. I seek unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence in memory of the six million Jews killed during the Holocaust.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow for a moment of silence now in memory of the six million Jews who were killed during the Holocaust. Agreed? Agreed. Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Members will please take their seats.

1050

WEARING OF KAFFIYEHS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I need to ask for a moment of the House's time, as I have a brief statement that I wish to make regarding the controversy that has surrounded the wearing of kaffiyehs in the legislative precinct and the chamber.

As we know, areas assigned to members, caucuses or the media are their own individual domains. These spaces are not subject to any restrictions relating to the choice of attire by their occupants.

However, there have always been different rules governing the chamber. I return again to an explanation of

our long-standing practice, going back decades, that items of clothing or accessories, including T-shirts, jerseys, scarves, ribbons and pins, that, in the opinion of the Chair, are being used to make a deliberate statement may not be worn in the chamber unless there is unanimous consent of the House to permit members to do so.

When the issue of wearing kaffiyehs in the House was raised with me, I reviewed the matter, and I concluded that, at this time, a member seeking to wear the kaffiyeh in the chamber was intending to make an overt political statement by wearing it. I stand by that conclusion, and I believe that events which have transpired since have confirmed it to be true.

On at least two occasions when it was raised, the House denied unanimous consent for the wearing of kaffiyehs in the chamber. Had unanimous consent been granted, I would have had no objection to the wearing of the kaffiyeh in the chamber. Again, the Speaker is the servant of the House.

Let me add that I never concluded or stated that the kaffiyeh is not a cultural symbol for many in the Arab and Muslim communities.

Since the issue has become so controversial, I think it necessary to point out that there is not a blanket ban which singles out only the kaffiyeh for those who wish to wear it and enter the legislative precinct. It has been our standard practice, again for many decades, to ask those who seek to enter the assembly not to wear any attire which appears to be intended to make a political statement of any sort. This is intended to promote order and decorum and mostly has had the desired effect through the years. But in this case, which unfortunately became politicized, it has instead fostered division and discord, both in this House and in our communities in the province.

As Speaker, my intent has always been to uphold the conventions and principles that were designed to bring us together to debate important issues. Diversity has been and remains one of Ontario's greatest strengths.

Therefore, I wish to clarify that members, staff and visitors wearing the kaffiyeh will be permitted entry to the legislative precinct. However, in line with my previous statements in the House, the kaffiyeh is not permitted to be worn in the chamber or the galleries at this time without the unanimous consent of the House.

I will remind all members and guests that demonstrations in the building are always prohibited, and members must be able to fulfill their parliamentary duties without obstruction.

I thank the House for its attention.

QUESTION PERIOD

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier. Last week, I met with housing advocates in Peterborough and in Barrie, and I heard how this government's refusal to

spend federal housing money on housing is putting so many projects at risk.

Under its agreement with the federal government, this government promised to build nearly 20,000 new affordable homes over 10 years, but six years later, they've built barely 1,000. The province didn't keep its end of the deal, and now the federal government is taking back \$357 million, leaving a giant hole in our housing budget.

My question is, why is this government so opposed to building affordable housing that they'd risk losing \$357 million?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: In fact, let me update the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, the province of Ontario and its partners, the municipalities and our service managers, have actually built 11,000 of the 19,000 units, with five years left to go.

We also had a target, I believe, of 23,000 units that were to be renovated, rehabilitated and brought back into service. Of that target, five years in, we have actually done 123,000 units—almost 400% of the target.

The federal government has unilaterally decided that they want to change the rules and are unilaterally holding back \$357 million. The province of Ontario is committed and will continue to fund our portion of the National Housing Strategy. Our service managers and our municipal partners are in full agreement with the province of Ontario. It is only the NDP who feel differently, Mr. Speaker, and that's why "other" got more votes than they did in the two by-elections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: The dirty little secret here is that while federal funding for housing has increased under the National Housing Strategy, this government has cut back provincial funding. Maybe the federal government got tired of seeing their housing dollars spent on—I don't know—private luxury spas in downtown Toronto, so they're taking back that \$357 million.

My question to the government is why, again, is this government abandoning its responsibility to fund and deliver new affordable homes in this province?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Truly, the Leader of the Opposition hasn't got a clue what she is talking about. In fact, we've increased funding in her own riding by 33%. She'll recall that because she has voted against that 33%.

Now, let's unpack, colleagues, what the federal government has decided to do. They've decided to unilaterally withhold \$357 million because they disagreed with us on how we should distribute that money. For weeks, we've been saying, "It is distributed through our service managers." Now, the big, bad federal Minister of Housing is going to punish Ontario. Do you know how? By distributing the money the same way we have done it for the last 35 years: through our service managers.

So I say, thank you very much for listening to the province of Ontario. Thank you for continuing to distribute the money the way we have done it for 35 years.

Unfortunately, unilaterally, they decided to hold back \$357 million, with the support of the federal NDP, who could have stopped it right away but chose to ignore it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: When government MPPs voted against the NDP's housing motion two weeks ago, they made their position crystal clear. Housing is a human right, but this government doesn't believe it is the job of the government to fund and deliver affordable housing.

Public funding for luxury spas? No problem. Give \$8.3 billion to greenbelt speculators? Sure thing. Fatten the Premier's office's budget? Why not? But provincial funding for affordable housing? Nada.

Why does this government hate publicly funded housing so much that it is choosing to give up \$357 million in federal funding?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, the Leader of the Opposition couldn't be more incorrect. We are continuing to fund our portion of the National Housing Strategy. Unilaterally, we have decided to continue on that funding. In fact, we've gone a step further with the budget—not only this budget, but the previous budget. We've actually increased funding to its highest level in history. Now, the Leader of the Opposition, of course, and the entire NDP caucus voted against that.

We're going to continue to fund those programs that make sense for the people of the province of Ontario. If the big, bad federal government wants to get on board and help us, we welcome that.

1100

We have said for two and a half months that we fund housing through our service managers, through our partners at the municipal level. They have said, "No, no, no"—but then they sent us a wonderful letter just last week that said, "You know what? We're going to punish you by funding the program the exact same way you've done it for the last 35 years." Well, thank you very much, and I agree with that.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Wow. Do you know what's highest in history? Homelessness rates right now—that's what's the highest in history.

But back to the Premier: A little over a week ago, on a Friday afternoon right before the constituency week, the government dropped their annual funding announcement for schools. That should have been the first clue; right, Speaker? Dropping a major announcement at the last minute on a Friday afternoon. The government thought they could pull one over again on the people of Ontario. They thought that if they gave it a different name, showed some kind of new calculations and rebranded it, they could confuse you.

I'm sure the Premier and the minister thought that they had outsmarted everyone and avoided accountability, but it turns out they weren't so clever, Speaker. In fact, it's the same cuts again and again, just under a different name.

My question to the Premier is, does this government refuse to adequately fund school programs that are needed by the most vulnerable of our students, and why?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, if you can believe it, we also made an announcement on a Sunday—because our government seems to be working 24/7—to restrict cellphones, to ban vaping and to deny social media from school websites.

This, coming from the member opposite: a party that has a record of literally denying to the public servants of this province, by the Rae day imposition of 12 days of mandatory unpaid leave. This is a member whose party, a generation ago, cut staff by 5%. This is a party that actually forced teacher unions to use surplus monies in their teacher pension fund to offset teacher cuts that they imposed.

This is a government committed to investing in our students and in our future: \$745 million more dollars in the coming school year, 9,000 additional education workers, 3,000 more front-line educators.

I know the member opposite doesn't want to acknowledge that this is a government investing more than ever before in our publicly funded schools.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order.

Supplementary question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll tell you, Speaker—back to the Premier again—we're not buying it. Ontarians aren't buying it. All you have to do is talk to one parent in this province and you will know that the status quo is not working. It's not working for our kids in overcrowded classrooms; it's not working for our under-resourced teachers. The minister might want to try actually talking to parents, teachers and students.

This year, public funding is \$2 billion lower than was expected. That's only accounting for the current status quo, to keep things the way they are, which is pretty darn terrible right now. It's not even including the additional funding that schools need to address the worker shortage, the student mental health programs, the school violence. This government thinks that that's just good enough.

So to the Premier: Why does he think that "just good enough" is good enough for our kids?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I am proud to be part of a government that has increased funding in public education to the highest levels ever recorded in Ontario history: \$745 million more for this school year.

I mean, in addition to the monetary investment, this is a government that did what your party and the Liberals

couldn't do, which is sign deals for three years, delivering peace for children in Ontario. Then we announced a revision to the curriculum, the introduction of a kindergarten curriculum that ensures literacy and math is involved in the curriculum. We also announced a plan to remove distractions, to ban vaping, to eliminate social media from school devices. This is a common-sense plan bolstered by support.

Some \$17 million on mental health funding: The member opposite speaks about mental health. This is an issue we care about. There's a reason why we've increased funding by 550%.

We're continuing to invest. We're also continuing to demand better—better outcomes from the investments we make. That's the difference. We actually will hold school boards to account, to expect better outcomes on reading, writing and math, and the outcomes of our kids.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And the final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, we saw what happened in this province when Conservatives applied their so-called “common sense,” and boy, we're still recovering from it—absolutely terrible.

The Minister of Education has pile after pile of applications for capital builds for schools, while kids are sitting in portables, and they are collecting dust on his desk.

The government has made a habit of stashing away so-called contingency funds to give them free rein on spending. We see this over and over, and we're seeing it again with \$1.4 billion allocated for “planning provisions” that is not accessible to school boards. Core funding isn't really core funding if it isn't actually available to our schools.

So to the Premier: Is the government disguising this new slush fund under education funding to hide the massive cuts to public education and our schools?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: This is the government that doubled the funding to build more schools in the province of Ontario, a 136% increase in funding. And yet, we also announced a plan to cut by half the construction timelines. And yet, the member from Davenport has a history, including when she was critic for education, of opposing increases that help families in Toronto, increases that would allow us to reduce the backlog of maintenance that she enabled when she propped up the Liberal Party.

This is an opposition that can't accept a basic premise. It is the Progressive Conservative Party that cut child care fees by 50%, it's the Progressive Conservative Party that has increased capital funding by 136% and it's the Progressive Conservative Party that is increasing literacy and math rates for the first time in a generation.

We are getting the job done. Join us for the benefit of kids in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please stop the clock.

Once again, I'll remind the House that it has been the established practice of this House that members should not use props, signage or accessories that are intended to

express a political message or are likely to cause disorder. This also extends to members' attire, where logos, symbols, slogans and other political messaging are not permitted unless the unanimous consent of the House is granted. This Legislature is a forum for debate, and the expectation in the chamber is that political statements should be made during debate rather than through the use of props or symbols.

Mr. Joel Harden: It's not a prop.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order.

I must warn the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Harden left the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Centre will come to order.

The member for Hamilton Centre is warned.

Sarah Jama, you are named.

The member is currently not eligible to be recognized in the House, pursuant to the order of the House adopted on October 23, 2023. As a result of being named, for the remainder of the day today, the member is ineligible to vote on matters before the Assembly, attend and participate in any committee proceedings, use the media studio, and table notices of motion, written questions and petitions. You must leave the chamber.

Ms. Jama left the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Member for Kitchener—Conestoga, it's totally inappropriate to make reference to the absence of any member.

We can start the clock, I think. The next question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Chandra Pasma: The Minister of Education would rather talk about anything but what's happening in our schools right now, because the situation is pretty grim thanks to this government. Schools are turning down the heat to save money, telling teachers to bring in their own supplies. Kids with special needs are being sent home because there's no one left to look after them. Teens asking for mental health support are waiting over a year to see a social worker.

In the face of all this, the Premier is once again proposing education funding for next year that doesn't keep pace with inflation or enrolment growth. This is another cut, Speaker.

Why does the Premier not believe that children in Ontario deserve a high-quality education and safe, supportive, fully resourced classrooms?

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, we're increasing funding by over \$745 million for the coming school year because we believe in restoring focus, discipline and some common sense back in Ontario schools. And that's why

we've increased the funding for the coming school year to the highest levels ever.

We've also committed and we have hired 9,000 more education workers, 3,000 additional front-line educators. We have 900 additional teachers being hired for literacy and for math. Mr. Speaker, this is a historic investment, underpinned by a reform to the curriculum that infuses life and job skills, that actually ensures financial literacy and coding and phonics has returned to the norm in Ontario schools.

We know there's more work to do, but I would hope members opposite would join our government and our Premier in increasing the funding and the staffing and the expectations in Ontario's publicly funded schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And the supplementary question.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I guess the minister's math is so basic, Speaker, that he's never heard of inflation.

The Premier is providing \$1,500 less for each child in our schools compared to 2018. This at a time when we have a massive teacher shortage, a problem with violence, a mental health crisis, not enough special education or ESL supports, transportation problems and crumbling schools.

As a parent, on behalf of parents across the province, I want to know, why are you attacking our children's education?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I think parents want governments to act on the priorities that are impeding their ability to learn in the classroom. That's why we announced a plan to restrict cell phones, to ban vaping and to remove social media from the in-class learning experience. That is supported by 85% of families.

If we want to listen to the people we represent, then the overwhelming majority of parents will say, "Go back to basics. Remove the distractions and the nonsense, and make sure my kids are proficient in literacy and in math," and that's exactly what we're doing. The Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act repatriates that power back to the people, puts parents in the driver's seat, ensures transparency on school boards and benchmarks their performance according to academic achievement, which is what education is supposed to be about.

We have increased the funding, we're increasing the expectations and we're adding more staff to make sure that students are set up for long-term success.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Saunderson: My question is for the extremely busy Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Last week, our province welcomed a historic investment in my riding of Simcoe–Grey. Honda's \$15-billion investment in Ontario is the largest auto investment in

Canadian history. This general investment will create jobs not only for my constituents in Simcoe–Grey but right across our great province.

Premier Ford has called Minister Fedeli the architect of the Honda deal, and not surprisingly, Minister Fedeli has credited the Premier as being the best closer you have ever seen. The reality is that this dynamic duo got it done for Ontario.

Speaker, can the minister take us behind this historic deal?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, Honda's \$15-billion investment is a game-changer for our auto sector and for our entire province. This would not have happened without Honda's long-standing history here in Ontario and especially with the dedicated team of workers at Honda, who produce some of the best-selling vehicles made in Canada; Premier Ford, as you heard, the best closer at the negotiating table, and a strong team—thank you to them—our team, who were introduced earlier, with their deep understanding of the auto sector; the officials in our ministry and their tremendous work and countless hours; and every member of this government—treasury, finance, infrastructure, energy, mines, labour. It was an all-of-government effort.

Speaker, this is a new chapter now in Ontario's auto sector. We are an EV manufacturing powerhouse.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the minister for that answer. When you look back to what Ontario was before this government took office, you really get a sense of how monumental this investment is. We had an auto sector that was on the brink of collapse, and the previous Liberal government's response was to throw in the towel on Ontario's manufacturers and our workers. They implemented policies that sought to restructure the composition of our economy by crushing our goods-producing sector so that we could become entirely dependent on the service sector. As a result, 300,000 good-paying jobs left our province.

But now our province is landing investments that were unthinkable six years ago and bringing back jobs by the tens of thousands. Can the minister explain what this new investment will mean for Ontario's economy?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Honda will build an EV assembly plant and a battery manufacturing plant at their facility in Alliston. This \$15-billion investment of Honda's will create 1,000 new, good-paying jobs, while retaining 4,200 jobs at that plant. They will also build a cathode plant through a joint venture with Korea's POSCO and a separator plant through a joint venture with Japan's Asahi Kasei. These are both multi-billion-dollar joint venture announcements as part of Honda's \$15-billion investment. These both will create significant new jobs in two Ontario cities, which will be announced in the coming weeks. In addition, there will be tens of thousands of supply chain jobs created all across Ontario.

We are the EV-manufacturing powerhouse.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

A recent Ombudsman report has revealed fatal gaps in youth support and has made 20 recommendations to York children's aid society.

Mia, a 16-year-old young girl, repeatedly cried out for help. She needed a foster placement, and she wanted to return to school, which are all within her rights. Mia's rights were ignored, and she was shockingly told to go to a shelter.

Premier, are you going to adequately fund our children's aid societies, or are you going to continue to leave children like Mia behind?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank the member for the question.

The death of any child or youth is a tragedy.

We've reviewed the report, and we take it very seriously. We agree with the Ombudsman. The best interests, protection and well-being of children is paramount in the child welfare system, and our government expects York CAS and every children's aid society in the province to ensure that children's and youth's voices are heard in their decision-making and their well-being.

We will never waver from our commitment to keeping children and youth safe, regardless of their circumstances. That's what's driving our comprehensive redesign of the child welfare system—that's the most recent bill that I introduced last week, the children's futures act, which the member debated on. We saw that it was passed in second reading. Through the redesign, we have initiatives to improve out-of-home care to make sure that we hold bad actors to account.

Once again, let me make it very clear: We will never waver from our commitment to making sure every child, every youth is safe in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Miss Monique Taylor: Not wavering from a commitment would mean ensuring that there's proper funding for the children's aid societies, which there is clearly not.

Speaker, time and time again in this House, your government has made promises to children and youth in care. Two weeks ago, legislation was introduced outlining small steps in the child welfare system—small steps in a system that Mia tried to navigate herself while in emotional crisis, a system which turned its back on her and broke its promise to keep her safe, housed and protected.

Back to the Premier: What has your minister done to ensure there will never be another Mia anywhere again in this province?

Hon. Michael Parsa: As I said, every child and every youth in this province needs to live with safety and security, and we'll make sure that we take every measure to make sure that happens.

In the recent bill that I mentioned earlier, the Supporting Children's Futures Act, which we introduced a couple of weeks ago—here in this bill. Mr. Speaker, we are going above and beyond what we've already introduced, and I made it very clear in the bill.

1120

The member calls it small steps. Mr. Speaker, I said that this bill is just one of the many steps that we're taking. The child welfare redesign, Mr. Speaker—never took any action by the previous government, and this member was here. It was our government that said, through the child welfare redesign, we will make sure we won't leave anyone behind. That means introducing fines and making sure that the bad actors are held accountable. None of these provisions included before; none of these children and youth were being cared for, were being looked after. We'll make sure that through this bill and other initiatives—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

The next question.

TAXATION

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is for the Minister of Energy. My riding in Richmond Hill and everyone knows that the Liberal carbon tax does nothing to reduce emissions. It is fueling the cost-of-living crisis Ontarians are already going through and burdening families with one tax hike after another.

Speaker, Ontarians won't be fooled by the Liberals' tax-grabbing measures. Unlike the NDP and the independent Liberals, our government knows that a carbon tax is not a solution. That's why, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we have shovels in the ground on new clean energy infrastructure.

Speaker, can the minister please explain our government's affordable approach to ensuring that Ontario has sufficient energy capacity to meet growing needs without a carbon tax?

Hon. Todd Smith: I can do that. Through Powering Ontario's Growth, we're going to ensure that we have the clean, non-emitting, reliable, affordable electricity that we're seeing right now. But into the future, this type of affordable, reliable non-emitting energy is what has actually allowed us to land the historic multi-billion-dollar Honda deal, which Minister Fedeli was just talking about last week: a \$15-billion investment at four different plants across the province.

Through Powering Ontario's Growth, we're ensuring that we have a small modular reactor not just being talked about but under construction at Darlington right now. Three more SMRs are going to be going in at that site. Mr. Speaker, we have the first large-scale build that's about to get under way at what's already the world's largest nuclear facility at Bruce Power. We have a non-emitting procurement that's under way with the IESO. We have the largest battery storage procurement under way—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Supplementary question.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the minister for the response and those exciting updates. It is encouraging to hear that our province is well positioned to provide clean, affordable and reliable energy for the people of Ontario and for businesses that are looking to invest in our province, and we're doing it without forcing Ontarians to face a punitive carbon tax.

As Ontario moves towards an electric future with a strong electric vehicle supply chain network, the need for reliable, low-cost and clean power has never been greater. Unlike the federal government's carbon tax disaster, our government has a real plan to ensure that our energy supply will continue to meet the needs of a growing population and industrial expansion.

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on what our government is doing to build a stronger Ontario and strengthen the competitive advantage?

Hon. Todd Smith: Well, what we're not doing is we're not imposing a carbon tax, a punitive carbon tax like the federal government is doing. The Liberal leader here, the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, is in full support of Justin Trudeau, our Prime Minister, in bringing forward this carbon tax, Mr. Speaker.

But in spite of that, we're continuing to move forward with non-emitting resources like our nuclear facilities, hydroelectric facilities, battery storage facilities and renewables that will work better because we have the storage that we need in the province. As a matter of fact, according to the 2024 greenhouse gas registry—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Todd Smith: —and I think the folks who are heckling opposite might be interested in this; it just came out. It says Ontario continues to lead Canada with 86% of total greenhouse gas emission reductions. Our plan is working. We're seeing multi-billion-dollar investments in Windsor, in St. Thomas, in Alliston and in Loyalist township and right across Ontario, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

The next question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, to the Premier: Last Thursday, Canada released its annual report on greenhouse gas emissions. Ontario is showing sharp increases in GHGs since they bottomed out at the beginning of the pandemic. The report showed the increases in Ontario's emissions were the largest in Canada.

The Conservatives' inadequate climate plan is headed towards failure. When will the Premier take action to sharply cut Ontario's emissions to protect our standard of living?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you for the question from the member opposite.

Our government's dedication to protecting the environment is clear. The report confirms that Ontario continues to lead the country with 86% of Canada's total greenhouse gas emission reductions. We'll continue to build on this success by making Ontario a global leader in electric vehicles and investing in clean steel production, reducing emissions by the same amount as taking two million cars off the road.

We will continue making critical investments to get Ontarians where they need to be, such as the Ontario Line, that takes another 28,000 cars off the road every day. In addition to those historic investments, we've also invested in conservation through the Greenlands Conservation Partnership, which has protected over 420,000 acres of land.

We've proven we can protect the environment without imposing a costly job-killing carbon tax on—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

The supplementary question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: We've heard all the stories from the Premier and his ministers, but they don't change the reality that Ontario's not going to meet their targets and it's increasing its emissions under their watch. That means the government is not leading the fight to protect our way of life but it is going backwards. Because of climate change, we're headed to a harder and more expensive life for all of us. Why won't the Premier act now?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, we are acting now. We are a government of action that's building new non-emitting resources right across our province. At the same time, we're ensuring that the price of electricity stays low. As a result of that, what we're seeing are multi-billion-dollar investments in the sectors that are going to actually reduce the emissions where the emissions are. We're going to be building EVs. We're going to be building EV batteries. We're putting in green steel, electric arc furnaces at our steelmaking facilities. We're putting non-emitting resources right across our province because we're building out the transmission so we can use the advantage that we have. It's a clean energy advantage, Mr. Speaker, something that that member wouldn't understand.

The people in Milton, the people in LKM disagreed with their proposals last week: They got 6.76% in the by-election. We've got two new Tory members because people are opposed to the federal carbon tax and they're opposed to Bonnie Crombie, the queen of the carbon tax.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Adil Shamji: For the Premier, Mr. Speaker: The Premier campaigned on being transparent, ethical and accountable, yet six years after assuming power, his government has left nothing but a series of scandals in its wake, punctuated by backtracks and broken promises. Five ministers have resigned. Others have been banished from caucus. There's an RCMP criminal investigation

with a special prosecutor and judicial appointments for like-minded friends, with even a special office in Ottawa for a failed political candidate. Clearly, the gravy train is rolling full steam ahead with a new station in Ottawa.

So you'll forgive me for being skeptical of the Premier's taxpayer-funded self-promotional ads saying that everything in Ontario is okay. With shuttered emergency rooms and an unprecedented health care staffing crisis, he refuses to give details about our health care worker shortage, citing the risk of economic damage.

Will the Premier break his cone of silence and let his Minister of Health tell Ontarians how bad they have let our health care worker shortage really get?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It is an absolute pleasure to tell you how well we are doing in Ontario, in Canada, with our health care system.

We have our second match of CaRMS. What is CaRMS? CaRMS is matching residency students with their first choice, and we have all of those residencies now matched in the province of Ontario—unprecedented here. It means that students who are training and want to practise in Ontario got that match with CaRMS. So please, congratulate them.

1130

And I have to say, the outgoing president for the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, Sarita Verma: congratulations. Fifty-one per cent of your students at Northern Ontario School of Medicine have chosen family practitioner as their number one specialty residency.

We are making progress. We will continue to invest in our health care system because we know, whether it's hospital capital, whether it's health human resources, offering those opportunities for students to train—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Supplementary question.

Mr. Adil Shamji: That answer had nothing about PSWs, nothing about nurses and nothing about the shortage of physicians in our province.

This government has allowed our health care system to fall into such dire straits that a little transparency would threaten our economic prosperity. This government is terrified that public sector workers will have more bargaining power than they will. They're terrified that even the private sector, flourishing under their protection, could soon be holding them over a barrel, demanding higher rates.

Why? Because this government's mismanagement has resulted in the highest demand for health care workers in our province's history. If it sounds familiar, that's because it's the same trademark mismanagement that's got the demand for housing—pardon the pun—through the roof. This government can't make progress on housing, and they can't make progress on health care. All they can do is hide from the damage they've done and try to save their own skin.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier give Ontarians a straight answer and tell them how many front-line physicians, nurses and PSWs our health care system is missing?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Here's the straight answer, Speaker: Two years in a row, we have registered more registered nurses in the province of Ontario in Ontario's history. How have we been able to do that? We have been able to do that by directing the Colleges of Nurses of Ontario and the physicians and surgeons of Ontario to quickly assess, review and ultimately license, when appropriate, internationally educated clinicians.

We are making progress. We are working with our partners. We are ensuring that not only capital investments—over 50 different capital builds in the province of Ontario at our hospitals: new, expanded, renovated hospitals. We are doing it with expanding the number of residency positions, the number of positions; seats that are available for our nurse practitioners, for our registered nurses and for our PSWs.

We are making the investments, and we are seeing those changes impacting our communities, not—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

The next question.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Saunderson: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Honda's historic investment in Ontario is being talked about across the world, across this province, and certainly across my riding. Global automakers and competing jurisdictions know now: Ontario's auto sector is back and stronger than ever. Demand for electric vehicles will continue to ramp up in the coming years, and we are making sure the supply of made-in-Ontario vehicles is here. This is a massive economic opportunity in front of our province, and one that this government intends to seize. There is not one US state that has secured more auto and EV investments than Ontario in the last four years.

Can the minister explain how, with so many competing jurisdictions vying for this investment, Ontario was successful?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Deals of this scale and of this calibre, they're not made over night; they take time. Our first EV discussion with Honda was in Tokyo almost two years ago. We knew, going into these negotiations, that everything was going to be about relationships and trust. Honda already knew that we have the talent, the clean energy, the EV ecosystem, the minerals and the investment track record; they knew all that, and now, quite frankly, the whole world knows that.

Through many meetings in Tokyo, here at home, multiple meetings at the Premier's own home, we cultivated that trust with Honda's leaders—leaders like president and CEO Mibe-san, Honda Canada president Jean Marc Leclerc, Ozawa-san and Miyamoto-san. With the Premier at the table, leading those negotiations, they knew Ontario was serious about Honda. So thank you, Honda, for this wonderful—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The supplementary question.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the minister for his answer. Congratulations to the minister and his team and to the Premier for all their hard work in selling Ontario's value proposition to Honda. It is clear that Honda has confidence in Ontario's ecosystem, our talent, our workforce and our leadership. Honda's investment proves that, once again, our government's targeted and responsible economic plan is a winning one.

Tens of thousands of good-paying jobs are being created right across our province, and investments in our auto sector will strengthen our economy for decades to come. Under the previous Liberal government, that sector was hollowed out and signalled to companies that they should make things abroad rather than in Ontario. No one could have imagined at that time how we have bounced back.

Can the minister explain to this House what our government has done to position Ontario as a jurisdiction where automakers need to be?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: From day one, Premier Ford said that EVs will be built in Ontario, by Ontario workers. With last week's news, we are living up to that commitment. Now, we took the approach of lowering the cost of doing business, reducing red tape and lowering taxes. As a result, Ontario's position as a leading electric vehicle jurisdiction has been secured with \$43 billion in investments into Ontario. That is greater than every US state.

Companies are choosing Ontario because we have everything global leaders need in EV production; 70,000 annual STEM grads, 700 parts makers, 500 tool and die and mould makers, 400 connected and autonomous companies—the full EV ecosystem—but, Speaker, most importantly, we have the best talent in the world.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Minister of Housing. We have an affordability crisis, and housing is a big part of it. Tenants across Ontario are experiencing drastic rent increases simply because they live in buildings built after 2018. For example, in Livmore High Park, last year, rent was raised by 14%, and this year, rent is going up by 13%. With stagnant wages and rents skyrocketing, the cost-of-living crisis is pushing people out of their homes.

Why won't this government provide stability to tenants in the midst of an affordability crisis?

Hon. Paul Calandra: In fact, what we've been doing since day one is recognizing the fact that for over 15 years there were very few purpose-built rental housings built in the province of Ontario, which has led to the challenges that we are now facing. We started back in 2018, as the member talked about, putting incentives in place so that we could build more purpose-built rental housing, and the results have actually been quite staggering, exceeding our expectations. But there is more work to be done.

As you know, we have the highest level of purpose-built rental housing, not only in the last couple of years, but frankly, in the province's history. Bringing more supply online will help us ensure that we can bring stabilized rents and eventually bring those rents down.

When you talk about affordability, of course, it is our government that has brought in measure after measure after measure to make life more affordable for the people of the province of Ontario, whether it is reducing taxes, fighting the carbon tax every step of the way, the measures that we have brought in place to actually make it cheaper and more affordable to build rental housing. We're going to continue to be focused on that because it's the right thing to do for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Tenants across Toronto are going on rent strikes. They're being forced to take matters into their own hands because this Conservative government refuses to reinstate rental protections they removed. No caps on rent increases are unfair. People don't know what they will be paying next year. It could be 3%, 10%, 50%—it could double. It's precarious and it's dangerous. No one can build a life like this.

Minister, will you reinstate the protections you removed and protect tenants from unlimited rent increases?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member knows that there are indeed and there continue to be rent controls on buildings built prior to 2018. We made the same decision that was made by the NDP government in 1990. Colleagues will know, I never give the NDP government of 1990 to 1995 credit for anything—nothing—because, literally, they brought the province to the brink of bankruptcy. But one decision that they made, which was on the heels of the disastrous Liberal government from 1985 to 1990, was to remove rent controls on new purpose-built rental housing. Why? Because that spurred on the creation of new rental housing.

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The NDP government at the time said that they had to do it because the previous Liberal government was so disastrous. I and my colleagues, we copied that great program from the NDP government. We're doing it now. We're building more than ever before.

Thank you for your advice on that policy. We'll continue that policy, because it's working—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The next question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. In the galleries today, there are citizens concerned about the cost and health impacts of the climate crisis. In just four days last year alone, toxic air pollution from forest fires cost our health care system \$1.28 billion. We have to dramatically decrease climate pollution if we have any

hope of our children having a healthy, affordable and livable future.

But Ontario, according to data released last week, had the highest increase in GHG pollution in 2022. Things are only going to get worse with the government's plans to ramp up expensive, dirty gas plants that will increase climate pollution by—get this, Speaker—580% by 2030.

So, Speaker, will the Premier save us money while protecting our health and climate by not ramping up gas plants and investing in low-cost, clean, renewable energy?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Energy.

Hon. Todd Smith: As the member opposite knows, we are currently refurbishing our nuclear fleet across Ontario. That includes at Bruce and OPG and eventually Pickering as well. That is emissions-free, reliable baseload power that is going to continue to power the growth of our province going forward as the Hondas and the Volkswagens and the Stellantis plants and the Umicore plants come online.

What the member opposite is proposing in his question is to try to replace all of those megawatts with wind and solar. I just took a look at the independent electricity system's grid watch, and it shows that right now, on a very, very sunny day in May, we're getting about 300 megawatts from our entire solar installation across the grid, and we're getting about 400 megawatts from our wind power. The capacity just isn't there. That's why we're investing in large baseload nuclear power: so the kids in the gallery can be able to get the electricity when they flip the switch. We'll continue to—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Supplementary question?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Last year, \$1.88 trillion were invested in the green energy transition, over half of that in wind and solar. Do you know why half of it went into wind and solar, almost \$600 billion? Because they are the lowest-cost sources of electricity generation in the world. So instead of investing in quickly ramping up wind and solar, this government is going to increase climate pollution by 580% by investing in fossil gas plants, which are more expensive and create toxic air pollution.

Speaker, my question for the minister is, why not choose low-cost renewable energy, where global investment dollars are going, so we can create jobs and prosperity while lowering electricity prices?

Hon. Todd Smith: We are, through competitive procurement, procuring new non-emitting resources in our province, but only because we have also committed to ensuring that we have battery storage in our province so we can actually use the types of renewables that the member is talking about. We're taking a very common-sense approach.

But I'll remind the member opposite of what it was like here in Ontario in January, where we actually saw about 26 hours of sunshine in the whole month of January. Can you imagine what would have happened to those people who live on the 40th, 50th floors of condo buildings in downtown Toronto when they want to put solar panels over at Portlands Energy Centre in Toronto, which is

currently the insurance policy—our natural gas facility—that keeps the lights on, that keeps the elevators going, that keeps business happening in our province?

I will give the member credit. He believes wholeheartedly in what he's saying. He's just wrong, Mr. Speaker.

TAXATION

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Ontario has one of the cleanest electricity systems in the world. Nuclear power and hydroelectricity are the backbone of our system, providing low-cost, reliable and emissions-free electricity. This clean energy grid is the envy of jurisdictions in Canada and around the world and is a point of pride for Ontarians, but instead of building on our energy initiatives, the federal government continues to force a carbon tax on hard-working Ontarians.

The federal Liberals need to face reality, recognize the harms they are causing and get rid of this tax. Speaker, can the minister tell this House how our government is strengthening Ontario's economy through our clean energy advantage despite the additional challenges imposed by the Liberal carbon tax?

Hon. Todd Smith: We don't need a carbon tax. We don't need the federal Liberals. We don't need the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, either, and the people in Milton and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex agreed with us last week in the by-elections by bringing Zee Hamid and Steve Pinsonneault to our Legislature. They wholeheartedly said no to the queen of the carbon tax. They said no to what the NDP was offering—they said no in a big way to what the NDP was offering.

What they said yes to was our plan for powering Ontario's growth: investing in refurbishments at our Candu facilities across the province, building new nuclear at Bruce Power, building new small modular reactors at Darlington, investing in a competitive procurement for new non-emitting generation, building out the transmission that we need and investing in green steelmaking facilities with electric arc furnaces.

None of that involves the carbon tax, and the people of Ontario believe in what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the minister for his response. As a result of the proactive measures taken by our government, Ontario's clean energy advantage is doing more than just powering the new homes we are building. It is also powering the electrification of transportation.

But, Speaker, when it comes to the opposition NDP and the independent Liberals, they have continuously voted no to our feasible plan towards electrification. They would rather support a tax that drives up the costs of daily necessities for their constituents.

Our government will always advocate for the people of Ontario and not stop fighting until the federal Liberals finally scrap the carbon tax. Speaker, can the minister tell

the House how our government is leveraging our energy system to support manufacturing and industry, rather than taxing them out of business?

Hon. Todd Smith: I know that the Minister of Economic Development and the Premier are going to back me up on this, because they have seen multi-billion-dollar investments in manufacturing in our province. As the tail lights were headed across the border to other jurisdictions under the previous Liberal government here in Ontario, the headlights are coming back. We're seeing massive multi-billion-dollar investments in our EV sector, in our auto sector that was left to die by the previous Liberal government. They are coming back en masse. They believe in what we're doing.

What is the key? It's reliable, affordable power, something that they didn't get under the previous government, where they saw electricity prices triple, skyrocketing, and business left because of that. Now, the federal government in Ottawa has imposed this punishing federal carbon tax.

In spite of all that, with the work that we're doing here in Ontario, led by Premier Ford and our team, those investments are happening at a rapid pace. The people of Ontario, the new investors in Ontario can count on this Ontario government.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Aamjiwnaang First Nation closed its band office and sent employees home on April 16 after people became sick with symptoms associated with high levels of benzene.

1150

The First Nation reported last week that they were not consulted on what the Ministry of the Environment considers acceptable levels of benzene. Speaker, will the minister ensure Aamjiwnaang is at all decision-making tables on benzene emissions in Sarnia?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Our government's dedication to protecting human health and the environment is clear. That's why last week a decision was made to suspend INEOS Styrolution's environmental compliance approval. Despite several provincial orders requiring the company to reduce benzene emissions, recent readings at the site continued to be above acceptable levels. This action will ensure that the facility, currently shut down for maintenance, fully addresses the causes and sources of emissions before resuming operations.

The ECA has been amended to require the facility to suspend production and operations at the facility, remove all benzene storage from the site and submit a comprehensive monitoring and community notification plan. We have made it clear that our government expects that swift action is taken to reduce these emissions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And the supplementary question.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, on Friday, Aamjiwnaang issued a notice of violation to both INEOS Styrosolution and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, seeking immediate remediation of benzene emissions. Aamjiwnaang is asking again for the human right of having clean air to breathe.

Ontario has failed to protect air quality at Aamjiwnaang for generations. Will this government finally listen to their air pollution control recommendations?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: We will continue to work with Aamjiwnaang First Nation to prioritize the health and safety of all residents. Our government will not hesitate to take any further steps or compliance actions that may be required to protect people's health and the environment. We've also been working on updates to the benzene technical standards for petrochemical and petroleum facilities, which will impose tougher requirements on facilities like INEOS. We're also working to strengthen the environmental penalties regulation so that more financial penalties can be imposed on bad actors.

We'll continue to take any additional steps and compliance actions that may be required to protect people's health and the environment. Make no mistake, when it comes to protecting health and safety, we will not hesitate to use the various tools and enforcement actions we have at our disposal to hold emitters to account.

TAXATION

Mr. John Jordan: My question is for the Solicitor General. The Liberal carbon tax is raising the cost of living and burdening families and businesses across Ontario, especially in rural ridings like mine, Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston, where people are worried about the impact of this tax on emergency services in our province. They want to ensure that our police and other emergency response teams have the tools and resources they need to keep their communities safe.

The public safety of Ontarians is of critical importance. The federal Liberals need to finally recognize the consequences of this tax and scrap it today.

Speaker, could the Solicitor General tell the House how the federal carbon tax is impacting the operations of police and first responders across Ontario?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank our great, hard-working MPP from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for the question and for his advocacy of public safety in his own constituency.

It's completely undeniable. Last week, I went up to OPP headquarters to see for myself, to understand just how many boats we have that keep the waterways of Ontario safe, thanks to the OPP. I saw our aerial fleet that goes every day to northern Ontario to fly-in communities, and I understood how important it is to have that aviation support. And of course, Mr. Speaker—and I've said this in the Legislature—how important it is to have hundreds and thousands of cars on the roads that keep Ontario safe and how vital those cars are.

Mr. Speaker, it's undeniable: The carbon tax, now 21 cents for a litre of diesel, is affecting our public safety. And you know who knows about it? Bonnie Crombie. Let her come clean with the people of Ontario to say, when she was on the police service board, she knew it—and now she's saying nothing.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Mr. John Jordan: I thank the Solicitor General for that response. My constituents will be reassured to hear that our government, unlike the NDP and the Liberals, is listening to their concerns and prioritizing public safety.

With media reports detailing a surge in criminal activity throughout our province, Ontarians want to ensure that first responders are well-equipped and have the support that they need.

But, Speaker, people are concerned about the negative impacts of the Liberal carbon tax on police budgets. With the carbon tax increasing the operating costs of these critical services, it is essential for our government to continue to support the hard-working men and women that keep our communities safe.

Speaker, could the Solicitor General please explain how our government is enhancing Ontario's public safety framework as police and first responders face additional challenges due to the carbon tax?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's simple: We will stand with everybody that keeps Ontario safe. We're going to stand with our firefighters, our police officers, our probation and parole officers, our correctional officers—everyone that keeps us safe. But the carbon tax is affecting everything.

Just last week, I attended the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. I want to give a special shout-out to Rob Grimwood, who leads that organization. He reminded me that an average fire truck of 200 litres that fills up almost every single day is now paying 21 cents a litre for diesel. It's not right.

It's not only affecting the public safety side of our communities, our policing side; it's affecting the firefighter side. It's not right and that's why our government, led by Premier Ford, will stand up for the people of Ontario every single day and say, "This carbon tax is bad."

Bonnie Crombie knew it as mayor of Mississauga. Let her come clean with Ontarians.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, last month, Fleming College abruptly announced the closure of 29 programs in Peterborough and Lindsay, following the loss of \$40 million in international student tuition and years of provincial underfunding. With the college sector facing a projected \$3-billion revenue loss over the next three years, Fleming is likely the first of many colleges to slash programs and possibly close campuses, which will be a huge blow to the communities and local economies that rely on graduates of college programs and the jobs that colleges provide.

Speaker, will this government act now to pause the program closures at Fleming and commit to a permanent increase in post-secondary base funding before it's too late?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I thank the member for that question. This is exactly what we predicted was going to happen when the federal government made a unilateral decision to cut the number of seats for our colleges and universities—no discussions with the colleges and universities sector and none with the provinces at all.

Mr. Speaker, that's why this government has stepped up in providing \$1.3 billion in funding. The historic investment—the largest investment that's been made in over 10 years. We're going to ensure that our schools remain sustainable for years to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period for this morning.

MEMBERS' SEATING

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that my earlier authorization to permit the members for Toronto—St. Paul's and Scarborough Southwest to switch seats in the chamber, pursuant to the authority granted to the Speaker under standing order 2, is no longer required.

NURSING WEEK

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga Centre has a point of order.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I wanted to rise to acknowledge that we are starting Nursing Week in the province of Ontario. This year's theme is "Changing Lives. Shaping Tomorrow." So on behalf of our government, I would like to wish all the registered nurses, registered practical nurses, nurse practitioners and nursing students in Ontario a very happy Nursing Week.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1159 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Gigi Juriansz, who is my summer intern. She's in the commerce program at Queen's University, and I'm very happy to have her here for the summer.

Hon. David Piccini: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature—whether they're specifically in this room or not; I know they're in the building—the entire ministry team at the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, who have worked tirelessly around the

clock, with many late nights and many late messages from me, to deliver on the bill we'll be introducing today.

Thank you for your hard work, and welcome to your House.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Steve Clark: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy on the estimates selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas): Mr. Clark from the Standing Committee on Social Policy presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 63, your committee has selected the 2024-25 estimates of the following ministries for consideration: Ministry of Health; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services; Ministry of Long-Term Care; Ministry of Colleges and Universities; Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility.

Report presented.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE INTERIOR

Mr. Aris Babikian: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Interior and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 171, An Act to enact the Veterinarian Professionals Act, 2024 and amend or repeal various acts / Projet de loi 171, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 2024 sur les professionnels vétérinaires et à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

WORKING FOR WORKERS FIVE ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, CINQ

Mr. Piccini moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 190, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 190, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'emploi et au travail et à d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the minister care to briefly explain his bill?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, our government is introducing the Working for Workers Five Act, 2024. Our new legislation would, if passed, open new pathways into the skilled trades, remove barriers to employment, protect front-line heroes, support women at work, and improve fairness for workers across our great province, driving Ontario's economic growth.

I would like to give a shout-out to the MLITSD MO team, who are now here and who have worked incredible long hours to deliver on this bill.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

1147946 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2024

Ms. Hogarth moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr47, An Act to revive 1147946 Ontario Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

CHILDCARE AND EARLY YEARS WORKFORCE STRATEGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LE COMITÉ CONSULTATIF DE LA STRATÉGIE RELATIVE AUX PRÉPOSÉS AUX SERVICES POUR LA PETITE ENFANCE ET LA GARDE D'ENFANTS

Ms. Armstrong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 191, An Act respecting the establishment of a Childcare and Early Years Workforce Strategy Advisory Committee / Projet de loi 191, Loi concernant la création du comité consultatif de la stratégie relative aux préposés aux services pour la petite enfance et la garde d'enfants.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for London–Fanshawe care to briefly explain her bill?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Parents want accessible, affordable child care. Providing child care workers with the supports they need will go a long way to solving our critical retention and recruitment problem.

This legislation would create an advisory committee solely dedicated to supporting workers in the child care sector and would help make child care workers' concerns and voices heard. The legislation will allow the advisory committee to immediately get to work on addressing some of the biggest challenges facing workers in the sector,

including: increased wages; minimum work standards; career advancement opportunities; recruitment strategies; immigration considerations; enhanced collective bargaining.

We need a real plan and a real strategy to ensure families have child care that they can rely on, because a chronically underfunded child care sector is simply inexcusable.

Passing this bill will be an important step towards a better future for the hard-working ECEs and RECEs in this province who are caring for our generation.

I also want to thank my co-sponsors, MPP Bell, MPP Karpoche and MPP Pasma, for supporting me in this bill.

1310

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Introduction of bills? The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. I move that leave be given to introduce a bill entitled An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act and that it now be read for the first time.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Would the member like to briefly explain her bill?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Health Protection and Promotion Act is amended so that the Ministry of Health will ensure the ratio of patients to nurses does not exceed—and they're very simple:

—1 to 1 for critical patients on ventilators;

—2 to 1 for critical patients not on ventilators—or needing very high mental health care;

—3 to 1 for specialized care;

—4 to 1 for palliative care;

—5 to 1 for rehab, except 7-to-1 on night shifts.

I hope you can all agree that's a good idea.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Anthony Nito for organizing this petition, and the 2,092 people who have signed the petition.

The petition is quite simple. It basically shows that hospital staff play a very important role in the quality of our health care system, but many of them have to pay parking fees to get to work. That affects their job satisfaction. There are many hospitals in Canada where the hospital makes parking free for their employees. Adding parking fees to our hard-working health care professionals is a financial burden for some of them. They feel that if parking was free it would be one more step in trying to attract and retain health care workers to our understaffed hospitals. So they ask the government to fund our hospitals in a way that they are not forced to charge parking fees to their staff just to balance their budget. I think this is a good idea—an idea of which time has come.

I will be happy to sign this petition and send it to the table with page Raisa.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition entitled “Stop Bill 166.” I would like to thank the hundreds of Londoners who signed this petition just in this past week. In front of me, I have the signatures of university faculty, staff and community members across the city.

The petition talks about how the government has dramatically underfunded mental health and anti-racism work on post-secondary campuses and is now planning to impose unilateral directives as to how that work should be put in place, without any accountability to the public or to experts.

The petition urges the Legislature to respect the institutional autonomy of universities and the academic freedom that is a cornerstone of our democracy and that has historically been celebrated in Ontario but which is under threat because of the bill. It calls for the Legislature not to allow the overreaching powers that the bill would give to the minister and instead to adequately fund post-secondary education so that institutions can invest in culturally responsive mental health supports and in fully staffed and funded equity offices. It also calls for the re-establishment of community-based subcommittees under the Anti-Racism Directorate, to take an intersectional approach to equity and anti-racism.

I couldn't agree more with this petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Glynis.

PROSTATE CANCER

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition deals with the ever-increasing levels of prostate cancer in men in Ontario. We have been asking for years to have the PSA test covered by OHIP.

It's not very well known that prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers to affect Canadian men. But when you detect this cancer early, you save lives, you improve the quality of life, and you save money in the health care system. Our acute-care health care system is obviously in crisis today.

Prostate Cancer Canada fully supports the call to have PSA testing—which is prostate-specific antigen testing—covered by OHIP. This is a good thing for men in Ontario. It's a good thing for their families, who love them.

We are calling on the government to fund PSA testing under OHIP.

I want to thank Ken Steele and the Ride for Dad, who have collected all these signatures from Waterloo region. Let's keep riding together.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is entitled “Stop Bill 166” and it is signed by scholars from my riding of Parkdale–High Park and across Ontario.

Mental health and anti-racism work have been massively underfunded in Ontario's post-secondary institutions. And under this Conservative government, the mental health

budget has been cut and the Anti-Racism Directorate has been gutted.

Bill 166 gives the Minister of Colleges and Universities unprecedented power to dictate post-secondary policy in these areas and threatens unspecified consequences if institutions do not follow ministry directives. It also threatens the democratic principles of academic freedom and university autonomy that all parties in Ontario have historically respected.

This petition is calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

- stop Bill 166;
- uphold academic freedom and university autonomy;
- fund post-secondary mental health supports and equity offices; and
- use the powers of the Anti-Racism Act, 2017, to re-establish subcommittees that undertake equity and anti-racism work in Ontario.

WEARING OF KAFFIYEHS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I've met with constituents in the London–Fanshawe area with respect to the decision that has been made in this Legislature not to allow members or guests to wear a cultural piece of clothing that actually identifies their heritage and their culture. They've given us a petition, and they're asking the Legislature to allow guests and members who work in this legislative chamber to be allowed to wear the kaffiyeh. The kaffiyeh, to them, is a symbol of their culture and their heritage. The netting of the kaffiyeh is about the fishermen and how they survive for food. Then there is the part of the kaffiyeh that looks like olive plants—and then the roads are the roads travelled.

This is not a political piece of clothing. This is a cultural and heritage piece of clothing that identifies the Palestinian people, and they want to be able to visit this House and be in the galleries.

Members who work here who are of Palestinian heritage should be allowed to wear the kaffiyeh.

I support this petition—and we ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to please allow that kaffiyeh to be entered into the chambers.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm very pleased to be able to rise and present this petition that is signed by many residents of Ottawa, including Kimberly Byars of Ottawa West–Nepean. These constituents raise concerns about the privatization of our health care system and the fact that people across Ottawa and across Ontario are being charged fees for services that should be covered by OHIP, despite the fact that the Premier and the Minister of Health promised that nobody in the province would be required to pay for health care with their credit card.

They are also concerned about the fact that allowing privatized health care bleeds health care workers out of our public system. We don't have an unlimited source of

health care workers to provide nurses and doctors for both a public system and a private system.

So these petitioners are calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect our health care system against sale by this government, to actually properly fund our hospitals, to recognize the foreign credentials of nurses and doctors who have been trained outside of Ontario, and also to ensure that everybody in Ontario has 10 paid sick days.

I wholeheartedly support this petition. I will add my name to it and send it to the table with page Liam.

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CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Diana Smith from Capreol in my riding for this petition, “Coverage for Take-Home Cancer Drugs.”

Basically, if—we don't wish this upon anybody, but if you have cancer and need treatment, if the treatment is given in the hospital, it is free of charge. But the minute that you are able to go home, where your cancer journey will be a whole lot better—you get to sleep in your own bed, eat your own food—then cancer drugs are not covered in Ontario. This has led to a lot of people facing financial barriers.

I want to tell you, Speaker, that in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec, they all cover take-home cancer drugs. It is time for Ontario to do the same.

The Canadian Cancer Society will tell you that because Ontario does not have take-home cancer drug coverage, there are people whose lives are cut short. They die because they do not have access to treatment. So they ask that the Ontario government follow the other provinces and offer full coverage for take-home cancer drugs. I think that's a good idea.

I will sign this petition and ask my good page Raisa to bring it to the Clerk.

WEARING OF KAFFIYEHS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is entitled “Reverse the Kaffiyeh Ban.”

The wearing of our cultural and national clothing is part of who we are as Ontarians and something that we are proud of.

The Speaker of the House has expressed that if it is the will of the MPPs in this chamber, it would be allowed in the chamber. The official opposition has moved forward two unanimous consent motions that have been denied because some government MPPs voted to uphold the prohibition of wearing of the kaffiyeh. This petition calls on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the prohibition.

ONTARIO PLACE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I have a petition to present. “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario Place has been a cherished public space for over 50 years, providing joy, recreation and cultural experiences”—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to interrupt the member and remind her that she needs to summarize her petition; she’s not able to read it verbatim because of the new standing order that was presented. But if you could offer a summary of the petition, that would be fine.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you for the kind reminder.

This petition is being submitted by a number of residents who have signed it and, in summary, it is calling upon the provincial government to ensure that any future plans for the redevelopment of Ontario Place is halted and to engage in meaningful consultation with the community as soon as possible.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier M. Émile Prudhomme de Val Caron dans mon comté pour ces pétitions, « Temps pour les soins ».

Pour lui et pour des dizaines de milliers de familles, la qualité des soins dans nos maisons de soins de longue durée est importante. Ils veulent que le niveau de soins rencontre les besoins des différents résidents et résidentes des soins de longue durée, et ça, ça veut dire qu’il y a un minimum, à la grandeur de l’Ontario, de 4,1 heures de soins par résident ou résidente.

Donc, ils demandent à l’Assemblée législative de changer la loi sur les foyers de soins de longue durée, une loi qui date de 2007, pour s’assurer qu’un minimum d’heures de soins y soit inclus, et en ce moment, ce minimum devrait être à 4,1 heures de soins.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Catherine Fife: Imagine waking up one morning and at your door is someone—an American company—telling you that you will accept \$35,000 an acre for prime farmland or that land will be expropriated by the regional government. Imagine serving your community for years, Speaker. This is what’s happening in Wilmot.

I’m pleased to present 400 signatures from the people of Wilmot, from the people of Cambridge, Waterloo and Kitchener, to ask the regional government and this government, the provincial government, to pause on expropriating 770 acres of prime farmland in Ontario.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I’d like to thank Mrs. Linda Armstrong from Lively in my riding for these petitions—“Invest in Ontario Arts and Cultural Sector.”

Basically, the art and cultural sector in Ontario is a big economic driver—we’re talking \$28.7 billion to our GDP; we’re talking 30,000 jobs in Ontario alone.

Unfortunately, the Ontario Arts Council’s budget has not kept up with inflation. Actually, it has been frozen for many, many years. Many of the people who work in the arts and culture sector make way below \$25,000—many

of them make below the poverty line, which makes their lives very precarious.

They petition the Legislative Assembly to make sure that the Ontario Arts Council budget increases. And they’ve asked for a \$65-million increase so that the arts and cultural sector continues to thrive in Ontario—but also support equity-deserving groups, such as small and medium grassroots collectives, such as individual members of BIPOC, and all of the artists who make our province so great.

I support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask my good page Liam to bring it to the Clerk.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Linda Adler from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions: “Improving Broadband in Northern Ontario.”

I can tell you, Speaker, that the people and the businesses in northern Ontario need access to affordable and good broadband services. Right now, we do not have this in Nickel Belt. Most of—95% of the riding of Nickel Belt does not have access to good broadband, including myself. Unreliable Internet is not good for business. It’s not good for people in school. It’s not good for families. It’s not good for anything.

The government keeps allocating money in the budget for the private sector to set up broadband Internet. That does not work in northern and rural Ontario. I have spoken to every single Internet provider; none of them want to come to Nickel Belt. Even if this government pays for the tower or pays for all of the infrastructure, there is no money to be made. They do not want to come.

The government has to look at rural and northern Ontario and make sure we have access to broadband. That’s why those people signed the petition—and so will I. Then, I’ll give it to my good page Liam.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day? I recognize the member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a point of order: Pursuant to standing order 7(e), I wish to inform the House that tonight’s evening meeting is cancelled.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I don’t think you need unanimous consent for that.

Laughter.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY AND STUDENT SUPPORTS ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR RENFORCER LA RESPONSABILISATION ET LES MESURES DE SOUTIEN AUX ÉTUDIANTS

Ms. Dunlop moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act / Projet de loi 166, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I look to the Minister of Colleges and Universities to lead off the debate.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Good afternoon, everyone. I'll be sharing my time with my friend and colleague the Minister of Education.

I'm pleased to stand before you today to speak about Bill 166 once again—a bill that contains historic changes that will better position Ontario's students and the post-secondary education system for continued success.

Before I jump into the third reading of Bill 166, I would like to thank each of the individuals who appeared in committee. Whether they were there to support, express their concerns or ask questions, I appreciate the time that they took out of their day to engage in the meaningful conversation.

I'd like to also address the petitions that the opposition members just recently read out, and I want to thank CIJA for the call to action that they put out, where we've seen support of Bill 166. We tracked over 6,500 emails in support of Bill 166. So thank you very much to CIJA for the incredible work that they do.

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Speaker, I think back to my own journey, first as a university student, then as a faculty member at Georgian College, and as someone who has always cared about post-secondary students—as I see my youngest graduate from post-secondary. I made the connection early on in my life before politics that the strength of our post-secondary education system institutions directly ties to the strength of our communities, and this is particularly true in northern and rural areas.

You've likely heard me mention before that in my area, I have Georgian College as well as a Lakehead University satellite campus, which has been there for close to 25 years now. I think back to the work that was done in the early days within our community to really get behind that project, because the opportunity to have a local university was very, very important to our region. Everyone pulled together to make that happen. The partnerships that happen in our community because of these two institutions have been great for our area.

From learners to employers and to the broader community, post-secondary institutions make our communities stronger. Now, in my current role as the Minister of Colleges and Universities, I get to see this not only in my own community, but through my visits with students, instructors, administrators, professors, staff and community members at schools all across Ontario.

Ontario's post-secondary institutions attract and train some of the brightest students and researchers in the world.

This positive energy doesn't stop with just the students; it sparks local jobs and spurs economic growth in every corner of the province. You'll often hear the Premier say the reason why companies from across the world are

looking at coming to Ontario is because of the world-class education that's offered here and the amazing labour market that we have.

To keep our post-secondary institutions strong, our government is providing \$1.3 billion in new funding—the single biggest investment in more than a decade. Along with this funding, we are proposing measures in the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, 2024, that will give students a solid foundation for their education.

The bottom line is that all students in Ontario deserve to learn in a supportive, safe and respectful environment. The safety and well-being of everyone on Ontario's post-secondary campuses is a critical responsibility of our colleges and our universities.

That's why today I'm proud to speak about the three initiatives outlined in the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, 2024. All three of the initiatives are about creating the right conditions for student success, and that means creating affordable, inclusive and safe environments for learning, for all students.

The first of these initiatives is a set of amendments that focus on a top priority for my ministry: the mental health of post-secondary students. Specifically, the amendments would require colleges and universities to have policies in place outlining mental health and wellness supports and services available to students and, going forward, to report annually to their boards of governors on the implementation and the effectiveness of these policies. These amendments would also enable the minister to provide further direction to colleges and universities about the elements in their student mental health policies.

I know that many of our colleges and universities are already doing great work to provide mental health supports for their students, and the collaborative action on post-secondary student mental health GTA initiative is a great example. Five colleges—Centennial, George Brown, Humber, Seneca and Sheridan—partnered to pool their expertise and resources to better support their students.

The University of Guelph has also seen success in providing minimally intrusive mental health crisis responses through their Integrated Mobile Police and Crisis Team. Through this initiative, a dedicated mental health professional is stationed alongside campus safety officers when assisting with crisis calls. Guelph was the first university in Ontario to try this approach, and it has led to a significant reduction in the need for police or emergency medical intervention.

While many colleges and universities are already making considerable efforts such as these to support their students, the legislative amendments being put forward today will help build common ground among the institutions to help ensure that supports are accessible at all institutions. At the same time, colleges and universities will be able to take a tailored approach that meets the unique needs of their student communities. And as an added measure, our government will help institutions to enhance mental health supports by investing \$23 million,

including \$8 million for the Post-Secondary Mental Health Action Plan over three years, starting in 2024-25.

I'd like to thank my former PA, MPP Pierre, for the work that she did across campuses. She had a chance to visit with many of our campuses, colleges and universities, and speak with faculty, staff and students about the needs for these mental health supports, but also to see this framework on campus to better support our students. I really want to thank her for all that work.

I have also had the opportunity to visit campuses and speak with staff and students about mental health supports. It's interesting to see the changes that were made as a result of the pandemic and the supports that are now offered online or in a hybrid method that students really appreciate. In some cases, students were actually using those supports more often because of the convenience of having an online method, as well as not having to sit in an office space with other students waiting for a chance to see one of the clinicians.

So schools are doing a great job and really acknowledging the needs of the students on campus, but the mental health challenges that students face have become increasingly complex. I have three post-secondary-aged children, and I've also taught college students, so I know the significant impact that mental health can have on students' lives. As a faculty member at Georgian College, we were encouraged to take the mental health first aid course for students, because we're working with young folks and there seems to be a high level of suicide in young people. Sometimes, being a faculty member, you are the person a young person turns to for advice, for supports, and to acknowledge when there may be an issue, and you're able to then help that student and find the supports on campus that best meet their needs.

These amendments are so important, because students are often unaware of the supports that are available to them, and the best way to make progress is to ensure that all students have access to the mental health supports they need, when they need them. That's why our government has enhanced resources for students attending post-secondary institutions across the province.

In 2023-24, we are investing more than \$32 million in mental health supports for post-secondary students, including funding provided directly to post-secondary institutions through multiple grants. Some key examples are the Mental Health Services Grant and the Mental Health Worker Grant, which help post-secondary institutions develop and expand mental health services on campus, as well as hiring mental health professionals to help meet the needs of students. Specifically, in 2023, more than 160 positions were filled with the help of the Mental Health Worker Grant, which resulted in shorter wait times for students and less pressure on campus-based services.

We are also working to ensure that students from around the world who come to Ontario to study have access to the mental health supports that they need to succeed. In 2023, our government invested close to \$3 million in four special projects, all with the goal of

supporting the mental health of international post-secondary students in Ontario.

Supporting ongoing initiatives like these that help provide direct one-on-one support for students continues to be a high priority for our government, as well—like the Good2Talk mental health helpline for post-secondary students. This initiative ensures that students, whether they are on campus, off campus or on break, have access to mental health supports where and when they need them. In 2023-24, our government invested over \$5 million in this initiative so the organization could expand its services and continue to provide free, bilingual and confidential services to students.

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And to ensure that all students in the province have access to the mental health services, our government has invested more than \$12 million in 2023-24 in another important resource: the Get A-Head portal. Those seeking care can access a portal to match with a clinician or a mental health professional in training—so this is a win-win—based on relevant factors such as their area of support, gender, age and cultural background. This tool not only provides critical and timely mental health services to post-secondary students at little to no cost, but it also offers students training to be mental health providers—an opportunity to gain experience delivering those supports. I'm pleased to report that in 2022-23 the Get A-Head platform served over 27,000 post-secondary students. According to a survey carried out by those overseeing the online tool, more than 80% of students who responded reported improvements in their mental health and well-being.

Through all of these efforts, we want post-secondary students to know that they are not alone and that help and resources are always going to be available. That's why I'm proud that this proposed mental health framework will ensure that all students know about and have access to the services that are available on their campuses.

The second set of amendments in the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, 2024, introduces policies and measures that underscore our government's zero tolerance of any form of hate or discrimination in the post-secondary community. We know that a healthy, safe and respectful campus environment is critical to student success.

A number of my colleagues and I have heard personally from students about the devastating effects discrimination has had not only on their mental health but on their grades. I know many members of the committee heard this from students, as well, when they were presenting at committee.

At a fundamental level, no student in Ontario can reach their full potential unless they feel safe and have a full sense of belonging on their campus. All students should be able to pursue their studies on campus or off campus without having to worry about racism, hate or discrimination.

We've all heard reports in the news, over the past two years, of unsettling incidents happening at colleges and

universities here in Ontario and across Canada and across North America.

It is really concerning to me, as the Minister of Colleges and Universities, that incidents of racism and hate on post-secondary campuses have been escalating over the past few months.

Since the outbreak of the war between Israel and Hamas last October, the media has been reporting about the rising tensions on campuses across the province, across the country and around the world. Countless students have reported that they feel unsafe due to incidents of racism, discrimination, harassment and hate at our post-secondary institutions. This includes incidents of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia—concerning incidents that have been reported at institutions throughout Ontario and that have involved students, staff, student groups, and visitors to post-secondary campuses.

I've had the opportunity to speak with students and faculty alike, prior to October 7, about the incidents of hate on campus and the lack of reporting that we're hearing from students and staff alike—saying, "What's the point of even reporting when there's never any follow-up, there's no action?" So we knew there was a real need to have a plan in place.

Due to the serious nature of these incidents, institutions have pursued internal or external investigations, and many have requested the involvement of law enforcement.

Yet, at committee, we heard from several students who believe their complaints about the harassment that they faced went unaddressed by their schools, and that in some cases, institutions failed to abide by their own anti-hate policies. We even heard the tragic testimony of a student who felt so unsafe that she needed to hire private security just to attend classes.

I find it completely unacceptable that any student who has been subjected to hate could feel ignored by their institution and no longer safe on campus.

While many of our post-secondary institutions have taken action to address these incidents, it's clear that a broader, more proactive approach is needed so that all incidents are dealt with in a consistent manner to address students' concerns about safety on campus.

Our government's position on this issue is clear: Hate of any kind has no place in Ontario, and especially no place at our post-secondary institutions.

Colleges and universities should be places where students feel free to exchange ideas and have open and respectful debates.

Since January 2019, all publicly assisted colleges and universities in our province have implemented a free speech policy that meets a minimum standard prescribed by the government and is based on best practices from around the world. The policy protects free speech at colleges and universities and does not allow hate speech, discrimination, harassment or any other illegal forms of speech.

The Ontario Human Rights Code, which applies to all Ontario colleges and universities, prohibits discrimination, and this includes discrimination based on race, place

of origin, disability, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and more.

Free speech policies at colleges and universities apply to all faculty, staff, students, management and guests, whether on campus and/or in a virtual learning environment delivered by these post-secondary institutions. And let me be clear: Any directives would need to be in line with our free speech policy and not infringe upon the right to free speech all students and faculty are guaranteed under the law.

This bill is about upholding the right to feel safe on campus so that all students and faculty can participate in the free discussions our institutions are meant to foster.

Since last year, I have sent two letters to the presidents of each publicly assisted college and university to remind them of their role in supporting safe and respectful places of learning and their obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code. The most recent memo specifically referenced recent events in Israel and the heightened risk of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. While post-secondary institutions have taken action to address these recent incidents, issues continue to exist today, which means a broader, more comprehensive approach to campus safety must be adopted.

As I mentioned earlier, the second set of amendments in the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, 2024, introduces changes that underscore that our government does not and will not condone hate, discrimination or any other form of harassment in our communities. Our government believes that everyone should be able to pursue their studies, on campus or off campus, without having to worry about hate or discrimination.

Speaker, as you know, the government has zero tolerance for sexual harassment, sexual assault and any other forms of violence in our communities. This is not something we merely believe in; it is something that we have acted on, as a government. That is why, in 2022, the government passed the Strengthening Post-secondary Institutions and Students Act, 2022, which will help publicly assisted colleges and universities and career colleges better address faculty and staff sexual misconduct towards students.

But that's not all we've done since forming government. Over the years, we have listened, and we've addressed sexual violence matters in various ways.

For example, since July 2019, colleges and universities are required to report annually to their board of governors on the number of reports of sexual violence by students, as well as the supports, the programs and the initiatives available to students.

And since 2019, the government has invested \$6 million annually in the Campus Safety Grant. These funds help publicly assisted colleges and universities implement campus safety initiatives, including campus sexual violence prevention programs and supports.

While government has done a lot of important work over the past few years, more must be done to ensure that our post-secondary campuses are free from discrimination, hate and any form of harassment. That's why, today,

the amendments we are speaking to, if passed, would help ensure inclusive, safe and welcoming campus communities for all students.

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As part of these changes, all public colleges and universities would need to have clear, defined policies and rules in place to address and combat racism and hate, including but not limited to anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Direction to publicly assisted colleges and universities would ensure greater consistency with how these incidents are dealt with. We will work closely with our post-secondary and community partners as institutions implement these policies and report on them.

As I mentioned earlier, many universities and colleges are already taking important steps to address student safety concerns and build inclusive learning environments.

Education is a key element in building a more diverse and inclusive environment for everyone, not just on campus, but throughout our province.

Speaker, I want to share and thank Brock University for having me in February. I had the pleasure of touring Brock University and attending their Black History Month kickoff event. This was a rewarding opportunity to tour their campus and to meet with the bright students and faculty, to learn about some of the incredible work that is happening there to increase students' knowledge about topics such as anti-racism and discrimination. In addition to their kickoff event, Brock University also had a fantastic lineup of events scheduled throughout February, such as the Spirit of Mali art exhibition, a Black student success centre paint session, and much more.

I want to thank the amazing students I had the opportunity to meet with at Brock as well as the esteemed student leadership on campus.

I want to thank all student leadership on campus. I was recently with my critic at the OUSA event for the session, and it was great to see students there, and the awards for the professors—that they were there—amazing work that they're doing with leadership on their campuses across the province. We really appreciate that relationship that they have.

I know that many post-secondary institutions took the opportunity to mark Black History Month with their own special events and are doing exceptional work year-round in celebrating the many cultures that make Ontario so diverse and welcoming. For example, this past October, Western University had a week of awareness and learning opportunities, both on campus and within the city of London, on the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion. St. Lawrence College had a global learning opportunities week just this past March to showcase their vibrant multicultural community.

I commend all the colleges and universities for the efforts that they're making.

Speaker, I hope we use each day as an opportunity to learn something new and to thank those who are making such a difference in their communities. By learning from the past, I know we can work together to build more

diverse and inclusive campus communities where everyone feels welcomed and has opportunities to succeed. The legislative amendments we're introducing today will help us get one step closer to this goal—a goal that I know we all share.

Our government wants to create a better future for everyone across the province, including students from all walks of life, to promote economic prosperity for all. We all have a responsibility to ensure that we keep the doors of opportunity open so that everyone in Ontario has the access to learn and access an affordable post-secondary education. To that end, we must also ensure that what we do is sustainable so that the doors of opportunity remain open for students today, and for students in the future.

I know that during these challenging times, when the rate of inflation and the cost of living is forcing Ontarians to make some tough financial decisions, students and their families could use some extra help.

As a parent and a public servant, I strongly believe we need to further reduce barriers to higher learning, both by improving access to post-secondary education and making it easier for students to succeed once they get there. As a first step towards this goal, as announced in February, Ontario is maintaining the domestic tuition freeze for publicly assisted colleges and universities for three more years, while allowing limited increases of up to 5% for domestic out-of-province students. This tuition freeze builds on our government's historic 10% reduction in 2019-20, along with tuition freezes over the past four years. These changes have made post-secondary education more affordable for Ontario's students and their families, and our government believes it must continue.

Prior to 2019, Ontario had the highest tuition fees for undergraduate and graduate programs in Canada. Currently, Ontario's average tuition is the fourth highest in Canada for undergraduate students and the third highest for graduate students. This is solid progress in our efforts to increase affordability. We're not going to undo that progress by making it more expensive to access education; particularly now, when too many Ontario families are already struggling to make ends meet.

In addition to the tuition fees students pay, students also pay fees for learning materials and activities associated with their programs. However, they do not always have a clear line of sight on these additional costs until after they have selected their programs. Textbook costs, in particular, can pose an additional financial burden to students and their families that they weren't expecting and didn't even know they had to plan for.

We likely all saw the CBC article reporting that textbook costs have increased dramatically over the years—in fact, by more than 800% since the 1980s.

That's why the third set of legislative amendments we have introduced in the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act will require public colleges and universities to follow ministry directives to increase the transparency of student fees, including learning materials.

As mentioned earlier, students have been facing financial burdens due to the costs of materials and activities associated with their programs and courses.

If passed, Ontario's measures to increase transparency around the costs of ancillary fees would help students prepare for costs and provide them with greater options when selecting courses. Faculty would continue to be able to make decisions around the educational materials for their courses. However, as always, our government is requesting that both faculty and institutions keep the best interests of students in mind when selecting materials.

Speaker, I remember when I was back in university and paying for textbooks at the time—but then also, once you're registered, finding out there were additional lab materials that you needed. You needed your lab coat; I remember needing my set for microbiology—and these were all quite expensive items.

We're going to ensure that students know about these additional costs up front.

Separate from these legislative amendments that I'm talking about today to further support transparency in the post-secondary education sector, in coming months, we'll be working with colleges and universities to provide greater details around how tuition fees are allocated and used. After all, if students are making such an effort to invest in their post-secondary education, it's only fair that they understand exactly what they're investing in.

That is why I'm pleased to now speak to another very important action our government is taking to support students, and that would be housing for students. Our government is also increasing affordability for students on another big-ticket item that is vitally important to their well-being and ability to go to school, and that is student housing. It's so important to have access to student housing on campus.

I know when I was working at Georgian College, at the time, we actually didn't have any student housing at the Orillia campus. When potential students and their families would come to visit during their open house, that was always a question I heard from parents—"Where is the residence?" That was definitely a concern for parents—that their child or young person was going to possibly have to live in the community somewhere, to find student housing. Were they going to have access to it? Was it going to be safe? So I know that was a big-ticket item—for the schools to have that consideration. A few years later, they did build residences, and I believe they also have more residences planned in the future because of the great need in my community.

The important thing with student housing is, when our colleges and universities step up and have student housing, that also helps to alleviate the pressure in our municipalities, which we know—we can all agree there's a housing crisis in this province. So when we're looking at the need to build 1.5 million homes, it's great to see our institutions stepping up to support that in their way.

1400

Addressing the housing needs of students is a long-term strategy that requires collaboration at all levels of government and with stakeholders, post-secondary institutions and students. Recently, we took important steps towards this goal by proposing to remove red tape faced by

universities when building student housing. As part of Ontario's spring red tape reduction package, we introduced changes to exempt universities from the Planning Act. This would enable universities to build faster and meet the needs of their students. Universities, like public colleges already, would no longer be subject to many municipal planning approvals. This will virtually save years in approvals, avoid application fees, and remove barriers to getting shovels in the ground to build safe and affordable student residences.

Speaker, we had a round table where we met with many institutions; we also had students attending, and hearing the concerns was interesting. There's a project right here at U of T that has taken almost 10 years to get through the approvals. You can imagine, in that time, how the increase to the build has now suddenly resulted in a decrease to the number of units that the residence is going to have. Taking over 10 years just to get to this point, to move forward on the project—unbelievable.

This change in the red tape bill is really going to make a huge change for our universities.

We are also requiring all public colleges and universities to publish their student housing policies, including a guarantee that housing options are available for incoming international students. This will further ensure that all post-secondary students, whether domestic, out-of-province or international, have access to and are aware of student housing options that are safe, affordable and within an easy commute to campus.

Our government is committed to helping all learners access and succeed in post-secondary education. Our greatest strength in this province is our people, and if we can develop the highly skilled workforce that today's economy demands, we can fill critical jobs and lay the foundation for long-term, sustainable growth. That's why we've taken steps over the past few years towards ensuring that meaningful educational and economic opportunities are available to learners from all walks of life and in all parts of our province.

Speaker, our government supports a post-secondary education system that is affordable, respectful and inclusive for all learners, including Indigenous learners. We work with colleges, universities, Indigenous institutes and Indigenous partners to create the conditions that make it easier for everyone to access a high-quality education, because we want to build and encourage a post-secondary system that embraces inclusivity and promotes success for all learners so they can find rewarding careers.

Indigenous institutes are an important pillar of our post-secondary education system and act as a major local hub for their communities. Not only do they provide education and training for hundreds of Indigenous learners, but they are offering this in a culturally holistic and safe learning environment—an environment where Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing are woven into all aspects of the learner experience.

In fact, I just came back from Thunder Bay, where I attended the NOMA conference with many of our colleagues here to learn about the needs of northern

communities and opportunities for growth. When I was there, I visited a number of post-secondary institutions: Confederation College and Lakehead University, as well as the Indigenous institute Oshki-Wenjack. I want to thank Laurie and her staff for the great day that we had and a wonderful tour. I had the opportunity to meet with the staff. We also had three students come in and talk with us about their experience. One student was actually returning for her third time, and she was now working on her bachelor of social work. Another student was also doing a social work degree, and she was explaining to me that she was graduating this year and her daughter was also graduating from grade 8. I said, “That is so amazing.” Someone that her daughter can look up to—that you can go back to school at any time and get a degree, or to college—amazing students.

We were talking with some of the PSW students and the RPN students, and there was actually one RPN student who was returning to her community in Red Lake. I was telling her that that same morning, I had had a meeting with Mayor Fred Mota from Red Lake. We all love Fred. Fred was talking about the need for health human resources in his community. So I told the student, “Well, I’m going to talk to your mayor later this afternoon and let him know that there’s a future RPN who’s returning to the community.” And I did do that.

One thing that we heard from the students at the round table was that the institution treated students like they were family. It was so important that they were talking about—sometimes when there were difficulties and life happened, when they got out of the elevator and went to school, when the doors opened, that family and support were there, and they could leave the issues and the problems at the door and focus on school.

So I want to thank Oshki-Wenjack for the work that they do, and I also want to thank them for the wonderful Persians that they brought in for us and also sent us home with.

On our part, our government is committed to supporting Indigenous institutes to help them flourish and respond to the community demands and the needs of the local labour market. That’s why our government continues to invest in Indigenous institutes across Ontario and to reduce financial barriers for Indigenous learners.

We support colleges and universities in providing culturally appropriate services and student supports to Indigenous learners through the Indigenous student success fund. Through this fund, our government invests more than \$18 million annually to fund programs and services, such as Indigenous counsellors; elders-in-residence; academic supports; and access to mentoring, counselling and advising services. These supports are key in helping Indigenous learners and communities have the tools and resources that they need to build solutions, to develop local economies, and to revitalize languages and cultures.

I’m pleased that we are continuing to build on our supports for Indigenous institutes through mental health investments of \$2.5 million over three years for the Indigenous Institutes Mental Health Grant. This funding

will help all nine of the Indigenous institutes provide culturally relevant, trauma-informed mental health supports and services for their students.

We also recently announced investments that will help students, faculty and staff at Indigenous institutes have safe and accessible facilities in which to learn, to teach and to work. This includes an additional \$3 million for the Indigenous Institutes Facilities Renewal Program for the next two years.

We also created a new Indigenous institutes equipment fund. This fund of \$500,000 per year for three years will provide Indigenous institutes and their students with state-of-the-art, industry-standard equipment for their programs.

While important gains have been made, I know there is more that we can do to support Indigenous students. That’s why, earlier this month, we started discussions with the Indigenous institutes sector through the Indigenous institutes financial sustainability and growth circle to determine how to best support Indigenous institutes and their learners going forward. I’m really looking forward to working with this group and the collaboration and the work that unfolds as a result.

Up until now, I’ve talked about removing barriers to post-secondary education and how to support learners once they get there.

I’d also like to touch on some steps our government is taking to ensure students can successfully transition from post-secondary education to the workforce. It’s up to all of us, in partnership with all of our post-secondary institutions, to establish pathways to help set Ontarians up for success.

Like the rest of the world, as we continue on our road of economic growth, Ontario continues to face challenges. To navigate this ongoing global economic uncertainty, our government has a plan—a plan to build an Ontario that the people of this province can be proud of not only today, but in the future. An important part of this plan is preparing Ontarians for the jobs of a modern economy, with the skills to be adaptable, lifelong learners in an ever-changing world.

People are keener now, more than ever, to explore pathways to meaningful and rewarding careers. They want to ensure that the training that they put their time, effort and money into will pay off.

We also know that Ontario’s economy is becoming more knowledge-based and technology-driven. A skilled workforce is an important driver for the province’s economy and competitiveness.

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That’s why Ontario invested \$100 million in 2023-24 to help cover the operating costs of science, technology, engineering and mathematics programs at publicly assisted colleges and universities that have enrolments above their funded levels. On average, STEM graduates have better post-graduation outcomes than their non-STEM counterparts, with lower unemployment and higher wages. Therefore, it makes sense to provide enhanced support for these programs, as they will help post-secondary students secure good, in-demand jobs.

The second-largest information, communications and technology cluster on the continent is right here in Ontario. In Ontario alone, the sector employs approximately 400,000 people. That's a lot of exciting jobs with great future prospects. In fact, today the number of tech jobs created in Toronto outpaces those created in Seattle, the San Francisco Bay area and New York City combined.

And according to a report produced by Deloitte on behalf of the Vector Institute, over 20,000 artificial intelligence jobs were created in Ontario between April 2022 and March 2023. During this time, venture capital investments in Ontario's AI ecosystem reached nearly \$1.2 billion. To support this sector, since 2017, the government has invested up to \$81 million in the Vector Institute and \$110 million in the Perimeter Institute to help make Ontario a global leader in these fields of AI and quantum computing.

The economic benefits and endless potential of the tech sector are clear. It's safe to say that the demand for educated, talented and enthusiastic professionals in STEM-driven occupations is high.

Our province is well positioned to remain a global information, communications and technology hub. We are home to many world-renowned institutions with a strong focus on technology-related disciplines, such as the University of Toronto, Lakehead University and the University of Waterloo. Colleges such as Humber and Seneca also offer programs with a strong focus on STEM-related disciplines. These world-class institutions are often the birthplace of novel ideas, cutting-edge research and startups that drive Ontario's competitiveness on the world stage.

To help build momentum, our government recently announced investments of more than \$278 million in the last two years in research projects at universities, colleges, research institutes and hospitals. This funding will help safeguard Ontario's position at the forefront of innovation that continues to be competitive on a global scale. More than 400 research projects across the province are being supported through this funding, helping to cover the costs of operations and infrastructure, including building, renovating and equipping research facilities with laboratories and the latest technology.

Beyond the AI-focused research institutes I mentioned earlier, our government is also supporting a number of other research organizations that are bolstering our health care sector.

For example, it was just Cancer Awareness Month, in April, across Canada, and I would be remiss if I didn't mention the work of the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research. They are doing incredible work that is making a very real impact on the lives of people across this province. Unfortunately, I'm sure that we all know a family member, a friend, a neighbour, a constituent who has been diagnosed with cancer. It's a truly terrible disease that impacts so many folks of all ages. That's why it's encouraging to see some of Ontario's greatest minds, armed with a critical STEM education, working together to accelerate the development of cancer research

discoveries for patients right here in this province and around the world.

I've had the opportunity to visit many of our research institutions, but one that I found quite interesting is at McMaster University, which is a research reactor, so I was joined by the Minister of Energy—very exciting. They're producing medical isotopes there, as well, and doing research on those isotopes. Prior to the budget announcement being made, they were originally working 14-hour days, five days a week, so the reactor had to shut down every day and then restart. From what I understand, that is quite the process. In budget 2023, we invested \$6.8 million over two years, and this would allow the reactor to run 24 hours a day, five days a week. This is incredible work that McMaster University is doing in medical isotopes, and it's pretty cool that we have a medical reactor right on one of our campuses. I know the Minister of Energy was quite excited.

Importantly, our government's investments to both fuel STEM programs and cutting-edge research projects will develop talent in these growing fields, which is a win-win for students and for the economy. Investing in the education of Ontario's people now will support our economy for years to come and ultimately improve the quality of life for so many Ontarians. I look forward to seeing the incredible ideas and inventions that I'm sure will come from these investments.

And I look to my colleague the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, who seems to come in here every week, bringing a new company to Ontario from around the world—and we're quite excited about the new investment from Honda, as well. They're coming here because of the world-class training that we have here, the labour pipeline of students and folks who are already working in some of these industries—something that we should all be very proud of and that is definitely an economic driver, because of the training that's being done here in Ontario.

Another way our government is connecting students to rewarding careers is by creating a career portal. This portal will help students understand labour market needs and make informed decisions on their post-secondary education journey. There are so many sources of labour market information out there that it can be overwhelming for students to navigate and choose their educational path. The creation of a career portal will help to strengthen how students, workers, employers and newcomers access education and career pathways in Ontario. I hope to be able to share more details about the portal with everyone soon. I've heard from students—especially high school students—who are saying, "There are so many opportunities out there. There are jobs that are going to be available in 10 years that we don't even know about right now," and "How do I make these choices? Where do I look for these opportunities? What schools do I attend to be able to create that pathway to those future jobs?" The portal is going to be a great asset for all of our students—and not just the young folks in school currently, but those who are looking to maybe change professions as well.

Speaker, I'm sure we will all agree that all students deserve the best opportunities to gain the skills they need to get good-paying, high-quality jobs. Our government is taking steps to help our post-secondary institutions offer more in-demand programs and adapt to changing labour market needs. Pending regulatory changes, we're planning to allow colleges to submit applications to offer applied master's degrees. These programs would give students more choices when it comes to innovative, applied master's programs that lead to in-demand jobs—programs that will help them graduate with the skills, the expertise and the credentials to successfully transition to the workforce. It will also give employers access to more industry-ready employees who can immediately meet labour market demands in specialized fields—fields such as advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence and animation. Again, finding new ways like this to prepare students for great careers is a win-win for all Ontarians.

As you can see, Ontario is putting students first with a continued focus on removing barriers to post-secondary education, helping students succeed once they get there, and ensuring that learners are equipped with the skills and experience they need to successfully transition to the workforce. However, it is important to recognize that the supports that we put in place for our students are only as useful as the strength of Ontario's post-secondary system as a whole.

Our government provides more than \$5 billion annually to Ontario's publicly assisted colleges and universities; we do so because we recognize their important contribution to the economy of the province, to local communities, and the individual impact that higher education can have for Ontarians.

Continuing to focus on efficiency, accountability and financial sustainability within the system will help ensure our post-secondary institutions can deliver high-quality education for years to come.

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Today, our post-secondary institutions continue to navigate the increasing costs of delivering programming, historic inflation, as well as some significant recent changes to the educational landscape across Canada. Therefore, Ontario is taking further action to ensure the continued viability of the post-secondary education system in a very responsible way—a way that supports students and post-secondary institutions today, while building an even stronger foundation for future generations.

That's why, to bring financial sustainability to post-secondary institutions, our government announced that we're providing nearly \$1.3 billion in new funding. I mentioned this earlier, but it bears repeating: This is the single biggest investment in post-secondary education in over a decade. This funding includes the \$100-million investment in STEM costs that I already touched on. We're also creating a three-year Postsecondary Education Sustainability Fund valued at \$900 million. This fund will provide \$700 million in broad-based support for all institutions and will offer \$200 million in additional top-up funding for institutions with the greatest financial need.

This funding will help institutions to address their immediate, critical costs so they can continue delivering high-quality education to students.

We're also supporting the world-class research being done in our post-secondary institutions with a recent investment of more than \$65 million to support research and innovation.

Interjections.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I can see the Minister of Labour is quite excited about our \$1.3-billion investment.

Interjections.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: We're not raising tuition over here. We're keeping education affordable for students.

Interjection.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: No, I think it's great. We should talk more about it.

This funding will help Ontario researchers to continue to access state-of-the-art advanced research computing, or ARC, systems to build and further their research. Additionally, it will support Ontario institutions in leveraging their fair share of federal investments to refresh national ARC systems.

These investments will help us ensure that the social and economic opportunities that result from discoveries made in Ontario benefit Ontarians and the Ontario economy.

To help post-secondary institutions provide modern and safe learning environments for students, faculty and staff, we are also providing nearly \$170 million in additional funding for institutions that will allow them to address their deferred maintenance backlog, undertake critical repairs, modernize classrooms, update technology and improve their environmental sustainability, while continuing to deliver a safe experience for students on campus.

We also recognize that our northern and smaller rural post-secondary institutions face unique challenges. They're more reliant on operating grants and domestic tuition. That's why, in 2022-23, our government provided more than \$400 million in operating grants to northern institutions. And in 2023-24, we provided northern colleges with \$83 million through the Small, Northern and Rural Grant, and \$16 million for northern universities through the Northern Ontario Grant.

Our government appreciates the special role that our post-secondary institutions play in northern Ontario: providing learners with access to high-quality education close to home and helping to prepare them for in-demand jobs in their local communities and beyond.

As I mentioned earlier, I was at the NOMA conference, and I had the pleasure of visiting Confederation College. When we were at Confederation, we visited the flight school. This was my second time visiting the flight school—absolutely incredible work that is being done. We were talking with students, all who were from—actually, the majority of them were from the Thunder Bay area, so they had the opportunity to study right there at home, but they were also all planning on staying in the Thunder Bay area. One of the students who was graduating was coming back in the fall to become a flight instructor, so she could

up her hours—to continue on her goal and profession of becoming a commercial pilot.

Our government recently announced that we are providing a one-time additional investment of \$10 million in 2024-25 through the Small, Northern and Rural Grant and the Northern Ontario Grant. This will help northern universities and small, northern and rural colleges to maintain a full range of programs and will provide students with local competitive choices for post-secondary education.

Speaker, I want to be clear about something: Our government's approach to ensuring the financial sustainability of our post-secondary system does not just include infusing more money into the system. We know that taxpayer dollars need to be spent wisely, while still maintaining the high-quality level of education that Ontarians deserve.

That's why, to further support publicly assisted colleges and universities to operate in an efficient, accountable and transparent manner, our government also announced that we're creating an Efficiency and Accountability Fund. This fund will provide institutions with \$15 million over the next three years, starting in 2024-25, to support third-party reviews. These reviews will identify actions institutions can take to drive long-term cost savings and positive outcomes for students and communities. Ontario will work with post-secondary institutions to create greater efficiencies in operations and program offerings, because at the end of the day, our government needs to ensure that colleges and universities are taking the necessary steps to operate as efficiently as possible.

The measures I've just outlined focus on restoring efficiency, transparency and accountability to post-secondary education, which are critical because we want our post-secondary system to remain strong and sustainable for generations to come. A strong education system will ensure that students have the opportunities and supports they need to prepare for in-demand jobs, which in turn helps to build Ontario's economy. And a strong economy is going to benefit all Ontarians.

While I've covered a lot of actions our government is taking today, we need to remind ourselves that at the heart of it, post-secondary education is about students and their futures. That is why the measures we are proposing would put students first. My top commitment is to always put students, their education and their futures first.

If students don't feel safe or have a sense of belonging, this will impact their success. It will impact their performance, not just in school, but long after graduation.

Post-secondary institutions have a responsibility to provide a safe and supportive learning environment and are expected to do everything possible to address issues on campuses, be it the mental health of their students or incidents of hate and racism.

The three amendments I outlined at the beginning of my remarks, if passed—and I hope we're passing this—would benefit students by helping to create a safer, more supportive environment and campus community. These are measures to help position our post-secondary education

sector for present and future generations—because there is no greater investment that we can make in the talent and skills of our next generation.

As I noted earlier, in my days as a faculty member at Georgian College, in my role as the Minister of Colleges and Universities, and as the MPP for Simcoe North, I see every day how important post-secondary education and training are to the broader community.

The actions that we're taking will strengthen the system in a responsible way, supporting both the students and the institutions. The legislative measures in Bill 166 will ensure that students are aware of the mental health supports available to them, understand the fees that they pay, and are protected from discrimination, empowering them to achieve their full potential during some of the most formative years of their lives.

We are building on past successes to help students feel safe and supported, and supporting our institutions in upholding high standards. By implementing these initiatives, together, with our partners, we will keep building strong, vibrant communities and continue creating real opportunities across every corner of the province for the people who live here and the businesses that want to invest here.

I feel optimistic about the changes being proposed as part of the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, and I appreciate your support as we move forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The minister will know that there is a growing number of professors around Ontario's universities who have serious issues with Bill 166. You've heard them at committee.

This is a quote: "Bill 166 fundamentally changes the way universities in this province are governed, moving us away from democratic principles of university autonomy." This is from Sue Ferguson, from Wilfrid Laurier University in my riding.

She went on to say, "We need to ensure that the safeguards from political interference in our institutions of higher learning are strengthened, not weakened."

And this is from the Coalition Against Political Interference in Public Research and Education in Ontario, which has been created because of Bill 166: "Instead of advancing student mental health and anti-racism on campuses, this bill stymies both and opens to the door to a degree of political interference" never seen before in this province.

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What do you say to those informed voices who have serious and legitimate concerns about Bill 166?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I have serious concerns about what's happening on our campuses across Ontario. I have heard from students and from staff alike. Our committee members heard from students.

Let me read you some of the Hansard from committee. This is an independent member—mandating mental health policies is "red tape." At committee, we heard from a member who called the anti-hate provisions of this bill

“red tape.” That member heard the testimonies of students who were made to feel so unwelcome and unsafe that they stopped going back to campus. The member is more concerned about burdening university staff than the well-being of our students.

We also heard the need for centralizing reporting of incidents. Again, committee members heard from the National Council of Canadian Muslims, which expressed a need for centralized reporting of hate crimes to the ministry—according to these, incidents of hate are far often not reported to institutions and aren’t addressed in a timely manner.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Mike Harris: It makes me feel a little bit old to stand up in the Legislature and say that my oldest child is actually going off to college next year. As we’ve been going through the deliberations—I know; I’m sorry. I’m almost 40. It’s starting to get to me a little bit. He’s going off to college. The bills have started to roll in.

I know one of the provisions in this legislation calls for more clarity, obviously, for students and parents, caregivers, guardians as they move forward with paying the universities for books, for educational courses, for residence and some of the different pieces like that. So I’m just wondering if the minister could elaborate a little bit more on how this will help clarify things for students as we move forward.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Congratulations to Jaxon, who is going on to college. That’s very exciting. And you think you feel old with your oldest going to school? I feel older with my youngest graduating from school. It’s definitely a very exciting time, but also a very expensive time too. I know my three daughters were all in university at the same time together, so at that time you can imagine the costs of textbooks are quite extreme.

We heard from a lot of students who were saying, “I understand that government froze tuition, but how come my tuition keeps going up every year?” That was because of the extra costs. So the legislation will require universities and colleges to, up front, explain the costs for programs.

I mentioned in my speech, when I went, I remember my microbiology class—you pay for these expensive textbooks, but then you find out once you start class that you also had a lab coat and you had your little microbiology kit. I remember going to the library—and, of course, they ranged from all expenses.

We want students to know up front what the expense is going to be for all their programs, as well as a tuition breakdown.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Minister, thank you so much for your presentation. Standing on your feet for one hour is not always easy, but you did it extremely well.

Speaker, I want to just bring to your attention—as you know, there were a number of witnesses who came to committee who expressed concerns that there were provisions within the ministerial directives on policies and

rules on racism and hate, and they were fearful that it could be a form of political interference on campus. I know you’ve heard this as well. They’ve also expressed concern that this could quash certain types of activism on campus; in particular, Palestinian activism. They also noted that it could threaten academic freedoms, which I know that nobody is really interested in doing.

There were also some witnesses who talked about the powers that the government already has—including the Anti-Racism Act, which is still up and running. Why is the government not using those powers to create subcommittees to address Islamophobia—anti-racism—anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for the question. Since I became the minister in 2021, I’ve been meeting with students and faculty administration, and what I found disturbing from students and staff was incidents of hate on campus. What we heard from students was that most students didn’t even report it because, to them, there was never any follow-up, there was no process in place. Some said, “Well, what was even the point of reporting?” And for me, as minister, I would hear about these incidents the same as anybody else would—on the news or in social media—because there was never that reporting mechanism to the ministry as well.

So, working with our colleges and universities—and I also want to thank MPP Smith for her motion as well, working with the anti-hate policy.

We’re going to work together with the institutions, and we want to ensure that these policies are the same across all campuses. Whether you’re at Georgian College or at Lakehead, the same expectation is going to be there for all students.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Hon. David Piccini: I want to thank the minister for her remarks. And I’m glad those whose hatred has been hidden behind the thin veil of academic freedom are now on notice, and I want to thank the minister for her leadership in cracking down on hatred on campuses. I’d hope members opposite would support that, but sadly, no.

Speaker, I’m really interested in the measures the minister has taken that haven’t resulted in an increase in tuition. I think the only party in this Legislature that isn’t doing this on the backs of students—and I’m wondering if she could shed a little more light on that and how it’s really putting a little more money back in the pockets of students.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the Minister of Labour for that important question.

And he would know—because you were a PA back in 2018, when our party came into government and Ontario had the highest tuition in all of Canada. And under the leadership of Premier Ford, we decreased that tuition by 10% and have continued to freeze it every year since.

Life is expensive—expensive for all families. We have a cost-of-living crisis, and the thought of increasing tuition for students was absolutely ridiculous. This was not something that we were going to do, and the Premier was quite clear about that.

We've heard from the leader of the Liberal Party. She's interested in increasing tuition. I'm not quite sure where the NDP stand on it, but we've made an investment in our institutions, and we're going to work with our institutions to ensure that they're running as efficiently as possible. We're already doing some great work and some great collaboration that's happening with our institutions, and I look forward to continuing that work moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The minister will know that it's not just the coalition; it's the Council of Ontario Universities, who, of the 23 universities—an umbrella group. They've raised concerns about the powers that the bill gives to the minister and the risk that it would undermine their autonomy. Universities already have mental health and anti-racism policies in place, but provincial funding for those programs is inadequate. This is what they told you at committee. They also went on to talk about the powers that you've given yourself—sweeping, strong powers. They say that this power moves against them, colleges and universities who don't comply with your directives.

Now, our critic asked you in committee, what are the consequences if universities and colleges do not comply with your sweeping powers and your directives? What is the consequence to those colleges and universities? Because this is not the way that you negotiate with universities in Ontario.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: What I find concerning is the voices that we also heard at committee. Samantha Kline, an OCAD student: "My grades have declined immensely. I find myself—instead of creating things that I want to be making, I'm creating things just to get by and essentially paying for a degree where I'm not learning anything. I can't focus in my classes. I look around, and I see people that have just been hating on me online or have talked about me with professors. It's hard for me to concentrate. I can't even walk into school without having a panic attack."

These are the students that I'm concerned about, the stories that I've heard about, but we're going to work with our colleges and universities to ensure that we have an anti-hate policy in place to protect all of our students across this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is my great privilege to serve as the critic for colleges and universities for the official opposition. I am pleased to rise today to participate in third reading debate on Bill 166.

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I have shared before that prior to my election in this place, I was a policy researcher. So third reading debate always is something that I particularly enjoy, because it speaks to the researcher in me. You get to go to committee and conduct key informant interviews with the deputants who appear before the MPPs. In this case, there were 33 deputations. You collect very rich qualitative data on

perspectives on the government's bill, and you amass evidence that you can use to inform policy.

Clearly, the government does not share my interest in evidence-based policy-making. They appear not to have listened at all, or they've listened to a few of the voices that appeared before committee but ignored many of the deputants, in particular the deputations that were made by key stakeholders in the post-secondary sector: the Council of Ontario Universities, Colleges Ontario, Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, CUPE, OPSEU, OCUFA. These were all organizations that are deeply embedded in the sector and that raised some very legitimate concerns about this bill.

That was helpful to us in the official opposition in determining how we were going to vote on this bill at third reading, because we certainly did support it at second. We wanted to hear what people had to say. We listened to what people had to say, and we presented a series of amendments to address the concerns that were raised, to fix the bill, to make sure that it actually does address the very serious concerns that people raised with us—students in particular—about the lack of support for student mental health on campuses and the lack of appropriate institutional response to incidents of racism and hate.

I just want to begin with some reflections on that committee process overall and what we heard from the deputants who appeared before us. There was certainly a very strong recognition of the need for increased mental health supports for students. There was a strong urging of the committee, of the government, to ensure that there were increased efforts, more effective efforts to respond to reports of incidents and hate on campus.

We heard from individual students who were unacceptably failed by their institution when they went to report the anti-Semitism that they had experienced on campus. We heard from organizations like the National Council of Canadian Muslims how Muslim students on campus and Palestinian students on campus are also experiencing increased racism and hate. They also have concerns about the effectiveness of administrative responses to these reports.

The third piece of the bill, the requirement for institutions to provide some financial transparency about the ancillary fees of attending post-secondary institutions: There were very few deputants who spoke to that piece of the bill; obviously, that makes sense. We on this side of the House agree with the government that at a time of rising cost of living, students should not have to bear the cost of increased tuition. But unlike the government, we believe that the government should not just say to institutions, "We're going to remove any possibility to increase tuition fees and institutions will have to figure it out." We have said that the government has to come forward and ensure that there are public resources provided to institutions to replace the lost tuition revenues.

We also heard at committee from many of the deputants that the mental health supports that are provided on campus have to be culturally responsive. They have to be informed by the lived experience of marginalized com-

munities. One of the examples that was shared with us was the student from the McMaster Students Union about the Black Student Success Centre on that campus.

We also heard from a number of the deputants that policies to support student mental health needs and policies to address racism and hate on campus already exist. So the question was raised, why not improve—strengthen—those existing policies? Why bring forward a bill that now says that these new policies have to be implemented on campus, dictated by the minister? Why not look at the policies that are already there that have been developed through a broad process of consultation and collaboration and that speak to the specific realities of each individual institution?

We heard very much about the importance of consultation. As I said at the outset, there was no consultation with post-secondary stakeholder organizations. We heard some references to what sounded very much like informal visits to campuses, where the parliamentary assistant had spoken to small groups of students. There was no report provided from those visits. We don't know how many campuses were visited, how many students were talked to, but we do know that no formal consultation took place with any of the major post-secondary education stakeholders.

We heard about the importance of involving local communities. Certainly, in terms of students' mental health, universities and colleges have stepped up to provide these services for students because of the pressures on community mental health services. Universities and colleges are already committing significant resources to supporting students' mental health needs because they understand that resources in the community are so limited. But it really does speak to the importance of involving communities who understand the different supports that are in place, how the system works together and that will be very specific to the locations where these campuses exist.

We heard about the need to involve the people who are most directly affected by these policies in their development and implementation. Those people are students. It's faculty. It's staff. It's community. It's experts. Those are the people who should be involved in developing the policies that are now required by Bill 166 and yet the legislation doesn't mention the word "consultation" at all.

If you read the legislation on its surface it says that the minister is going to unilaterally dictate the contents of these new policies on mental health and on racism and hate, and there's no guarantee whatsoever that any kind of consultation with local campus communities will take place.

Many people raised concerns about the unprecedented nature of the ministerial directives that are imposed by this bill. As I said, the legislation gives the minister the power to say to a college or university, "Thou shalt have a policy and it shall contain these elements, these topics, these pieces of content." That is a huge concern for institutional autonomy, but in particular in the university sector, for university self-governance. The principle of university autonomy, university self-governance, is established through legislation. Each university in this province exists by

virtue of a specific university act, and that delegates governance to a board of governors and a senate, and it empowers individual universities to make their own governance decisions. This bill represents an unprecedented challenge to that long-established principle of the independence of our universities in this province.

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Hearing the delegations from the people, organizations and individuals who appeared before the committee, the NDP members on the committee tried to move amendments to address some of these legitimate concerns that were raised. We put forward a number of amendments specifically around legislating a requirement to have a broad consultation process involved in the development of policies, to remove the minister's power to issue ministerial directives, to have a transparent process through order in council, which is what had happened when the previous Liberal government mandated post-secondary institutions to have sexual violence and harassment policies.

When the previous Liberal government had made this requirement for sexual violence and harassment policies on campus, they brought forward the elements of those policies through order in council and they mandated a broad process of consultation to inform each campus' policy. That, we heard from several of the deputants who appeared before the committee, was viewed as a very constructive process that resulted in good policy.

I just wanted to speak a little bit about what we heard about the need to have good policy, the need to have policy that really does address the growing mental health needs of students in our post-secondary institutions and the rising reports of incidents of racism and hate on our campuses.

We heard that the mental health needs of students are becoming much more complex than they were in the past. Instead of being episodic, they have now become sustained throughout the year and, as I said, much more complex than in the past. They talked about the fact that, as I mentioned, the gaps in community-based resources mean that the pressures on campus mental health services are even greater and that increases the demands on our university campuses.

We heard about long wait times. Some students can wait six months before seeing a mental health counsellor, depending on the kind of counselling that they were seeking. It's also depending on whether specialized care was needed, what kind of support you need, how often you need it, etc.

Other barriers that created delays in enabling students to access services on campus related to accessibility because campuses are also dealing with issues around pressure on accessibility services, as well.

We heard about staffing of campus mental health services, where positions are short-term; they're not able to become full-time positions so that there is a full-time counsellor who's there to provide the support. They may be funded for a very limited period, and as soon as that staff contract ends, the service ends, as well.

One of the presentations, I think, that had a particular impact on me—and I certainly hope that the government listened carefully to this presentation—was the presentation from the Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health. That centre, Speaker, is a very unique partnership funded by the government of Ontario, but it is a partnership between Colleges Ontario, the Council of Ontario Universities, the College Student Alliance, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance and the Canadian Mental Health Association. The experts from the Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health understand what is happening on our post-secondary campuses related to student mental health concerns.

They cited a report from the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations that found three quarters of students reported experiencing—three quarters, Speaker—negative mental health in their studies, and in particular, Indigenous students, low-income students and 2SLGBTQ+ students were most at risk.

They also talked, however, about the fact that most, if not all, college and university campuses in Ontario already have student mental health policies. What these campuses are really grappling with is the lack of resources to adequately deliver student mental health services. I'm going to quote from the presentation. They said, "The issue is the acute need for stable and ongoing funding for the work that must be done to put policies" in place. "A further concern is that the creation of mental health policies ... with no funding will consume resources and provide no real value to campus well-being."

Ms. Catherine Fife: More red tape.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes. And they refer to a report that was done by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. This report was actually commissioned by the Minister of Colleges and Universities, and it was delivered to her desk in January 2024. It was a review of student mental health in Ontario, exploring best practices and identifying gaps. In that report, the findings of the report, the first finding of the report is that "structural and systemic forces ... make it challenging for institutions to implement programs, hire staff and plan comprehensively for the long term." So, institutions' ability to respond to increased service demands is limited by some of these structural factors, and one of their key recommendations was to "increase ... funding to help institutions address the growth in demand for services and increasing complexity of need."

Now, this was research that was conducted by HEQCO. It took a very comprehensive look at mental health policies on post-secondary campuses, and nowhere in this report did the researchers say that what they were hearing is that the problem is that there are no policies in place. They very, very clearly heard that the problem is that there are policies but there is no funding. Again, I want to share some of the findings:

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"Despite these investments, the systems in place to support students are struggling to keep up. Demand is outstripping the supply of available resources; institutions

experience the dual challenges of ensuring adequate access to supports while experiencing increased need."

So it would have been nice if the minister had reviewed this report when she received it in January 2024, and had held back on this decision to mandate, to dictate, a student mental health policy in this legislation, because we know that these policies already exist in our post-secondary institutions. It's not an absence of policy; it is an absence of resources that is increasing the pressures on our post-secondary campuses.

I also wanted to talk about—and I mentioned this already—how the staffing for mental health services is very challenging. The roles that many of these staff fill are short-term, they are precarious, and that creates an ongoing turnover of staff and a massive level of burnout because of the caseloads that these staff are dealing with.

The challenges in delivering mental health services on campus also mean that campuses are limited in their ability to provide the culturally responsive mental health supports that are so important for young people on our campuses. We heard many of the deputants talk about the fundamental importance of culturally responsive mental health supports, including a deputant who works with Palestinian youth in particular. She talked about the need for culturally responsive trained mental health experts, as well as one of the Jewish students who came to speak to the committee. She said it's paramount that professionals on campus are at the very least adequately trained on working with various student populations at the minimum. So culturally responsive supports on campus are critical, and yet, universities and colleges are challenged to provide those supports because of the lack of funding.

I now want to talk a little bit about the second major element of this bill, which is the requirement for colleges and universities to have an anti-racism and hate policy. As I said at the outset, there's no disagreement that there is a need to strengthen post-secondary responses to racism and hate on campus. One of the pieces of information that was shared with the committee was from Hillel Ontario. They said they've had nine times more reports of anti-Semitism on campus within the last academic year. NCCM said that they had tracked a 900% increase in Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism on campus in the last year. So we do need to make sure that post-secondary institutions can respond to these increased incidents of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, as well as the other kinds of racism and hate that we have heard about on our post-secondary campuses.

At the University of Waterloo, in June 2023, there was a gender studies professor and two students who were attacked right on campus in—

Ms. Catherine Fife: In class.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes, in class. In Queen's University in 2019, there was a Pride flag stolen and death threats.

So, yes, there is a need to strengthen these services on campus. But again, the big question is, does it require a new ministerial directive for a new policy to be put in place that will be dictated by the minister? I would say that

we heard from many of the deputants that the answer to that question is no, that what is needed, again, is funding to support the education, the training, the efforts that are already under way on our college and university campuses to deal with racism and hate, because our post-secondary campuses in this province have to be places where people feel safe, but where they feel that they can freely express their opinions on issues so long as it does not cross the line and become hateful.

We do know, as the minister said, that many students are not reporting racism and hate on campus because they feel that there won't be an adequate response. But what you need to be able to respond adequately is staff. You need fully staffed and funded equity and diversity offices to do the follow-up that's necessary and to engage in that broad-base campus training to improve safety of our campuses and make sure that all students feel safe.

Again, just as with the mental health policy, what we heard from the people who appeared before the committee was not that colleges and universities lack racism and hate policies, it's that they lack the funding to appropriately deliver these policies that will support students.

What happens when you don't have that adequate funding? I want to share a couple of quotes from deputants who appeared before the committee. One said, "Our equity, diversity, inclusion and justice offices are just as depleted as the mental health units in this sector. For example, having two EDI staff in a campus with a student population of 20,000 students is equivalent to treating a deep wound with a Band-Aid and no antibiotic cream."

You have to appropriately fund the offices that have the expertise to respond to racism and hate as systemic problems and do that hard work of dismantling racism and hate if you are going to adequately protect students.

Here's what another deputant said: "There's a massive funding issue at post-secondary institutions right now, and we keep saying it over and over again. We have equity offices that are willing to do this work, that want to do this work. Our group has spoken with people who do this work on campuses, and they are dramatically underfunded. They want to get the word out. They want to hire experts, people who are specifically trained in culturally specific mental health supports. They want permanent employees who can do this work, and they don't have the funds."

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We heard from the National Council of Canadian Muslims, the NCCM, as well as from some of the B'nai Brith and CIJA and the other organizations that appeared before the committee about the importance of faith-based supports for students. What NCCM said is that there are a growing number of faith-based supports on campus, but he pointed out that these people may start doing these services based on the initial funds raised—he was referring to trained Muslim psychotherapists who have both a faith identity and a track record of serving the Muslim community. But he said they could "start doing those services based on the initial funds raised, but if their services get interrupted, which often has happened, it's one step forward, two steps back—there are so many

students who are left in more difficulty than when they started, because of the interruption of those services.

"There needs to be a long-term strategic investment in this area, in mental health supports broadly, and to also have wide consultation with various faith-based communities...."

Speaker, when this legislation was announced, the government also announced a funding package to accompany it. That funding package included a total of \$23 million to enhance mental health supports, but of that \$23 million only \$8 million was allocated to the post-secondary mental health action plan, and that was over a period of three years. So you've got \$8 million over three years for direct support for the post-secondary mental health action plan, which when you do the math, means \$2.7 million per year for the post-secondary mental health action plan, which means \$57,000 for each of the 47 colleges and universities in this province in direct student supports.

So, in the face of everything they know about the underfunding of mental health supports based on the current levels of funding that are provided, this government made the decision that they're going to mandate this new policy and they're going to give every college and university about \$57,000 per year in direct student support to improve campus mental health services. I asked people who appeared before committee: Do you think that's going to make a difference on your campus? Every time I asked that question, they said, "Absolutely not, absolutely not." In the face of the kinds of pressures that are experienced on our campuses, that's a drop in the bucket.

Now, on the racism and hate policy, with the government's funding announcement that went along with this bill, there were no additional dollars for implementation. And we know that moving forward with a new policy, training people on a new policy, implementing a new policy requires significant dollars. Yet as our universities and colleges are in the midst of the most serious financial crisis that we have ever seen in this province—they are literally on the brink—this government decided to mandate this new policy for anti-racism and hate, which replicates policies that already exist, and to provide no additional funding.

I just wanted to go a little bit deeper into the financial context that our post-secondary sector finds itself in right now. For the last four decades, Ontario has been at the bottom of the list in terms of per student funding that is allocated by each of our provinces in Ontario. Since this government came to power in 2018, it has gotten worse; it has literally brought our post-secondary institutions to a state of such crisis that the government had to strike a blue-ribbon panel to look at how to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector, because there are very serious questions about whether our colleges and universities are going to be able to survive in this fiscal environment. That blue-ribbon panel came up with a recommendation that what this sector needed was \$2.5 billion in permanent base funding just to keep the sector afloat. And that, Speaker, was before the federal government announced its cap on

international study permits, which has generated another huge financial hit for our colleges and universities in Ontario because this government was quite happy to see colleges and universities actively solicit international students because they brought with them much greater tuition dollars and it took the government off the hook. It let the government avoid its responsibility to publicly fund our institutions.

We know from the government's budget this year that the impact of the federal government cap on international study permits on the college sector is going to be \$3 billion—an additional \$3-billion revenue loss over the next three years. We don't know the total revenue loss that universities are going to face because of different kinds of reporting, but we do know that in the college sector, for those 24 colleges, they're looking at the removal of \$3 billion in revenue.

What we're seeing are program cuts across the board, and I am positive that we are going to be hearing more and more about program cuts in every community in the province. This morning, I asked about Fleming College in Peterborough, which just announced that it was slashing 29 programs because of the loss of international-student tuition dollars. That's more than one in five programs in that college. Queen's University said that they are cutting programs in arts and sciences. University of Guelph said that they are cutting 16 programs; 10 of them in the science field. This is because of the very real financial pressures that institutions are facing.

The implications of those pressures are felt by students because the institutions have to cut programs, they have to cut staff; oftentimes they do that by not filling vacancies, by not replacing retirements, by moving to short-term contracts instead of permanent positions. In fact, when OPSEU appeared before the committee, they told us that in 2021-22, there were 231 full-time counsellors employed in the college sector. That was a 5% reduction from the total number of full-time counsellors that was reported the year this government was elected in 2018-19. So at a time when student needs are increasing, the number of full-time counsellors available in our post-secondary institutions is decreasing because of the very serious fiscal crisis that our institutions are facing.

Speaker, as I said, the big question for me, the big question not for the government members on the committee—although hopefully they were thinking about this—was, since these policies already exist in most if not all of our institutions, what can we do to strengthen them? Can we use this legislation to improve the student mental health services and anti-racism-and-hate services on campus? We felt yes, there is an opportunity to use this bill to strengthen those services, but you have to make sure that the policies that are mandated by the legislation are going to be effective. And how do you do that, Speaker? You require a broad process of engagement. You talk to students; you talk to faculty; you talk to staff; you talk to the people in the community about how best to support students' mental health needs and how best to address racism and hate on campus.

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Actually, I'm going to quote here from the Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health. She said, "For a mental health policy to be truly effective, there has to be significant consultation on that campus. It can take a year to two years for a mental health policy that truly embodies the needs of that school to ... come into fruition." And she pointed out that, when you have that fulsome consultation process that leads to effective policy, there are costs involved in developing the policy and then additional costs in implementing the policy. But this government has refused to make the investments that the sector requires.

Again, we had other deputants who said—

Interjection.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: That's right.

This one was about the racism and hate policies. She said, "These policies work best ... when they actually come from the different communities that" are involved, "when they are organic and come up through the different governance structures." She pointed out that when you engage people in the policies, they "have more buy-in," which means the policies are much more likely to be effective. And that's the big problem with this ministerial directive, with this unilateral dictate about what has to happen on our campuses and what has to be in the policy.

Not only is the legislation silent on any process of consultation at the local level with individual colleges and universities, but as I highlighted earlier, there was absolutely zero consultation with the sector about this legislation overall. So when you think about OPSEU, they represent 45,000 workers at 24 colleges and 16 universities; CUPE represents 30,000 university sector workers; the Council of Canadian Universities represents 23 public universities; Colleges Ontario represents 24 public colleges; OCUFA represents 18,000 faculty, academic librarians and academic professionals. OUSA, the College Student Alliance—these are organizations that are the voices of students across the province, and yet none of them—none of those organizations—had any kind of conversation with the ministry in advance of this bill coming forward. None of them were asked, "What do you think? Is this a good idea to impose new policy requirements on our post-secondary institutions?"

Another concern about this unilateral approach, this dictating of policy through ministerial directive—with, I might add, no information about what consequences will be imposed if the minister deems that a college or university has not adequately complied with the ministerial directive. There are lots of concerns about what the consequences are, and kudos to the students from OUSA and a number of student unions who appeared before the committee, because one of the recommendations they made was that the consequences should not ever involve withholding funding because it is entirely counterproductive when you have students in crisis on our campuses who can't access mental health services, who don't feel supported when they experience racism and hate because of the lack of resources on those campuses. It is entirely counterproductive to then withhold resources.

The minister, when I asked her what the consequences are, sidestepped the question, wouldn't give me a response. We moved an amendment to remove the minister's ability to impose financial penalties on institutions, but of course the government voted that down.

The problem with ministerial directives is really around the lack of transparency. That's why, as I said earlier, I referred to the model of the order-in-council process, a regulatory process to generate the policy requirements that were in place with the sexual violence and harassment policies that were mandated on campuses. That was the benefit of doing an order in council, because at least there is some kind of public process. Draft regulations are posted publicly. There is an input period. It would provide at least a little bit of transparency into what the minister is going to be requiring in these policies. That was a recommendation, certainly, of the Council of Ontario Universities. But unfortunately, when we introduced an amendment to provide that kind of transparency, the government voted it down.

The other big problem—and I did mention this earlier—when you have ministerial directives dictating policy is that it undermines the institutional autonomy of both colleges and universities. But in the university sector in particular, it undermines the legislated self-governance of universities and the importance of ensuring that our post-secondary institutions, our universities, are free from political interference.

In particular, I want to acknowledge the Coalition Against Political Interference in Public Research and Education as well as the Invest in Post-Secondary Education Inter-University Coalition for their submissions to the committee, because they emphasized that the independence and integrity of academic research and education is recognized internationally as a cornerstone of democracy. We should be doing everything we can to maintain that independence and that freedom from political interference of our post-secondary institutions and not allow this overreach by the government to move forward, which is what we see in Bill 166.

It was interesting, Speaker, back on April 19, when the Premier addressed a media conference and told the reporters who were there that he personally thinks that the government should not get involved in affairs of university governance, he said, "It's really up to the dean to govern his"—he didn't say this—or her "own university." He said, "I think we shouldn't get involved in that." Even the Premier recognized the inappropriateness of using government legislation to interfere with the autonomy and the independence of our universities in this province.

I want to quote from one of the deputants who talked about the consequences of allowing the government to start determining what universities are going to do or what universities are going to say. What happens when the government is pulling the strings at our academic institutions is that the research that comes out of those institutions can no longer be trusted, because is the research being directed by the government because they want to achieve a specific end, or is it truly independent research

that has integrity and trustworthiness that we can use to advance the public interest? There's a big concern when you start interfering with institutional autonomy, and in particular when you challenge the legislated framework in which universities in this province exist.

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This was an enlightening quote from Fred Hahn from CUPE, who pointed out that not only does this result in bad policy, but it also represents a degree of political interference that, quite frankly, no matter who was sitting in government, no matter which party of which political stripe, no politician should be able to dictate these kinds of policies at academic institutions in our province. It opens the door to whoever is in government, whoever is the minister of the day, setting out in dictates how hate and racism should be defined and how mental health should be addressed on—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Stop the clock. The House will come to order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Niagara Falls will come to order. The Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development will come to order.

The member from London West has the floor and I ask her to resume. Start the clock.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much, Speaker. There are very real concerns about allowing any minister, any party, to dictate contents of such vital policies, to define what constitutes racism and hate on Ontario campuses. It should not be allowed. The government shouldn't be going in that direction, challenging institutional independence and undermining the legislative framework in which our universities exist.

There were also concerns raised about freedom of expression on campus and what kinds of protections will be put in place to ensure that freedom of expression is not restricted by whatever policy the minister decides to put in place.

There were concerns about possible conflicts between the policy that's dictated by the government and the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, because there has been some debate about if the charter applies on campuses. In Alberta, there was a court decision that said, "Yes, the charter does apply on those campuses." That's one of the reasons that we brought forward an amendment to specify that the charter of rights has to apply with the policy that the government is bringing forward.

Going back to what we heard from people who appeared before the committee about what a better approach would be to strengthen institutional responses to racism and hate on campuses, they talked about widespread, funded anti-discrimination training, cultural competency programs, reporting mechanisms. All the while, they emphasized the critical importance of involving marginalized voices in the development of any policy that is implemented.

I want to now talk a little bit in my remaining time about some of the amendments that we brought forward and, in particular, Speaker, in the context of today, as we watch the devastation—the humanitarian catastrophe—that is continuing to unfold in Gaza. As we see students across the province who are calling for an end to the violence, we moved an amendment that anti-Palestinian racism be explicitly included in the bill.

Some of us in this chamber will remember, back in 2017, the Liberal government of the day brought in the Anti-Racism Act. Initially, the Liberal government's legislation referred only to anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and other forms of racism. But there was all-party consensus—given the circumstances of the time, given the passion that members brought to the debate on that bill—about the need to name anti-Semitism, the need to name anti-Islamophobia. There was agreement across party lines that the bill would be amended to do just that: to talk about those four forms of hate—anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism.

And this is five years later, after the Anti-Racism Act was passed in 2017. We are at a time when circumstances are demanding that we name anti-Palestinian racism. This was brought to the committee by several of the deputants who talked about the importance of naming anti-Palestinian racism. The deputant from NCCM talked about anti-Palestinian racism as, “The dehumanization and denial of the equal dignity of Palestinian people.”

Nothing would be lost, Speaker, by acknowledging this form of hate and racism that is being increasingly experienced across this province. But the government voted down our amendments to include anti-Palestinian racism.

We also included, as I think I had mentioned earlier, a requirement for consultation to take place with students, educators, staff members, experts, community members on the development of a student mental health policy as well as the anti-racism-and-hate policy.

We moved an amendment, as I said, to increase the transparency around the policy that the minister is going to bring forward by requiring regulations through the Lieutenant Governor in Council about the process for policy development, what kind of training is going to be provided etc., and again the government voted that one down as well. They're quite happy to have the minister dictating behind closed doors, determining what's going to be in these policies with no transparency and no involvement of those who are directly affected.

We moved an amendment to ensure that the legislation complies with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We moved an amendment to ensure that the policies are reviewed regularly, every two years, to ensure that they respond to the changing needs of campuses in this province.

Unfortunately, Speaker, every single one of our many amendments was voted down by this government. As a result, we can't support this bill. We cannot support this bill because it ignores the presentations that were made to the committee about what a government that was serious

about supporting the mental health needs of students on our post-secondary campuses would do. It ignored the feedback that we heard about what is needed to actually respond in a meaningful way to incidents of racism and hate on campus. As I said, what that involved, most of all, is funding. It's funding to do the training, it's funding to hire the staff, it's funding to deliver the services, and this bill came with no additional commitment of resources except for that \$57,000 per institution for mental health—nothing for anti-racism and hate, and we can't support this bill in the third reading vote.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): It's time for questions. Questions?

Mr. Mike Harris: I wanted to follow up to the member opposite with a similar question that I asked to the Minister of Colleges and Universities and that is, in this bill, it does prescribe and set out some regulations in regard to what costing looks like for fees for students.

And like I had mentioned, I've got my oldest son going off to college, and it's been interesting to see how the fee breakdown works when it comes to textbooks, when it comes to tools that are required, tuition, residence fees, different things like that. So I know that this does hopefully help clarify some things for students, parents, caregivers.

I just wanted to get some of your thoughts on that.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thanks to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga for that question. Interestingly, the committee heard almost nothing about that aspect of this legislation. Because it makes sense. It does make sense. Students need more financial transparency.

But one of the interesting things that we did hear from a number of the students is the stress that financial pressures create and the impact on their mental health when they worry about being able to find housing, about food insecurity, about keeping up with the rising cost of living.

So yes, they need transparency in terms of knowing how much those costs are going to be. They need tuition that is affordable, but they also need access to student financial aid that will help them attend colleges and universities in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the member for her hour lead on this manner. In a previous life, prior to my time here, I was a university professor, and I can definitely say, one of the more challenging things, as the member detailed, is the necessity for us to make sure that campuses are welcoming environments where a conflict of views can be heard but people feel safe at the same time. It's not an easy balance to walk.

What I worry about in Bill 166, and I'd like the member to elaborate based upon what she said, is that we don't seem to be putting a lot of faith in colleges and universities to be able to do that.

Given the real and present dangers, some of which the members talked about, where many students, many

faculty, many staff at our post-secondary education campuses do not feel safe, do not feel like they have the ability to express themselves without undue censorship, without undue ability to have that foreclosed, what was the advice you heard at the committee stage to make sure that this government could put faith in the campuses so we could set up those learning environments where we encourage the conflict of ideas but not the conflict of people?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to my colleague the member for Ottawa Centre for that question. One of the quotes that I shared earlier in my speech was also from a professor who talked about the fact that there are two equity and diversity office staff people on a campus with 20,000 students. So staffing an office—when you have only two staff people, full-time staff people, to deal with 20,000 students, it's not the way to ensure that students who are experiencing racism and hate on campus have the appropriate response, have the appropriate follow-up to the concerns that they raise.

It's not the way to conduct the anti-discrimination training that has to take place across campuses. So we need to provide the resources. We need to involve those who are living this on a daily basis in developing an appropriate policy response and then implementing it—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you. Next question.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate hearing the member opposite participate in the debate this afternoon. I have, perhaps, a little bit of a unique privilege: I'm still a part-time student at the McMaster University in Hamilton, and so I have the opportunity regularly to be on campus at McMaster University and speak with students about the challenges that they are experiencing and also the opportunities that they see here in Ontario. I'll be done that journey pretty soon in just a couple of months' time. I'm looking forward to graduating and earning that degree.

But I'll tell you, it's a stressful time for many students. I know I hear from students about the challenges when it comes to mental health and the lack of awareness that they sometimes have or a lack of resources that are readily available to them that they're aware of. They might not know where exactly to go to access services even if those services are there.

So I'm wondering if the member opposite agrees with the portions of the bill that lay out expectations for universities and for other post-secondary institutions to provide greater transparency and also access to those services and create policies that reflect the need that we see, not just on campuses, but across all parts of this province.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to the member for Niagara West for that question. What we did hear at committee, especially around the part of the bill that deals with student mental health policy, is that there are policies. These policies already exist. These policies were developed through a long process of engagement and consultation on local communities. The issue is not the lack of policy; the issue is the lack of resources. So additional resources to operationalize policies to deliver mental health supports

for students is what is really going to make a difference on our college and university campuses.

Having the minister unilaterally dictate the contents and topics of mental health policies on campus is not going to support the students who don't know where to go, often because those services are so understaffed that they don't have the staff to run them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch to the member for that presentation. I know the government says the intent of the legislation is to ensure safety and support for post-secondary students. A growing group of professors say that the bill undermines the independence of Ontario's universities. For example, "Bill 166 fundamentally changes the way universities in this province are governed, moving us away from democratic principles of university autonomy," said Sue Ferguson, associate professor emerita at Wilfrid Laurier University.

What do you make of this strong opposition to Bill 166? Instead of advancing student mental health and anti-racism on campuses, this bill stymies both and opens the door to a degree of political interference that would shatter the integrity of Ontario's post-secondary institutions.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to my colleague the member for Kiiwetinoong for that question. There are a lot of problems with this bill, not the least of which is the fact that it allows the minister to unilaterally dictate what kinds of policies regarding student mental health and racism and hate are to be implemented in our post-secondary institutions. One of the fundamental issues with doing that is that it does undermine the academic freedom that has been a foundational principle of our democracy and, in fact, in the case of the university sector, is enshrined through legislation. Each university has its own university act that guarantees that it is governed by a board of governors and a senate so it has the autonomy and the independence to make its own decisions, free from political interference.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member from London West for that lengthy presentation. I enjoyed your presentation, but I have a question for you.

At committee, we heard from a number of students who reported incidents of discrimination to their institution, only for no recourse to be taken. There, you also heard one of the members opposite call the anti-hate provision of Bill 166 "unnecessary red tape." So will the member vote so that the incidents of hate are dealt with in a consistent manner, or are they of opinion that ensuring the safety of all students is an unnecessary bureaucratic burden?

1550

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Quick response?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the question from the member for Markham-Thornhill. The testimony that we heard from those students was very powerful. It was very difficult to hear, and it is entirely, completely unacceptable

that they have those experiences on our campuses and don't get an appropriate institutional response.

The difference between your side of the House and our side of the House is that we don't think this legislation is the way to improve things. We need to appropriately fund anti-racism and anti-hate initiatives on campus to ensure that students get the support and the response that they deserve when they experience racism or hate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: It's an honour to rise on behalf of the government to speak to Bill 166, as the parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, to discuss the significance this bill holds and the implications for our colleges and universities across the province.

As Minister Dunlop stated earlier, Ontario's post-secondary institutions draw some of the most talented students globally. This positive momentum doesn't just benefit students; it also generates local employment opportunities and drives economic development across the province. Bill 166 is not just a significant move toward protecting the well-being of students and promoting inclusivity within our post-secondary institutions. It's a crucial step in ensuring the overall well-being of our entire province.

All across Ontario, I see a diverse mix of people from various cultural backgrounds, with different political beliefs and varying levels of education. Despite these differences, what we hold dear and what we stand for is crucial. Our values shaped by our backgrounds and experience play a significant role in defining who we are as individuals and how we navigate the world around us.

In Ontario's diverse landscape, this variety of perspectives and beliefs enriches our communities and contributes to our collective growth. It's through this diversity that we learn from one another, broaden our understanding and foster a sense of unity amongst our differences. Each person's unique perspective adds depth to the fabric of Ontario's society, creating a tapestry of experiences and values that make our province vibrant and dynamic.

These amendments that we're going to be discussing here today are not only bureaucratic procedures, they are a symbol of support for our students and their communities at large. At its core, this legislation is about mental health, anti-hate and fee-transparency policies on all public colleges and universities. By creating these standards and reporting mechanism, Bill 166, if passed, will ensure that every student in Ontario receives the support they need to succeed regardless of their background.

Bill 166 not only stands for but promotes a culture of inclusivity, equality across the post-secondary education sector, reinforcing that every student is valued and has the opportunity to thrive. And in turn, Ontario thrives.

Speaker, recent events have underscored the urgent need for this legislation. The tensions arising from overseas have reverberated onto our campuses, breeding discrimination, anti-Semitism, anti-Palestinian racism, anti-Arab racism, Islamophobia and other forms of hate.

Incidents like these have spread across to institutions across Ontario, leaving many students feeling unsafe and marginalized. While commendable efforts have been made by post-secondary institutions to address these issues, it has become clear that more proactive and comprehensive approaches are necessary. Our government denounces all forms of hate and discrimination, affirming that they have no place on post-secondary campuses.

Speaker, the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, 2024, embodies our commitment to combating hate and ensuring that the safety and dignity of every student is looked after. Our legislation mandates that every college and university must have policies and rules specifically designed to address and combat racism and hate. Encompassing areas such as, but not limited to, anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. These amendments signify—"signify"? I can't even say it—a firm stance against discrimination and harassment, establishing a framework that promotes accountability and support for those affected.

We recognize that a healthy and respectful campus environment is essential for our students' success. No student should ever feel marginalized or threatened while pursuing their education, and it's our collective responsibility to uphold principles of inclusivity and tolerance, nurturing an environment where everybody can succeed.

Speaker, throughout our committee deliberations with students and faculty, we have been confronted with distressing accounts of hateful acts occurring on campuses. These incidents—that I know we all have seen through social media and the news—highlight not only the need but the urgency for action. These students' experiences are evidence that we cannot stand idly while they live in fear.

If passed, the implementation of Bill 166 will ensure the adoption of comprehensive policies, transparent reporting mechanisms and swift responses to anti-hate-related incidents. We believe that Ontario's colleges and universities should be places where people can freely share their thoughts, ideas and knowledge and freely be able to study and grow as they start their journey in Ontario. While we believe that post-secondary institutions should be an environment where diverse viewpoints are welcomed and valued, Bill 166 reinforces our dedication to cultivating a learning atmosphere that nurtures growth and development by bolstering measures against hate speech, discrimination and in alignment with free speech policies of post-secondary institutions.

Speaker, Bill 166 helps further empower our educational institutions to intervene decisively and support those affected by hate and discrimination. It provides a framework for transparent reporting and investigation, ensuring that justice is served and that the perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.

I also want to note that we're not overlooking the work already being done by many of our colleges and universities, as Bill 166 is not intended to undermine these efforts, but rather to complement them, fostering consistency and clarity in our approach to student well-being.

Bill 166 embodies our unwavering dedication to fostering inclusive and welcoming campuses where every student can flourish without fear or prejudice.

Madam Speaker, this bill will serve as a tool against hate as it also stands as a beacon of support for the mental health of Ontario's post-secondary students. Our government is making historic investments across Ontario, including mental health services within our post-secondary institutions. We're committed to safeguarding the accessibility and availability of these mental health supports that colleges and universities have to offer.

Just this year, our government has dedicated \$32 million to enhance mental health supports for post-secondary students throughout Ontario. This funding will enhance on-campus mental health services catering to the diverse and challenging needs of our student population. Whether it be specialized supports for vulnerable demographics, peer-to-peer networks fostering solidarity and understanding, or mindfulness and resiliency programs nurturing emotional fortitude, the grant ensures that no student is left behind in their journey towards wellness.

We firmly believe in the importance of mental health resources. That's why our government has undertaken initiatives such as the Mental Health Worker Grant, which serves as a vital resource facilitating the hiring of diverse mental health professionals within post-secondary institutions. From experienced counsellors and compassionate social workers to caring nurses and diligent care coordinators, these dedicated individuals are prepared to address the complex array of student mental health needs with empathy, skill and commitment. In 2023, over 160 positions were filled thanks to the Mental Health Worker Grant, resulting in noticeable reductions in wait times for students and easing the pressure on campus services.

Speaker, we also recognize the significant contributions of our international students, who enrich our campuses with their diverse perspectives, talents and resilience. It's important that we ensure they have access to the mental health support they need to thrive academically, culturally and personally.

Our government's investments are focused on offering a wide range of support services, including virtual options like Get A-Head and Good2Talk, which provide support to students in distress 24/7, 365 days out of the year. However, we also value the importance of on-campus resources where counsellors provide personalized support and guidance to our students.

Despite our progress, disparities in mental health resources persist among different institutions. It's concerning that some students factor in the institution-specific mental health supports and specialties when deciding where to study. This shouldn't be a deciding factor and it's up to us to tackle this disparity.

1600

If enacted, Bill 166 will create uniform mental health policies throughout the post-secondary education sector. This legislation would ensure that all students, regardless of their location, have access to basic support at their chosen institution. By requiring the publication of policies

and resources online and setting standards for compassionate leave, we aim to create a more fair, inclusive and supportive educational environment.

It's important to emphasize that any directive would be built off best practices and from feedback from the sector—much we have already received through weeks of consultation with the sector. Together, we can ensure that every student in Ontario receives the support they deserve to flourish academically and personally. Speaker, when talking about mental health, it's crucial to address one of the paramount issues that affect our post-secondary students.

I'd also like to talk about fee transparency, and this is a conversation that we had a lot during committee. In terms of tuition, this government has enacted a tuition freeze to ensure that rates don't rise and students have the lowest tuition possible. But as we work towards those goals, students have seen other fees rise, and we need to prepare students and students need to have the ability of transparency to see what those fees look like beforehand. Those examples can be some of the examples shared by the minister earlier today: somebody signing up for a biology lab and then not knowing that they have to pay for coats; not knowing they have to pay for special tools and things going forward. These transparency measures will really help students understand where their money is going, and that also applies to the fees that they're paying to their universities or colleges when it comes to their enrolment and how much they're contributing to each individual item.

Right now, some colleges and some universities list exactly where all of that money goes, some don't. We want to create a universal platform where all of that is listed transparently for every student that's paying tuition to know where exactly every dollar and every cent is going. This issue is the financial stressors burdening our students as they pursue higher education. It's no secret that the cost of post-secondary education can weigh heavily on the shoulders of our Ontario scholars, affecting not only their academic pursuits but their overall well-being.

In recognition of this pressing issue, Ontario is taking proactive steps to alleviate the financial strain on our students and their families. Speaker, we are proud to have announced the continuation of the domestic tuition freeze for publicly assisted colleges and universities for a minimum of three more years, additionally allowing limited increases of up to 5% for domestic, out-of-province students. This commitment builds on our government's historic 10% reduction of tuition in 2019-20, coupled with the previous tuition freezes over the past four years. These measures have made post-secondary education more accessible and more affordable for Ontario students.

However, we understand that tuition is just one piece of the financial puzzle. That's why the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act includes provisions to enhance transparency regarding student fees. We have listened to the voices of our students who have shared their concerns about the hidden costs associated with their education. Whether it be textbooks, subscriptions, ad-

ditional reading materials, unexpected lab fees, students deserve to know the full extent of the financial obligations tied to their education.

The proposed legislative amendments will empower students and parents by providing them with clear and comprehensive information about ancillary fees, enabling them to make informed decisions when selecting courses. While faculty will retain the autonomy to choose educational materials for their classes, we urge them to prioritize what's in the best interests of our students.

Speaker, transparency is crucial, especially in these challenging economic times, where every dollar counts. By ensuring that students are aware of the expenses they are undertaking, we are fostering a culture of accountability and empowerment within our educational institutions, and our government is committed to affordable and accessible higher education for all. Together, we can break down the barriers that hinder the academic success of our students and pave the way for a brighter future.

I'd like to start concluding with discussing the incredible potential of our province and the great people of the province of Ontario. Our collective spirit, our resilience and our unwavering determination propels us forward, even in the face of challenges. If we want to see our province truly thrive, we must invest in nurturing a highly skilled workforce that can adapt to the demands of our rapidly growing economy.

Our government is deeply committed to ensuring that every individual has the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education and achieve their dreams. Over the past few years, we've made significant strides in making education more accessible and inclusive for everyone, regardless of their background or where they come from. We believe that education should be affordable, respectful, and welcoming to all. Speaker, we've worked hand in hand with colleges, universities, Indigenous institutions and community partners to create an environment where every learner can flourish. Our goal is to build a post-secondary education system that not only celebrates diversity but also empowers individuals to carve out fulfilling and meaningful careers.

Bill 166, during its second reading, passed smoothly. I urge each and every one of you to throw your full support behind Bill 166. This legislation is pivotal in ensuring Ontario's colleges and universities are held accountable for supporting the well-being of our post-secondary students. This legislation represents a significant leap forward in creating a safe and nurturing environment that students deserve.

It's imperative that the resources allocated for student mental health are used effectively and transparently. We can't afford to overlook the mental health and well-being of our students; it's our duty to prioritize their welfare. This is an opportunity to implement meaningful change that will leave a lasting impact for generations to come. Speaker, let's seize the opportunity and stand united in our commitment to creating a brighter future for all learners.

Speaker, I'd also like to talk about the great work that our government is doing to ensure that the mental health, safety and well-being of every student in Ontario is being

looked at and letting them know that we, as a government, truly and deeply care to ensure that their mental health and well-being while on campus is a top priority not only for the government but the universities themselves. That's why, through Bill 166 and the directives that we're taking, we're also going to be ensuring that mental health supports and mental health funding that is given to colleges and universities is mandated and is spent in that particular direction, that they don't have the opportunity to spend that money into different aspects.

The mental health funding that the government gives must be spent on mental health supports for those students learning in those post-secondary institutions. That's why Bill 166 is so crucial as we continue to support our students and continue to ensure that they have an environment where they feel like they'll be successful, where they feel like they can thrive and where they can feel that they can move forward in their lives and create great careers for themselves going forward. As we take a look at some of the contentious issues that we see around that are impacting us globally, this bill will really help us ensure that all students have a safe place to learn, a safe place to be while they go through their educational journey.

We can't afford to overlook the mental health and well-being of our students; it's our priority to prioritize their welfare. It's an opportunity to implement meaningful change and leave a lasting impact for generations to come. Let's seize this opportunity and stand united in our commitment to creating a brighter future for all learners. Together, we can forge a path towards a post-secondary education system that embodies the values of inclusivity, accountability and excellence.

Thank you, and I hope we have your unwavering dedication to support Ontario's students.

With the few remaining minutes that I have left, I just want to add that a lot of the discussions that we had in committee and a lot of the consultations that took place prior to drafting Bill 166—done by the previous parliamentary assistant, the minister and the ministry's team—are really reflected in the actions that we're taking to make sure students are protected going forward, the actions that we're taking to ensure that those mental health supports are there for students and the actions that we're taking to ensure that transparency is there for students. It makes a huge financial impact for young learners who are just entering the preliminary workforce, starting with beginner jobs, supporting themselves through education and creating a transparent path for them to see what the costs and expenses are involved. Bill 166 will really help set the standard across the province.

Right now, as of today, when we look at different universities and colleges, a lot of them have the best practices implemented, but they vary. It's not a standard practice across the board, across the province. And with this Bill 166, we're going to be able to ensure that transparency spans across the province to all post-secondary institutions, all colleges and universities.

1610

As we continue to do that, we're going to make sure that the funding we have allocated to support the mental

health of those students enrolling into those great programs and great classes is going to be there for them, with a ministry directive mandating universities and colleges to spend that money where it's duly supposed to be spent, and that's for the students' mental health and well-being.

The minister has done a wonderful job bringing this bill forward. The previous parliamentary assistant has done a wonderful job with her consultations, and I'm taking that work forward by presenting and speaking to Bill 166 today. I spoke about this a lot in committee as well: I hope we have your support to take Bill 166 forward, ensure that we have transparency and ensure that mental health funding is there for all of our students across the province.

With that, I'd like to say thank you, Speaker. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Coming down on Sunday, I was sitting beside le recteur de l'Université de Sudbury, and he was telling me that your government's own panel of experts have recommended, via the blue ribbon, an urgent \$2.5-billion investment over three years, as a minimum, needed to keep colleges and universities running. This was before the international student cap was announced. He was telling me that the new budget, the money they received, was only \$13,000 more and they're really struggling financially.

My question is, why is your funding just half of what your own expert was recommending—the \$2.5 billion?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I wanted to say that the member will pick and choose lines from recommendations from the blue-ribbon panel to ensure that they meet the objective of what he's trying to talk about, but the blue-ribbon panel also encouraged the government to raise tuition fees, to increase fees on students and to support universities in that directive.

Our government will not raise fees on students. We will make sure that we have lowest fees for students in Ontario. We will support them with every resource that we have. That's the mandate given to us by Premier Doug Ford and that's what we're going to continue to do. And if the NDP insists that we accept every single recommendation from the blue-ribbon panel, they can go ahead and tell students that they want to raise fees. We're not going to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Billy Pang: As the member mentioned a lot, earlier, regarding mental health—I have some similar questions. Attending university or college can be a challenging time, when many students are away from home for the first time in their lives. Many students have complained that navigating their university or college's mental health programs often requires a degree of its own. So what will this bill be doing to improve a student's ability to access mental health services on their institution's campuses?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the honourable member for the question.

As mentioned, this bill will ensure that we have a minimum mental health standard going forward across the province. This bill will ensure that mental health funding provided by the province will be used by the institutions on mental health programs within the post-secondary institutions. We want to make sure that that money that we're putting forward makes it all the way down, makes it down to the student, and the resources that we're providing are actually available to them. We want to make sure that happens, Speaker.

As we continue to work together to make Ontario's post-secondary institutions a great place for students to thrive, Bill 166 is a crucial part to achieving that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I listened to the member for Brampton East just now and during his remarks talk about access to mental health supports. I heard him talk to my colleague about cherry-picking things out of bills, and the funny thing is, is the government side cherry-picks what they want the public to hear. They don't want to hear the criticism. They don't want to hear from the people that came to committee and raised huge alarm bells about this bill.

But I'm going to talk specifically about the mental health piece. Because you can talk about mental health supports all you want, you can pass on that responsibility—which is what you're doing—to the post-secondary education institutions, but you are not properly funding those institutions to be able to provide those supports and services.

You are grossly underfunding community mental health and addictions supports, to the point where they're laying off workers, at the detriment to the community. There are months-long or years-long wait-lists for mental health supports in communities all around this province.

So my question to the member opposite is: Rather than just talking about what we are doing, what are you actually doing to fix the funding problems and to address the root causes of mental health and addictions, to ensure people actually have those connected supports?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question.

We had a lot of debate during committee, when we talked about all of these issues.

Rest assured, Speaker, this government has invested a historic amount into education: a whopping \$1.2 billion, which is a number that has not been seen before. That's our government investing those dollars back into our universities, back into our colleges, making sure that they have the resources that they need to move forward in changing climates and changing times.

This government is investing \$23 million to support mental health and introducing legislation that will require colleges and universities to have mental health policies and let students know that those supports are available to them. That's a big deal. We're making sure that these students have transparency, we're making sure that these

students have access to mental health care, and we're making sure that that's a standard across the province.

The one thing that we're not going to do, that the NDP members haven't mentioned in any of their questions—we're not going to raise tuition fees. We're going to continue to work with colleges and universities to make sure they stay low, and we're going to continue to work with them to make sure that they have the resources they need to provide the critical services for our students.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. John Fraser: I just want to remind the members opposite that every year, the government spends historic amounts on whatever it is we have to do for people. It's just the way it works. If there are more people, we have more needs. We always spend more money. I'm getting tired of hearing the word "historic."

I'd like to ask the member a question—and it goes off my colleague from Windsor West. Would it not be a simpler thing to do than to pass a piece of legislation to actually say, "There's this much money, and here's how the program works"? That's the way government does it most of the time. "Here's the program. Here are the rules. You have to apply. You have to spend it this way." Why not just actually invest in it, make the policy, let it go, and not worry about all the words that we're putting in here that we don't really need—because we can do it without having to do this.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question.

It's amazing to hear that we're just going to sign away a blank cheque and say, "Hey, you go figure this out."

The Ministry of Colleges and Universities, as we work with all of our partners across the board—when it comes to post-secondary education, we like to see what types of programs they're offering, how we can support, what different types of programs we can invest in. I'm sure the member opposite is also aware of all of those things that we need to make sure happen in order to ensure the success of all of our post-secondary institutions across the board.

This bill is about transparency. This bill is about ensuring that my kids, your kids, our future of Ontario—when they get to school, they get to see exactly where every dollar is being spent; they know what they're paying for; they know what they're getting involved in.

This bill is to ensure that the mental health supports and the funding that are being provided by the government make it all the way down. That's exactly what this bill intends to do. That's why I urge every member of this House to vote in favour of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I've enjoyed the debate this afternoon.

I'd like to ask the member what our government is going to do to help enforce freedom of speech on all the campuses.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the honourable member for the question.

Our government is committed to freedom of speech, and that hasn't changed. As a part of the free speech policy announced by this Premier—colleges and universities should be places where students really exchange different ideas and opinions in open and respectful debate. This also means ensuring that they follow the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Criminal Code and ensure the protection of academic activities where students could share ideas in good faith.

Speaker, we know that some institutions have not treated all professors, students and employees the same and can create multiple standards that members of the institution are held to. By and large, there is limited publication of the results of non-academic conduct cases—and specifically, the way the cases are handled, ensuring that there is a meaningful conclusion at the end of the process. Perhaps now more than ever, it's clear that a broad and comprehensive approach must be taken to ensure that all incidents of hateful speech are addressed in a fair and consistent manner.

Transparency, accountability and due process for those found violating codes of conduct are essential for ensuring the protection of freedom of speech on campuses. And that's exactly what Bill 166 intends to do, and that's exactly what—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you. Quick question?

1620

Miss Monique Taylor: I've definitely been listening to the debate this afternoon, as well as previous times that this bill has been before this House. I was happy to hear the NDP lead on this—but again, it brings us back to the fact of the lack of funding for mental health. I'm sure you would have heard this from your constituents.

Are you satisfied with there not being enough dollars for mental health when it comes to our students?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'd just like to say to the member opposite, thank you for the question.

If you support transparency for students across the province, I urge you to vote for this bill. If you desire for those mental health dollars allocated to those colleges and universities to make it all the way down to those students, I urge you to support this bill.

If you go ahead and vote yes for this bill, you'll be delivering for students.

WITHDRAWAL OF BILL

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I rise to inform the House that the bill introduced earlier by the member for Nickel Belt, introduced as, "An Act to Amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act," contravenes standing order 39(d), which provides that no bill be introduced in blank or imperfect form. The bill was introduced with a truncated version of the title, and the question on the motion for first reading was put using the incorrect version of the title. The bill is therefore out of order, and it will not be added to the Orders and Notices paper.

STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY
AND STUDENT SUPPORTS ACT, 2024
LOI DE 2024 POUR RENFORCER
LA RESPONSABILISATION
ET LES MESURES DE SOUTIEN
AUX ÉTUDIANTS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's always a pleasure to rise and speak in the House, but today is kind of an interesting day, obviously.

I want to say that a lot of times on this job, you're not home—I think we can all relate to that on special occasions. Today is my wife's birthday, so I wanted to make sure that I wished her a happy birthday. I know she's spending her time with my beautiful daughter, as well. I think they're going out for dinner. The other reason I thought it was a good idea to start with talking about that is that my wife—although she's retired now, and she actually retired a year early because she had to take care of her mom and dad, as a caregiver, and she gave up a year of her pensions—was a teacher. So I'm surrounded by education quite regularly. And then, our daughters—Tara works with special-needs kids in the school board. My other daughter is a teacher. And here we're talking about education and where we should go with education.

We heard a lot today, and I've been listening about the bill—how important education is, how important colleges are, how important universities are.

In my riding—I don't know how many know this, how many have been there. Well, you guys have been down to Niagara so much, I figure you guys don't even need a map anymore. We have a couple of really good colleges and universities in my riding.

Niagara College—10,500 students at Niagara College. They do a great job down there. Their president is Sean Kennedy. I met with him a couple of weeks ago. The programs they have are really geared to jobs in Niagara, quite frankly—some are in the skilled trades, some are in tourism, some are in winemaking.

And then you go up the road and you look at Brock University. They have 19,000 students at Brock University, under Lesley Rigg, who is the president there. That's a lot of students, and quite frankly, they have a lot of power.

We didn't have any transportation at Niagara College—or very little—same like Brock, and the two student bodies got together and said, “Hey, there are 34,000 of us who come to school. We need to make sure that we have proper public transit.” They got together, and they changed the whole thinking in Niagara. Now we have regional transit in Niagara, all across Niagara—and a lot of that was geared to the students standing up to the establishment and saying, “We need to make sure that we can get to school in a timely manner.”

Unfortunately, I know that both of these institutions have significant concerns about their current financial health. I'm not here today to say they're in any way in

trouble, but they have clear concerns—those concerns sometimes go right across the province. But I will tell you that Niagara College is \$12 million in debt—that's underfunding. Brock University is in worse shape—\$35 million in debt. As I listen to the PCs stand up here and say how they're funding our colleges and our universities—well, they wouldn't be that much in debt. And now they've got another problem, which we're all hearing about, which is international students and some of the rules that have been placed on them by the federal government.

What we don't talk about, on the international students, is the fact that they've been being gouged for years to make up for the lack of funding coming from, at this time—the Liberals and the PC government. And do you know—put your hands up on the other side. I know you're not really listening to me, but I figure you can put your hands up—those who are. Do you know that international students are being charged three to four times more than domestic students to take the exact same course?

I spend a lot of time walking down Wellesley, from my apartment to here, because I like to get a little walk in in between, and I run into a lot of students in my apartment, where we live, where I stay Sunday to Thursday. And I say to them—they're at University of Toronto, right here. I say to them, “How's things going?” “Well, the rents are really bad.” Do you know that a student who's going to University of Toronto, where I live, is paying somewhere between \$3,400 and \$4,100 a month just in rent?

Yesterday, I was in the elevator. A really nice young lady and I got talking while we're going up to the 20th floor—I probably shouldn't say what floor I'm on, but I'm on the 20th. She had a bag of groceries—one bag—and I said, “Oh, you were out shopping for groceries.” Do you know what she said? Unbelievable. One bag was \$80. This is a student—\$4,000 in rent; \$80 for a bag of groceries. That's what students are facing, and you wonder why we're talking about that you've got to fund our universities and our colleges.

Our students are our future. Let's think about that. Most of you guys in here are probably—I look around; most of you are at least over 40, so you have kids, you have grandkids. One of the most important things that we can do is make sure that our kids and our grandkids are getting an education.

But do you know what happens when you get an education in Ontario—and it goes back a few years. I'm not just blaming the Conservative government. They've been terrible, but to their credit, it's not all their fault; the Liberals helped too. The reality is that when you get an education, you are coming out of a university—particularly a university; sometimes a college—when you have a student debt that's as high as a mortgage: \$100,000.

The thing I've never understood—nothing in Bill 166 on this, by the way. What I've never understood—why, as they borrow money from the government to go to university, do they have to pay interest on that money?

I'll tell you, as bad as the States is right now, they're talking about this and they're actually doing it in some of

the states down there—they're limiting all the interest on their student loans. To me, if you're looking at a bill and you're saying our students are struggling—they're struggling to pay their rent. They're struggling to buy their books. Some are working two jobs. Some, quite frankly, are going without food sometimes, just because of the cost of everything. Wouldn't that be an easy solution to put in Bill 166? Just get rid of the interest on student loans.

Why should government—Madam Speaker, you can answer this. I don't know if you can speak now, but I know you can when you're sitting up here some days. Why would government have to make money on the backs of students? Can somebody explain that to me?

Interjection: It makes no sense.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It makes absolutely no sense.

I don't think I'll be in committee because, remember, you guys took me off committee because you don't like me asking these tough questions. But I'm going to make a suggestion to you: Why don't you guys fix the bill and say, "We're going to get rid of the interest on the student loans"? I see my colleague there—I don't know what riding you're from over here. He's nodding his head. He doesn't think that's a bad idea, but he's probably just old enough—he just probably came out of university. He's not that old. Or even the member from Niagara West—Niagara West went to Brock University with my daughter Jacqueline, and he's still taking courses, but he shouldn't be paying. To me, he could raise that in his caucus meeting and say, "That's not a bad idea." Actually, it's not in my notes, but I just thought of it, because it was driving me nuts for years, when I used to speak about education.

I see there are a lot of students up there. They're nodding their heads. That's our future up there—all five rows up there. They're waving, and I'm waving back at them.

You are our future, and it's up to people like us and the government that's in power to make sure that your education is funded properly and that you're not paying interest on your student loans.

1630

And if you want to talk about the rest of it, you can talk about food prices. We've got to make sure we get our food prices in so the Weston family doesn't continue to gouge us;—so kids aren't spending one bag on a bag of groceries. It's absolutely ridiculous.

So when we're talking about education, do you know what we're talking about? Right up there—our kids and our grandkids; my kids and my grandkids. My grandkids are still in grade 3 and 4; they're just tiny. But someday, they're going to go get an education. That's our future.

Anyway, I'll get on with my speech. I'm on page 2.

For decades, through both the Liberals and the Conservatives, our colleges and universities have endured underfunding to the point that they're near collapse. And when people say, "You're making that up"—I'm not making it up.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It happened to Laurentian.

I just met with Brock University. I have a really good rapport with both the university and the college, because I

think that's important, even though Brock is not in my riding. It's actually in Jeff Burch's riding. He represents Brock.

Our proud institutions, pillars of knowledge and progress, now stand on the face of crisis. It seems like every time we stand up here, we talk about a crisis. Whether it be food prices, whether it be housing prices, whether it be the homeless, whether it be encampments, it just seems we're always talking about a crisis. And guess what? Who has been in power for six years? The Conservatives. Yet, every time I stand up here, I feel like I'm talking about a crisis.

For Bill 166 to be a solution to the challenges facing our post-secondary education system—it falls short of addressing the magnitude of the issues at hand. While it may contain some terms, it lacks the ambition, the foresight and the commitment necessary to truly meet the moment that we are in.

The reality is stark: Our colleges and universities are at a breaking point. Years of neglect and underinvestment have taken their toll, leaving our educational infrastructure crumbling and our students and our faculty struggling to make ends meet. This is not a problem that we can sweep under the carpet or under the rug—or take half measures. We need a serious solution, and we need it now.

It's very clear that the current government's approach is insufficient. As a matter of fact—I'll just get off a little bit, and we already had some questions on this—your own blue-ribbon panel said that you needed to invest \$2.5 billion in universities and colleges. And what did you do? Half. It reminds me of some of the marriages—you get half. That's usually the way it works.

What they didn't say on the question—because it was a question from our side about it—right now, our colleges are at 44% of the national average; universities are at 57%. Do you know what that makes us when it comes to funding, Madam Speaker? I'm going to tell you what it is. It makes us the lowest-funded colleges and universities in the country. So when they stand up and say they're investing, they're investing, they're investing, it's not completely accurate. Quite frankly, it's probably—well, it's not the truth. I guess I can't say they're lying; that wouldn't be nice. But they're certainly not telling the truth.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the member from Essex on a point of order.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: What the member just said is exactly the same as lying.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I'm going to ask the member from Niagara Falls to withdraw.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Sure. Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): You may continue.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. I'm just making sure my colleague from Windsor was paying attention; that's all.

Further, we must take a look at the exploitation of international students, who have become increasingly vulnerable in the face of rising tuition costs and precarious

living conditions. I already mentioned that they're paying three to four times higher than domestic students. I'm not making that up. You can look it up. It's another point that's not in my speech—to a point that Niagara College in my riding, going back a few years, under then-president Dan Patterson, set up a school in Saudi Arabia. Because they were so underfunded, they had to find different resources to try to get funding in Saudi Arabia. He took a lot of hits for that, because of some of the human rights conditions in Saudi Arabia. You think about that. He had to do that. By the way, I'm glad you heard about it, because they're still in there. They're still there.

The international students contribute immensely to our diversity, vibrancy on our campuses. Yet, too often, they are treated as cash cows. That's why they want international students. Think about that. Instead of inviting them to our country and enjoying the country or the province—no, they've got to pay three to four times more, instead of being a valued member of our community. We must strengthen the oversight to ensure that they are protected from the exploitation and abuse.

I want to be clear on this: The NDP stands firmly behind our world-class post-secondary institutions. Let's be clear on that—including Laurentian. I know my good colleague from Sudbury fought very hard about that. We recognize the positive impact that they have not only on the individuals who study and work within their walls, but also the surrounding communities, and quite frankly the province as a whole.

We're committed to ensuring that everyone who lives, works and studies at post-secondary institutions in Ontario has the support they need to thrive. Well let's be clear: This is not just about the institutions themselves. It's about the future of our province, our economy, our society and—I've already mentioned, because the young kids were here—the kids and our grandkids. A strong and vibrant post-secondary education system is essential for building a prosperous and equitable Ontario for all.

Madam Speaker, it brings me to another issue. It's not just the institutions that are struggling. It's also the students, and it's a big problem. It's affecting a lot of people. First off, I've talked a little bit about it. Let's talk about the money. The cost of living is going up. That includes things like groceries, which I meant, rent—gouging by the Weston family. For students who are already trying to juggle tuition fees and other expenses, this can be a huge burden. It's getting harder and harder to afford the basic necessities, and that's not fair. There's the rent. Rent prices are going through the roof not just in Toronto by the way; down in Niagara is the same way. I believe Ottawa is the same way. Windsor, I would think—Hamilton is the same way. Rents are going through the roof. There's not enough protection in place to keep them in check, like putting rent controls on new builds that haven't been there since 2019—big, big mistake. That means students are being forced to pay more and more for housing. Often on top, there are already high tuition fees. It's tough to focus on your studies when you're worried

about whether you're going to be able to afford the rent the next month.

Let's not forget about mental health, which has been raised here a number of times. And we know there's not enough money. University—and I learned this from my daughter who went to university. It's a really stressful time, and students need support more than ever. But the sad truth is there aren't enough resources available.

Mental health services are often minimal and hard to access, leaving students feeling overwhelmed and alone. There's not enough support on campuses. Then if you go off campus, you know there's over a year wait to go and see if you have issues with mental health, including—I might as well raise this now; I've got a couple of minutes left.

We put forward a bill to the minister in Niagara asking for 24/7 services for those with mental health, because do you know what? Mental health doesn't stop at 4:30 in the day. And we were promised that he'd bring it into Niagara. Here, that was two years ago. It still hasn't happened, and we're like everywhere else. Mental health is really in a crisis—crisis.

What can we do about it? Well, for starters, the provincial government needs to step up and start prioritizing the needs of post-secondary students. That means taking action to make sure groceries are more affordable, implementing rent controls to keep housing costs down and investing more in mental health supports. These seem to be three very reasonable things that they could do today—today, Madam Speaker.

1640

Right now there seems to be a pattern from this government when it comes to education in total. The lack of commitment to post-secondary education also seems to be a case in our high schools and our elementary system, even encouraging some students not to finish high school. The failure to ensure Ontarians have access to good-quality education goes right across the board with the government.

Let's take a look at the recent cuts to education funding in Ontario. I think that's important. I probably won't get to it all, but it's important.

It seems like the government is trying to hide what they're doing with the money. That's not right. Let me break it down for you, Madam Speaker. In the past few years, the government has been setting aside money in something called a contingency fund. This allows them to play around with the numbers and make it look like they're spending more than they actually are. It's like using an accounting trick to make things seem better than they really are. This isn't just happening with education; it's happening in a lot of public services in the province of Ontario as well. It's not fair to the people who rely on those services.

Take education, for example: In the budget of the 2019-20 school year, there was a line that was called "un-allocated amounts." It wasn't a lot of money; it was \$82 million. But then the following year, that line disappeared and instead they started putting money into something

called a “planning provision.” Here’s the thing about the planning provision: School boards can’t actually use the money for anything.

I know that’s my time. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): It’s time for questions.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague for his speech this afternoon.

I know my colleague was talking about the cost of groceries. But it’s kind of ironic that the federal NDP props up the current federal Liberal government that has the highest carbon tax in North America. They prop them up. And he could really help the province and the people and the constituents he serves by talking to his federal NDP colleagues, Speaker.

I know the member also mentioned mental health supports and the availability of these very important supports at their institutions. I know at committee, members of the opposition called the requirement for institutions to have accessible mental health policies in this bill “unnecessary red tape.” Student mental health policies which are accessible and transparent are essential for students seeking help.

Will the member opposite stand in this House today and support Bill 166, or do they also believe that less paperwork for institutions is more of a priority than the well-being of students?

Mr. Wayne Gates: That was kind of an interesting question. First of all, if you guys were honest with the public, you’d know that you got rid of a cap-and-trade system that made polluters pay, which meant that nobody else had to pay. Farmers didn’t have to pay. Housewives didn’t have to pay. Husbands didn’t have to pay. It was done through cap-and-trade. Instead, you took it to court. You went to court to argue you didn’t have to have a cap-and-trade in the province of Ontario. You went to court, and guess what happened? You lost, for the 47th time—because every time you go to court, you don’t win. And then you decided, “Now we’re going to have the carbon tax,” and then you blamed everybody else but yourselves, because you’re the ones who didn’t want the cap-and-trade. Do you know why you didn’t want it? Because your buddies that are paying \$1,000 every time they come to one of your fundraisers were very happy they didn’t have to pay because they were polluting anymore, because it was put onto everybody else in this room but the ones that were emitting—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Next question?

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: I always enjoy my colleague from Niagara Falls when he speaks.

You were talking to the kids when they were here, saying that they’re our future, but they’re also our biggest resource. It’s not gold. It’s not materials or EV batteries. It’s not that; it’s our youth. And yet we see this government’s own panel of experts recommend—a blue-ribbon

panel recommended an urgent \$2.5-billion investment over three years, and that’s minimum. That’s minimum.

I heard you speak about how students are struggling. I want to ask you, what would the NDP government do? Because they’re not doing that which should be done. I know you brought some good points, but I’d like to hear from you, if we had recommendations like this, what would the NDP government do for their kids?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, first of all, I’m going to agree with you that our kids are our most valuable—so I’m going to say that—

Interjection: Resource.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Most valuable resource.

I think it’s easy to answer what you should be doing for education. One thing I talked about: Get rid of the kids paying taxes on their student loans. I think that’s the first thing we should do.

The second thing is called funding. Everything comes down to funding. There’s a reason why Niagara college is \$12 million in debt. There’s a reason why Brock University is \$35 million in debt. It’s all about funding, and it’s all playing with the numbers. I’m glad to see my colleague from Niagara West is back, because he went to Brock University, and I’m sure he doesn’t want that university to be \$35 million in debt either.

So there’s the things you do: Fund it properly; take the interest off the poor students that are paying that. It’s ridiculous.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. John Fraser: I think there’s a bit of an irony alert going on here. The Premier’s office has gone from 16 to 48 staff on the sunshine list in the last five years, has gone from about \$3 million to almost \$7 million in just that spending alone. That’s pretty rich. I mean, I did describe it as the gravy train. I think it’s a really apt—

Interjection: Choo-choo.

Mr. John Fraser: Choo-choo, that’s exactly it.

But you know what? Here’s the irony: They added another car on the gravy train. They just appointed a failed candidate in Ottawa onto the sunshine list to work for the Premier in Ottawa, bypassing the members who are here. It’s shocking.

But is there not irony? This government is talking about doing all of these great things but not putting any money towards it. It seems like it’s all going to the Premier’s office.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, I’ve always liked your answer on the gravy train, for sure. You forget to mention the one thing that I mention all the time: Not only did they do that and make sure the sunshine list—I think it’s 42 new people who are on the sunshine list—

Mr. John Fraser: Forty-eight.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Forty-eight from his office, but they also gave themselves a 16% raise, which I know you didn’t get.

So they are definitely, definitely a problem. I agree 100% with you. There are better ways to spend money. It’s about choices, and the choices should always be putting

money into education, putting money into a publicly funded, publicly delivered health care system. It's about choices. Their choice is about privatizing, whether it's in our public system or whether it's in our health care system.

So I agree with you. That's the second time I've agreed with you in 12 years.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the member for his remarks this afternoon. I'm just reflecting a little bit on the objectives for this legislation. If passed, it would require colleges and universities to have policies relating to student mental health and wellness. These supports would be available to meet the needs of unique student populations. It would also require colleges and universities to have policies in place to combat racism and hate, and greater consistency in how these incidents are dealt with. And it would also authorize the minister to issue directives requiring colleges and universities to provide information about ancillary fees and other student costs—I heard the member talking about costs—including textbooks and other learning materials.

So, really, my question is, aren't these objectives important to education in Ontario and ones that the member could support?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I believe we should spend as much money as we need on our mental health crisis that is going on right across the province of Ontario, so I'm going to agree with you that you want to fix that. You could put all the rules in place that you want, but if the envelope isn't big enough—and that envelope is coming from your government, and it's not big enough—I've got to make decisions. I could put it into mental health, because that's what you're saying this bill has to do. But I've got to get that money from somewhere. Do you know where it's going to come from? They're going to cut the classes in Niagara College. They're going to cut them in Brock University. They've already cut classes at the University of Toronto.

It's all about funding. So you can stand up and say, "Well, isn't this good?" I think it's great that we spend as much money as we can on mental health. I'm a firm believer in that. There's a crisis there. But you can't say to the college, "You've got to do this, but we're not going to give you enough money to actually run your classrooms." That's what's happened. It's about choices, and the choice from your government should be funding them properly.

If the blue-ribbon panel is saying—that you put together, by the way; this is your own. You guys did it. It was your own. It's not mine. It's not the Liberals'. It's yours. So do the recommendation: at least \$2.5 billion. And you put \$1.25 billion and then you throw more rules on the colleges and universities when it comes to mental health. That means cuts to student learning. That's just the way it's going to have to be, because the envelope is not big enough.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Joel Harden: I enjoyed in particular the member for Niagara Falls talking about international students because I'm very concerned about them. I see an incredible amount of international students in Ottawa using food banks and who are very housing-insecure, and I just want to zoom out for a minute because there are other places in the world that treat international students very differently.

I want to cite in particular Germany. Germany is a place with over 300 public post-secondary institutions, and you can study there as a Canadian for free, for minimal tuition; there are nominal fees here and there.

The German economy is one of the most successful economies. I had the occasion to go there for some conferences when I was a student. I learned a lot from people I met over there about how particular industries run in that country, and I'm wondering if we could actually convince this government to financially contribute to colleges and universities. Why couldn't we treat international students with more respect?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, we absolutely should be treating our international students with respect, but not only is Germany the same way, Finland is as well, and so is Sweden, and both those countries actually have the highest union representation in the world because they're paid fairly, they get vacation time, all that stuff.

So absolutely, I agree with you. International students shouldn't be looked at as cash cows; they should be treated with respect and dignity, and when they come to this country, that's exactly how we think—and when we go to Germany, they should treat us the same way: with respect and dignity when it comes to paying for universities or colleges.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Before we continue with debate, I remind members to make comments through the Chair and not to make reference to another member's absence.

Further debate?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: No one could argue against anti-racism, mental health or fee transparency policies. They all make perfect sense. Everyone deserves a safe and welcoming post-secondary experience. The challenges our students are facing are real, and they deserve real support, real advocacy and strength, funding and respect.

Putting out a piece of paper with policies but no money attached is wrong. This government needs to invest in safety from racism, help to overcome challenges in mental health, and the security of financial transparency.

The money this government has allocated to post-secondary recently is just half of what was recommended by the government's own experts, and that's even before the international students were capped.

Speaker, anti-racism and mental health both touch vulnerable and marginalized communities. The fact that this government wants to hand down policies without consultation, not only is awful for academic freedom, but I believe it's a reckless approach to policies that will have serious consequences on people's lives. This lack of consultation is completely unprecedented.

When the previous Liberal government asked post-secondary institutions to have sexual harassment policies, there was a defined and rigorous consultation process that led to good policy. That's what we need. We need good policy.

The Premier himself even said, "Universities and colleges are really good, and it's up to the dean to govern their universities." I wonder, what makes it that a minister will know more about how to deliver good programs for students than the people that are on the front lines in those institutions every day. Speaker, all of these institutions already have these policies. They just need proper funding.

Also, the minister has repeatedly refused to state how they plan to penalize non-compliant institutions. Will the minister financially penalize institutions? We can't say. This is the glimpse in the lack of transparency that we can expect in the future. This bodes poorly for this bill. When the government mandated free speech policies in 2018, it was explicitly with the threat of funding cuts. I'm a little worried that they're refusing to give the details this time around.

This government's approach to this bill, with no formal consultation taking place, is not the way forward for dealing with complex social issues that require input from across a broad spectrum of stakeholders. We could end up hurting people if we don't do this right, so why not take the time to actually listen to those experts, listen to people with experience in mental health and other things? How do we prevent these policies from being hijacked for personal benefit or political gain? What processes are there in place to make sure that that doesn't happen? I don't see them, Speaker, and that worries me.

These policies currently exist, and I think that the universities and colleges did a good job of creating the kind of policies they need. Could they be improved? Absolutely. Now, that would have been a bill, to mandate that the policies that are in the universities and colleges need to be reviewed every three years, every two years. Now, that would make sense, because that would make sure that they're addressing the most current issues that are out there and that things that we're learning about today that we had not thought about five years ago are included in the policies. That's something that would make sense, and it would also make sense in terms of funding if we're funding mental health.

We don't even know what these policies will look like if they're handed down from on high. What one college in northern Ontario needs and a university in southern Ontario could be two different things. We don't know. But I would like to see that whatever money comes into these kinds of policies, which I think—I think they are really important; they're absolutely essential if we are going to do a better job of making our education system more inclusive and more welcoming and more open and more successful to more people.

I believe that the experts are at the coalface, as we would say in the military. They are on the front lines, are at the colleges and are at the universities, and are at the mental health agencies. We need to listen to the people

who know, and I worry that these decisions will be taken up to the minister's office without that consultation we need in order to make them as good as they could possibly be, in order to make them so that they will serve the greatest number of people and serve them well.

I don't think that handing down extra policy requirements is addressing the reality of the current situation. The government is happy to tell you that our students are their priority, but I'll tell you what, Madam Speaker: Show me your budget and I'll show you what you care about. We'll say that over and over again. Coming up with policies of this nature that are so instrumental—can be instrumental—in people's future without transparency, without consultation and without funding is just plain wrong.

In closing, no one could argue against anti-racism, mental health or fee transparency policies. Everyone deserves a safe and welcoming post-secondary experience. The challenges our students are facing are real, and they deserve real support, real advocacy and strength, funding and respect.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: The independent Liberals and the opposition routinely vote against every measure that our government initiates to make life more affordable, and of course, the member opposite who just made her submission is a former member of a government that brought us a dreaded carbon tax.

1700

I wonder, since this bill, Bill 166, is about increasing transparency, allowing students to make more informed choices and, of course, maintaining the principle behind the lower tuition rates for students—it's about putting students first, supporting students and creating and improving transparency—will the member commit to voting for transparency and the core principles of this bill, which is about students?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I thank the honourable member for his question, but I think it's really dangerous, Speaker, and I think it's dangerous to all of us. If we put a bill forward, we put policies forward, with no money attached, then the danger becomes that it's just performative and it's only just to make a point; it's not to make a difference. And I think that's what all of us here want to do: We want to make a difference.

So, I think it's very dangerous to put forth policies without funding because it creates expectations that you're not going to be able to fulfill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Again, we talk about transparency; we talk about the intent of this bill. The Premier was quoted saying, when he was asked about Bill 166, that he had concerns about political interference and he said, "We shouldn't get involved in that and that's really up to the dean to govern his own university. I think we shouldn't get involved in that." This is where the confusion lies.

Then we get a statement from the Premier's office saying that he supports the bill. Now we have directives

from the minister asking the colleges and universities to have a student mental health policy, which we think we need to make sure is robust there. But they need to put their programs on the website and report back and they need to comply. But in the bill, they don't tell you what the compliance measures will be if they fail to do that, and that's another confusing part.

Can the member comment on how confusing this legislation has become with the Premier's comments and then no recourse for how they have to comply, and when they don't comply, what are the consequences?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I thank the honourable member for her question, and I think she's absolutely right. These things are so important that I think they're too important to be left to chance and they're too important just to be handed down on high to people who are the ones who are going to have to implement them.

If we centralize all of that power, all of that influence, over our colleges and universities inside the minister's office, that is not the right way forward when it comes to academic freedom, when it comes to the kind of future and what we want for our students.

I thank the honourable member for her question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. John Fraser: I hope this question is not too personal for the member. You may have heard me mention the gravy train a bit earlier and how the Premier has 48 people on the sunshine list in his office and how he's added another person to work for him in Ottawa—actually, the candidate that you beat in the last election is going on the sunshine list and probably making more money than any minister is here. But that's not the point.

Actually, that office is going to cost \$1.7 million a year for someone who you beat, and we all know the reason for doing that is that's what the Premier wants to spend to try and get the seat back. Don't you think it would be smarter for the Premier actually to just invest that money in the things that we're talking about here?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Quick response.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Show me your budget and I'll show you what you care about.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Harris: There's 40 seconds, Madam Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): There's not enough time for questions and answers.

Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for letting me join the debate on Bill 166, the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, 2024. Once again, what's clear is that our government is putting students first, with a continued focus on accountability, efficiency and financial sustainability in our world-class post-secondary education system: nearly \$1.3 million in new funding, while maintaining the tuition fee freeze to keep costs down for Ontario's students and their hard-working parents.

If passed, this legislation will support student mental health, safe and inclusive campuses and allow for increased transparency of fees.

Speaker, I have two universities in the region of Durham. One is Ontario Tech and the other is Trent Durham, and I also have a community college. But I'd like to share with the House—because I think it's material to our debate today—what Trent Durham had to say about the legislation before us:

“As an institution that has advocated for wraparound supports for our students, Trent is pleased by the news of investments in enhanced mental health supports for students.” They went on to say, “Renewed support for capital repairs and equipment will help Trent maintain its world-class facilities for teaching and research.”

They concluded by saying, “The new funding will allow Trent to continue our role as a key contributor to the well-being of our communities, driving regional innovation and economic growth, and providing our graduates with the skills and abilities to support the complex workforce needs locally, nationally and internationally.”

Speaker, Ontario Tech also had this to say: “Happy to see Minister Dunlop commit to additional funding for students in STEM fields.

“With Ontario Tech's focus on STEM and health programs linked to labour-market needs, we hope this will create more opportunities to prepare our students for rewarding and in-demand careers.”

Speaker, this suite of measures also includes initiatives that will help connect students to rewarding careers to build Ontario's skilled workforce. One of the skilled trade centres is situated in Durham College, which I share with the Honourable Todd McCarthy. He has part of it in Oshawa, and I have part of it in Whitby. If you've ever toured that skilled trade centre, you'll see the impact that it's making on the lives of young men and young women, potentially, as they move forward with their career.

What's clear to me and my colleagues is that it has never been more important to keep costs down for students and hard-working parents. Instead of burdening hard-working families in Whitby and other parts of the Durham region with higher tuition, we're making historic investments to stabilize colleges and universities. Whether it's Ontario Tech, whether it's Trent Durham or whether it's Durham College, we're doing that. We're doing that to support students and their families.

Ontario is extending the tuition-fee freeze for public assisted colleges and universities for at least three more years, which is significant overall. Institutions will be able, though, to increase tuition by up to 5% for out-of-province domestic students. At the time the freeze was first introduced and accompanied by a 10% reduction in fees, Ontario had the highest university tuition rates in the country. Since then, students and parents have saved an estimated \$1,600 per year on average for university and an estimated \$350 per year on average for community college compared to what they would have paid under the previous policy that allowed 3% increases each year.

I'd like to provide some examples of how this legislation stabilizes post-secondary institutions. The Ontario government is investing:

- \$903 million over three years through the new Postsecondary Education Sustainability Fund, starting in 2024-25, including \$203 million in funding for top-ups for institutions with greater financial need;

- \$167.4 million over three years in additional funding or capital repairs and equipment; and

- \$10 million in additional one-time funding through the Small, Northern and Rural Grant for colleges and the Northern Ontario Grant for universities in 2024 and 2025.

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This funding will support financially vulnerable institutions while the government works with them on efficiency initiatives. And with respect to efficiency initiatives, there are many universities, like Ontario Tech, who have been spending time looking at efficiency initiatives in their particular sector.

There's \$15 million over three years beginning in 2024-25 through the Efficiency and Accountability Fund to support third-party reviews that will identify actions institutions can take to drive long-term cost savings and positive outcomes for students and communities, and \$100 million in 2023-24 to support STEM program costs at publicly assisted colleges and universities with enrolments above currently funded levels.

I have some quotes from some of the universities and community colleges that I'd like to share with members in the Legislative Assembly right now, starting with Brock University's Lesley Rigg, who is the president and vice-chancellor: "We have heard directly from industry that there's a significant need for STEM workers, both in the Niagara region and across the province. We are very appreciative of the provincial government's investment in STEM students, who will go on to fill labour market gaps and contribute to the future of Ontario's economy."

Long-time president at Seneca College, David Agnew: "We're delighted that the government has recognized the value applied master's degrees can bring to the Ontario economy, both for existing businesses and those who can attract the province. These degrees bring a practical, career-focused approach, building on the years of experience we have in offering students skills-based graduate education."

And then there's \$65.4 million to support research and innovation, including \$27.4 million for the infrastructure refresh of Ontario's advanced research computing systems and \$18 million for their ongoing operations and maintenance; and, importantly, \$23 million to enhance mental health supports, including \$8 million for the post-secondary mental health action plan over three years.

Now, Speaker, when I first came into the Legislative Assembly in 2016, I was appointed by the then-Leader of the Opposition to be the critic of colleges and universities, and then, subsequent to that, the critic for education. In those roles, I travelled the province visiting campuses, both community colleges and universities, and what I heard continually was the need for more mental health

supports from students and from some of the faculty. That's the importance of this \$18 million for ongoing operations and maintenance, but \$23 million to enhance mental health supports.

There are universities like Ontario Tech in Oshawa, which has been a leader in providing mental health supports for students for quite some time. And why is that? Well, they use a stepped care approach to mental health services that triages students to intake coordinators and wellness coordinators who serve the population, in the course of that reducing wait times for service and using the lowest level of intervention necessary. They're also advantaged, Speaker, by the assistance of Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences, and Durham mental health, as well, but it's a model that could be adopted in other areas as well.

If passed, this particular legislation would allow the minister to issue directives requiring colleges and universities to provide information about auxiliary fees and other student costs, including costs for textbooks or other learning materials. Importantly, to provide additional transparency as it relates to tuition, the province will also engage with colleges and universities to create tuition fee transparency to help students and their families better understand how tuition fees are used.

The legislation would also, if passed, require colleges and universities to have policies in place related, as I just described, to mental health and wellness supports and services and require colleges and universities to have policies in place to combat racism and hate, including but not limited to anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

The province is also introducing measures to protect students and improve the integrity of career colleges. The province will better integrate enforcement efforts across ministries to strengthen the oversight of career colleges and will ensure timely responses to concerns and complaints by improving data management, document processes and the efficacy of compliance investigations.

As recommended by the blue-ribbon panel, the government will be working with colleges and universities to establish certain core competencies for board members, including financial literacy and risk management.

Now, to help more students find jobs, the province intends to allow colleges to offer applied master's degrees in areas of study that will help students graduate with in-demand skills, expertise and credentials. This approach will also provide local employers access to more industry-ready employees that meet labour market needs in specialized fields such as advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence and animation.

Speaker, when I meet with the chamber of commerce and other chambers across the region of Durham, this has been a long-standing ask of these employees. We're approaching close to a million people in the region as I speak here this afternoon. Meeting this particular need is going to make a big difference with the local business community.

The province is also going to launch a career portal to help students understand labour market needs and make informed decisions on post-secondary education.

Speaker, I wanted to talk a little bit more about financial sustainability, because in the discussion that has taken place thus far this afternoon and earlier debates on this bill, there's been a diversion of opinion. The long-term financial sustainability of our post-secondary institutions is a top priority, moving forward. However, the sustainability and viability of our sector is a shared responsibility. Increasing operating dollars so schools benefit on the backs of taxpayers or increasing tuition on students is not the solution. And we've heard that. We've heard that at delegations from students.

When our government invests over \$5 billion of taxpayers' dollars annually in operating funding for our colleges and universities, we need to ensure that money is being spent wisely. That doesn't account for the billions in tuition, including over a billion through OSAP, that students and their families are spending on education each and every year. Our government's response to the blue-ribbon panel report demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that college and university education will not be funded off the backs of students. Our government has committed to keeping the cost of post-secondary education low for students while providing the largest investment in over a decade to schools to provide them with the predictability and stability they need for the future.

Speaker, the members of the Durham four, which include myself; the Honourable Todd McCarthy; our finance minister, the Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy; and our representative from Ajax, Patrice Barnes—we've heard this regularly when we meet, as we do regularly, with the presidents of Ontario Tech and Trent Durham, and we certainly do from the new president of Durham College. So, once again, our government is committed to keeping the cost of post-secondary education low for students while providing the largest investment in over a decade to schools to provide them with the predictability and stability they need for the future.

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I talked a little bit earlier about sector accountability, and I can't overemphasize that point: the importance of ensuring that colleges and universities operate transparently and are accountable to students and taxpayers about how their money is spent. In my region, and I know that Minister McCarthy will attest to this as well, they do that well. They do that well. They have KPIs and other measures to ensure that the money is being spent and is accountable to students and taxpayers.

The Ministry of Colleges and Universities has already begun working with institutions on a financial accountability framework that will allow for early detection of financial challenges and require immediate action where challenges exist going forward. From governance practices, program offerings, day-to-day operations and everything in between, colleges and universities across the province need to become the very best possible version of themselves, and I know that Ontario Tech and Trent Durham and Durham College are striving to do that every day, every month. My colleagues in Durham region see evidence of that, and I'm confident that other colleagues

here in the Legislative Assembly see evidence of that as well.

This is not a change that's going to happen overnight, but it's one that's necessary so that students, families and taxpayers can have confidence that every dollar is being allocated appropriately and with complete transparency. Because at the end of the day, when it comes to ensuring a bright future for our students—and I know we're all committed to that—we cannot afford to provide anything less than a first-class education that is efficient, accountable and puts the needs of students first.

In summary, what I've described today are the first of many actions the government is taking as the government introduces a path forward where all partners, like Ontario Tech, Trent Durham, Durham College and the region of Durham, play a pivotal role in contributing to financial viability and creating supportive learning environments that prepare Durham students for great careers and, yes, success.

The province is supporting the financial sustainability of the post-secondary sector, as I said, and will provide all institutions with an inflation-based increase to their operating grants as well as offering more targeted support for the financial sustainability of publicly assisted colleges and universities. We're going to work with the post-secondary institutions to create greater efficiencies in operations, program offerings and sustainability of the sector so that they can continue to provide financial relief and predictability for students and families seeking access to affordable post-secondary institutions overall.

The government is continuing to work to ensure students have access to the right conditions to support their well-being and achieve success at colleges and universities. This legislation, if passed, will enhance student mental health supports, increase auxiliary fee transparency and help students plan early for their educational costs and, at the end of the day, help prepare them for great careers and their longer-term success as contributors to our economy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I asked a similar question earlier today, but when I was coming down Sunday, I had the exiting and the new rector of a university on the train with me coming to Union Station, and they were telling me how financially difficult it is and the government not following the recommendation of the blue-ribbon panel. But what they were telling me is that they received a new budget with an increase of \$13,000—\$13,000 for a university that is struggling. We have, what, three universities in French, and this government can't see the vision of giving more for our universities so that they can better serve the community?

So I ask you, \$13,000—you seem to have all the answers, so I'm going to ask you: What do you want them to do with the \$13,000, and how can they be more financially autonomous with \$13,000 and give good service to their francophone—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you very much.

Response?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Well, Speaker, through you, I've already indicated in my comments that the investment that we made is the single largest in Ontario's post-secondary system in over a decade.

What's also clear, though, is that under the Liberals, college and university ballooned in cost, with students having to pay for the increases. Unlike the Liberals, propped up by the NDP, we're not going to fund colleges and universities off the backs of students.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Next question.

Mr. Rick Byers: I very much appreciated the member's comments this afternoon—as usual, very well researched. And I appreciated as well his comments, the direct feedback he's had from some of the academic institutions in his area that's very, very relevant and direct. And I certainly also appreciated his comments and experience he reflected—his time as critic.

But I wanted to ask him a question about freedom of speech. It's intertwined with the academic mission of post-secondary institutions, but far too often, fears of professional or even personal retributions stand in the way of individuals expressing their views and opinions. So my question to the member is: What will the government be doing to protect freedom of speech on campus?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to my colleague for the question. The government's commitment to freedom of speech has not changed. As part of the free speech policy announced by the Honourable Doug Ford, the Premier, and our Minister of Colleges and Universities, the Honourable Jill Dunlop, they should be places where students freely exchange ideas and opinions in open and respectful debate—and I underscore “respectful debate.”

This also means ensuring that they follow the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Criminal Code, and ensure the protection of academic activities where students could share ideas in good faith. And Speaker, I know that would be your expectation as well.

We know that some institutions have not treated all professors and students and employees the same and can create multiple standards that members of the institution are held to, but by and large, there's a limited publication of the results of non-academic conduct cases, specifically the way that cases are handled and ensuring that there's a meaningful conclusion at the end of the process.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Next question.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to ask my friend from Whitby a question about student and staff mental health, because it's an issue he cares about, and I care about it too. I just recall an anecdote from my time as a university educator. I remember a student all of a sudden not coming to class. It was once, it was twice, and then on the third occasion I managed to get in touch with the student and found out that she'd had a very debilitating lapse, a mental health lapse. When I worked with her to get her an appointment at Carleton University's mental health and wellness services, we found out that there was an over six-month

waiting list. And I thought, for someone in an abject crisis, that's unacceptable. We have to do something about that.

One program we have in the city that would work for Carleton University students, staff, faculty is called Counselling Connect. It runs through our community health centres. It gives you up to three psychotherapy sessions online or in person, and the intake is within 48 hours. That's the goal. It's serving about 700 people a month right now.

So I want to ask the member if he's willing to think about an amendment to this bill to make sure we have community mental health services that can respond on that basis when someone is in crisis, within 48 hours.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, through you: In her capacity as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Colleges and Universities, the member for Burlington met with students, staff and institutions in every region of the province to learn about supports being offered and the challenges facing student mental health. I cited one example at Ontario Tech. The member from Ottawa Centre cited another model. And part of what the parliamentary assistant did here and saw were models across the province.

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Something that often came up during her consultations was that even at institutions with quality mental health services, students still had difficulty navigating the number of supports available to them. Bill 166 is intended to build off those consultations and would require institutions to have a mental health policy, publish it and, if necessary, allow the minister to intervene and issue directives—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Thank you. Next question.

Mr. John Fraser: I was listening quite intently to my colleague's remarks. He said that this was the biggest investment in post-secondary education in a decade. That's 10 years. That means that we spent more money 10 years ago, but everybody is saying that this is a historic investment. If he could sort that out for me, what that means, I'd like to know, because I do know that if you take a look at the investment into the campuses between 2003 and 2015, it's pretty significant investments that went into post-secondary education.

I guess the thing is—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm not done yet.

How would you describe saying you're going to do something great, but not putting real money behind it? What would you describe that as, my esteemed colleague?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, that was a very long preamble.

What I want to say—I'm reading from Hansard, and this is from our minister: “We provided \$1.3 billion in new funding for the sector. But to help institutions, we also provided the efficiency fund of \$15 million so that they can apply directly to the fund to be able to do those audits,” if that's what they want to do. “The shared responsibility for the students—we didn't see a tuition increase” at all. “We want to ensure affordability for students....”

I've provided the rationale for that. I provided the rationale for that. We don't want the education to be funded off the backs of students going forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Next question?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I remember fondly the by-election campaign in the winter of 2016, when the member for what was then the riding of Whitby—Oshawa, now the riding of Whitby, was elected for the first of three times. Now, of course, he's number 9, as the Minister of Finance likes to point out—the Maurice Richard number; the Gordie Howe number; the Norm Ullman number, as I recall, for the Maple Leafs.

He always stood with the students of Durham region. What does he have to say, then, about the transparency of this bill in terms of issuing directives, the proposed issuance of directives to colleges and universities on student costs, on textbook costs, on tuition fee costs? Is that a key part of this bill that motivates his support for this bill?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thanks to the minister for his question. What's underpinning all aspects of this bill is public engagement and consultation with all levels of academic institutions, whether it be students, faculty, other education workers on campus—all aspects of that consultation did occur, and it occurred in a transparent way. It occurred in a transparent way because as you move forward with particular directives, as an example, to help students succeed, you want to make sure that their voices are heard.

I've talked at length about mental health policy and implementing best practices, but overall, I fully support removing obstacles in the way of students, particularly getting the help they need and the support that they need, which is why I'll be voting in support of this important, groundbreaking legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Anishiniimowin.* It's a good day.

It's always an honour to be able to get up and speak in this place and to speak about the issues in Kiiwetinoong. But Bill 166, Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, 2024—one of the things that really jumped out at me is when we talk about the minister's directive. It says: "The minister may, from time to time, issue directives to one or more colleges or universities described in subsection (1) in relation to the manner in which their policies and rules address and combat racism and hate, including but not limited to anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia."

I know, just kind of going around who is speaking, it's not the people that typically have to fight racism. It's mostly non-Indigenous people, non-Black people that are speaking on this bill with regard to when we talk about racism. In order to address racism, you have to acknowledge that that exists, and I think it's important to acknowledge and accept that settlers have always been placed where they are being racist. I live with racism every day. I see it. It's water off the duck's back, and sometimes I just don't say anything when I hear it. I think it's

important to acknowledge that it certainly has an impact on racism. Racism is very—within different legislations within this government, it exists. I have some people coming in tomorrow, and they will speak about that.

But, Speaker, again, it's an honour to be able to speak on Bill 166, again, on behalf of the people of Kiiwetinoong. We have to understand: Kiiwetinoong is a very unique riding. It's about 70% First Nations people. There's 31 First Nations and four small municipalities. When we talk about universities, we have no universities in Kiiwetinoong. We may have satellite sites of, perhaps, colleges. But also, there are a lot of issues in Kiiwetinoong when we talk about housing, when we talk about the non-existence of mental health.

I know this bill is trying to speak about the importance of student mental health and then safe and inclusive campuses and transparency. But, Speaker, we can always do more. We can make sure that students are getting the appropriate services that they need in Kiiwetinoong or when they come out to urban centres such as Thunder Bay, such as Toronto, anywhere in Ontario.

But we also need to make sure that Ontario is addressing the financial crisis that successive governments have created in our post-secondary sector. As you know, without adequate resources, it will have little impact on the support and services available to students.

As part of Canada's journey—your journey—toward reconciliation with Indigenous people, educational institutions have been called on to increase the number of Indigenous students pursuing post-secondary education. For example, the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission note the need for more Indigenous health professionals as a way to improve the ability of the health care system to meet the health needs of Indigenous patients.

But we have to ask ourselves whether post-secondary institutions are meeting the needs of Indigenous students, and thus able to make good on these commitments, on the truth and reconciliation calls to action.

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Also, research has shown that post-secondary students are a highly stressed population. In recent years, the mental health status of post-secondary students has been identified as an important determinant of student academic success. So in trying to improve educational outcomes, it is essential that we look at the root causes of poor student mental health. In order to do that, we need to improve the social determinants of health for students, particularly First Nations students, before they get to the post-secondary level, such as housing conditions, poverty, the loss of culture and the loss of language.

A study from 2015 found that Indigenous students attending Canadian post-secondary institutions are more likely to experience mental health issues—including a diagnosis of depression or anxiety, increased self-harm, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and higher rates of binge drinking, marijuana and other substance use—compared to their non-Indigenous peers. There is a need for

research regarding culturally appropriate services and supports within post-secondary academic settings to address the mental health needs of these students.

Although the available evidence suggests that the provision of mental health services by individuals with similar cultural backgrounds or in culturally supportive settings may improve access to mental health services and to be protective against mental health concerns, the capacity for and availability of such resources is not there.

When we talk about different education levels, we need to understand the traumas former education systems have caused the students. Even if there have been some improvements, Indigenous communities have always had their own education systems based on oral traditions, community and centring of the spiritual view of the world.

The continued imposition of Eurocentric education is just one example of how colonialism is ongoing. The core cause of the gaps in the educational attainment of Indigenous peoples is rooted in colonialism, and the historic and continued ways that the colonial education system has an agenda of assimilation and continues to predominantly centre Western ways of learning and Eurocentric content. The implications and traumas of colonialism in turn create barriers to education access and success. Western and Eurocentric education systems have been imposed in the name of assimilation: Indian residential schools. Social impacts: distrust, hostility because of history, including Indian residential schools, also, low self-esteem and self-worth, alienation, high suicide rates.

Geography continues to be a barrier, including for communities in the north, including Kiiwetinoong and Mushkegowuk—James Bay, with the costs of transportation and housing and the challenges of being away from support networks.

Most Indigenous students are women, and they face additional barriers with family responsibilities and daycares being inaccessible. Indigenous students face racism, overt and subconscious, in education and don't have enough access to culturally appropriate supports.

I can say that there are even more barriers at the community level. I say that because it is difficult for areas where more poverty is experienced to access good educational resources and recruit and retain high-quality teachers. I was just up in KI just last week, and I saw that. That was the message I got from the community, the leadership of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug.

A 2011 survey said that 31% of First Nations students attend provincial schools—especially high schools—off-reserve because of the lack of schools on-reserve. Today, this number has not changed. Sometimes I'll see a post from people from down south each fall, each September, when their daughters, their sons leave for college. Meanwhile, in Kiiwetinoong, they're posting that their grade 9 daughter, their grade 9 son is leaving for high school for the whole year.

Indigenous education faces inequalities in funding, especially in areas considered rural and remote. Federal programs in education for First Nations communities are

insufficient, capping funding increases at 2% for decades and not accounting for the other needs, including libraries, sports and technology.

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CBC reported in 2016 that the Post-Secondary Student Support Program has seen an 18.3% decline in the number of students it funds since 1997. What exactly you see there in that report is exactly how racism, colonialism and oppression work, because we're not supposed to attend school.

We need to be able to address root causes. Indigenous communities and leadership have to have jurisdiction over education of future generations. We need to reject and reverse colonial education systems and re-Indigenize Indigenous children's learning curriculums. That's how you combat anti-Indigenous racism—not just a line where you provide a minister's directive.

We need to change educational curriculums for Indigenous students so that their education includes learning their languages, traditional knowledge and cultural values.

We need to bring parents and community, elders and women into the process of educating our young people to support their learning and identities, to build strong communities.

Funding for educational opportunities for children can no longer be inequitable. Our government and the federal government need to invest more in education and eliminate the inequality of funding. This means multi-year and long-term funding that actually addresses the needs of our communities, both in education and infrastructure and in our social determinants of health and other challenges our communities are facing.

We need to reduce poverty and the cost of food and housing.

For post-secondary institutions, more universities and colleges need to follow in the footsteps of those that have made Indigenous studies mandatory for all students, including Lakehead University, including Trent University.

We need to think of and invest in innovative learning models to offer experiential learning opportunities to Indigenous students. It's not in Ontario, but the University of Northern British Columbia offers courses like First Nations cultural heritage through moose-hide tanning and Dakélh studies dugout cottonwood canoe courses.

We also need to increase partnerships that can allow colleges and universities to provide more courses and degree opportunities for northern communities.

Ontario should be funding research to explore why First Nations students face such a high level of mental health and substance abuse issues at post-secondary institutions. This research can help us identify strategies for promoting mental health and wellness and improving the treatment of mental health and substance use issues of Indigenous post-secondary students. Such research should specifically explore the implementation and impact of recent efforts to create Indigenous spaces, cultural supports and increased

awareness of Indigenous issues among students and faculties across Ontario campuses.

Speaker, we need to make sure our learners have all the supports that they need. Meegweteh.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you to the member for his part of the debate today, and I just want to thank everyone in the House for their debate today. It's been very interesting, listening to both sides of the House, including the minister, speak on Bill 166.

Interesting enough, this is one of the emails that's very popular in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, asking us to support this bill. So, for the members of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, please know that I will be supporting Bill 166. It is an important bill that we do get passed.

To the member: Every student has a right to study at a college and university. You mentioned more Indigenous people in the medical field and I know we have our northern school of medicine that has spaces specifically for Indigenous people to apply.

One thing we want to do is remove barriers relating to mental health, racism and hate or costs that [*inaudible*] students from obtaining a better experience from their campuses. Will the member opposite support this bill to implement policies that will protect our students—all students?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: You know, it's pretty hard to support something that is very limiting. Well, they can go the full scope of implementing Indigenous anti-racism at these schools.

I outlined everything that I hoped to see. I just don't—I spoke 20 minutes focusing on Indigenous things. I think for far too long we've been in the background, listening. When we look at post-secondary education—we're not supposed to have post-secondary education. We're not supposed to be here. And I think it's important that you go further than that.

It's pretty hard for me to be able to support this bill, the way it is right now.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the member for Kiiwetinoong for that 20 minutes. It's always informative listening to you.

I just want to maybe, in the opportunity to respond to this question—if you could elaborate for the House some good practices in post-secondary education you've seen.

When I was, for a brief time—for nine months—a professor at Nipissing University, in the sociology department, they had a very active outreach program to recruit Indigenous students. But the Union of Ontario Indians, which was an organization—a queer organization—in the area, had an active role in shaping that outreach strategy, had an active role in thinking about the wellness services that would be available on campus.

Something, I think, that is often lost when we talk about students as facts and figures—some of the sad statistics you were talking about and how people are suffering—is that we need to be led by community and guided by community in post-secondary institutions.

Can you elaborate on any examples you're familiar with to help the government improve the bill?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Across Ontario, different colleges, different universities do a very good job of implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, which reflects on doing better.

Reconciliation is more than just putting up woodland art in these facilities. Reconciliation is more than just putting woodland art in your offices. The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement, and I think having Indigenous-led processes on how you're going to engage with Indigenous communities towards reconciliation to make sure that they're part of the decision-making processes within universities is really important.

I think I spoke about Lakehead and I speak about Con College here in Thunder Bay. I think it's very important that some universities reach out to them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I know how deeply the member for Kiiwetinoong—how much he cares about his riding. And I was so honoured to be welcomed to his riding, at Pickle Lake specifically, for the reopening of the ServiceOntario there. I know that he's an advocate for all residents and citizens of his riding. Would he agree, therefore, that the mental health supports for all, as proposed in Bill 166, is a good thing for his riding and all students across Ontario?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you for mentioning that trip to Pickle Lake. I've been here almost six years. It was the first time I got invited by this government to be part of an announcement—

Mr. Dave Smith: No, it wasn't. It was with me.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Second time.

Mr. Dave Smith: Second time.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: It was the second time. But it was the second time that I got invited for an announcement in my riding, but before that, never.

Going back to mental health, there's a lot of mental health issues happening in the north. To say things about mental health—I do support it—but I think what really speaks out is to start putting resources behind those announcements. It's important that there's resources for the colleges, that there's mental health resources for the universities, as well, again to make sure that the students who are there are safe and to make sure that their well-being is considered.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): It is now 6 o'clock. The House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt
Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day
Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,
Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
		Premier / Premier ministre
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
		Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
		Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Vaugcois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Vacant	Milton	