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Jeudi
5 juin 2025

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Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 5 June 2025

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 juin 2025

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Good morning, everyone. Let's begin with a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING CHILDREN
AND STUDENTS ACT, 2025
LOI DE 2025 SUR LE SOUTIEN
AUX ENFANTS, AUX ÉLÈVES
ET AUX ÉTUDIANTS

Mr. Calandra moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to child, youth and family services, education, and colleges and universities / Projet de loi 33, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives aux services à l'enfance, à la jeunesse et à la famille, à l'éducation et aux collèges et universités.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the minister.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Let me say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Markham–Unionville; the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler; the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services; and the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security.

It is, of course, a pleasure to rise today to talk about the bill that we have introduced, Bill 33.

Let me first quickly just highlight some of—where we've come.

As you know, Madam Speaker, since 2018, the government has been refocused on a mission to restore education in the province of Ontario—a back-to-basics system that puts students, parents and teachers first. As you know, in 2018, our children were certainly suffering under an education system that really wasn't reflecting the needs of the jobs of tomorrow. The results, when it came to reading and math, were certainly suffering. That is why the previous ministers moved very quickly to, as I said, restore a back-to-basics approach. Obviously, that was challenged somewhat when we faced a global health and economic emergency, but through that all, we did continue on with that progress of improving the education system for our children, and the results have been very, very, very encouraging.

This bill will highlight some additional changes that we're making in co-operation with other ministers—which is, again, a focus on improving outcomes for children across the province of Ontario.

Let me highlight, there are a number of things education-related in this bill—and I know the parliamentary assistants will also talk about some of the aspects of the bill that are unique, but I'll do a high-level approach to this.

Ultimately, what this bill does is what I said: It begins the process of restoring power back to parents, back to teachers, and focusing on outcomes for students.

One of the highlights of this bill and one of the first things I want to talk about—one of the parliamentary assistants will delve deeper into this—is the return of the school resource officer into all of our schools. Some of our school boards have continued with the school resource officer program. What this program was is a program that allowed police back into our schools. This was a very, I think, exciting program, and where it is undertaken still, currently, in the province of Ontario—I think some 30 of the 72 boards still have a program, in co-operation with local police forces.

What this bill will do is mandate that every school board will have to work with police forces, where a program is available, and we will assist in ensuring that there are programs available by working with police forces across the province of Ontario to assist them in developing programs. It allows officers back into our schools—into our high schools, into our elementary schools. Not only is it a safety function—yes, having police back in the schools—but it also gives our students the opportunity to connect in a very real way with police officers. It helps them understand the role of a police officer, helps to demystify it, and helps them understand that law enforcement is there to help them. And it restores a sense of security into our schools. The reaction from parents on this has been very, very exciting. The reaction, obviously, from our police forces has also been one of excitement—to be provided the opportunity to get back into our schools.

Just today, I was reading, from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board—one of those boards that has clearly been a challenge. They're excited to have officers back in their schools.

I'm going to leave it at that, because I think the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler and the parliamentary assistant will talk a bit more about that.

It's one of the things that I'm quite proud of in this bill. I, of course, acknowledge the work of the previous minister, Minister Dunlop, who was instrumental in helping to develop the program.

Another element of this bill is giving the Minister of Education the ability to approve names of schools and the changing of names of schools. I know, for some, that might appear to be a bit of an overreach. Some might argue that having the minister approve the names of every single school across the province of Ontario—every new school—or where a name change is happening is not only overreach, but it might take out local consideration or local priorities when it comes to the naming of a school. I acknowledge that it is more work for us. I acknowledge that it's more work for the ministry. But at the same time, what we have seen across the province of Ontario—and again, let me highlight the Toronto situation.

The city of Toronto, as you know, Madam Speaker, are undertaking a review of three schools at this time. They want to change the names of three schools—most notable, of course, is the name of Sir John A. Macdonald Collegiate Institute in Scarborough. This is a high school that has obviously been around for a very, very long time. We've had so much outreach from graduates of that school who are very proud to have attended Sir John A. Macdonald. But more importantly, what this is, in my estimation, is an overreach from the local board.

We can debate, and I would be very happy to debate with anybody at any time, the importance of history and the importance of preserving our history, the importance of teaching our history—the good parts of it, the bad parts of it—and not simply erasing it to answer to a small cadre of people who have demands.

Whether it's Sir John A. Macdonald or Ryerson or Henry Dundas—those are the three schools that Toronto is looking at renaming. They spent hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to decide whether they should rename their schools, and those are dollars that go directly out of the classroom for a project of renaming three schools—a project that is about erasing our history. That is something that I, as the minister; that is something that we, as the government—and I would hope, certainly, that all members would not condone.

That is why in this bill, if it is passed, the minister will have to approve changes of names. The minister will approve the name of every school in the province of Ontario. I acknowledge the fact that we are building a lot of schools across the province of Ontario. We have a massive building program. There are a lot of schools that are being built, and there are a lot of schools that are being renovated—more than at any other time in the history of the province of Ontario—but I'm excited to have that opportunity to be able to approve those names. We'll work with communities to do that. But no longer are we going to be basing the names of schools on how we can rewrite our history and how we can erase history. And I said very clearly that this bill also highlights the fact that, once passed, if passed and approved by this Legislature, that will be retroactive to January 1, 2025.

So, very clearly, to all of those who might still be considering erasing parts of our history, who might be considering changing the names of schools—let me just be very clear to them that they should stop. If they do

something that the ministry or the minister and the people do not approve of, we will force them to change the name back and maintain the existing name. I don't want to go too long on it, but this is very important.

In the rush to eliminate our history, in the rush to appease small parts of different communities, school boards—in particular, in the city of Toronto—have been nothing but gleeful in their attempts to do that.

I think the better approach is for us to acknowledge, to educate and to teach people the great things about our province, the great things about our country, and the great things that people have done to build what we have all said is the best country and the best province in the world, and we have to acknowledge those who helped make it that. At the same time, we can do that in a way that respects people. So that is why that part is in the bill.

Again, as I said very clearly, to any school board that is out there considering changing a name right now: This bill is retroactive, and on the assumption that it gets passed, we will ensure that our history remains a prominent part of how we name schools.

0910

Another part of this bill is communicating to our child care system—it's a small part. Right now, the Minister of Education is responsible for child care in the province of Ontario but does not have the ability to communicate directly with parents on issues that are very important to them—and in particular, on funding issues.

As you know, Madam Speaker, we are currently in the process of renegotiating a new child care agreement with the federal government—an agreement that, if we cannot come to terms with, will mean some serious and fundamental changes on how the program is delivered across the province of Ontario.

As you know, in April, I did send out a letter to service managers who organized the system for us, where I outlined the fact that in the absence of a new federal funding commitment for child care, fees would have to go up. I was surprised, at that time, to learn that I could not communicate directly with parents; that I could only communicate with service managers.

This small change allows me to keep parents up to date as we continue these negotiations with the federal government—so important for families across the province of Ontario. I completely acknowledge how important this is for families. That is why I think, as we negotiate over the next number of months, we have to keep families updated as best as we possibly can with every single aspect of those negotiations. The decision-making for families when it comes to child care is a very complex one, it is a very difficult one, and the earlier we can provide the information, I think the better it is for families.

The reason I'm so worried about this, as I highlighted to operators in April, is that the federal government, of course, has acknowledged that they are underfunding the system by about \$10 billion. I'm hopeful that we will come to an agreement when it comes to child care, but if we are unable to come to an agreement that sees the federal government fund its portion, then I think at the same time,

we have to tell parents as soon as we possibly can that that commitment is not there, and that will mean a change in the fee structure for parents.

That is why I've put that small piece in the bill—a small but very, very important part of the bill.

The other part of this, of course, is the update to how we assume responsibility for boards in the province of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, as you will know, currently, in the province of Ontario, we have assumed responsibility for one board: the Thames Valley District School Board—which is London and area—one of our largest school boards in the province, with an over \$1-billion budget. A recent report on that led to us assuming responsibility for that board—in essence, firing the trustees and putting a supervisor in place to bring the board back into a healthy position. They went from multi-year surpluses in that board to a \$17-million deficit. As you know, school boards are not allowed to continue with multi-year deficits—and certainly not annual deficits—without the approval of the minister. But without a path to balance, boards are often—not often. Honestly, it is very rare; I'll give them that. It's not used very often. But in this instance, we felt it was important that the ministry assume responsibility for that board.

We also have investigations currently under way in the Toronto Catholic District School Board, the Toronto District School Board, and the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. These are boards, again, that are facing multi-year deficits without an approved path back to balance.

Just to back up a bit—in order for us to make these decisions on how a board gets to be supervised, the Minister of Education is faced with an antiquated process that requires me to bring in a third-party auditor and then rely on a recommendation from a third party as to whether the ministry should assume its role, its responsibilities, and take over or assume responsibility for a school board. So, even in instances where we absolutely know that a board has gone off the rails, that they have no desire to come back into a balanced position, the minister must rely on a third party to report back and give me a recommendation.

This bill will change that. It allows the minister to not only assume responsibility without relying on a third party; it broadens the scope by which the minister might assume responsibility for a school board—not only for financial reasons, but for other reasons. It allows us to put ministry investigators directly in the position of reviewing, as opposed to looking at an outside investigative team to look at the finances. But it ultimately allows us to move much quicker, so that we can address the challenges that are being faced in school boards with respect to, more often than not, trustees who are refusing to put money into the classroom and are putting money in different areas.

You've heard, very recently, of course, that one school board in the province of Ontario sent a group of four trustees to Italy to buy art for a school and spent thousands of dollars on this excursion—literally over \$100,000, if I'm not mistaken, on buying art; expenses that were

totalled over \$12,000 each, for each of these trustees to be on this trip, for business class flights, expensive meals, limousines, the whole works. No expense was spared in helping these trustees go to Italy and buy art. That investigation found that each of these trustees owed \$12,000. It wasn't just the cost of the trip—then the money that was spent to help them deal with this challenge, bringing in a crisis communicator. They spent almost as much, if not more, frankly, on a crisis communicator, on legal fees to try to defend a trip that is, frankly, indefensible, not only in my estimation, but in teachers' and parents' estimation as well.

As I said at the news conference, can you imagine trying to convince a teacher who goes to Dollarama to buy supplies for their school that somehow a group of trustees needed to spend 12,000 bucks each to go on a trip to Italy to buy over \$100,000 worth of artwork?

Three of the trustees have paid it back. One of the trustees has basically said, "I'm not paying. I've had enough." They gave 2,000 bucks back, and the rest of it—"not my problem." What makes this trustee even more aggravating is, this trustee was actually an educator before—he's a retired educator, and I don't have the tools, as Minister of Education, to deal with that. But I will have tools, separately—and my tool will be to bring a bill to this House to specifically remove this trustee, fire this trustee from holding the position that he currently holds.

But the bill, if passed, allows us to deal with these types of situations more quickly.

0920

In other situations—I know we'll get the question at some point: "What's another situation?" Not only financial—hopefully, everybody can agree on financial. The bill also says the minister can step in in other situations. I know everybody is wondering, "Well, what does that mean? If the minister has had a bad day, he's going to take over a school board?"

Let's look quickly at the Peel situation, where Black students were not feeling comfortable in their own school, and the previous minister had to send an investigator into that school board and found things that none of us, I think, would agree with.

The minister's ability, the ministry's ability, to move quickly on clear financial mismanagement, on clear issues where students are not being put first, on issues where students are being divided, on issues where schools and trustees think that they're in charge of geopolitical events—the ministry does not and the minister does not have the tools to move quickly to address that. This bill is all about restoring that ability.

Let's be clear: The powers that we have given to school boards are powers that Parliament has devolved down to a school board. And what this bill does is—if passed—it restores some of those powers that we as Parliaments have given to boards, back to where they belong: into the Ministry of Education. I hope you will all agree that this is a very important tool in helping us ensure that students, parents and teachers come first in the education system.

I hope members will ultimately support the bill before them.

With that, I will cede the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The minister is sharing his time.

I recognize the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler.

Ms. Jess Dixon: It's very gratifying to be able to rise today and speak in support of this bill, but particularly about the aspects bringing police back to schools—the school resource officer program. I brought a motion forward last year to do exactly that, because I heard over and over again from parents across the province, from teachers and from police officers, especially in communities where the SRO program was removed, that something really important had been taken away from them, and taken away without real consultation. School resource officer programs connect students with trusted and trained adults—adults who are visible and consistent and able to intervene early. I heard from many officers who served in those roles.

I particularly want to call out Officer Chris Golder of the London Police Service. His daughter was a page here last year. I met Chris before the school boards in London removed their SRO program, Chris was one of the most dedicated and caring SROs I have ever heard of. He was not just a uniform in a hallway. He was a constant for children. He was somebody who listened. He was a trusted adult for children, across the years, who were facing real, personal challenges and had nowhere else to turn. Chris is an example of the type of person who was removed from those children's lives.

So to see this legislation that says that when a police service is willing to deliver a school resource officer program, a school must avail itself of it, is incredibly satisfying to me.

One of the reasons that I was so supportive of the SRO program is because I view it as an equity issue, predominantly. For many students, especially those in communities that deal more with violence or with instability or with fewer supports, that extra layer of that relationship-building with police can make a really, really key difference. The way that I view this is, police are a key part of our protective infrastructure, like EMS, like paramedics, and children and families should be able to access that protective infrastructure without fear and without alienation. It was very clear that there were accounts from children—predominantly Black and Indigenous children—who, because of history and experiences from their parents, had a negative connotation with police officers. The way that I look at it is, that is then a clear equity issue. We cannot have vulnerable students being taught, either implicitly or explicitly, that police are dangerous and, essentially, that police are not for people like them. I don't view that as a remotely tenable situation in our schools or in our community.

When you are denying access to that relationship-building opportunity that SROs offer, that denial is not neutral. Honestly, it disproportionately affects especially vulnerable children—children who are newcomers; chil-

dren of immigrants; racialized children; children who are coming from violent home lives, where they don't have access to any kind of trusted adult. To deny them the ability to form that relationship, as I said, is an absolute failure of equity. It's not justice. I view it as abandonment.

Ultimately, removing those officers in what was, in my opinion, an ill-thought-out, sort of politically motivated knee-jerk reaction, did a huge disservice to those children and to those families.

Ultimately, the SRO program—we now have the opportunity to entrench it and improve it, to make sure that it is done well, with guardrails in place. An SRO ultimately is not a surveillance officer; they are a bridge. They are a bridge to building a relationship of trust, a relationship of respect, in a neutral, friendly environment that many children and many families would not have access to. Ultimately, very small things—a handshake or a high-five in the hall, a sticker, a basketball game, a child going home to their parent and talking about a uniformed officer being kind to them. That is the type of thing that breaks down that inequitable access, that barrier, and ultimately creates a society where all children and their families have access to the same infrastructure.

With that, I will pass it over to my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Markham—Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: I rise today to speak in support of Bill 33, the Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025.

Since the minister's appointment, he has taken a hard look at the state of school boards in the province and the legislation that governs them. What we've seen is alarming: boards rewriting spending rules, wasting funds on perks and inflated salaries instead of directing resources to classrooms. When boards misdirect resources, it's parents, teachers and students who pay the price. Despite unprecedented investments, certain boards have prioritized bureaucracy and administration over student success.

That's why Bill 33, the Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025, is essential. It gives the minister the tools to act decisively, modernize outdated systems, and ensure accountability.

Let me share a few examples.

In July 2024, the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board sent trustees on a nearly \$190,000 trip to Italy to purchase religious art. Taxpayers footed the bill for luxury hotels and fine dining. A governance review exposed mismanagement, procurement failures, and trustees interfering in daily operations, damaging morale and governance. The minister has directed the board to repay travel and art expenses, as mentioned earlier, ensure meeting compliance, and submit a learning plan for trustees. These actions were delayed because of outdated rules. Bill 33 would change that.

At the Thames Valley District School Board, 18 senior staff stayed at the former SkyDome hotel for a retreat, despite a large budget deficit. They also increased executive salaries, violating compensation rules. During the pandemic, some senior officials even gave themselves bonuses of up to \$24,000. These moves occurred while

families were still recovering and student needs were mounting. The board promoted a role without trustee approval, increasing its pay by \$40,000. In response, we appointed a supervisor to oversee the board's financial and operational decisions. Bill 33 will help us interfere faster in cases like this.

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Unfortunately, financial missteps such as these are not isolated events happening at one or two school boards. They are happening even at the largest school board, the Toronto District School Board, which has also demonstrated poor financial management.

In December 2024, the Auditor General of Ontario found, in a report on the TDSB, a lack of documentation, ineffective use of funds, and inefficient planning. Despite declining enrolment, the board added two new associate director positions, relied on one-time pandemic funding, and deferred school repairs, leading to increased costs. Now facing a deficit of tens of millions of dollars and depleted reserves, the board risks filing a non-compliant budget. Meanwhile, the board has wasted time and money on renaming schools.

Bill 33 proposes giving the ministry the authority to approve school names, ensuring taxpayer funds go towards student success.

This pattern of fiscal mismanagement is not isolated. The Toronto Catholic District School Board and Ottawa-Carleton District School Board have both been running deficits for years. Deloitte found the Toronto Catholic board could have done more to avoid these financial issues. Similarly, since the 2021-22 school year, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has been reporting in-year deficits and is reporting another shortfall this year. At the end of the 2023-24 school year, the board had completely depleted its reserves.

Perpetually running deficits is not sustainable. This is why, for these two boards, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board, the minister has appointed financial investigators.

In summary, Bill 33 provides the tools needed to act swiftly when boards mismanage funds. I commend the minister for holding boards accountable, and I urge all members to support this important legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: It's a pleasure for me to join my colleagues the Minister of Education and the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security for today's second reading debate. We're here today to speak in favour of Bill 33, the Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025.

As the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, I am, of course, here to talk about a number of new proposals in Bill 33 that will improve the child and youth services sector.

Before I do that, I want to voice my strong support for one section of the bill that was championed by none other than the amazing Minister of Education, the Honourable

Paul Calandra. Through this legislation, our government will instruct school boards to mark June 1, Ontario Day, as a dedicated time for student learning. Four years ago, I introduced Bill 173, An Act to proclaim Ontario Day, in this House. I did this because Ontario is truly an amazing place to live, work and raise a family, and I think we ought to be very proud of our province. So I commend my colleague the Minister of Education for taking action to ensure that students learn more about Ontario's history and, rightfully, take pride in it.

Ontario is a land of opportunity. We want to see all young people achieve lifelong success. That's why we've been working to improve the child welfare system, to focus on services that prioritize safety and protection and that are high-quality, culturally appropriate, and responsive to the needs of children, youth and families.

Throughout this process, we have consulted with our community partners about how we can better protect children and youth. I sincerely thank everyone who took the time to share their thoughts and their experiences with us throughout this process. The measures that we're proposing build on the feedback as well as the recommendations from the Ontario Ombudsman.

If passed, our government's proposals would update the legislative framework of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act to strengthen the accountability of children's aid societies and prioritize the well-being of children, youth and families, and would support child and youth well-being, so that all children and young people receiving support and services from a children's aid society have access to, and are aware of, as well as understand the role of the Ombudsman. Additionally, we want to make sure that children and young people receiving services from children's aid societies know how to contact the Ombudsman when they have a complaint about the care that they're receiving.

As I mentioned earlier, our work to improve the child welfare system is a continuous effort, and I believe it's important to acknowledge and build on the improvements that have been made already to date.

As you're aware, Speaker, our government announced a third-party review of 37 non-Indigenous children's aid societies last October. This review is just another step that we're taking to help ensure that the needs of children and youth are being met by service providers, including children's aid societies.

Every child, every youth in this province deserves to be supported and protected. That's why we established new regulatory requirements to improve quality of care as part of the quality standards framework. This important framework sets out enhanced requirements around pre-admission and placement assessments, safety plans, as well as plans of care. I'm confident that we can build on these changes and better protect children and youth by developing personalized supports and services that meet their unique needs.

As part of Bill 33, we're proposing to strengthen the accountability of children's aid societies. This involves prioritizing the well-being of children, youth and families

by updating the legislative framework of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017. It also involves increasing the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services' oversight of certain financial decisions made by children's aid societies. Improving transparency and financial sustainability is critical to ensuring that societies use their funding to prioritize the well-being of children, youth and families. We want to help societies avoid budget deficits, and we want to make sure that taxpayer dollars allocated to child welfare are being used effectively.

I'm very proud to add that there's strong support within the sector for the reforms that we are proposing.

In fact, Solomon Owoo, the CEO of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, recently had this to say: "While we are still in the process of reviewing the proposed legislation, we support the government's desire to improve the lives of children, youth and families receiving services from child welfare agencies."

That's a very positive statement, and I welcome Mr. Owoo's feedback and support.

I will add that these proposals build on existing ministry oversight and accountability tools aimed at improving the efficiency and overall effectiveness of the child welfare sector.

Our government is taking action to protect children and youth in care.

In fact, last April, the Legislature unanimously passed the Supporting Children's Futures Act. That bill included provisions to modernize and standardize important safeguards for children receiving licensed out-of-home care. We strengthened the ministry's oversight of foster care and group homes, including stronger licensing enforcement tools to hold licensees accountable. We also enhanced privacy protections for people who are currently or were formerly in the child welfare system by restricting access to personal childhood histories and protection records. And we increased the frequency that children's aid societies are required to visit children in their care, such as children in foster homes and group homes, to better support their safety and their well-being. These changes represented a significant step forward. But we're not stopping there.

We're proposing to require children's aid societies to review and to update their bylaws and make them available to the public to increase consistency and transparency. The details of these proposed changes will be outlined in future regulations.

We would also consult with our sector partners on developing regulatory requirements for children's aid societies. And we would require them to publicly post board of directors' meeting dates and minutes to increase transparency about their governance.

We want to ensure that all children and youth receiving services from the child welfare sector are aware of and understand their rights, and that they know how to speak up when they have a complaint about the care they're receiving.

Thanks to my colleague the Attorney General, our proposals would, if passed, expand the Ombudsman's

investigative powers to include complaints about children's aid society services provided to youth between the ages of 18 and 22 who are eligible for or who are participating in the Ready, Set, Go Program. This would improve the consistency of the Ombudsman oversight with respect to mandated services provided by children's aid societies. The proposals that we're introducing today would also amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act to clarify when children's aid societies need to inform children and youth about the Ombudsman. That includes youth who are eligible for or who are participating in the Ready, Set, Go Program.

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Speaker, just to provide some context, the Ready, Set, Go Program was launched in April 2023 with a \$170-million investment over three years to improve outcomes for youth leaving care in the child welfare system. This program provides youth transitioning from the child welfare system with the additional services and supports that they need to prepare for adulthood and to succeed after leaving care. As part of the program, children's aid societies help children plan for the future at an earlier age. Starting at age 13, they begin learning practical life skills and planning educational goals. At age 15, the emphasis expands to financial literacy and preparing for the workforce—including managing personal finances, setting up a bank account, grocery shopping, résumé building, and how to access social services and other supports. The program allows youth to continue receiving supports and services from a society until the age of 23—that's up from the age of 21.

The Ready, Set, Go Program includes monthly financial assistance to provide youth with better quality of life and help them maintain housing so that they can focus on their studies or perhaps employment opportunities. Youth in the program receive \$1,000 per month at age 21, and at age 22 they receive \$500 per month. They're also able to work up to 40 hours a week at Ontario's minimum wage without seeing an impact on their financial supports. Youth pursuing a post-secondary program or training in skilled trades and apprenticeships receive an additional \$500 per month, starting at age 20.

The Ready, Set, Go Program has supported thousands of youth leaving care since its introduction in April 2023. In the first year, the program served 4,444 youth between ages 18 and 22. In the second year, the program continued to have an important impact, by reaching an additional 3,425 youth between the ages of 18 and 22, between April 1 and December 31.

In 2023, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services also conducted a review of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, which came into force on April 30, 2018. The act governs a range of important services, such as adoption, child welfare and protection services, Indigenous-led family services, licensed out-of-home care services and youth justice services. By law, we must review the act every five years, and every review shall address the rights of children and young persons described in the act. The review involved extensive en-

agement with children, youth, families, service providers, sector experts and community organizations, as well as First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous representatives from across the province.

The 2023 review and engagement built on six key areas: (1) child and youth rights, which assessed how rights are respected when receiving services; (2) First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, which considered developments on Indigenous-led models of child and family services and assessed how well services are meeting obligations, such as providing culturally appropriate services and consultations with communities; (3) equity and anti-racism, which assessed how we're addressing overrepresentation in services and opportunities to further embed equity and anti-racism within the act; (4) prevention and community-based care, which looked at how to increase access to holistic prevention, early identification and early intervention services, including a focus on family well-being, community-based care and protection from sexual exploitation; (5) quality services, which looked at the ways to improve the quality of services, with a particular focus on licensed out-of-home care, youth leaving care, and anti-human trafficking; and (6) accountability, which assessed enabling greater accountability through oversight, governance, financial performance, data, and outcomes measurement.

As I mentioned earlier, we want to be sure that children and youth in care understand their rights and how to make a complaint. For that reason, the ministry will consult with children's aid societies and out-of-home care licensees on proposed regulatory requirements to post age-appropriate information about children and youth rights and internal complaints processes in the areas of a facility that are accessible to children and youth. This would align with existing requirements for societies and out-of-home care licensees to post information about the Ombudsman and similarly align with requirements in other care settings. Children and youth would feel more supported and heard by having an increased awareness of the Ombudsman's office, their rights, and the complaints processes related to the service providers that are supporting them.

Speaker, I believe we're making progress as we strengthen and improve the child welfare system. Over the past 10 years, the average number of children and youth in care has decreased by more than 28%, and the average number of ongoing open protection cases has decreased by about 48%. More families are being supported earlier, so more children and youth can stay with their parents whenever it's possible.

That said, we recognize there's more work to be done. We will continue to consult with experts, with advocates and community partners to improve supports and services for all children and youth in our province. Similarly, we will continue to engage regularly with First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous representatives and service providers on how we can best meet the unique needs of Indigenous children and families and communities requiring services. This includes improving coordination between the provincial child welfare system and Indigenous-

led models of child and family services operating pursuant to Indigenous laws. Their input is vital to ensuring the success of our government's vision of leaving no child behind.

Together, we'll continue to take steps forward to improve Ontario's child welfare system, because every child and every youth in our province deserves a safe, loving and stable home and to have the resources they need to succeed and thrive. Passing Bill 33, the Supporting Children and Students Act, will help us achieve that goal.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Today I have the pleasure to speak about our Supporting Children and Students Act. If passed, this bill would strengthen oversight, accountability and transparency in our world-class post-secondary education system.

Every day across Ontario, our colleges and universities are building the workforce of tomorrow—a workforce that is dynamic, highly skilled and ready to face whatever may come our way. And as we always have, our government continues to ensure our colleges and universities are laser-focused on preparing students for success.

Since becoming the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security, I've had the privilege of visiting many of our post-secondary institutions, and I can tell you from first-hand experience that Ontario is home to some of the brightest graduates and researchers in the world.

The people of Ontario are the greatest asset we have, and as our government has said since our historic re-election, we'll do whatever it takes to protect Ontario, and that includes protecting our students. By creating the right conditions for students to succeed, both during their academic journey and in their future careers, Ontario will continue to build a strong, resilient economy.

All students in Ontario deserve transparency, accountability and fairness when embarking on their post-secondary journey.

That's why, today, I'm proud to join Minister Calandra and Minister Parsa to highlight the incredible work being done for the post-secondary sector through the Supporting Children and Students Act. To put it simply, the proposed measures in this bill would put students first, ensuring their success as they learn the skills they need to lead our critical industries for decades to come. These measures would provide greater clarity to students and their families, increase consistency, and foster trust in our world-class post-secondary education system.

The first area I'd like to address is our decisive action in this bill to increase transparency around tuition and other fees.

Our government has always had the backs of hard-working students and their families. We know every dollar counts for Ontario households, and we're ensuring maximum clarity for each dollar students spend on post-secondary education.

We've heard from students and their families that it is difficult to find detailed information about tuition costs and the full scope of fees they are being charged for their education—including the purpose of each fee, which services the fees are funding, and which fees they can opt out of—which is why, if passed, Bill 33 would enable our government to require publicly assisted colleges and universities to publish detailed information about tuition and ancillary fees and how they are used. Last year, we took action to make sure that the costs of textbooks and other learning materials were accessible and transparent for students and their families. And now we're taking it one step further by making sure tuition and ancillary fees are clear and consistent across institutions. These detailed breakdowns would be posted online for current and future students to easily access. If passed, we would also explore what fees can and should be optional. For some of these fees, students are already able to opt out. This bill would ensure that it is abundantly clear which fees are optional and how students can opt out if they so choose.

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As we always have, we're going to be consulting with the sector to understand which fees are necessary, what fees may not be, and when that opt-out process could begin, making sure there are no disruptions to student services or in the delivery of our world-class education.

Hard-working students and their families deserve to know where their money is going and that every dollar is well spent in pursuit of their education. And through Bill 33, our government would make that happen.

In addition, we know that admissions processes vary widely by institution and can be unclear to students and their families.

That is why, through this bill, we would also increase transparency in the admissions process by requiring post-secondary institutions to clearly outline their merit-based admissions policies. When prospective students are trying to better themselves through higher education, they deserve to know the standards they are being evaluated against, and those standards should be directly related to their academic achievements and potential for success in Ontario's economy. We know our colleges and universities are already home to the best and brightest this country has to offer, but for many prospective students, the application requirements can be confusing. So through this legislation, if passed, we would take the mystery out of applying for post-secondary education, ensuring our students know exactly what they need to begin achieving their full potential at a college and university.

Let me be abundantly clear: Our government will always ensure students of all backgrounds and abilities have pathways to access post-secondary education in Ontario.

For example, we recently announced that we are investing \$10 million to create new scholarship opportunities for First Nations students interested in pursuing careers in resource development. These scholarships are breaking down barriers for First Nations students to get the skills

needed to succeed as leaders and innovators in this highly demanded sector.

This is on top of our numerous other accessibility measures for under-represented students accessing higher education, including:

- \$90 million annually to support students with disabilities and to provide enhanced mental health services;

- over \$40 million for programs enhancing post-secondary accessibility and employment outcomes;

- \$9.5 million annually for Pathways to Education, a not-for-profit that provides academic, financial, social and one-on-one supports to youth in low-income communities in Ontario to help them graduate from high school and transition into post-secondary education; and

- \$11.4 million annually in access and inclusion programs at colleges and universities that provide outreach, transition and retention support to students who are facing barriers to accessing and succeeding at post-secondary education.

If passed, I look forward to the extensive consultations we will have with our sector to understand their current admissions processes and bring better clarity to our prospective students so we can keep producing the incredible leaders and innovators our province is known for.

Speaking of innovation, we know that groundbreaking discoveries are happening in our colleges and universities—discoveries that drive our economy and improve the lives of people in Ontario and across all of Canada. Research as valuable as ours needs to be protected. Now, more than ever, it is crucial for our government to bolster research security to safeguard our province's significant investments in Ontario-based research and mitigate any potential threats of foreign interference or economic uncertainty.

Through Bill 33, if passed, we would strengthen a unified approach across our institutions by requiring all publicly assisted colleges and universities to develop and implement formal research security plans. This will protect our discoveries so that Ontario can continue to produce, commercialize, and drive research in our key sectors. Ontario is already leading our country in research security, serving as a model for other jurisdictions. With Bill 33, we are building on Ontario's existing framework, ensuring the province will continue to lead in responding to emerging and evolving risks in order to protect our workers, our economy and our future. We know we are strongest when we work together, which is why we will consult with the sector on best practices for implementing these research plans and eliminating duplication with federal or other security measures of equal calibre.

I want to be clear: As I have said many times this morning, should this bill pass, we will be undertaking extensive consultation with the sector, including students, to shape and implement these proposed changes in the months ahead. We understand the challenges institutions are facing since the federal government's unilateral decision to reduce the number of international students. And we will take the time to get this right so that our

world-class colleges and universities can continue delivering excellent education for our students.

If the bill passes, we will not be bringing forward any regulations until consultation is completed. Colleges and universities and other sector stakeholders will hear more in the coming months on consultation to inform implementation, timing, and development of any forthcoming regulations.

To close, when students choose Ontario's world-class colleges and universities to pursue their post-secondary education, they deserve to know where their fees are going, what criteria they need for admission, and how their research will be protected.

Through the Supporting Children and Students Act, our government would be ensuring that colleges and universities are taking responsible measures to protect our students as they prepare for successful careers that will strengthen Ontario's economy for decades to come.

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 preparing students to make successful contributions to our workforce.

That is why, as our government always has, we are putting student success at the forefront of proposing the Supporting Children and Students Act. Together, these proposed measures would ensure our post-secondary sector continues to be transparent and accountable.

As we always have done, our government will do whatever it takes to uphold Ontario's world-class post-secondary education system and ensure students are ready for the jobs of tomorrow, because when we protect students, we protect Ontario. The Supporting Children and Students Act does exactly that. I'm confident that the initiatives outlined in this bill will protect our students, our workforce and our economy. I ask for your support as we move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: My question is for the Minister of Education.

Let's review this government's record a moment: \$6.35 billion out of the education system under their tenure. They've driven 46,000 qualified teachers out of the education system. They've cut special education programming to the point where parents are sending their kids off to school in the morning not even knowing if they will be safe, let alone if they will learn anything. They can't assure parents that the school bus will show up on time, that their children's school will not flood and does not have lead in the drinking water, and that the ceiling will not crumble over their heads.

Why is the minister grabbing more power to himself when it's very clear that it's the minister who should be put under supervision?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think the question in itself highlights the fact that the NDP and the opposition are probably going to vote against the bill, because what they don't want us to do is assume responsibility for the over—it's a \$40-billion ministry. We spend—one of the most on

education than anybody in the Western world, for the love of God.

We want to ensure that the money we're spending on education goes to students, parents and teachers, so that our kids can graduate with the best results possible. It is a responsibility of the Ministry of Education, of the Minister of Education, to ensure that those dollars are spent correctly. This puts the responsibility back with the ministry and the minister.

The member, in voting for this bill, can hold us directly responsible to ensure that the commitments that we make and the dollars that we're spending live up to the expectations that we're setting for our students. That's why I'm hoping that the member will support the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I have to say that I was very hopeful when I saw, last week, the minister stand up to table a bill on education. I was certainly hoping that the bill would address the important and concerning shortcomings in our education system, such as the shortage of teachers, mental health support, crumbling infrastructure, and support for special needs. Those are just examples in areas that need attention—yet this bill doesn't do anything for that.

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So I will ask the minister: When and what will you do to fix the problem, at least—and I will focus on just one issue: the important shortage of teachers, especially in our francophone schools.

Hon. Paul Calandra: There's so much to unpack in that question.

We have school boards across the province of Ontario that have money in their capital accounts that they're not spending to repair schools.

But leaving that aside, we have record levels of funding to build new schools; record levels of funding to repair schools. The reason that we're having to do that is because we inherited a massive infrastructure deficit across the system. You don't rebuild a school in an afternoon. You don't build a new school in an afternoon. It's something that we've been doing since 2018.

When it comes to the teacher supply shortage—it manifested itself when the Liberals made a change on how we educate students across the province of Ontario. We've heard from teachers, we've heard from educators themselves that it was the policies of the Liberal government that have led to this.

The Minister of Colleges and Universities, in this budget, has—I think it's more than \$55 million to graduate more students.

We are focusing on getting more educators in the classroom to fix the mistakes that we inherited from—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Questions?

Hon. Zee Hamid: I might as well continue with the Minister of Education.

We've all seen deeply concerning examples of school boards spending education dollars on luxury trips abroad, high-end conferences, and multi-day retreats in downtown hotels.

Can the minister please speak to how Bill 33 strengthens the government's ability to investigate, supervise and, if necessary, intervene when school boards mismanage taxpayer funds and lose focus on their core responsibility, which is student learning?

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's a good question. At the heart of it, that's what this bill really is about. It is about ensuring that the funding that the people of the province of Ontario provide to school boards is used for the purpose that it's intended: educating students, giving the teachers the tools and the resources that they need to give us the best students possible.

The system that we operate now is an antiquated one, where the Minister of Education, who's responsible for education, needs to hire somebody else to tell him—in this instance, me—whether a board that has gone completely off the rails should be supervised.

This bill allows me to move quickly, so that things like what we're seeing in Peel, in Toronto, in Ottawa—we don't have to let sit and manifest over years. We can step in quickly and put the funding back where it belongs: into the classrooms.

I am ready to be held accountable for those decisions that we are making, and this legislation allows me to be held accountable.

I hope the opposition will agree that it is time we reassert our influence over the education system for the betterment of students.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Parents expect to have a say in their children's schools, and they deserve to have a say in their children's schools. Right now, they have that say through their democratically elected trustees. The school board has to consult. Most trustees hold many consultations in their community, and parents know that if they have a concern or a question about what's happening in their child's school, they can go and meet with the trustee. If they don't think the trustee is actually serving their interests, they can elect a different trustee in the next election.

But what this government wants to do is to appoint a Conservative government insider from Toronto who is not required to consult with anybody, to listen to anybody. We've seen that with supervisors in boards. We're seeing that right now with Thames Valley. The supervisor is not speaking to a single parent in the community. They can make any decision they want. Parents can't even go to court to overturn that supervision.

So why doesn't the minister respect the rights of parents to have a say in their children's schools?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I do respect the rights of parents to ensure that their students are educated in a way that makes them ready for the jobs of tomorrow. That's what I expect.

To be clear, school boards exist because Parliament allows them to exist. That is all.

In this instance, Parliament, with this bill, is reasserting, reassuming, some of those powers that we devolved to school boards. We're taking those powers back.

When the member talks about London—there are numerous NDP members of provincial Parliament from London. Are they not answering their phones? I know my colleagues will deal with education issues.

I can tell you this, Madam Speaker: In Markham—Stouffville, we elected, as a school board trustee—they elected a white supremacist racist, and we couldn't get rid of the person. Do you know why? Because nobody knows who the trustees are. They don't come out and do things that they're supposed to do. Their job—by Parliament—is to deal with a budget. That's what their job is. They're not doing it—and when they don't, we're going to assume responsibility, we'll fire them, and I have no problem with doing it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I'm not against financial accountability. We expect that much of the government, and definitely, school boards that spend public money should be accountable as well.

However, I'm very concerned about the control measures contained in that bill for those school boards that have exemplary governance practices, that have a stellar record in terms of performance, of student success.

I'm just wondering, what are you going to do to ensure that you're not punishing those school boards to get at the few bad actors?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I agree with the member. This isn't about the good actors in the education system. This is about going after those who are not doing their job.

To be clear, it's not just about financial challenges. That, for the most part, is what this bill deals with. But you do have instances, as I talked about in my speech, in Peel, where Black students weren't feeling comfortable to go to school, where there continue to be problems with anti-Black racism in the Peel District School Board that are not being addressed by the school board.

As minister, I need to be able to move in and make the changes that are needed so that students can feel safe and parents can feel safe sending their kids to school. I will not apologize for doing that. This bill gives me the power to go back and do that. And we will do that. I shouldn't have to wait months or years for somebody to tell me to do the right thing.

This bill allows us to reassume the power that we once had that was devolved and that now needs to come back to the ministry to ensure students, parents and teachers have the best ability to get our kids graduated for the jobs of tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I am rising today, as the MPP for Ottawa West—Nepean and as the official opposition shadow minister for education, to speak about this govern-

ment's Trumpian education bill with another ironic title: Supporting Children and Students Act.

I want to start by saying that this is really personal for me, as a parent of three children in our education system in Ontario—and two of them are actually here watching us today. Say hi, Luc and Clara.

They experience, every single day, the impact of this government's cuts to education. And Minister, you could actually look up at them, if you wanted, and see two of the people who are experiencing the effects of this government's cuts day in and day out—a school bus that doesn't arrive on time, not enough teachers in the school, nobody to fill in when a teacher is sick for the day, not enough educational assistants.

For a psychological assessment, we got told to go to a private provider. The school board just outright told us there was no way that we were ever going to get one, if we had to wait, through the publicly funded system.

This is their education. This is their future. This is what you're doing here in this House with your decisions. These are the kind of kids you're impacting—their whole future that you're shaping through these decisions here.

So I want you to think about that—that this isn't just about debate; it isn't just about the kinds of behaviours that we've seen this week from this government. It is about our children, and it is about their best interests, which we should be prioritizing.

I want to take a step back for a minute and talk about what has happened this week and talk about what has happened this month and talk about what has happened this year.

This government has quite a track record just this year. The year started with an unnecessary election that disenfranchised many people in Ontario.

I spoke to so many people, in the days before the election was called, who said they were about to leave the country, as they normally do for the month of February. They were leaving before the election started, they weren't coming back until after the election ended, and they felt completely disenfranchised by this government. They felt like this government didn't respect their right to have a say.

1010

I spoke to many seniors and people living with disabilities who were worried about their capacity to make it out to the polls on election day because of the snow and the ice. We did our best to make sure that everybody was connected with Elections Ontario in a way that would allow them to vote. But they could only do that if we were able to connect with them. The government's snap election meant that many people didn't even have the information they needed to know about how they could vote and about where their polling station was.

Then, after that unnecessary election, the government refused to call the Legislature back for six weeks. So for the first three and a half months of this year, in which the government said they had such an urgent agenda to stand up to Trump, they couldn't even be bothered to recall this House so that we could sit, so that they could bring for-

ward proposals and we could debate them on behalf of the people of Ontario.

They've used that delay in recalling the Legislature to ram legislation through, now that we are here. In fact, on seven different bills, they have moved time allocations, saying that we're not allowed to have any committee study of the bill. So the public aren't allowed to come for six of those bills, including the budget, and tell their legislators what they think of the proposals the government is putting forward and what they would like to see in it. They have shut down debate here, so even as MPPs elected to represent people, we're not allowed to bring forward the voices of our constituents on the legislation that they're proposing.

They did force through a bill yesterday that tramples on First Nations treaty rights, that breaks an election promise to the people of Chatham-Kent-Middlesex, and that creates special law-free zones where the government can do literally anything they want. No laws at all will apply in those zones, whether we're talking about labour laws, child labour laws, health and safety measures that are meant to protect the people of Ontario, environmental protections. We could put children to work, we could wipe out species, we could poison the water, and all of it is perfectly legal because of this government's legislation. They didn't even want to hear from the people of Ontario about this. They wouldn't take the bill on the road to the communities that are going to be affected by it. They shut down committee hearings. They wouldn't even take the time to consider it at third reading, with all the galleries full of people who will be deeply affected by this bill. They were not interested in that.

They think that they deserve all the power in the province of Ontario, with no say from the people of Ontario and a complete lack of accountability or guardrails.

Now they have this Trumpian education bill which is seeking to do the same thing in our education system. The minister is trying to give himself all the power without any kind of accountability or oversight. Parents will have no say anymore about what happens in their children's schools. Their democratically elected trustees will not have the power to take their concerns and their questions, and take them into account in shaping a budget. It will be the minister, with no oversight, no guardrails—not even the ability to challenge his decisions in court—who will be making the decisions for all of our children.

This is a government, as I said, that already has a track record of cutting the funding that our children need to have safe and healthy schools; cutting the funding that our children need to actually have a qualified teacher or education worker in our schools; cutting the funding that our children need to be on a school bus in the morning that shows up on time, that takes the correct route, and that doesn't spend more than an hour getting to school. This is a government whose funding cuts mean that our children are in special education programs that can't even keep them safe, let alone provide them with any kind of learning support.

When the minister says we should just trust him because he's more trustworthy than democratically elected trustees—well, we've seen what happens when this government is directly in charge of schools—and that's the provincial schools, which are, if anything, in even worse shape. There are so many allegations of abuse, harassment, discrimination, crumbling schools, and lack of education that this government has already paid out \$23 million in lawsuits, and yet there are at least three current or pending lawsuits that I'm aware of. That's this government's track record when they directly control education. I don't think a single parent in Ontario wants to actually see that in our children's schools—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize. It is now time for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Today, I rise to commend and congratulate the outstanding individuals in my riding of Richmond Hill who have been recognized with prestigious honours for their leadership, compassion, and community service.

I'm proud to recognize the King Charles III Coronation Medal recipients Mul Raj Sethi, Ross Toms, C.S. Leung, Maryam Rashidian, Michael Lai, and Stephen Yau. I'm also honoured to receive the medal from the Premier.

I would also like to acknowledge Mina Mawani on receiving the Order of Ontario for her work as CEO of Dixon Hall, a multi-service charity uplifting at-risk populations in Toronto.

I'm further thrilled to recognize Noah Bryan on receiving the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers. Through his advocacy for hypertension awareness and water-borne disease testing, Noah truly exemplifies youth leadership.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge the 25 recipients of this year's Richmond Hill Volunteer Achievement Awards, each of whom has dedicated countless hours to build a stronger and more connected community.

I'm proud of you in Richmond Hill.

CONFLICT IN MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Chris Glover: This may be my last chance to speak in the House before it recesses for the summer, so I wish to take this opportunity to relay a conversation I had with a Canadian doctor who has been working in Gaza for the past year. She described horrific events. There are tens of thousands of people who have been told to move once again. She said that thousands of people are now living without any shelter, not even tarps or tents. They are exposed entirely to the elements. In the hospital every day, she treats the victims of bombings, gunshot wounds, and starvation. She said that people are dying in their homes,

people are dying in the streets, and people are dying in the hospital.

Other Canadian doctors have also reported similar events.

Dr. Deirdre Nunan said that 1,400 health care workers have been killed and that the hospital where she works, the Gaza European Hospital, was attacked on May 13 with air strikes, and 60 people were killed.

Dr. Sarah Lalonde said that one of her patients she treated for a gunshot wound is now dying of starvation.

Dr. Rizwan Minhas said that innocent people are being killed in mass numbers. Gaza has the highest number of child amputees per capita in the world. He also said that Amnesty International, Doctors Without Borders, Jewish Voice for Peace, and the International Court of Justice are all calling what is happening in Gaza a genocide.

Canada is obligated, under the Geneva Convention, to ensure that aid is delivered impartially, and that humanitarian access is protected. As legislators, we must ensure that Canada lives up to its Geneva Convention obligations and that—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members' statements?

SENIORS MONTH

PRIDE MONTH

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I recognize two significant observances this June, Seniors Month and Pride Month, both of which hold deep personal meaning for me.

Seniors Month—this year will be the very first time Ontario marks it and proclaims it as Seniors Month, and it forever will be due to my private member's bill. By officially recognizing older adults, we are ensuring their contributions to our communities are forever celebrated, subsequently supporting the people who have built up our communities. It provides us with the opportunity to showcase local organizations that contribute to the health and well-being of our older adults.

For example, in my community, there are so many amazing not-for-profits, like Aurora Seniors Association and the Newmarket Seniors' Meeting Place; activities for seniors, like laughter yoga, Men's Shed Aurora, and the Canadian Tai Chi Academy; and cultural groups like the Senior Iranian Multicultural Association, 108 Health Promotion Association, Toronto Cultural Mingle Association, and Communauté du Trille blanc. CFUW is one of my favourites, with their home and garden tour, and they raise funds to support young women in their quest for a post-secondary education.

Pride Month: I love York Pride, an organization that promotes family-oriented activities—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members' statements?

TORONTO ZOO

MPP Andrea Hazell: Today, I proudly dedicate my statement to the Toronto Zoo, a leading force in conservation science, research, and education located in Scarborough.

The Toronto Zoo is more than a destination for over 1.3 million families; it's an internationally respected organization dedicated to saving wildlife and wild spaces. Their mission connects people, animals, and conservation science to combat extinction.

Their work in cryobanking, preserving genetic material for over 100 species to safeguard biodiversity for future generations, is an exceptional achievement. This innovative approach protects entire species through strategic genetic management.

1020

Equally inspiring is the zoo's collaboration with Indigenous communities, redefining conservation as a path that honours the land and uplifts traditional knowledge.

The Toronto Zoo exemplifies that conservation is about building a future where people, wildlife and wild spaces thrive together.

I ask all members to join me in commending their exceptional work and continued innovation.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Lisa Gretzky: Yesterday, I proudly tabled motion 17, calling on this Conservative government to rescind strong-mayor powers granted through the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022. Many municipal councils have passed their own motions to reject strong-mayor powers.

Strong-mayor powers don't make our cities stronger; they make them less democratic. They reduce the role of city councils to little more than an advisory body. They silence the diverse voices of local representatives—voices that reflect the complexity of our neighbourhoods and communities. And they erode the principle that the best decisions are made through debate, consensus, and compromise.

Ontarians are proud of our local democracy. We elect our councillors to represent us—not to be overridden by a mayor who unilaterally vetoes decisions of the majority of council and only needs one third of council support to push through major decisions. That's not representative government. That's executive overreach.

If we truly want to fix the housing crisis, if we want better infrastructure, we must invest in local capacity, in transparent processes, and in empowering communities, not silencing them.

The people of Ontario didn't ask for this power shift. It was imposed, without meaningful consultation, by this Conservative government.

We have seen another piece of legislation just this week, Bill 5, granting the Ford government the unfettered power to override every law within their designated spe-

cial economic zones—another power grab and erosion of democracy.

I implore the Conservative government members to listen to municipal councils and their constituents, support my motion, and immediately rescind strong-mayor powers.

CAMBRIDGE HORNETS HOCKEY CLUB

Mr. Brian Riddell: I'm proud to rise today and share some exciting news from my riding of Cambridge: the return of the local OHA senior AAA team, the Cambridge Hornets.

For decades, the Cambridge Hornets, formerly the Galt Hornets, were a cornerstone of our community's sporting culture. From their early days in the 1960s to their Ontario championship runs, they brought a sense of community, energy and pride, and a strong sense of identity for Cambridge. They were more than just a hockey team. They were part of our history.

This isn't just about hockey; it's about reigniting local spirit, supporting youth and amateur sports, and honouring our city's deep love for the game.

Their return, after more than a decade, is a huge win for our city.

I want to thank the dedicated organizers, sponsors and volunteers who have worked tirelessly to bring the Hornets back. Your efforts are truly appreciated.

As the Hornets return to the ice, I know the community will be cheering them on, just like we always have.

Welcome back, Hornets. Cambridge is proud to have you home.

As a side note, Galt Arena Gardens, where they play, which was originally built in 2021, is the oldest continuous operating arena in the world.

CAROL KERNAGHAN

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I rise today to mark someone who was selfless to a fault, a strong leader, but someone who absolutely abhorred being celebrated or honoured—all the more reason to recognize her life and good works.

Carol was the eldest child of John and Irene Penner, and a leader, role model, mentor and friend to her sisters, Diane, Janet, Ginny, and brother, Bob. The tight-knit group holds semi-annual sisters' days, including beloved cousin Sharon.

My mother was incredibly intelligent and beautiful. She reminded me of a blend of Elizabeth Taylor and Lynda Carter.

After being crowned Leamington's tomato fest queen, she earned a scholarship from my grandfather's union and charted the course for the Penner family.

Carol exemplified devotion. She refused to suffer fools gladly and was a relentless champion for my siblings, Sean, Cara, Jamie, and myself. Despite a busy career as an educator, she found time to bake cakes for our classrooms and community fundraisers, sew and build costumes for school plays and Halloween, craft and garden for herself

as well as for her parents back in Leamington. She loved to make the world a more beautiful place.

She volunteered at my school library every single week, shelving books, and even supported students with special needs for EQAO and other important events.

After retirement, she picketed with educators during the unconstitutional attack on teachers—the Liberals' odious Bill 115.

Respectfully, while she wasn't—ahem—entirely fond of this government, she was pleased that there was finally a female Speaker, as she fought for women's full economic participation and rights.

Mom, we miss you but are all the better for having known you, having loved you and, most of all, having been loved by you.

Good night, great lady. Rest in peace.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): You're making me cry.

Members' statements?

PAUL DOMINEY

MPP Mohamed Firin: I rise today to honour Staff Sergeant Paul Dominey, a local hero and pillar of York South–Weston, who retired on May 30, 2025, after 29 years of exemplary service with the Toronto Police Service's 12 division.

Before joining the force, Staff Sergeant Dominey served nine years in the Canadian military, bringing discipline, duty and compassion to his role.

As head of the Community Response Unit, he made vital contributions to public safety—coordinating anti-violence protests, supporting outreach efforts, and building strong partnerships with schools, faith leaders and community organizations. His leadership earned him the Governor General's Police Exemplary Service Medal in 2017.

Beyond law enforcement, Staff Sergeant Dominey was a dedicated mentor and advocate for our most vulnerable residents. One of his standout initiatives was a holiday fundraiser, partnering with Canadian Tire and local not-for-profits to ensure families in need could shop for holiday gifts with dignity, reflecting his belief that true public safety starts with respect and trust.

Colleagues and residents alike praise him for bridging the gap between police and the public with compassion and consistency.

On behalf of York South–Weston, I extend our deepest gratitude to Staff Sergeant Paul Dominey. His unwavering commitment to our community leaves a lasting legacy. We wish him good health, happiness, and success in his retirement.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I rise today to echo the many people sounding the alarm about the state of special education in Ontario. I listen to too many neighbours who

are devastated that their children are not getting access to education because their needs aren't being met. Education workers regularly come to me in tears because the public system we all love is on fire.

I am a school social worker. I can tell you, honestly, things have changed, but the special education funding formula has not.

I echo the ETFO report that shows that the lack of support staff and overcrowding in classrooms causes kids distress. These classes are so crowded, you often can't fit all the desks in.

I want to thank all those who are vocal regularly, who don't give up the fight: Michaela, Carolyn, Kimiko, Jeff from ETFO, Dave from OSSTF, Patrick from OECTA, and the countless other parents and advocates who work tirelessly to fill in these gaps.

Let's do better, Ontario, because the kids of Ontario are not okay.

MEMBER FOR OXFORD

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to mark a special milestone for the dean of the Legislature, Ernie Hardeman. This Sunday, June 8, marks his 30th anniversary as MPP for Oxford. Ninety seconds just isn't enough time to list all his accomplishments, but I would like to highlight a few.

Following a tragedy in his riding, Ernie introduced a private member's bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act, to require carbon monoxide detectors in all homes in Ontario. He had to introduce it five times, but he got it passed, and it has been saving lives in Ontario ever since.

He served as the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs, rural, and launched the Rural Economic Development Program, which continues to this day and is responsible for thousands of jobs across rural Ontario.

He served as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs twice. He introduced protections for farmers and animals by preventing trespassing. He introduced legislation to support farmers through the mental health challenges that a career in agriculture can present.

Ernie's advocacy for his people back home is legendary.

1030

Notwithstanding all his accomplishments, it is Ernie Hardeman, the person, I most admire—his unique personality, his sense of humour, his ability to infuriate you and amuse you almost simultaneously, and his common-sense approach to solving problems, something there is just too little of.

His dry sense of humour was often on display when dealing with controversial issues. We would be treated to an Ernie-ism like, "Half of my people are for it and half are against, and I'm with the people."

Around here, he's Uncle Ernie—and not just to John Vanthof.

Thank you for being a mentor and a friend to me.

Congratulations, Ernie, and God bless.

Applause.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Graydon Smith: It's always a special day when I can introduce my wife here in the Legislature. Melissa is down in the Speaker's box.

It's great to have you here, my love.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I am pleased to welcome today my son and daughter, Luc and Clara Pasma-Helleman, who are here to spend some time with me, and also the Blue Jays. And while they're here, I'll wish them a very early congratulations on their graduation from grade 6 in a couple of weeks.

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, page Leif Keresztesi's mom, Mette Krüger, is going to be here; his brother Istvan is going to be here—and on Sunday, I got to meet his grandmother Marion Endicott. I'm looking forward to joining them for lunch, and if you're available, Speaker, come down and see us.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize members of staff from the constituency offices in the Ottawa and Kingston area: Celeste Soares; Abigail McGuire; Carolyn Kropp, who is afraid of heights, I just noticed; Tanya Da Silva; Ivanna Kazantsev; Alastair Munro; Melodie Ballard; Mackenzie Gendron; Prithika Mansur; Dave Williams; and Mark Kaluski. A warm welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm in a very unique position this session. I've had not one but two legislative interns, under the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme, both from British Columbia. Both were fantastic.

Under the underpress, there's Sayyidah Jaffer, my OLIP intern. I'd like all members to give her a big round of applause. She has been great.

Applause.

Ms. Doly Begum: I would also like to thank all the OLIP interns and congratulate them on their hard work during this session.

It is also my absolute pleasure to introduce Ayesha Ali, my wonderful, enigmatic and talented OLIP intern I had the pleasure of having in my office, who became a valuable part of our team, to the Legislature today.

Thank you so much, Ayesha, for all your hard work.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'd like to introduce Dr. Donna Rogers, the president and vice-chancellor of Algoma University, as well as Martin Bayer, Craig Fowler, and Margaret Mah.

Thank you for making the trip today. I look forward to our meeting this afternoon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have two groups to introduce: housing guru Heather Tremain and her nephew, energetic Ethan Tremain Calhoun, right here—welcome to your House—and the clever constituency office group for the Liberals in the GTA: Kin Seong, Alexander Ast, Sakeena Mohammad, Yumna Vaid, Janani Sivakumar, Elizabeth Akanbi, Colleen Staples, Marietta Fox, Alex McMullan, Liam Hancock, Sam Pointer, Kalsang Yangchen, Dalton Sanderson, and Sebastian Hickmott. Welcome.

Mr. Billy Pang: With pleasure, I welcome my family to Queen's Park today: my brother, Kam Hung Pang, and sister-in-law, Lai Hing Rosa Ng, from Vancouver; my sister, Kam Lai Pang, and brother-in-law, Wing Kwan Cheng, from Markham–Unionville; and my niece-in-law Yan Ki Chan and grandniece Eunice Cheng, from Richmond Hill. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to introduce someone who needs no introduction in the halls of this place: Jasmine Attfeld, our director of legislative affairs. It's going to be Jasmine's last day here today, for the foreseeable future. She's moving on to—not bigger, maybe better places.

Anyone who has dealt with Jasmine knows she's a force to be reckoned with.

We are going to miss her—maybe the government, not so much.

Applause.

MPP Bill Rosenberg: I'd like to introduce my wife, Jeannine, here today. She came here to make sure I didn't skip my last day of school.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to introduce Soraya Bayat, a legislative page for University–Rosedale, and her family: Ryanne Bohonos, Sal Bayat, and Kian Bayat.

Thank you for coming here today.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I'd like to introduce a few special guests who are here today with their families—some of them will be receiving the King Charles III Coronation Medal: Ms. Pamela Harakh, Mr. Nasser Pishva, Dr. Fariba Bashiri, Mr. Ted Leider, and Mr. Hamid Ghahremani.

Thank you for coming to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I'm happy to welcome my husband, Albert Wai, to Queen's Park to celebrate our 46th anniversary with me.

Thank you for your support and your love.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): There will be time at 1 o'clock for further introduction of visitors.

MEMBERS' BIRTHDAYS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the leader of the official opposition on a point of order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I can't forget to use this opportunity to wish two members of our caucus here a very happy birthday: MPP Jeff Burch from Niagara Centre, and MPP Jennifer French from Oshawa. This duo are both celebrating a birthday today. There's going to be trouble.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Is that how you assign seating—according to birthdays now?

MARC GARNEAU

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Point of order? I recognize the member for Kanata–Carleton.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I seek the unanimous consent of the House for a moment of silence in memory of the Honourable Marc Garneau, a distinguished veteran,

first Canadian astronaut, former federal minister, and a dear friend and extraordinary Canadian.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Kanata–Carleton is seeking unanimous consent of the House for a moment of silence in memory of the Honourable Marc Garneau, the first Canadian astronaut. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): You may be seated.
1040

ANNIVERSARY OF ATTACK IN LONDON

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for London West on a point of order.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I seek unanimous consent for a moment of silence to remember London's Afzaal family, who lost their lives on June 6, 2021, in an act of Islamophobic terror, and all those affected by Islamophobia and hate.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for London West is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence to remember London's Afzaal family, who lost their lives on June 6, 2021, in an act of Islamophobic terror. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): You may be seated.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, the Conservative government came into this session with a lot of goodwill from all of us, I think. And like all of us, they came in with a mandate to build a stronger and more resilient economy, but they are leaving having destroyed relationships—relationships with First Nations, with rights holders, with workers, and with so many more Ontarians. But do you know what else? They have also lit a fire of resistance across this province.

Ontarians need a government that unites us right now, not one that leaves us more divided than ever before.

Speaker, my question to the Premier is, will the Premier rescind Bill 5 before he makes things even worse?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we've been clear from the start that this legislation does not negate any duty to consult. We are fully committed to fulfilling our legal and moral obligations to the duty to consult.

This legislation reflects a path forward that supports economic opportunity while honouring our commitment to reconciliation. We have never moved away from our constitutional responsibility to consult with Indigenous

communities on projects that affect them, and we aren't going to start now.

There are significant economic opportunities that lie ahead for First Nations and for all Ontario families. We're facing a once-in-a-generation threat from south of the border, and it's long past time to unlock true economic potential in partnership with First Nations—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize. I'm asking the member from Kiiwetinoong to withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The minister may continue.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: It is long past the time to unlock Ontario's true economic potential in partnership with First Nations, and that is what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, here's the thing: They didn't consult. They didn't consult at all. And I hope this government is ready for a very terrible summer, because the sun will be out, and so will we.

We have heard from farmers, from working people, from First Nations, from rights holders, from scientists, from people who voted Conservative, yes, in the last election. Across the province, they are building a movement against this government, and we are going to be right there with them.

Speaker, hundreds of thousands of people have already sent emails, signed petitions, been out in protest to make their voices heard.

Will the Premier listen to the people of Ontario who oppose this bill?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we've all seen, and in fact, many in this Legislature agree that there is a country here that's under threat by a country south of the border. There's a chill that has been placed on business. That capital is now being parked and is ready to be unleashed, and when it is unleashed, it is going to need a place to land, and decisions are going to need to be made very quickly. You can't wait for 15 years to make decisions. The special economic zones will give us that opportunity to show these companies—we're ready for you. Unleash your capital here in Ontario and help all of our economies grow.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, it is this government that is putting a chill on the province of Ontario, actually.

The Premier may have missed this yesterday, but these galleries were full of people not just protesting, but people in tears: young mothers, elders, in tears—I saw them; you saw them—because there was hope for our province and today that hope is lost.

This bill is going to set us back decades—in truth and reconciliation, absolutely, but also in development, as everything is caught up in the courts—and these MPPs, who were left hanging yesterday by their Premier, are going to have to answer for it.

So, to the Premier—will he take some responsibility and admit he is wrong and repeal Bill 5?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we have been very clear. The proposed legislation is about unlocking Ontario's true economic potential, not overriding Indigenous rights or environmental safeguards. The duty to consult will not be compromised as part of this process. And I think they know that.

On Monday, the Premier signed a statement at the First Ministers' meeting, where he once again explicitly pledged to fulfill our duty to consult and to work to increase Indigenous partnership on major national projects.

Make no mistake, Speaker: The challenges that lie ahead for our province are not going to be easy to overcome.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier—but you know you're being investigated by the RCMP, right? People know that—I think you know that—and they don't trust you. They don't trust you with this.

Speaker, this government has broken the trust of First Nations. This Minister of Indigenous Affairs, in particular—his blatant disrespect for First Nations and treaty rights is taking our province backward. First Nations have been very clear that they can no longer work with this minister.

How can this minister possibly continue in this role when he has made such a mess of this?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): A reminder to ask your questions through the Speaker.

I recognize the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we have never moved away from our constitutional responsibility to consult with Indigenous communities on projects that affect them, and we won't start now. There are significant economic opportunities that lie ahead for First Nations.

Speaker, in all of this business chill, there is now a window of opportunity for Ontario to come out of this stronger and more prosperous than ever before. Maybe that's the gift that Donald Trump will give us—that we will be united. These economic opportunities will be beneficial for all of Ontario, including First Nations.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I don't know how many times we have to make this point, but consultations happen before you introduce a bill, before you pass a bill. That's when you consult.

The relationship between First Nations and this government is critical. The damage that this government has done to that relationship is irreparable.

The Minister of Indigenous Affairs had a job to do. It is his job, in particular, to honour free, prior and informed consent before passing this bill, and he failed. That is why Anishinabek nation grand chief Alvin Fiddler has called, among many others, for his resignation.

So what is it going to be? Will the minister resign, or is the Premier going to fire him?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, it's interesting that in the budget, we provide tremendous support for Indigenous

partnerships in critical minerals development—as an example, tripling the amount of the Indigenous Opportunities Financing Program to \$3 billion, investing \$70 million through the Indigenous Participation Fund, and investing \$10 million to create new scholarship opportunities for First Nations post-secondary students interested in pursuing careers in resource development.

These are the very programs that the NDP have voted down, have voted against.

I'll leave it at that.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm going to go back to the Premier one more time.

Instead of listening to First Nations, instead of listening to rights holders, the Minister of Indigenous Affairs decided he knew what was best. Instead of listening, the government silenced First Nations. Instead of working together to strengthen Ontario, they are dividing us, and they are forcing our province into a summer of chaos—it is not a question of if; it is a question of when.

When will this Premier grow a pair and demand the resignation of his—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I will ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order. Order. I will start warning and naming people.

Response?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I'll pick up where I left off earlier.

There's an opportunity here to strengthen economic and community partnerships with Indigenous communities all across Ontario. Again, we have all the critical minerals in the world. We have put money on the table, \$3.1 billion, to help First Nations partners join us. We need to get those minerals to market. We need the special economic zones so that they can get to market now, when they're needed, not 15 years from now. And as we've said from the start, we'll do all of this in partnership with First Nations.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I don't often agree with the Leader of the Opposition, but this morning, I agree with her.

Despite the deep concern expressed by First Nations and thousands upon thousands of others in this province who care about democracy and the rule of law, Bill 5 just passed third reading yesterday—and just so the Premier knows, it's not over. It's just beginning.

My question is straightforward: What is the Premier going to do to protect Ontarians' rights from the unjust law that he just passed?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Energy and Mines.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It was reported this morning that Canada's trade deficit is over \$7 billion, the highest it has ever been. We are dealing with a very serious threat to the economy of Canada.

The Premier campaigned on a plan of self-reliance. The first bill that was brought forth in this House was a plan to eradicate interprovincial trade—and because of the Premier's leadership in the federation, we are now moving with momentum to unlock \$200 billion worth of Canadian value here at home.

The second bill we brought forth was a plan to get our resources to market, because the legacy of the former Liberals was to keep our resources landlocked—the benchmark of 15 years is the genesis of a plan from the Liberals designed to halt every project.

Now, in this moment, we've got to stand together, we've got to work with speed, we've got to work with other governments and all partners to get projects done, to build our nation strong. And that starts today.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): A reminder to answer and ask your questions through the Chair.

I recognize the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: Bill 5 broke what little trust still existed between the government and First Nations. The Premier had an opportunity to reverse course. Now, at a time when we should be moving forward together—the minister wants to refer to “together”—we're not moving forward together. The Premier has divided us.

What is the Premier going to do to protect the rights of First Nations so we can move forward together?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of Energy and Mines, a reminder to answer through the Speaker.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I do thank the member for the question.

We are fully committed to respecting the duty to consult, and the government is not only committed to do that, but we put money on the table to ensure Indigenous nations can navigate the duty. They asked for more funding with the Indigenous Participation Fund, and we delivered it. They asked for more funding to ensure equity participation, and \$3 billion was delivered by our Premier, because he believes that economic reconciliation is achieved through partnership.

He also believes that we've got to get on with building our economy strong. He wrote a letter to the federal Prime Minister, outlining three principal priorities: the Ring of Fire, nuclear energy, and a port on James Bay. This is nation building. This is literally akin to building a railway from sea to sea.

I hope members opposite will stand with this government and every government in the land to build an economy that is resilient, that is economically strong, where we create jobs here at home.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: Earlier this morning, we all heard that the Premier has invited all of Canada's Premiers and national Indigenous leaders to Muskoka.

In light of Bill 5 and the minister's answer, I think a summit for Ontario's First Nations leaders, Chiefs of Ontario, with the Premier and the ministers responsible for Bill 5 would be the right thing to do. It would help us move forward together, maybe repair the damage that's done.

Will the Premier commit, this summer, sooner rather than later, to have a summit with Ontario's First Nations leaders, Chiefs of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Just to inform our colleague, that happens at every COF meeting. We bring chiefs, First Nations from around the country to come and speak to the Premiers, and really ask and work with and collaborate and co-operate with First Nations communities.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that this bill will help First Nations communities with \$3 billion of equity partnership.

We'll always respect duty to consult. We'll always respect treaty rights. We've paid out billions of dollars for treaty rights. But we'll always make sure we partner with First Nations communities.

In every speech I said during my election, I included First Nations communities.

I've talked to the chiefs. I'm going to continue meeting with the chiefs. They know they're going to prosper, and they want their kids to have a better life than they had. That's exactly what we're doing, by bringing in electricity, bringing in great roads so they have access to health care, food, and everything from community centres to hockey arenas that they never had, growing up—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the leader of the third party.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. John Fraser: Respectfully, through you, Speaker, it's not what you say; it's what you do. You missed the point of my question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government side will come to order.

Mr. John Fraser: Last year, every four hours in Ontario, somebody's son, somebody's daughter, somebody's mother, somebody's father, somebody who's close to someone, died from an opioid overdose—2,231 people. It's a public health crisis. That's an increase of 43% since 2018. Yet, Ontarians have not heard a peep from the Chief Medical Officer of Health. In a public health crisis, this is astounding.

Why is it that the minister will not allow the Chief Medical Officer of Health to speak to Ontarians about the opioid crisis?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: There is no doubt that as we see people suffering from drug use that is illegal, that is truly deadly, we have a government that wants to stand with them and help them.

That is why we have now announced and are opening and continue to open treatment hubs across Ontario—28 in total. These are treatment hubs where individuals who need that immediate primary care support will get it; who need access to mental health and addictions support will get it; who need, ultimately, support for supportive housing or a job replacement will get it. We're bringing all of these services together into these treatment hubs because we know we can do better.

We've seen a 15% reduction in opioid deaths in the last year, but we know there's more that can be done.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Madam Speaker, opioid deaths have increased 143% since this government came to power.

We're tired of hearing empty promises from a government that has done nothing but undermine our province's response to the opioid crisis. They cut hundreds of millions of dollars from public health, dismantled the Opioid Emergency Task Force. And with Bill 6, they seek to criminalize people who are showing signs of addiction.

Now we're learning that this government's highly celebrated HART hubs are in disarray. Two months after opening, we've learned that they're just old clinics operating with new titles, with no new services and certainly no new funding agreements.

We now know that an Ontarian dies every four hours from opioids, while this government does nothing.

When will this government come clean with a real plan to address the opioid crisis?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Well, I do want to highlight that, in fact, we've seen a 15% decrease in the number of opioid deaths. But we can do more and we will do more.

We have opened youth wellness hubs across Ontario because we want to make sure that children, at the very beginning, who are perhaps just testing the waters, know the risks of dealing with these deadly illegal drugs. We will continue to expand our youth wellness hubs and our community treatment sites because we have seen that when you offer hope to people, they actually get better and they improve. That's what our treatment sites will do.

I want to be clear, Speaker: Every single one of these HART hubs, these treatment hubs, were applied and approved and are now operationalizing.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I recently attended the premiere of a series of short films titled *We Were Here* featuring the lives of young people under 30 who had died from overdose. Many of those stories were told by their mothers. All were born into loving families. It's publicly available, and I encourage all my colleagues in this Legislature to watch it.

This 2024 number—the 2,231 families who are never getting their loved one back—is a tragic one. As we've said, it's a 143% increase since 2018. It provides a publicly available baseline number, given the recent policy change introduced by this government in Ontario.

To the Minister of Health: Given the start date of HART hubs in April 2025, what is your plan to evaluate and be transparent to the public on their impact on overdose deaths and increased service availability?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I think it's important to highlight that as we transition treatment facilities that were enabling illegal drug use into models that actually provide services, we've also increased the funding by four times.

I want to quote a client at PACE: "I feel like the workers at PACE assist emotionally, mentally and make it feel like a second home. It's also a place for friends to gather for support. Without PACE, we would have nowhere to go. I am looking forward and excited about exploring the HART hub services."

That's what people need. They need hope, and they need services, and they need treatment. And that's what we're providing with these treatment hubs.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, to the Premier: Communities across northern Canada and across the west are fleeing from devastating wildfires. Unprecedented global heat is causing unprecedented destructive wildfires.

This government's climate plan is a failure.

Why won't the Premier act to protect people from climate destruction?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Through you, Madam Speaker, I thank the member from Toronto–Danforth for the question.

We have a plan, and the plan is working. We are on track to meet the target, by 2030, of reducing the 2005 levels of greenhouse gas emissions by 30%. We're doing that by leading Canada.

Ontario, under the leadership of Premier Ford and our government over the last seven years—we are now at the point where 86% of the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions for all of Canada is due to the actions and leadership of Ontario. That is our track record, and we are going to continue with this plan because it's the right thing to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again, to the Premier: This government's plan is a failure. Emissions are going up. This government has cut funding for wildland firefighters. Our way of life is at risk.

What will it take to get this government to actually protect the people of this province?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Mike Harris: Let's be very clear: This government has increased wildland fire supports by over 92% since 2018, bringing that total up to \$134.9 million. So I'm not sure where this member is getting his numbers from.

Let's be clear: We are doing everything we can to combat these fires; we will not rest until we do. We have

700 wildland firefighters in northwest Ontario right now doing incredible work. We're not going to take lessons from these guys. We're going to do what needs to be done. We're going to do it right for the people of Ontario.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

MPP Andrea Hazell: After seven years in power, this government still hasn't delivered on major transit projects: Eglinton Crosstown LRT, Finch West LRT, Yonge North subway extension, Scarborough subway extension, Ontario Line, Sheppard subway extension, Ottawa LRT, or twinning Highways 11, 17 and 69. Shame.

Ontarians can't get to work, school or doctors' appointments on time. We're stuck in gridlock, facing delays and mental stress. Congestion already costs \$56 billion annually—projected to reach \$108 billion in 20 years. Ontario lacks a fast, safe and reliable transit system.

Can the Premier explain why this government boasts about shovels in the ground but fails to get them out and finish these critical projects?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: When the Liberals were in power, not a single transit project was built, not a single shovel was put in the ground. We are in this position—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the minister.

Order.

I recognize the minister.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: It was this government that put forward the Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension, the Eglinton West extension, LRTs in Mississauga, in Brampton, in Hamilton. When it came to the point of voting to support these measures, the members opposite, the Liberal Party, opposed them every single time—not a single project that they could point to, in 15 years, that they helped build.

But thanks to Premier Ford and his leadership, we're building subways, we're building LRTs—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

MPP Andrea Hazell: Let's take the Eglinton Crosstown for an example—a \$13-billion project, originally set to open in 2020. Guess what? It's now 2025.

On June 3, the Premier told reporters, "Hopefully we will be handing it over in the next couple weeks to the TTC.... And thank God, that is all I got to say about that and that project." That's not leadership. That's deflection.

On the same day, a TTC spokesperson said the transit agency has no comment—"We have no updates at this time."

After five years of missed deadlines, closed businesses and commuter chaos, Ontarians deserve transparency.

Through you, Madam Speaker: Will the Premier give the people a straight answer? Will the Eglinton Crosstown

be handed over to the TTC within weeks and open on time this September. Yes or no?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Let's take a look at what's happening in Scarborough right at this moment.

For 15 years, the Liberal Party ignored the residents of Scarborough, where that member resides and represents.

It was this Premier who got shovels in the ground on the Scarborough subway extension.

Not only that, but for the city of Scarborough—it's seeing its first new medical school, it's seeing a new hospital, community centres. It's because this government supported the people of Scarborough, who were neglected and left behind by the previous Liberal government.

1110

Every corner of this province is getting a new subway, LRT—highway expansions across Ontario.

For 15 years, they did absolutely nothing—got no shovels in the ground, got no public transit projects off the ground.

We're investing \$70 billion over the next 10 years to ensure we have a world-class transit system across Ontario—something that no one in North America is doing like we are right here in Ontario.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: My question is for the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries.

Ontario's energy system is facing big demands. We know electricity needs are expected to rise by 75% over the next 25 years. That's why our government must continue to act to keep our energy system strong and reliable. We also know that rising industrial electricity use is set to grow by more than 35% over the next five years.

The US trade policies continue to challenge our economy, putting our businesses and our workers at risk. That's why we must continue to show leadership and take actions to protect Ontario's long-term energy needs.

Speaker, can the associate minister please explain what our government is doing to build a clean, reliable energy system for generations to come?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member for Bay of Quinte for his question and for his championing of his riding and their concerns.

He's absolutely right; Ontario is seeing an unprecedented increase in energy demand across the province. Demand is expected to increase by more than 75% over the next 25 years, and industrial energy demand is expected to increase by some 35% as well.

Now, as we all know, Ontario is facing new challenges, with the continuously evolving trade situation with the United States.

With the new legislation, Minister Lecce and I, as well as the parliamentary assistants, joined to announce, we are acting boldly to support job creation, attract investment, and deliver affordable, reliable power, to power not just our growing economy, but future generations as well.

The Protect Ontario by Securing Affordable Energy for Generations Act will help immediately unleash Ontario's

economy and protect the province's economic interests. It's just one more way we're working to protect—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Bay of Quinte.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the associate minister for his ongoing leadership and for coming to Bay of Quinte just last week to host the Eastern Ontario Regional Network. It was a pleasure to have you there, sir.

Speaker, we know that Ontario must keep investing in energy innovation to stay ahead of rising demands. We also know that Ontario families and businesses need a system that is strong, reliable and secure.

With the US changing its trade policies, we know that Ontario's economy and energy system face new threats that could hurt our businesses and our workers.

That's why the Protect Ontario by Securing Affordable Energy for Generations Act is so important. It will make sure our energy system is strong and secure. It will add economic growth as a key goal of our energy agencies so they plan for Ontario's needs, not for foreign interests.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how these measures will protect Ontario's energy independence and keep Ontario a clean energy leader?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: The member is absolutely right.

He talked about how we are adding economic growth as a formal objective of Ontario's energy agencies, to ensure that they are actively planning for and supporting Ontario's growing energy needs.

It also adds a new component to require prioritization of data centre investments that will support the province's economic interests, including those that create good-quality jobs, support domestic data housing, and strengthen Ontario's position in the global digital economy.

We're also supporting Ontario utilities, through this legislation, by allowing them to buy Canadian and build a more secure energy system that will protect the province from risks of malware, manipulation, spyware, tampering and surveillance, and expanding the eligibility of the Future Clean Electricity Fund to include nuclear generation as well as transmission capacity.

These are just a few of the ways we're working to support industries, families and workers in the province, and I'm excited to speak more with the member about this after.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier.

Speaker, right now in Ontario, there are about 30,000 unfunded domestic students attending post-secondary education, and that number is expected to increase to 225,000 in just 20 years. That means that their college or university, already struggling with the lowest per-student funding in Canada, does not receive any government funding at all for their spot. The result is that more and more qualified Ontario high school students can't get into the school or program of their choice.

Speaker, why is this government pretending that the problem is admission processes and governance instead of increasing funding to meet enrolment demand?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: We did just that recently. We invested another \$750 million for 20,500 new STEM seats right across the province. That's on top of the \$2 billion in the last 14 months we've given, and \$1.3 billion last year, to stabilize the sector because of the unilateral decisions based on the federal government.

Just in this budget, we've invested another \$75 million for 2,600 construction seats; another \$55 million for more teaching seats, with a focus on French teaching as well; and \$10 million for our First Nations scholarships.

Speaker, we will continue to stand beside our post-secondary sector to ensure that we continue to have a world-class post-secondary education system.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Niagara Falls.

MPP Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier.

Niagara College had to pause hospitality and tourism programs, right in the heart of Ontario's biggest tourist region. That's a hit to our winemakers, our small businesses, and our local economy. Niagara College laid off 29 staff, and over 100 more took buyouts just to balance the books.

The last provincial budget cut \$1.2 billion from colleges and universities.

Ontario college students already get just 44% of the public funding students receive in other provinces.

Niagara College did everything right.

Temporary funding isn't the solution. It's not working. It's not working at the college. It's not working for the Niagara region.

How many more jobs and programs have to be lost before the Premier stops starving our colleges and our universities?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Let me be abundantly clear: Funding for the post-secondary sector is higher than it has ever been. That member could have easily advocated for the sector with their federal counterparts when it came to post-graduate work permit eligibility, but he sat there silent. That region, unfortunately, has lost the opportunity to bring international students for culinary and tourism as well.

There are opportunities with our recent investment of \$750 million into the STEM programming—again, on top of the \$1.3 billion that we invested last year to stabilize the program.

Speaker, we will continue to stand by our post-secondary sector to ensure that it stands and is world-class for years to come.

HEALTH CARE

MPP Tyler Watt: My question is for the Minister of Health.

I have heard over and over again from this government that they have made a world-class health care system.

Here is what this world-class health care system looks like. Speaker, 30,000 people in Nepean don't have a family doctor. Emergency rooms are closing. People are dying while waiting for necessary surgeries. Urgent care clinics are turning patients away, even before noon.

A constituent told me that it took him 18 hours to get his newborn son seen at the hospital.

When I toured a hospital recently, I saw signs taped up on the walls besides the beds in the hallways: hallway bed 1, hallway bed 2—all the way up to 10. This is not dignity. That is not care. And it certainly is not world-class.

Speaker, will the Minister of Health stand up and truly continue to call it a world-class health care system, knowing that this is the reality?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I absolutely 100% will say that the clinicians who work in the province of Ontario—in our hospitals, in our long-term-care facilities, in our community centres, in our facilities across Ontario—are providing world-class health care.

I look at the expansions that happened last year, in February 2024.

In Ontario Health east region, we have Upper Canada Family Health Team—an additional 6,000 patients connected; Ottawa Nurse Practitioner Led Clinic—an additional 6,000 patients connected; Perth Family Medicine family health team—an additional 3,500 individuals connected; Kingston Community Health Centres, otherwise known as Periwinkle—10,000 patients.

I could go on and on, because there were 78 expansions. And that's not all, because, of course, in the coming weeks and months—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

1120

MPP Tyler Watt: That was a lot of words to not answer my simple question.

I'm a nurse. I've worked in long-term care. I will never forget the day a patient grabbed my arm and said, "Get me out of here. I feel like a trapped animal." That's the system that you're here talking about.

This government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Education will come to order. The member for Windsor West will come to order.

MPP Tyler Watt: This government has had—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member.

The Minister of Education will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order. Order. I will start warning and naming people.

I apologize to the member. You may ask your question again.

MPP Tyler Watt: This government has—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Education will come to order. The member from Windsor West will come to order. I will start warning people.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Education is warned.

Please re-ask your question.

MPP Tyler Watt: This government has had seven years. They keep bringing up the past Liberal government—and it's a good thing we live in their heads rent-free, because after they cancelled rent control, rent has gone through the roof.

I'm a nurse. I've worked in long-term care. The story I shared with you should have touched a nerve—and you should be that passionate about fixing our broken health care system.

This is what our system has become for too many people. This is not a place of healing, but a place of fear, delay and despair.

Hospitals are stretched to the point where hallways have become permanent patient rooms, and families are left wondering if the care will come in time.

So I encourage this government to talk to nurses, talk to PSWs, talk to patients about what they're actually seeing on the ground.

Speaker, through you, to the minister: How can this minister continue saying our system is world-class instead of doing her job to fix it?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, Madam Speaker—talking about a lot of words, right? For 15 years, that's all the Liberals did—a lot of words.

The member talks about long-term care. We inherited a long-term-care system that had not been reinvested in in over 15 years.

The responsibility for the failures of the health care system, including long-term care, stand at the feet of the Liberals, who abandoned health care for 15 years. They put our seniors in ward rooms—four people packed to a room. That's your legacy. They fired nurses. That's your legacy. They gave our seniors two hours of care a day. That's your legacy.

We're building more, we're hiring more—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Kitchener Centre.

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Last week, myself and the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore introduced a bill to tackle homelessness with housing. It is a bill that is rooted in evidence and compassion and that builds on the success of jurisdictions like Manitoba, Houston, and Finland.

All of us agree that we have to do something. This year, AMO published a report that said that 81,000 people in Ontario experienced homelessness and that that number is

set to rise to 300,000 by 2035. Across the province, we are seeing the impact of escalating rents and minimal to no increase in income. The math is impossible. And 50% of Canadians are one paycheque away from being homeless.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Will the minister meet with people with lived experiences, front-line workers, experts on this bill, and consider it as an effective path forward to addressing homelessness?

Hon. Rob Flack: I thank the member from Kitchener Centre for her question. I know she's a tireless advocate for the homeless and supportive housing issues, so we thank her for that.

Obviously, yes, I'm willing to meet with anyone with a great idea when it comes to housing. As we all know, housing is not a partisan issue. It is a crisis in this country. In fact, I've had discussions with the new federal Minister of Housing—and we're planning to get together to work collaboratively to get that done.

So with specifics to your question: Bring forward your ideas. I'm happy to sit down and talk about the math, as we've talked about, and look for bold and innovative solutions to solve homelessness and supportive housing in this province. Together, we can get it done. Together, we will get it done.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I appreciate the minister stepping into a conversation with an open mind and acknowledging that this is not a simple issue.

I've promised the seniors, families, newcomers, people with disabilities, who are homeless and have lost all hope of finding housing—I've promised them that I would do whatever I could to help.

Too many people come to my office who are living in cars, on couches, in shelters, in tents, or in very abusive relationships, because they have nowhere to go. This makes people very sick. Folks end up needing emergency services from our emergency rooms, health care workers, firefighters, paramedics, police, outreach workers, food banks, and municipalities. The financial cost of homelessness is astronomical, and it is a moral injury to Ontarians.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Will he do a cost-benefit analysis of how much homelessness is costing Ontario's taxpayers and the system, against the cost of implementing Bill 28, a housing-first approach?

Hon. Rob Flack: We're proud of the work our ministry has done in this arena, when I look at homelessness prevention funding and, in fact, the Building Faster Fund, which puts infrastructure in the ground to get more homes—all types of homes—built. Absolutely, we're on the right path.

Is there more to be done? Absolutely. So let's talk about the math. Let's take a look—if there are some realistic solutions.

As we stand today, I can't promise that we will support her bill.

But what I can say is, we don't need more red tape; we don't need more bureaucracy.

We just passed Bill 17, which, again, creates the conditions to get more homes built faster and smarter, and if we can build on that and work together with the member opposite—and those ideas—I think we can see some meaningful results.

That being said, we've also supported—we've given \$1.7 billion in supportive housing and homelessness. We keep investing in treatment centres.

We'll work together, we'll figure out the math, and we'll get it done.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Ontario families and businesses are feeling the impact of economic uncertainty and the looming threat of US tariffs. That's why they need our government to keep fighting for them.

Since 2018, our government has been cutting red tape and making it easier for businesses to grow, thrive and, yes, hire more workers. That needs faster approvals, less paperwork, and more time to build and invest.

The Liberals and the NDP made things harder with red tape and roadblocks.

Ontario families and businesses need to know that our government will always have their back in these uncertain times.

Speaker, can the minister explain what actions our government is taking to help protect Ontario businesses and hard-working families in our great province?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you to the member for Whitby for that excellent question. He has been a champion of red tape reduction.

We're taking an all-of-Ontario team approach to reduce red tape, to make life easier for people and to protect Ontario.

Since 2018, our entire government has worked tirelessly to reduce over \$1 billion in red tape. We've reduced 1.2 million hours in paperwork and bureaucracy, saving people time and money, because we value their time and money. That's nearly 6% of unnecessary red tape. That means less paperwork, faster services, and more time on what matters. Regulations should serve the people, not delay them. We're focused on results, not on red tape.

That is why I am proud that we have introduced the latest bill, the Protect Ontario by Cutting Red Tape Act, that takes action and gets it done.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the minister for her strong leadership.

Speaker, Ontario families and businesses are facing challenges with rising costs and the threat of US tariffs. President Trump's decision to double tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminium is putting thousands of Ontario jobs at risk.

That's why we need our government to keep standing up for our workers and businesses.

1130

Our government is showing leadership by cutting red tape to make it easier for businesses to grow and create good jobs. That means simpler rules, faster approvals, and lower costs. Ontario cannot afford to let red tape and foreign tariffs slow us down.

The Liberals and the NDP made things worse with higher costs and, yes, more rules.

Can the minister explain how the Protect Ontario by Cutting Red Tape Act will help and protect Ontario's economy and shield us—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: The member is right; we are providing hope to Ontarians again.

We won't go back to the days of the Liberals and NDP, when we had bloated bureaucracy, empty promises and policy paralysis.

Instead, this bill will save about 256,000 hours of red tape reduction and bureaucracy—that's shaving 30 years off of their lives. It will help northern small business enterprise centres be more efficient. It will make sure propane workers can do work safely without having to jump through hoops. And it will continue to modernize our health care system so that doctors can continue to put patients above paperwork, putting patients first.

This is how we protect Ontario. It's how we stay strong in this province, in a fast-changing world.

We cannot afford more delays. We need to attract more investments. We're protecting Ontario and getting it done.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: To the Premier: After being recruited from the US through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program with the promise of permanent residency, a sought-after anesthesiologist in St. Catharines has been left in limbo, not knowing when the next round of applications will be accepted, separated from his family—and zero communication from program officials. My community is in danger of losing this much-needed anesthesiologist because of this government's mismanagement.

This is happening not only in my community, but across the province, putting people's health at risk.

Does the government agree that this program requires urgent reforms today?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: This government has put the programs in place to accept and extend health care workers in the province to cover the shortage. We have been extending and accepting new international graduates and graduates from all over the place—nurses, doctors, all the staff needed to cover for the Ontarians in the province.

I don't understand why the member opposite tried to politicize the issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'm not sure of that answer, but it's the classic Ontario shuffle as far as I'm concerned—dodge, deflect, and blame someone else.

Premier, your government says it's prioritizing health care and attracting skilled workers.

Program applicants are kept in the dark—no transparency, no communication, and no clear timelines. In fact, the Auditor General released a very critical report on the state of the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. This government often dismisses reports, but they can't ignore this issue any longer.

This anesthesiologist in St. Catharines is seriously considering moving back to the United States because the program is so broken.

Will this government reverse the brain drain from Ontario and finally take this issue very, very seriously for my community?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Again, I have to go back to the same line.

We are expanding the medical programs which can attract more physicians, more medical staff to come to Ontario.

The college has accepted the fast track for getting international graduates from the US, licensed medical workers from the US and from other jurisdictions that are compatible with the Ontario system.

We are adding more people to the system, and we are getting more family doctors.

We opened two new medical colleges to add more doctors to cover the people in Ontario.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: Earlier this week, the wait time to be seen at the Ajax Pickering Hospital emergency department was three and a half hours, more than double anywhere else in Durham region.

I've heard from countless Ajax residents of 12- and, yes, even 18-hour waits at the emergency department. But once they're admitted, it's not to a room, but a bed in the hallway—a trend that is becoming more and more common.

We heard from my colleague in Nepean about bed one, bed two, bed three in the hallway.

Seven years ago, the Premier committed to ending hallway health care, but it has doubled under his watch.

When will the Premier keep his promise and live up to his slogan from three years ago and get it done?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I think this is a perfect time to highlight some of the work that we have already implemented—and are seeing results. Of course, one is the 911 models of care, where we are empowering our paramedics to work directly with patients, getting their consent to go to places more appropriate than the emergency department. That is diverting individuals who can get service in other parts of the community, to ensure that they have that access.

Expanding the Emergency Department Peer-to-Peer Program, working with our partners on how we can best support our emergency departments across the province—and we began that, of course, last summer, and continue.

We have launched a Models of Care Innovation Fund specifically to support innovative staffing models, allowing hospitals to use their staff to their full potential. The Models of Care Innovation Fund in Ontario has a total of \$40 million annually. And we are seeing those results as we see the individuals serving—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Ajax.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: That answer from the Minister of Health will do nothing for my constituent who came to me [*inaudible*] to care for her elderly mother in the crowded hallway for more than three days in the hospital because there were no rooms available.

This government has not firmly committed to expanding the Ajax Pickering Hospital, which was actually last expanded, ironically, under a Liberal government. Surprise, surprise, right? Their budget doesn't even mention the promise to build a hospital in Whitby.

The demand is clear. The delays, frankly, are unacceptable.

Will the Premier commit today to expanding the Ajax Pickering Hospital, ending hallway health care, respecting our health care workers and, in Ajax, ensuring people can access emergency care when they need it?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Perhaps the member opposite missed the part of the budget that included almost \$60 billion in capital infrastructure for our hospitals—new hospitals, expanded hospitals, renovated hospitals.

I know the member is new, but he should look at the history of the Liberal Party. Your previous Liberal leader, Kathleen Wynne, said, “We did not invest enough in health care when we were in government.” That is your legacy.

Our legacy will continue to talk about world-class hospital clinicians in the province of Ontario—which also includes over 100,000 new nurses who have been trained and licensed to work in the province of Ontario.

While you were firing nurses, we're training them and giving them opportunities across Ontario.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is for the Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform.

People across Ontario are worried about the threat of crime. This is serious. Auto theft is on the rise, and it's costing families a lot of money. It's not just about their cars. It's about their safety in our streets. We know criminals are getting bolder in their actions, and people are concerned.

Since 2018, our government has been making big moves to help keep people safe. We have been working with police to catch these criminals. We have put in place special teams to fight auto theft.

1140

Speaker, can the Associate Solicitor General please tell us what actions our government is taking to address auto theft and help police keep people safe?

Hon. Zee Hamid: I thank the member for Thornhill for the question.

There can be zero compromise when it comes to keeping our communities safe, and I'm proud to represent a government that is taking strong action against crime.

I'm also proud to work in collaboration with our police forces across the province, who every single day put their safety on the line to bring criminals to justice. Our government is supporting our police in that fight with initiatives such as the Major Auto Theft Prosecution Response Team, the OPP-led Provincial Auto Theft and Towing Team, and the Preventing Auto Thefts Grant. Our government is investing hundreds of millions of dollars into these and other initiatives to ensure that police have the authority and the resources needed to stop auto theft and put criminals behind bars.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Thornhill.

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the minister for his proactive work in his portfolio.

Families and businesses across Ontario are worried about auto theft and organized crime. These crimes don't just cost people their vehicles; they are also making communities feel less safe.

Criminals are getting smarter and using new technology every day to commit these crimes. I'm proud that our government is not just talking, but we're taking action to stop them. We know that these criminals are always finding new ways to put people at risk.

That's why we can't stand still. We need to give our police the tools and the authority and the resources they need to fight crime and protect our communities.

Can the Associate Solicitor General please share what actions we are taking to fight back against auto theft and organized crime?

Hon. Zee Hamid: As thieves become more sophisticated in their abilities, our government has taken action to stay one step ahead of them with legislation and investments.

The Ministry of Transportation is proposing legislation that, if passed, will grant police enhanced authority for search and seizure and will ban the possession of illegal keyless devices, fob programmers, and related software.

The Joint Air Support Unit will receive an additional \$57 million for two new H135 helicopters, which supports the \$134 million already committed in the greater Toronto and Ottawa regions.

We're seeing great results. In 2024, auto theft in Ontario was down a whopping 17%. But our government will not become complacent.

The days of car thieves preying on our communities are numbered. This government will not rest until our streets are safe, our families are secure, and justice is served.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Folks, if I could just draw your attention to the members' gallery, we have with us today John Yakabuski, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke's rep in the 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd and 43rd Parliaments.

Downey, Doug
Dunlop, Jill
Fedeli, Victor
Firin, Mohamed
Flack, Rob

Oosterhoff, Sam
Pang, Billy
Parsa, Michael
Pierre, Natalie
Quinn, Nolan

Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Wai, Daisy
Williams, Charmaine A.

DEFERRED VOTES

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): We have a deferred vote on private members' notice of motion number 8.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Please take your seats.

Mr. Burch has moved private members' notice of motion number 8.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Armstrong, Teresa J. | Gélinas, France | Schreiner, Mike |
| Begum, Doly | Gilmour, Alexa | Shamji, Adil |
| Bell, Jessica | Glover, Chris | Shaw, Sandy |
| Blais, Stephen | Gretzky, Lisa | Smyth, Stephanie |
| Bourgouin, Guy | Hazell, Andrea | Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) |
| Brady, Bobbi Ann | Hsu, Ted | Stiles, Marit |
| Burch, Jeff | Kernaghan, Terence | Tabuns, Peter |
| Cerjanec, Rob | Lennox, Robin | Tsao, Jonathan |
| Clancy, Aislinn | Mamakwa, Sol | Vanthof, John |
| Collard, Lucille | McCrimmon, Karen | Vaugeois, Lise |
| Fairclough, Lee | McKenney, Catherine | Watt, Tyler |
| Fife, Catherine | McMahon, Mary-Margaret | West, Jamie |
| Fraser, John | Pasma, Chandra | Wong-Tam, Kristyn |
| French, Jennifer K. | Rakocevic, Tom | |
| Gates, Wayne | Sattler, Peggy | |

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

| | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Allsopp, Tyler | Ford, Doug | Racinsky, Joseph |
| Anand, Deepak | Gallagher Murphy, Dawn | Rae, Matthew |
| Babikian, Aris | Grewal, Hardeep Singh | Riddell, Brian |
| Bailey, Robert | Gualtieri, Silvia | Rosenberg, Bill |
| Bethlenfalvy, Peter | Hamid, Zee | Sabawy, Sheref |
| Bouma, Will | Hardeman, Ernie | Sandhu, Amarjot |
| Breseer, Ric | Harris, Mike | Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh |
| Calandra, Paul | Holland, Kevin | Sarrazin, Stéphane |
| Cho, Raymond Sung Joon | Jones, Sylvia | Saunderson, Brian |
| Cho, Stan | Jones, Trevor | Scott, Chris |
| Ciriello, Monica | Jordan, John | Scott, Laurie |
| Clark, Steve | Kanapathi, Logan | Smith, Dave |
| Coe, Lorne | Kerzner, Michael S. | Smith, David |
| Cooper, Michelle | Khanjin, Andrea | Smith, Graydon |
| Crawford, Stephen | Leardi, Anthony | Smith, Laura |
| Tuzetto, Rudy | Lece, Stephen | Tangri, Nina |
| Denault, Billy | McCarthy, Todd J. | Thanigasalam, Vijay |
| Dixon, Jess | McGregor, Graham | Thompson, Lisa M. |
| Dowie, Andrew | Mulrone, Caroline | Tibollo, Michael A. |

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 43; the nays are 70.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I would now like to ask the pages to assemble.

Interjections: Aw.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I know, it's a very sad time.

It is now time to say a few words about our legislative pages. Our pages are smart. They are trustworthy and hard-working. They are indispensable to the effective functioning of this chamber, giving every one of us fresh water.

To our pages: You depart having made many new friends, with a greater understanding of parliamentary democracy and memories that will last a lifetime. Each of you will go home now and continue your studies and no doubt will contribute to your communities, your province and your country in important ways. Perhaps you may be back here in these seats.

I ask the members to please join me in thanking this group of very hard-working legislative pages.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the government House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: Her Honour awaits.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario entered the chamber of the Legislative Assembly and took her seat upon the throne.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

Hon. Edith Dumont (Lieutenant Governor): Je vous en prie, veuillez vous asseoir. Please be seated.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly of the province has, at its present meetings thereof, passed certain bills to which, in the name of and on behalf of the said Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): The following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed:

An Act to enact the Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day Act, 2025 and the Ontario Free Trade and Mobility Act, 2025 and to amend various other Acts / Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 sur le Jour « Acheteons ontarien, acheteons canadien »

et la Loi ontarienne de 2025 sur le libre-échange et la mobilité et modifiant diverses autres lois.

An Act to enact the Special Economic Zones Act, 2025, to amend the Endangered Species Act, 2007 and to replace it with the Species Conservation Act, 2025, and to amend various Acts and revoke various regulations in relation to development and to procurement / Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 sur les zones économiques spéciales, modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les espèces en voie de disparition et la remplaçant par la Loi de 2025 sur la conservation des espèces, puis modifiant diverses lois et abrogeant divers règlements en ce qui concerne le développement et l'approvisionnement.

1200

An Act to enact the Restricting Public Consumption of Illegal Substances Act, 2025 and to amend the Trespass to Property Act respecting sentencing / Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 visant à restreindre la consommation en public de substances illégales et modifiant la Loi sur l'entrée sans autorisation en ce qui concerne le prononcé des peines.

An Act to enact the Measures Respecting Premises with Illegal Drug Activity Act, 2025 and to amend various Acts with respect to public safety and the justice system / Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 sur les mesures visant les lieux où se déroulent des activités illégales liées à la drogue et modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la sécurité publique et le système judiciaire.

An Act to enact or amend various Acts related to health care / Loi visant à édicter ou à modifier diverses lois en ce qui concerne les soins de santé.

An Act respecting primary care / Loi concernant les soins primaires.

An Act to amend various Acts with respect to infrastructure, housing and transit and to revoke a regulation / Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'infrastructure, le logement et le transport en commun et abrogeant un règlement.

An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

An Act to revive 1976998 Ontario Inc.

An Act to revive MFIS Holdings and Investments Inc.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): In His Majesty's name, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor assents to these bills.

Au nom de Sa Majesté, Son Honneur la lieutenant-gouverneure sanctionne ces projets de loi.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

SUMMER GREETINGS

Ms. Marit Stiles: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Point of order: the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, before the session ends, I'd like to thank the people who keep us going: my caucus; official opposition staff, who are essential in helping us hold the government to account [*inaudible*] the hard-working assembly staff—the Clerks, broadcast and recording,

and translation services—and of course yourself, Madam Speaker; our counsel; and the press gallery, who hold us all to account.

In the face of the economic threats and uncertainty we are facing, I really want to take a moment to thank the many stakeholders who met with us this session to discuss issues of interest in the economy, in health care, in housing, and in so many more ways.

The work does not stop today. My official opposition team and I are going to be out there offering real solutions throughout the break, and I look forward to meeting with people and getting Ontario building and growing our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: I'm not going to be political at all. I just want to wish everyone in the House here a great, safe summer.

I know work doesn't stop. No matter if you're on the opposition benches or in the government, we have something in common: We want a better Ontario. We want a more prosperous Ontario. I know we might disagree once in a while, but I believe in my heart that each one of you in this building go back to your constituents—and just because we leave here doesn't mean the work stops. Truth be known, you work twice as hard when you're out of here—you're going to events; you're talking to stakeholders; you're talking to people. Again, I know everyone in this Legislature works their backs off—people don't realize it. Everyone probably puts in 70 or 80 hours a week making their constituency better.

I want to thank each and every one of you.

I want to thank my colleagues as well, and you, Madam Speaker, and everyone else who keeps the machinery moving down here.

Thank you, and God bless.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: I often tease my wife, Linda, that I have a second family here in Toronto; the truth of the matter is that I do. We all have a family here—it's all of us. It's a weird, dysfunctional and different kind of family.

Most importantly, there are a whole bunch of people here—all of our colleagues—who help us. Everyone who works in the assembly here—I don't want to list everybody, because we're all standing up. We've been standing for a while. It would be kind of fun to go on for about five minutes, but I won't.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Don't.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm not going to. Thank you.

I just want to say thank you so much for all that you do for us, in helping to keep our family together.

On behalf of my colleagues, we'll miss all of you—especially you, Premier—but we look forward to getting back in September.

I hope everybody has a safe, great summer and a lot of good times with your families.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: On behalf of the little team over here on this side of the House, I just want to wish all of you a fantastic summer.

I know, as the Premier said, we're all going to go back to our ridings. We're going to work hard. We're going to connect with our communities. We're going to bring their voices back to this place.

I want to say a deep thank you to everyone who makes this building work and function and serves all of us and the people of Ontario.

Speaker, I want to congratulate you on finishing your first sitting as the first woman Speaker in Ontario history.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Is there any further business before we recess until 1 o'clock? Then this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1207 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M. Stephen Blais: Je voudrais prendre ce moment pour souhaiter un très joyeux 80^e anniversaire à M^{me} Marie-Paule Charrette-Poulin, une femme visionnaire, pionnière et profondément engagée envers sa communauté et son pays.

Madame Charrette-Poulin, joyeux 80^e anniversaire. Je vous souhaite tout le meilleur.

Hon. Mike Harris: I wanted to say a quick hello and thank you to some of the amazing interns that we've had with us over the last few weeks and that will be helping us out through the summer at the ministry: Mathias Sauerbrey, Jonathan Van Loan and Jack Hynes. Thank you for all your hard work.

Mr. Adil Shamji: I just want to take a moment to recognize and celebrate that our page captain today is Nathan. He's a brilliant young student from my riding of Don Valley East. I'm very proud of him. He was here with his family earlier today: his mother, Omotayo Sojobi, and his siblings, Jeremiah and Josiah Sojobi, as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Madam Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent of the House that notwithstanding standing order 40—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): This is out of order, sorry. We're on introduction of visitors.

Introduction of visitors?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Earlier today at question period, I was honoured to have Evangeline Chima, who is the founder and CEO of Black Mentorship Inc., and a lot of her students from the riding of Oakville.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Introduction of visitors?

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to authorize the Standing Committee on Justice Policy to conduct its study on intimate partner violence, as referred by the House on April 18, 2024, reinstated at the same stage of progress and in accordance with decisions made by the committee prior to the dissolution of the 43rd Parliament.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to authorize the Standing Committee on Justice Policy to conduct its study on intimate partner violence, as referred by the House on April 18, 2024, reinstated at the same stage of progress and in accordance with decisions made by the committee prior to the dissolution of the 43rd Parliament. Agreed? Agreed.

This is on a point of order? I recognize the member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I seek unanimous consent for the House to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Toronto Centre is seeking unanimous consent for the House to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic in Ontario. Agreed? I heard a no.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Kitchener Centre on a point of order.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm seeking unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 40(e), three minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to respond to the ministerial statements for Pride Month today.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Kitchener Centre is seeking unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 40(e), three minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to respond to the ministerial statements for Pride Month today. Agreed? Agreed.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition on a point of order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm going to correct the record. I want to make sure I got the title correct for Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, who is Grand Chief of Nishnawbe Aski Nation. I've already provided Hansard with that.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments, dated June 5, 2025, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 110(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DIGNITY AND MENTAL HEALTH IN JAILS ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 POUR FAVORISER LA DIGNITÉ ET LA SANTÉ MENTALE DANS LES PRISONS

Madame Collard moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to amend the Correctional Services and Reintegration Act, 2018 and the Ministry of Correctional Services Act with respect to conditions in correctional institutions / Projet de loi 53, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2018 sur les services correctionnels et la réinsertion sociale et la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels en ce qui concerne les conditions de détention dans les établissements correctionnels.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Does the member wish to explain the bill?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. The bill amends the Correctional Services and Reintegration Act, 2018, and the Ministry of Correctional Services Act with respect to the humane treatment of inmates and ending solitary confinement. The bill requires new and renovated or expanded correctional institutions to have at least 20% of inmate beds be in a mental health support unit.

The bill also prohibits any cruel and inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. It prohibits holding an inmate under overly rigorous physical constraints or surveillance, and it prohibits sensory deprivation or disorientation and punishments that withdraw things necessary for good health.

Finally, the bill prohibits the practice of segregation, which is any type of custody where an inmate is highly restricted in movement and association with others for 22 hours or more a day.

END THE PUBLIC FUNDING OF PARTISAN GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 VISANT À METTRE FIN AU FINANCEMENT PUBLIC DE LA PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE PARTISANE

Ms. Stiles moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to amend the Government Advertising Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la publicité gouvernementale.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Does the member wish to briefly explain the bill?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, thank you, Speaker. This bill ends the public funding of partisan government advertising. The Building Ontario Up Act, 2015, introduced under the previous Liberal government, made numerous amendments to the Government Advertising Act, 2004. Among the amendments that were made were many changes that weakened the rules that apply when the Auditor General reviews government advertising. This bill would amend the act to reverse those amendments so that the act reads substantially as it did before the 2015 amendments. It is word for word the same bill that was introduced under the previous Liberal government by the now Deputy Premier of Ontario.

1310

THISTLETOWN LIONS CLUB ACT, 2025

Mr. Coe moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr8, An Act to revive Thistletown Lions Club.

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

First reading agreed to.

ANDREW ZAWADOWSKI MEDICINE PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION ACT, 2025

Ms. Pierre moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr6, An Act to revive Andrew Zawadowski Medicine Professional Corporation.

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

First reading agreed to.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE EPIDEMIC ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR L'ÉPIDÉMIE DE VIOLENCE ENTRE PARTENAIRES INTIMES

MPP Wong-Tam moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act respecting intimate partner violence / Projet de loi 55, Loi concernant la violence entre partenaires intimes.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Does MPP Wong-Tam wish to briefly explain the bill?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I do. Thank you, Speaker.

The bill enacts the Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act, 2025. It requires the government of Ontario to recognize that intimate partner violence is indeed an epidemic. It also requires that the Attorney General establish the Renfrew County Inquest implementation committee as recommended by the report. Eighty-six recommendations were issued in June 2022 from the Office of the Chief Coroner's jury inquest based on the 2015 Renfrew county triple femicide.

Speaker, this is a very important issue. It's a bill that I have introduced with my colleagues here, including the great member Lisa Gretzky from Windsor, as well as co-sponsors Peggy Sattler and Doly Begum, deputy leader. This is an important issue, and I hope that the bill will move forward without any delay.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PRIDE MONTH

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and through you, good afternoon, colleagues. It is truly an honour and a privilege to rise in the House to recognize June as Pride Month. Ontario is incredibly proud to be home to such a strong, resilient, and bold LGBT+ community. We are in the best province in the best country in the world. One of the reasons for that is because we can live authentically, be who we are, and live our true lives here in Ontario.

For many, we have come to view Pride Month as a time of celebration, but it's much more than just rainbows, flags and parades. Pride is a movement.

Fifty-six years ago, the Stonewall riot sparked a broader movement for equal rights. In the 1960s and preceding decades, many lived in fear, and these were times that were particularly not welcoming for the LGBT+ community. Same-sex relations were illegal in New York City, forcing community members to seek refuge in limited spaces where they could socialize and express themselves openly without distress.

But in the early hours of June 28, 1969, a defining moment set in motion a transformative change in our history. When the New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn, it sparked a riot. Hundreds of people, including the neighbourhood residents and bar patrons of

Greenwich Village, fought to express themselves openly without discrimination, and for five more days after, protests involving thousands of people resumed in the fight against exploitation, harassment and social discrimination. Though the Stonewall riots did not start the LGBT+ rights movement, it unified communities, pushed for political activism and created numerous LGBT+ rights organizations.

June is an important month, as we remember the bravery of activists and advocates who pushed for what they believed in. Their commitment and devotion have helped drive positive change and have had a lasting impact on the fight for equality and acceptance.

While we celebrate this undeniable progress, we know much more work remains. There's no denying the concerning rise of hate in our province and in our country. However, our government stands shoulder to shoulder as an ally and a partner to Ontario's LGBT+ and gender-diverse communities. Hate of any kind has no place in Ontario. Our government will continue to work closely with the community partners to combat hate, foster solidarity, and build a province where all feel accepted and included.

Over the years, our government has taken action and made considerable investments to ensure that every Ontarian, regardless of their sexual orientation or their gender identity, feel safe to express themselves and live their most authentic lives. Over the last two years, we've invested \$45.5 million into the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant, to enhance safety and strengthen security in community spaces across Ontario, including those supporting the LGBT+ community. In August 2023, we launched the Building a Stronger and More Inclusive Ontario action plan, which outlined over 49 initiatives from 14 partner ministries, millions in investments by our government, including \$132.5 million from my ministry to help foster a more vibrant and inclusive province where every person can participate, contribute, and succeed.

Nevertheless, we know that we need to do more, and there's still more to do. In my capacity as minister, I look forward to continuing this work to foster a more inclusive society here in Ontario for generations to come.

Whether you are part of the community or an ally, celebrating pride and accepting everybody affirms all people deserve acceptance, respect, and freedom—values that we as Ontarians live by. Pride is all about celebrating and embracing who you are. However, we must also remember it's also about unifying and bringing people from all walks of life together without fear of judgment getting in the way of expressing oneself. June is a reminder that we must continue to advocate for equality, visibility and acceptance.

Before concluding, there's one key take-away I'd like to highlight. It's the importance of encouraging visibility and representation, especially to youth, so they can see their identities reflected in society. I am a firm believer in the core values that my parents instilled in me and many of our parents instilled in us: to be true to yourself, to live your life authentically and unapologetically. These princi-

ples lay the foundation for a society where future generations can live without judgment and love without shame.

To those watching from home: No matter where you come from or who you love, know that you are valued, loved, and never alone. You should be proud of yourself and feel empowered to live openly and joyfully. Love is love. Happy Pride.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Responses?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I proudly rise as the first non-binary person elected to this House, and I wish to say happy Pride, everyone. June is a very special time of year for the 2SLGBT community and our allies, when we all come together to celebrate and to agitate and to support one another.

I want to give a very special shout-out to my own Ontario NDP queer caucus and the leader of the official opposition, a very proud PFLAG mom. On Tuesday, we all gathered on the front lines of Queen's Park to raise the Pride progress flag, led by the Ontario Public Service Pride Network. As the flag rose, I thought about those who live in municipalities, especially those in smaller towns, where the raising of such a flag is under threat, as old arguments and harmful stereotypes are resurfaced and rehashed again.

The raising of the Pride flag at Queen's Park is a proud tradition now, started by former NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo, who represented Parkdale–High Park. Reverend DiNovo passed groundbreaking legislation right here in this House celebrating queer and trans rights. I have her to thank, because I was not required to fill out onerous paperwork, to pay a fee, to then adopt my own son when my wife gave birth to him. Our queer family was automatically recognized on the birth certificate by the laws of this great province.

1320

Speaker, it is illegal to be queer or trans in 65 countries globally. Six of those countries actively impose the death penalty on queer and trans people. In many places here, even in Canada and especially south of the border, things are sliding backwards. The Conservative Premier in Alberta is spreading hateful lies about trans youth, denying them life-saving medical care, restricting their ability to participate in sport and outing them at school.

In 2025, over 900 pieces of anti-trans legislation were considered by American politicians, and 111 of them have already passed. These bills are based on ignorance, hate and the scapegoating of trans people by governments to cover up the real issues of justice and safety.

I need every member of this chamber to stand strong and united with Ontario's queer and trans community. An attack on one of us is an attack on all of us. If we want to get anything done, we must do it together. We need that solidarity now more than ever.

This year, we saw five American companies bow to Donald Trump's anti-DEI rhetoric, cancelling their sponsorship agreements with Pride Toronto, the world's second-largest Pride celebration. We watch while Pride Toronto calls on the provincial government to stop

ignoring them and to start funding them along with the other Pride festivals in the province.

We know that Pride festivals in every single town and city bring millions of dollars in economic activity and tax revenues to Ontario coffers, providing an outstanding return on investment. For them to reach their full potential, I urge the government to commit to stable and predictable funding for Pride Toronto and other Pride organizations, as we have seen already in other provinces.

We must all stand with every student and educator in Ontario so that they know that they are not alone when flying the rainbow flag or creating safe space in their schools or libraries, even when others are trying to shut them down or ban their books that have queer and trans characters.

Let us always advocate for housing as a human right so that everyone, every single person in Ontario, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, will have a safe, caring home to call their own.

We must stand with every resident in Ontario so that they know that they can be their true, authentic selves in their workplace, in their school or even their place of worship.

Our goal in Ontario should be simple: It is a future that we can all lean towards and envision where everyone is free to express their most authentic selves, where all families are equal, relationships are recognized and all people, young and old, can wrap themselves in care as they explore their identities.

I hope everyone in this chamber will join me in saying to all of Ontario: Happy Pride Month.

MPP Tyler Watt: I rise today during Pride Month to recognize and celebrate the 2SLGBTQIA+ community across Ontario and to reflect on the journey that we've taken to get here.

As a gay man, standing here in this House today means more than I can express in words. I grew up in the 1990s, and back then, you didn't see Pride flags at government buildings or schools, and you certainly didn't see someone like me standing here as an elected official at Queen's Park.

Back then, it didn't feel safe to be out. You couldn't speak freely about who you loved or who you were. Many of us learned to hide, to shrink, to adapt, just to get by.

So when I see the Pride flag flying here today, it matters. When I see the minister standing up and talking about the LGBT, it matters. When I see the members of this House standing up with this community, it matters so much. It matters to every kid who walks past Queen's Park and sees that flag and knows they're not alone. It matters for every Ontarian who has ever felt like they don't belong.

But I also know we didn't get here alone. We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us: people who marched when it wasn't safe, who fought for rights most of us now take for granted, who faced police violence, job loss, family rejection and public shame just for being who they were. In Canada, it wasn't long ago that being gay meant you could be fired from your job, denied housing, or criminally charged. In fact, for years, the Canadian

government surveyed, interrogated and purged queer public servants in what we now call the LGBT Purge. I'm so grateful we do not live in that type of society anymore. Many never saw justice, and many never made it to this moment. We owe them our deepest gratitude, and we owe it to them to continue to fight—to fight for trans rights, for inclusive education, for accessible health care, and for a world where being queer or trans is not a risk, but a right. Because Pride isn't just a celebration; it's a protest and a declaration. It's a declaration that we exist, we matter, and we are not going anywhere.

While we have come a long way, we know the fight is not over. Every day, queer and trans people still face discrimination, violence and hate, especially trans youth, especially racialized members of our community. Just this year, we've seen hateful protests happening outside of schools and libraries. We've seen misinformation and fear stoked online and in public spaces. Right now, we are seeing politicians in the United States using trans people as political rage bait to distract the public. We've seen the toll it's taking: LGBT people are more than twice as likely to face a mental health crisis, more than half report living with depression, and one in eight LGBT youth have attempted suicide. These are not just numbers; they are lives. They are cries for help. They are consequences of a world that still too often tells people that they're less than.

But I've also seen the other side. I've seen what happens when we create space for people to fully be themselves, when we say: "You're welcome, you are safe and you are seen."

Pride is about joy. It's about resilience. It's about the power of showing up as your full, authentic self, even when the world tells you not to. So to everyone celebrating this month: I see you, I celebrate you and I'm fighting with you. We still have a long road ahead, but we walk it together. With love, with courage, and with our heads held high, we will. Happy Pride.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: It is an honour to rise today to celebrate Pride Month. As a school social worker for over a decade, I journeyed with so many young people as they came out to their families and to their school communities. I admired their courage. I stood with them and built a team of support so they could heal and accept their true selves. We worked so hard to ensure they had all they needed to thrive. I was proud to be there to push back against barriers and ignorance that existed in our school system and continue to exist in school systems in Ontario.

But I was also inspired by the many people who stepped up, showed solidarity and allyship with these young people and our 2SLGBTQ community. It doesn't just mean events and parades, but it's small actions of everyday life across Ontario that matter most. It is essential that we continue to be visible and out and together, and that we honour the history and celebrate the struggle and resistance of the 2SLGBTQ community—resistance to 2SLGBTQ violence, hate and systemic injustices that, sadly, people still confront today. We must continue to be vigilant. We need to continue to grow this movement, especially in the face of a horrific rise of homophobia, transphobia, toxic mascu-

linity and systemic backsliding across the globe and especially online.

In honour of Pride Month, let's come together. Let's care for each other. Let's celebrate and love—and celebrate love—our 2SLGBTQ neighbours. This month and every month, let's continue to make sure that we make safe spaces so that every person can be seen, can be heard, cared for and included as they are. We are stronger together.

Happy Pride, everyone.

1330

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Mr. Steve Clark: I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to attend the 2025 annual conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees in Regina, Saskatchewan, from September 6 to September 9, 2025; and

That the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be authorized to attend the 2025 Legislative Summit of the National Conference of State Legislatures in Boston, Massachusetts, from August 3 to August 6, 2025; and

That the following standing committees be authorized to meet during the summer adjournment at the call of the Chair:

—the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs;

—the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The government House leader has moved that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to attend the 2025 annual conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees in Regina, Saskatchewan, from September 6 to September 9, 2025; and

That the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be authorized to attend the 2025 Legislative Summit of the National Conference of State Legislatures in Boston, Massachusetts, from August 3 to August 6, 2025; and

That the following standing committees be authorized to meet during the summer adjournment at the call of the Chair:

—the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs;

—the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Mr. Steve Clark: I move that when the House adjourns today, it shall stand adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Monday, October 20, 2025.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The government House leader has moved that when the House adjourns today, it shall stand adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Monday, October 20, 2025. Is it the pleasure of the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. The government House leader has moved it and the government House leader would like to speak to it.

I recognize the government House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. We've had a very ambitious spring sitting. It has concluded with a historic passage of 10 bills—if you count the private bills, it will be 12 bills altogether—as part of the government's plan to protect Ontario and deliver on its mandate that it was given in the election earlier this year. Because it has been an ambitious sitting, we need time—substantial public policy, first of all, I want to say, and the government is now looking for time to implement that policy.

The government, in addition to the 10 bills, I want to highlight the fact that we had a throne speech for the 44th Parliament. Even though the Parliament began on April 14, on April 7, we announced very significant aid of \$11 billion in relief to support Ontario workers and Ontario companies.

We're in the middle of a trade war with Donald Trump. It's very important that we take the historic agenda with the passage of those 10 government bills—for us to take the summer to consult and to work with Indigenous leaders, the business community, community leaders and stakeholders to get that policy and those bills implemented. So the government is moving forward on this motion.

I'm sure there will be lots of discussion amongst the opposition parties, but I wanted to make sure that I did provide those comments. In a six-week sitting, to be able to stand here after starting on April 14 and having those bills move forward, having that plan to stand up for workers and stand up for jobs and stand up against Donald Trump—I'm moving this motion and I'm listening to the opposition.

I'll just take my seat and look forward to hearing from Mr. Vanthof.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the government House leader talk about the ambitious agenda of the government. I'd just like to put on the record that we are very much opposed to this motion.

In the short time the House was here, yes, 10 bills were passed. They were time-allocated; committee was not used. Yesterday was the ultimate example, when Bill 5 was—this week was the ultimate example. And today, when one of the ministers said, “We know about the duty to consult”—yet First Nations weren't consulted at all

before Bill 5 was introduced. That's not how consultation works. It just isn't.

During the initial committee hearings, the member from Kiiwetinoong asked a couple of ministers what they thought treaties were. Could they describe how treaties work? And I really don't think you understand.

To say that this works so great, we don't need to come back for quite a while—now, I'm not someone who's going to stand here and say, “Well, we need to come back for the sake of coming back, because everybody is going to have all summer off and all fall off.” Let's all face it, we all work as hard at home as we do here. That's not the issue. That is not the issue. To get elected, to stay elected, you're always working. I get that. It doesn't matter what your political philosophies are.

But the fact is, this Parliament is supposed to play a role in making good laws for the province, and when you ram things through the Parliament, the laws aren't as good as they could be. And in the case of Bill 5—Bill 5 will likely end up in the courts. Bill 5 very well could be the same as Bill 124 and Bill 23, having to be rescinded at some point. Bill 5 is going to cause, unfortunately, blockades. And when that happens—the government claims, and I don't disagree, that there are a lot of people looking for safe places to invest because of the unpredictability of the American system right now, but they're creating exactly the same unpredictability, exactly the same.

When there are protests in the street, when they openly say there are places where some laws won't apply, where other places in the same province have to face a different regulatory burden, that is creating unpredictability. It boggles the mind. And the answer is, “Well, we're going to sit even less. This is working so well, we're going to sit even less.” It's not working well. No.

I don't blame this on individual members. I certainly don't blame this on the government House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes, you are.

Mr. John Vanthof: I could blame it on him, if I like—a constructive heckle. I don't. I blame it on—there are people on the government side who do not respect how the Legislature works, and because they don't respect how the Legislature works, it doesn't. And who pays for that is the people of Ontario. Bill 5 is a prime, prime example of how the Legislature doesn't work.

1340

I was speaking a while ago about Bill 5. I can't remember exactly how I said it, but I said if you time-allocate it, you will come to regret it. You did time-allocate it, and you will come to regret it. The tragic part is, we will all come to regret it. Ontarians will come to regret it. If you really think about it—I'm using Bill 5 as an example of how when you rush things through the Legislature, when you shorten the time that the Legislature sits, you make bad legislation.

Obviously what this motion does now is, again, it shortens the time that the Legislature is going to sit. I'll give you an example. This is why the Legislature should sit more, why we should debate things more. In Bill 5, we got the special economic zones of, I would say, strategic

importance in defending ourselves against the unpredictability of the American government. Is that kind of the government's line?

MPP Jamie West: Yes.

Mr. John Vanthof: Great. And you know what? I think we're all in favour of doing that, of strengthening this province against the unpredictability of our former closest ally. Hopefully some day they will be our closest ally again, but right now, they're not. So we come up with Bill 5 and the government's lines are, "Critical minerals. We need to develop the north. That's why we need to make a special economic zone." I'm still waiting to see how many critical minerals there are in the Dresden dump; how building a strategic wall to protect your country, protect your province—the first thing is mega dump. But the mega dump is not even the worst one. It is terrible, but Ontario Place is in that as well. Please, someone could have used some extra time for the government to explain to us how the evil forces of Donald Trump are going to be held back by an Austrian spa—which, it turns out, is not from Austria. Is it Romanian?

MPP Jamie West: I don't know. It's like a shell game.

Mr. John Vanthof: But those are the things that need to come out in the Legislature in more time. Shortening the time isn't going to make it better.

We're not going to win this vote today. I hope we do, but I kind of think that they're going to have their members. But it's also our job to be propositional, not just oppositional. So, since we can't control—at least, can the government use that time to talk to all Ontarians, to listen to all their views? Not just their friends, not just the friends who happen to own the Dresden dump, not just their friends who happen to have a stake in Ontario Place; not just those Ontarians, but all Ontarians.

I listened to the Premier this morning, on how we all want—we do all want a better Ontario. I think the Premier does too. But the scope of who you're listening to certainly is not wide enough. We saw the galleries full yesterday. When we saw tears in those galleries—mostly because they had not been consulted, even thought of—I feel that. I am not First Nations, I am not Indigenous, but I am from northern Ontario, and we have heard this story so many times: "We know better. We want your raw materials, and don't worry, we'll take care of you after." The last time somebody took care of me was in grade 6, and the biggest kid in the class beat me up behind the show.

Hon. Mike Harris: Well, this has started to devolve.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. But that comes into my—because the government has the same attitude: "We're bigger, we're smarter, and we'll worry about you after we get what we want."

Even the government ads—you know, "Critical minerals from northern Ontario will build the manufacturing engine in the south." Those ads don't say, "Critical minerals from northern Ontario will actually help build northern Ontario so people in northern Ontario have even equivalent services to the south." They don't say that. Because we all know that that is not going to happen.

That's because successive governments—but this one isn't learning at all—pass what they want to get what they want, and the people in the areas that have things that the government of the day wants or that powerful people within the province want are always an afterthought. The people in Dresden are an afterthought. The people who actually live in the Ring of Fire are an afterthought.

The people who used, actually used, Ontario Place when it was a public park—I don't know what else you call it. I took my kids to Ontario Place. I'm an old guy, so my kids are old. I remember some of the best memories on Ontario Place. They used to have, like, rubber boats with little outboard motors. My son kicked the—my son really wanted to drown me in that boat, but anyway. Yes, successive governments ignored Ontario Place, and now—

Hon. Mike Harris: We're fixing it.

Mr. John Vanthof: You're fixing it as a private spa. If you had taken the \$2 billion and fixed Ontario Place as a public space—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Through the Speaker.

Mr. John Vanthof: And that is the problem when you curtail the time the Legislature sits, and when you—much more importantly—curtail the time that you actually listen to the people. Because the whole role of Parliament and our whole role is to listen to people, to represent people.

Any legislation isn't going to make everyone happy; I get that. And the government won a massive majority; I get that too. I don't understand why, with that massive majority, they are so willing to give up the trust that they seem to have in the election. When the Premier came out and said that he was going to protect Canada, people go, "Okay." But lessening the rules or making the rules different for one group or another, that's not protecting. It's certainly not protecting the people of Ontario.

Perhaps if the government actually took the time to sit as long as we are usually sitting, perhaps we could discuss what happened to the Conservative Party, because I seem to recall that the Conservative Party used to say that it shouldn't be up to the government to pick winners and losers. The government should make a stable regulatory, small government environment for everyone. It shouldn't be up to the government to pick winners and losers. Yet this government seems—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, thank you for reminding me. I was about to say the wrong word.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Now I totally lost my train of thought.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you for that, government House leader. The Conservatives, progressive or not, that used to be their tagline: It's not up to the government to pick winners or losers. It's to make stable, small government so everyone has a shot at doing the best they can and helping the province. This government is exactly the opposite. They decide to pick winners.

Now that Bill 5 has passed, you know what? There are likely meetings happening somewhere about where to buy

land, where it's going to be a special economic zone. I would be shocked if those meetings weren't happening. I would be shocked if they haven't happened already.

1350

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, they have, actually.

Mr. John Vanthof: We know that. But why does the government do that? I've heard, time and time again, that it takes too long to—

MPP Jamie West: Develop a mine?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, develop a mine—we agree. There are things we can do to make sure it goes faster without giving cabinet and government ultimate power to pick winners and losers. Other provinces do it; other states do it; other countries do it. Yet this government seems incapable—it's not incapable; unwilling. It's unwilling because this government wants to pick winners. They don't listen to all Ontarians. They just listen to a select few.

The less time that they can have this Legislature sitting, the less time they actually have to listen to other Ontarians, the less time they have to bear question period, the less time they have to listen to people like me—well, they don't have to listen to people like me, but the less time people like me can speak. They do not want people to speak against them. This is the one place where you have the ability to stand up and speak, and they don't like it—even though they claimed when they were opposition that they wanted to listen to people. They want to listen to people less than any other government in recent memory because they sit less. I think they've had the most bills rescinded and taken to court in recent memory.

This process is continuing. Bill 5 will end up in the courts. There will be protests. Honestly, I hope it doesn't come to that, but it very well could. If I was an investor and I was looking at a place to invest, I would look at a place where people had good relations with all residents, not just some.

Ontario is a great place; it is. We have the ability to be in this place and not always agree. But on a personal level, that's one of the things I love about this place. I can walk over to anybody and have a great conversation, and they can come and we can laugh at a joke. I really appreciate that. That's one of the strengths of this place. But the less this place sits, the weaker that gets—the weaker that gets.

I need to put on the record that we are strongly opposed to shortening the time the Legislature sits. But I have to put in a plug: The International Plowing Match is in the region of Niagara—Grassie, I think it's called?

MPP Wayne Gates: It's in Niagara.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, it's in the region of Niagara. The Legislature usually stops two days for the IPM. Now the Legislature is not sitting, so I encourage everybody to come to the IPM, the International Plowing Match. I'm going to give a shameless personal plug. We have a campsite there. You're all welcome. It's a non-partisan campsite. We had a bit of fun there last year at the campsite. But anyway, you're all welcome.

In my last minute, I would also like to pay tribute to my uncle Ernie Hardeman, who has been in this Legislature

for 30 years. I'd like to put on the record that he is the reason I'm NDP, but he is also a big part of the reason that I'm a legislator at all. He instilled a love of politics in me—not a love of the Conservative Party, but a love of politics.

The great thing about the member for Oxford: He can go anywhere and everyone recognizes him and talks to him on a first-name basis. When I saw that, I thought, "You know, that's pretty cool."

I'd like to apologize to him as well, because early on, when I got elected, I'm the first person here who called him "Uncle Ernie" because he is my uncle. That seems to have stuck. I think we all say it with respect and admiration. He's a friend to us all, but he's my uncle, and I love him.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: Wow. October 20—wow. If you do the math, we're going to sit about half of what we normally would this year—half. If you do the further math and take a look at what's on the order paper, you realize that when we come back, the government is going to have to start time-allocating bills right away. Maybe we can agree in this House, the way things are going, that at first reading, governments should have to file their time allocation motion so we know what we're dealing with.

It just shows a fundamental disrespect for what this place is. It's the people's place. Apart from all the legislation, this is a Legislature that's here for accountability. Every day, for one hour, the people get to ask their questions of the government about the things that they're doing: about the legislation, the policies, the investments the government is doing for them—or hopefully doing for them.

This isn't about trying to defend us or trying to protect us or trying to make sure that we can be strong and fight this war. It's just actually not wanting to be accountable, and it's not shocking. It's hard to get an answer out of a minister. Every day we're here and it's the role on this side—and on that side too. Our job—all of us, whether or not we sit here or we sit there—is to ask questions. Hopefully inside, in cabinet and in caucus, they ask questions, but I don't know. I'm not sure. It's not entirely evident.

Let's take a look at Bill 5. Bill 5 just passed yesterday. As I said this morning, "It's not over; it's just beginning." What it's saying to the people of Ontario is, guess what, anywhere, anyplace, any time, the Premier of Ontario or a minister can say that one of the 880 pieces of legislation, I think it is, the laws that we have in Ontario to protect all of us—to protect our families, to protect the environment, to protect employment standards—those don't apply.

My colleague from Timiskaming talked about land speculation. Well, if people on the other side think that's a joke, just take a look at the history of this government and how people who speculated on land, the greenbelt, MZOs, urban boundaries have benefited. It's a very clear record.

Now you're saying that you can wipe out laws in a geographical area. Wow. That's a real win for land speculators, for people who want to purchase land and just make money off the land selling it—not making money off the land by developing or investing in it, but by selling it.

That's what happened in the greenbelt. I know everybody's heads are down and people talk about the RCMP investigation, but the reality is, we all know that people profited from that. Wealthy, well-connected insiders profited from that. Now we've passed a piece of legislation that says—

MPP Lisa Gretzky: They did. They passed it.

1400

Mr. John Fraser: Well, I know. They passed it, but I say “we” because I'd like to get people to listen over there, so I keep wagging my finger and say “you.” Because I'm sure that there are many of you who stood up yesterday who had reservations. And if you didn't, I'd be quite surprised. Because I was standing—or sitting over here, and I could see the looks on people's faces. Nobody was cheering it. Nobody was saying, “This is great.” Nobody was saying it was great that we have actually done—that we've actually just—“we.” I'll say, the government has broken whatever little trust it had with First Nations. It's incredible.

I'll talk a bit more about the Premier's response today and why question period is important. I said earlier, the Premier's message was, “Don't be left behind.” And that really translated is, “We know what's good for you. All of you—First Nations, all of Ontarians—we know what's good for you.” First Nations have heard that for centuries and centuries and centuries, ever since settlers have come: “We know what's good for you,” often with very tragic consequences. So when the Premier is talking about a bill, putting forward a bill that essentially doesn't protect their treaty rights, their rights to the land, and doesn't respect truth and reconciliation—and his response is to say, essentially, “I know what's good for you, don't worry.” I mean, this morning he said we're going to build hockey rinks. That's actually not what it's about.

What it's about is respecting our obligations under truth and reconciliation, and that bears scrutiny. That needs scrutiny. Although Bill 5 has passed, it's not over yet, folks; it's just beginning. And I think you know that, and that's why the Premier and this government don't want to be here any more than they have to. They don't want to be here because they don't want to be here every morning at 10:30 to have to answer the questions that are going to come up as a result of Bill 5.

We know what's going to happen. Scandals are going to happen. Like the member from Timiskaming said, we're going to find out who bought what land, who has the inside scoop, and when that stuff happens, we need to be here. If you sat on this side, knowing what your responsibilities are, you would say exactly the same thing. And to members on the other side—I know it's not a free vote over there—you know we should be here. You all know we should be here. The work that we do is important here. It's important that we take the time we need to do that

work, that we have public consultations, that we have committee, that we allow committees to do their work. And cutting that legislative time in half doesn't lend itself to the best results. It doesn't. We go too fast. We time-allocate everything. And then people get upset when opposition parties are going, “You're going too fast. You're not thinking. You're not doing this right.” And everybody goes, “But you're obstructing.” No, what we're saying is stop. It's the only tool we have over here. And now what you're saying is you're going to sit here less and try to do stuff faster, and that's going to equal more mistakes.

I'll give you another one about mistakes. We passed Bill 11 here—I'll say “we.” You passed. The government rammed through Bill 11. Bill 11 has got a lot of great things in it: stuff for French-language services, some stuff around nursing agencies. It's okay; it's not great, but it's good. It's passable. But the Information and Privacy Commissioner of this province, who is an officer of this Legislature, who is here to protect all Ontarians' information and privacy, to provide information to government, wrote this government three times—count them, three times—about schedule 6 and the risks to people's personal health data, about their access to that data, about protecting that data. And the government didn't respond—save for a letter, I think from the House leader, at the last minute. I'll give him credit for that, but that's not much.

It didn't address what the Information and Privacy Commissioner had offered. She offered 21 amendments. They're all good. They're all well thought out. They're about protecting people's personal health data. But you know what? We didn't go to committee. We're in a hurry. We've got to get out of here. We've got to get out of here so we can come back seven weeks later.

So, we didn't go to committee. The government ignored all those pieces of advice. We're not putting forward the amendments. It's not us. We're not trying to be critical of the bill. This is someone who is saying, “Objectively, I am here to protect people's privacy and information, and health records are really important.” The Minister of Health didn't even give the Information and Privacy Commissioner the courtesy of a reply, of an acknowledgement, of a call.

And finally, after questioning from my colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, the minister says, “Well, we have a difference of opinion”—after saying that she'd been working with the Information and Privacy Commissioner. There's my point. I guarantee you, the stuff in schedule 6 in Bill 11 is going to come back to bite the government. But it's not biting the government; it's going to bite people. And then there's going to be a scramble to try and fix it, or there's going to be a deflection to say, “Hey, it's not a problem. Everything is okay.”

There was a suggestion in debate that, actually, people's personal health information, their data, was okay as long as it was anonymized—that you could trade. It was like, “Don't worry about it. It's okay to group that.” The fundamental misunderstanding that this government has and why data is such a big risk is that data is currency.

Data is the new currency, and so people want it. It has value. If you don't actually protect people's personal health information, it can be used against them. And it's hard to anonymize, because you can take data sets and figure out who somebody is. You take two or three or four data sets and then go, "Oh, that's who this person is."

So that's a big problem, that we didn't take that bill to committee, that we didn't hear from the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

I've just been told they want to steal my time here, so I'm going to finish up. I'm not greedy. I'm not greedy.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: You share. You share.

Mr. John Fraser: I share.

We can't allow ourselves to diminish this place. For this place to work, for government to work, we need to be here. We need to be here. It's important for accountability. It's important to get legislation right. And we will not be supporting this motion.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Say you'll share your time—

Mr. John Fraser: I'll share my time with my colleague from Don Valley East and Orléans.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Blais: This, frankly, is shocking. We rushed an election because of the urgency of dealing with Donald Trump's tariffs and the threat that that posed to Ontario's economy. We lost four weeks of legislative time for the election, and then we lost another six weeks for the transition of the government who was already the government. But they took six weeks to transition themselves back to work.

Now we've been meeting for a couple of weeks this spring, Madam Speaker, and while certainly we haven't agreed on everything, I would have to give the government credit for having a pretty packed legislative agenda.

But now we hear that we're going to stay home for the next five months. That is absolutely ridiculous. Madam Speaker, that is not a summer break. That is a democratic blackout, plain and simple. I don't understand what this government is so afraid of. If they are truly advancing the goals of economic development, if they are truly advancing the goals of reducing wait times in our hospitals, if they are truly advancing the goals of improving our education system, then they should be eager to bring those solutions to this place for debate, approval and questioning. But we've seen that they're not. They just want to go home.

1410

Just weeks ago, the Premier promised action on affordability. Days ago, his government and his ministers said that they were focused on housing, health care and public safety. But now, they're clocking out. We're done. We're going to take a longer break than teachers, who they decry so often for having poor work habits. Literally, we're going to be out for half the year.

Now, look—don't get me wrong—people do work in their ridings. There are lots of coffee meetings. There are lots of Kiwanis Club meetings. There's lots of door

knocking to do and church suppers to attend. But five months is a little ridiculous, Madam Speaker.

If this government was truly committed to standing up for Ontarians, if they were truly committed to defending Ontario against the threat of tariffs, if they were truly committed to bringing Canada together—to help everyone in Canada defend against those tariffs—they would have this Legislature back earlier in the fall, as scheduled, right after Labour Day, not a week or two weeks—whatever it is—after Thanksgiving.

That is not the kind of government that the Premier promised in the election. That is not the responsive, fast-acting, mobile and nimble government that the Premier said we needed to defend ourselves against Donald Trump. That is not what Ontarians want, and it's not what Ontarians deserve from their government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Adil Shamji: Our province is at war: Those aren't my words; those are the government's words.

Our province needs a Team Ontario approach that underlies a Team Canada approach: That's the government's words, not my words.

Yet at a time that we're apparently at war, that we need a Team Canada approach, that we need a Team Ontario approach, this government is dismissing Team Ontario until October 20.

Let's pause and reflect on the crises that we're walking away from right now. A child died from measles today. Amidst an anemic public health response—amidst a Minister of Health and a Premier that are afraid to even utter the word "measles," let alone take the necessary action to respond to measles—a child in Ontario died from measles, a disease that had, until now, been eradicated in our country for the last three decades. We're walking away from that.

We learned today that last year, over 2,000 Ontarians—our brothers and sisters, our friends, our family—died from opioids. We're walking away from that.

We're walking away as multiple pieces of controversial legislation have been forced through with time allocation motions. We're walking away as there are people across the province protesting and Indigenous people saying that they haven't been adequately consulted. We're saying that now is a good time to walk away and not come back until October 20.

A few weeks ago, I said in this House during question period that I was receiving emails urgently beseeching emergency doctors across this province to keep ERs open. I'm still getting those, and I'm still waiting for a plan—an actual plan that goes beyond words—to explain how we're going to keep emergency departments open across our province in rural communities and in Indigenous communities, and we're not getting that.

So how does it make sense? How does it make sense, after taking four months off before this parliamentary session began and as we stare down the barrel of, what is it, something like 24 weeks before we come together, in the middle of a war? It's not right. We have Ontarians who

are struggling, who are suffering, who are dying and who are waiting for a plan, and in this parliamentary session, that plan wasn't offered to them.

Let's keep going. Let's not come back six months from now. Let's—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Further debate?

MPP Wayne Gates: I'm really glad I'm going to get the chance to talk to this. Can you imagine? We found out an hour ago that we're not going to sit here for another—till October 20. That means we would have sat for six weeks in nine months, in a province, today, that has a housing crisis—the lowest houses being built in 50 years.

I'm going to share my time, as quick as I can, with Parkdale–High Park, Windsor West, Sudbury and my other colleagues—whoever wants to speak to this.

Think about it. I want to be very clear: highest unemployment among youth in the province of Ontario. Our food banks—we can't keep up because of the crisis of affordability. Health care is in a crisis. Our long-term care—we have 40,000 on the wait-list. And what does this government want to talk about today, on the last day before we recess? We're not coming back until October 20—October 20. That means we're sitting six weeks in 10 months.

We called an early election at \$200 million by this government. We needed an election. And guess what happened? We had the early election and we don't sit for almost two months after we have the election. And now they don't want to sit again. It's absolutely ridiculous.

I want to say to every MPP on the Conservative side, you should be ashamed of yourselves not to want to sit here so we can have question period, so we can have our committees, so we can have debates like we did on Bill 5. Every one of you that's going to stand up and vote for this should be ashamed of yourself. This should not happen in the province of Ontario. We should be sitting and doing our job that I was elected to do just a few short months ago.

Not coming back until October 20 is a disgrace. It's a disgrace by this Conservative government to even bring this forward.

Thank you very much. I'll turn it over to my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Parkdale–High Park.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Colleagues, just a few short months ago, the people of Parkdale–High Park elected me and they asked me to serve them and they asked me to serve the people of Ontario. And I came, as perhaps many of you, my colleagues here in the House, and you, Speaker, did: with a sense of possibility of what our democracy could do for the people of Ontario.

To arrive in this House and wonder if anyone is listening—Speaker, is anyone listening to me right now? To know that the thousands of people who gave me their trust are waiting for me to return home to them and share with them what this great place can do for them. And I need to tell them the truth of a government that has eroded

the processes that our ancestors put in place so that every voice could be heard; of a government that has looked at those who have been made vulnerable—because they are among the strongest people I know, the people who are experiencing homelessness—by our oppressive systems, and they have voted in a law to fine them \$10,000, to put them in jail after taking away harm reduction. I have to go home to the people of Parkdale–High Park and tell them that any place that they love could become a special economic zone, and that the municipal laws that protect that place, the environmental laws that protect that place, the worker safety laws that protect that place are no more.

1420

Speaker, I was here in the House yesterday as First Nations wept and raged in our galleries, because this place holds true to its colonial past and does not abide by free, prior, informed consent. I strongly oppose this decision to sit for only six weeks in nine months, to take away the voices of all those who elected the 124—not just 80 or so government—members.

I came idealistic, with a great sense of altruism and possibility, and I will not leave this place without that. But I invite the members who have been here for years, and who have been beaten down by this government that wants to take away the voices of the people they represent, to find that sense again and to vote against this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Sudbury.

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, we are talking about adjourning the House until October 20. Today, at lunchtime, I had the opportunity to have lunch with the page from Sudbury, Leif. His mom asked me when we were coming back, and I said probably in September. It's only during election years and federal elections that we don't come back to the end of October, and there's so much work to be done here. There's a lot of work to be done here, and I'm surprised the government House leader has suggested we don't come back until October 20. I'm not saying we don't work in our own ridings—we're all very busy—but our role here is to amplify and elevate those voices here, to make change here.

There was an election called, as you know, in February; a snap election to protect Ontario. What I heard at the doors—and I'm sure my colleagues heard it at the doors—was the number of people using food banks, the number of people who had been laid off: like in my community, 300 people laid off with the threat of Trump's tariffs, before the tariffs even came out. Since then, that need has escalated. We know that before the election, every single year—starting in the last year of the Liberal government and every single year of the Conservative government—more and more workers are using food banks. I know, talking to seniors in my community, that more and more seniors are going to food banks.

So, we had an election. And what did we do to address those concerns for people? How do we help workers and seniors? How did we help community members? I struggle to see that direct line. Those bold, courageous ideas that

were talked about during the election, I did not see it come forward from the government. In fact, there's a labour bill that was tabled three minutes after the election ended. That's not going to pass before we rise, and we're not going to continue debate until October. I think we can do better than AEDs and reporting fraudulent job postings and, "If you get laid off, you can look for work without pay." I think we can do better and bolder and protect people. I think we could go after the \$60 million worth of wage theft that we know about. I think we could do that. I think we can support the workers who are on strike at WSIB and Canadian Hearing Society.

The workers of Ontario deserve better than this and the government is not listening. We should vote against this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I'm going to share some of the time that's left with my colleague from Waterloo.

I just want to echo what my colleagues have said, how undemocratic this is. We will have sat for six weeks in 10 months. We have a government who called a very unnecessary and expensive election because it was urgent and then delayed almost two months calling this House back. The government House leader says, "We need a break now. We had a full jam-packed agenda and now we need a break to implement that."

What they need to do to address the tariff threats from across the border, what they need to do to support the workers on the picket lines in Windsor and across the province, what they need to do to address the number of people accessing food banks, is to have this place sitting to hear from the public, to hear from the communities that opposition members represent, for us to have debates and to be able to table bills and amendments and have committee meetings. That's how you get it done. What I heard from the government side was, "We delayed and we dithered so that we could push through anti-democratic legislation that will likely be challenged in court, and now we're going to go run and hide from accountability."

There will be no question period. We won't have media asking questions. We won't be welcoming the public into this place to hold the government accountable. That's what us on this side of the House have heard and that's what we stand against.

We cannot support the government shutting this place down again until October 20.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to say, on behalf of the leader of the Ontario official opposition, I chair the tariff response to the economic crisis that we're facing. People want leadership from us. They want leadership from every MPP here and they need legislative changes to make that happen. When 65% of our steel goes to the United States, we need a procurement strategy that will require legislative changes and funding to ensure that those jobs stay here. When steel workers tell us that they are just treading water and that we are on the precipice of losing the entire sector as a whole, that requires a legislative response.

This is no time for the cottage. This is a time for people to show up and support Ontario jobs. This requires all of our energy, and it requires leadership that clearly this government is failing on.

This is a sad day for Ontario. It's a sad day because also, by shutting down this place, you compromise trust in us—those of us who come to this place to do real work and make real change. What I want to say to you, Madam Speaker, is that as the official opposition, we're still going to do the work. We're still going to meet with the stakeholders. We're still going to propose solutions to this government because that is what we were elected to do.

The Premier said, "God bless all of you," here at the end of this. Let's think about the fact that we have no public health strategy on the measles file and that a baby died of measles in Ontario in 2025.

What a sad day for the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 32(b), the time allotted for the afternoon routine has expired. I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Clark has moved that, when the House adjourns today, it shall stand adjourned until 10:15 on Monday, October 20, 2025.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1430 to 1500.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Please take your seats.

Mr. Clark has moved that when the House adjourns today, it shall stand adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Monday, October 20, 2025.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Babikian, Aris | Grewal, Hardeep Singh | Quinn, Nolan |
| Bailey, Robert | Gualtieri, Silvia | Rae, Matthew |
| Bethlenfalvy, Peter | Hamid, Zee | Rosenberg, Bill |
| Bouma, Will | Hardeman, Ernie | Sabawy, Sheref |
| Bresee, Ric | Harris, Mike | Sandhu, Amarjot |
| Calandra, Paul | Holland, Kevin | Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh |
| Cho, Raymond Sung Joon | Jones, Trevor | Sarrazin, Stéphane |
| Cho, Stan | Jordan, John | Saunderson, Brian |
| Ciriello, Monica | Kanapathi, Logan | Scott, Chris |
| Clark, Steve | Kerzner, Michael S. | Scott, Laurie |
| Coe, Lorne | Khanjin, Andrea | Smith, Dave |
| Cooper, Michelle | Leardi, Anthony | Smith, David |
| Crawford, Stephen | Lecce, Stephen | Smith, Graydon |
| Cuzzetto, Rudy | McCarthy, Todd J. | Smith, Laura |
| Denault, Billy | McGregor, Graham | Tangri, Nina |
| Dixon, Jess | Mulroney, Caroline | Thanigasalam, Vijay |
| Dowie, Andrew | Oosterhoff, Sam | Thompson, Lisa M. |
| Downey, Doug | Pang, Billy | Tibollo, Michael A. |
| Dunlop, Jill | Parsa, Michael | Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. |
| Firin, Mohamed | Piccini, David | Wai, Daisy |
| Gallagher Murphy, Dawn | Pierre, Natalie | Williams, Charmaine A. |

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Armstrong, Teresa J. | Fraser, John | Rakocevic, Tom |
| Bell, Jessica | Gates, Wayne | Shamji, Adil |
| Blais, Stephen | Gilmour, Alexa | Shaw, Sandy |
| Bourgouin, Guy | Glover, Chris | Tabuns, Peter |
| Bowman, Stephanie | Gretzky, Lisa | Vanthof, John |
| Clancy, Aislinn | Hsu, Ted | Watt, Tyler |
| Collard, Lucille | Mamakwa, Sol | West, Jamie |
| Fairclough, Lee | McCrimmon, Karen | Wong-Tam, Kristyn |
| Fife, Catherine | McMahon, Mary-Margaret | |

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The eyes are 63; the nays are 26.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day? I recognize the government House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, if you seek it, you shall find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to see the clock at 6. Is it agreed? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS WEEK ACT, 2025 LOI DE 2025 SUR LA SEMAINE DES SPORTS UNIVERSITAIRES DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Saunderson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to proclaim Ontario University Athletics Week / Projet de loi 22, Loi proclamant la Semaine des sports universitaires de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It is a pleasure to rise in the House today on behalf of the hard-working families of Simcoe Grey to speak to my private member's bill, Bill 22. If passed, Speaker, this bill would declare the first week of October each year as Ontario University Athletics Week to recognize the incredible athletes and coaches that compete across our great province in university athletics.

As I start, Madam Speaker, I'd like to draw attention to the gallery and welcome my mother and my wife. My mother was a varsity athlete at the University of Toronto. She played varsity basketball for three years and was part of a team that won the provincial championship. My wife, Susie, was a varsity athlete at the University of Western

Ontario, competing for three years in the sport of cross-country skiing, and that is, in fact, how we met—so all the good things that come from sport. I also want to mention my father, Bill Saunderson, at home. He was an MPP in this house in 1995, an avid athlete who was a member of the Trinity College hockey team that won the Jennings Cup, intramural cup at U of T in 1955. As you can see, Speaker, I come from a family of athletes who have enjoyed the benefits of university sport in Ontario.

Our athletes and coaches have a great story to tell, a story about their dedication, their commitment and their journey—a journey of learning and personal growth wherever that may take them. Today, I'd like to share some stories about athletes that I know and their accomplishments and the opportunities that have changed their lives and rallied their communities, their universities and, in many cases, their country. Our incredible university athletes have done remarkable things on the ice, on the water, in the water, on the courts and on the fields across this great province. They have done these remarkable things locally, provincially, nationally and internationally, showing their incredible talent for all to see. Bill 22, if passed, will make Ontario the first jurisdiction in Canada to declare a week of recognition and celebration for our great university athletes. And I want to thank the legislative library for researching this for me.

In preparing for Bill 22, I have reached out to key stakeholders like Ontario University Athletics, or OUA, and a number of member universities, and I want to share some of the feedback I have received.

From Gord Grace, who is the president and CAO of Ontario University Athletics—he writes: "I am writing to express our enthusiastic endorsement of your proposed private member's bill, which would proclaim the first week of October each year as Ontario University Athletics Week. This initiative, which honours both athletic excellence and academic achievement, strongly reflects the values of Ontario University Athletics and the balanced pursuit of success that defines our student-athletes. Across our 20-member universities, student-athletes demonstrate unwavering commitment to their sport, their studies and their communities. By providing a platform for each university to recognize student-athletes who exemplify these values, the province of Ontario would be acknowledging the integral role of university sport in shaping future leaders and contributors to our society."

And from Scott Barker, the director of athletics and recreation at Ontario Tech University, one of our newer universities—he had this to say: "Ontario Tech University is proud of our Ridgebacks and our vibrant athletics community. In 2024, with the help of the sport hosting funding from the province, we partnered with the city of Oshawa to host the 2024-25 Bruce Power men's Canadian soccer championship tournament.

1510

"Sporting events bring people together, they unite us, and our campus was buzzing with excitement. This successful event was a great example of the impact that university athletics has on community and our student-

athletes. University athletics empower students to pursue studies and athletics hand-in-hand while pursuing their life goals. This bill, proclaiming the first week of October as University Athletics Week in Ontario is an opportunity to celebrate the hard work and dedication of student-athletes and showcase the impacts of a strong university athletics community.”

Speaker, I'd like to share some statistics about university athletes who have represented Canada at the Olympic games, and these are statistics that I gained just by going online and looking at some of the member universities from Ontario University Athletics:

—Western University has graduated over 130 Olympians;

—Queen's University, over 56 Olympians;

—U of T, over 300 Olympians;

—Ottawa University, over 40 Olympians;

—York University, over 42;

—Guelph, over 15;

—Brock University, over 50;

—Trent University, over six;

—Wilfred Laurier, over six; and

—Waterloo University, over 10.

That comes to over 700 student-athletes who have represented Canada at the Olympics, and that is only 10 of the member 20. And, Speaker, these only cover athletes who have competed at the Olympics. It does not reflect athletes who have represented their universities at provincial and national championships, international competitions—including world championships.

I heard this from Ontario Tech University: 10 to 15 of their athletes have competed at the World University Games, 25 to 30 athletes have competed professionally after graduation, and five to six athletes were drafted into professional sport while still playing at the university. Carleton University has told me that they've graduated 17 professional soccer players and seven international rugby players.

In our own caucus, the Minister of Sport was a university standout playing football for the Ottawa Gee-Gees, leading them to a Vanier Cup in 1975 before a hall-of-fame career in the CFL, winning three Grey Cups. In addition, our Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development played varsity soccer and goal for the Ottawa Gee-Gees for four seasons before coaching the team for five seasons. I also know, in discussion with the MPP from Etobicoke–Lakeshore prior to today, she was a varsity swimmer at university. These athletes have gone on to excel in life and to employ their skills, and this is just an example of the type of incredible talent that they learn and understand from playing in our university sports.

Speaker, I want to thank Shannon Thornton from Ontario Tech University who provided this very important statistic, which I think helps to frame the discussion today. She tells me that 40% of the OTU student-athletes are also Academic All-Canadians, meaning that their grade point average is a minimum of A-. This remarkable statistic, Speaker, I am told, is indicative of the academic perform-

ance of student-athletes across all 20 of the member universities that form the OUA association.

This really underscores the importance of our university athletics program. They're not just developing and graduating champion athletes on the fields; they're developing and graduating champions off the field who will make incredible contributions to our communities moving forward—champions who are well-rounded, well-trained and committed to excellence.

Speaker, I'm a great believer that life imitates sport. So many of our youth learn their most important lifelong lessons through sport that equip them for their futures. While they learn these on the field, they employ these life lessons off the field, off the ice and away from the arena for a lifetime to come.

Some of these lessons, Madam Speaker, include, and I can say that I have learned these lessons as well myself: that there are two types of work, there's teamwork and there's hard work; that you must believe in yourself. You have got what it takes, but it will take all that you've got. It does not take talent to hustle—and we all know that, through our campaigns, that hustle is one of the core foundations that get us here. We learn to celebrate our wins and to learn from our losses.

Speaker, character is one of those intangibles that we often hear sportscasters speak about. In fact, we heard it last night when Edmonton won in overtime. It was great to hear. It is said that sport is a crucible that builds character while revealing it at the same time. Characteristics like tenacity, persistence, resilience, dedication and belief in yourself all come to the fore when we talk about character. These are critical, if not essential, characteristics that equip each of these successful athletes for a successful life when their careers are over. And these are the characteristics that Ontario university athletes learn and develop and display during their careers. But most importantly, they learn and display those characteristics beyond the university and into their lives.

I'd like to use my remaining time tonight, with a bit of indulgence from the House, to speak about my own experience at the Ontario University Athletics program, because I was very much a beneficiary of the incredible athletics programs that we have. I attended the University of Western Ontario with the intention of playing either soccer or rugby, and I was injured, so I didn't get to the tryouts.

What I did do is end up going into the rowing program, because they told me it would get me in shape. In fact, Madam Speaker, from the first time I walked into the pool during the winter at four in the morning to start training with Doc Fitz-James, I became addicted to the sport of rowing and it opened many doors for me in my life.

I started at Western in 1981 and was a member of the Senior B team in 1984. I decided to move out west so I could row full-time. I will never forget this experience. As I was being toured around the UBC campus, I met two novice athletes, two 19-year-old kids, who were just starting to row. Their names were Mike Rasher and Kathleen Heddle. Both those athletes would go on to win

gold medals as my teammates at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. Kathleen, in fact, would go on to become one of the most decorated summer athletes, winning three gold medals, I think, and a bronze, but unfortunately we lost her to cancer.

During that time, I competed at the 1988 Olympics and the 1992 Olympics, and I can tell you that our performance in 1988 was much different than that in 1992. In 1998, Ben Johnson was caught for doping. Canada came to the fore, and with the Dubin inquiry we changed how sport operates. As a result of the Dubin inquiry, the international community and the IOC adopted the anti-doping regime.

By 1992, East and West Germanies had separated and doping was being cracked down on. In 1988, we took a full team of 40 athletes to the games and we didn't come home with a single medal. In 1992, the men's and women's rowing team, which had only six crews and 20 athletes, came home with three gold medals and a bronze medal, in fact exceeding the total of the entire Canadian Olympic team in 1988 for gold medals—just one team.

That, Madam Speaker, is how sport can change a life, and improve a life, and train our kids and our youth for future generations to come.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Simcoe-Grey for bringing forward this motion—we will be supporting it—and I want to congratulate him. It's interesting to hear that he, his mother, his wife and his father were all varsity athletes. That's quite an accomplishment, and that you've brought this forward. The motion, for those who are listening, is a motion to declare the first week in October as University Athletics Week.

They used to say in ancient Greece that you don't just train the mind; you train the mind, body and spirit. Today, I was reading an athletics document from the University of Toronto. They were talking about how athletics is a crucial element in a student's holistic development, and it absolutely is.

As he mentioned, there are a number of Olympic athletes and other great athletes in Canada whose talents have been developed in our universities and in our colleges. I'll just highlight a few of them.

On the 2024 Olympic team, Claire Scheffel, from the University of Waterloo, was a synchronized swimmer.

Kate Current, from Western University, was a 1,500- and 3,000-metre runner.

On the 2020 Olympic team, Pierce LePage, from York University, was a decathlete. In 2023, he was the world champion decathlete and in 2020 he was on the Canadian Olympic team.

Kylie Masse, from U of T, won silver medals in the 100- and 200-metre backstroke at the 2020 Olympics and also a bronze in the 4x100-metre relay.

1520

Going back further in time, there's a gentleman I've had the honour of meeting a couple of times. His name is Bruce Kidd. He was on the University of Toronto track team. He won 18 senior championships in Canada, the US and

Britain. He won the gold and bronze medals in the 1962 Commonwealth Games.

But his greatest contribution, I would say, to Canadian athletics was he was the founding dean of the University of Toronto's faculty of kinesiology and phys ed, and that has trained generations of athletes and coaches that have benefited Canada's athletics and our athletic programs for decades. Can we give a round of applause to Bruce Kidd and his lifelong achievements, and all the talent that he has developed?

Applause.

Mr. Chris Glover: Although I was not officially part of a varsity team—when I was a kid, I had ear infections, and I could not swim. When I was older, the ear infections cleared up and I was able to start swimming. I actually took swimming lessons at Hart House, not too far from here, and I learned to swim at the age of 20. By the end of the lessons at the end of the year, I was able to swim a mile of laps in the pool. I still love swimming. It's one of my favourite sports. So when you talk about developing a holistic athlete, a holistic student, definitely mind, body, spirit—all of it is part of it, and I am one of the beneficiaries of the U of T athletics program.

But I also want to spend some of my time here talking about what we actually need to do with our colleges and universities to maintain the excellence of our athletic programs and of our public colleges and universities. We need more than just celebrating the past accomplishments. We need to make sure that our colleges, schools and universities have the resources they need to develop the next generation of athletes and young students, who are going to make other contributions to our society.

Right now, our colleges and universities, our schools, are all making massive cuts because of funding shortfalls. You don't just start athletics mostly in university or college; you actually start in school. The TDSB is facing a \$58-million funding shortfall and possibly closing 33 of their swimming pools. They're laying off 86 aquatic instructors.

Penny Oleksiak, who won four medals at the 2016 Olympics, swam in TDSB pools that this government is threatening to close. The government has got to rethink. We can't just celebrate the past accomplishments. We need to actually make sure we're training another generation of athletes.

Ontario has the lowest post-secondary funding of any province in Canada. The average funding in Canada is \$16,000 per student. In Newfoundland, it's the highest. That's \$30,000 per student. What do you think it is in the province of Ontario? What do you think the university funding per student is in the province of Ontario? Any guesses? It's \$10,000. It's 58% less than the average. The research funding for our universities, it's also the lowest. The average in Canada is \$1,165 per student. In Ontario, it's \$563 per student. We're half of the average in research.

When you think about the challenges we're facing in this province, at this moment—we've got the AI tech revolution that's already started. The godfather of artificial intelligence, professor Geoffrey Hinton, did his research

and his work right here, across the street, at the University of Toronto. We need to invest right now in research, in our public colleges and in our public universities, because with the Trump tariff threat, there's an opportunity to attract researchers and tech experts who are fleeing the United States. There's an opportunity to grow our tech sector and to utilize our public colleges and universities to train workers for the new opportunities that are going to open up as we diversify our trading partners.

The unfortunate part is—and the budget was just introduced by this government a couple of weeks ago—our post-secondary education funding over the next two years is going to decline by \$1.4 billion. We're already the lowest per-student funding of any province in the country, and the government is cutting from that lowest level.

My concern—my deep concern—is that this government's goal is to turn over our public services and assets to corporations to make a profit. This includes our colleges, our universities and, ultimately, our schools as well. I think that's the goal of all this underfunding.

And right now, our universities are closing departments. They're increasing class sizes. They're deepening the reliance on part-time, temporary professors and staff.

And our colleges, Laurentian University—Olympic hopeful Nina Kucheran, from Sudbury, attributes her athletic career to the Laurentian University varsity team, but that program was cut. Centennial College is cutting 49 programs. Seneca College closed their Markham campus. George Brown is cutting programs.

On the other hand, there's a growing demand for programs. The higher education quality council says that we need 200,000 new university spaces by 2046. We need to be investing in our public colleges, our public universities, our public schools, so that we can develop another generation of athletes, another generation of scholars, another generation of tech experts, so that we will be able to be global leaders and that we can withstand the Trump tariff threats and we can seize the opportunities that are opening up because of artificial intelligence, but also protect ourselves from the cyber security threats and the dangers, the risks of artificial intelligence.

I'm glad the member brought forward this motion to celebrate varsity athletes and varsity athletics. We need to celebrate what we've accomplished, but we also need to make sure—and this is the government's role—that they are planting the seeds and providing the funding that we need to ensure that future generations of athletes and scholars in our public colleges and our public universities have the same opportunities that we benefited from and that will benefit our society going forward.

So, thank you to the member from Simcoe–Grey for bringing forward this motion. We will be supporting it. I strongly encourage you to work within your caucus to increase the funding to our schools, our colleges and universities, to make sure that the record of excellence continues for the next generation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you to the member from Simcoe–Grey for tabling this private member's bill to celebrate varsity sport each October. I have to say, when it came across, the email, I was so happy to know there was somebody in this Legislature that cares as much about sport as I do. I do want to congratulate you and add your name to the list of incredible athletes in this Legislature, having attended the Barcelona Olympics in 1992 as a rower for Canada. That's pretty impressive, and I really enjoyed meeting your family members. It's clear that maybe high-performance athletes—there's something in the genetics too, given your family history.

I think this motion is a start, to really start calling out the importance of varsity sports in Ontario. There are many good reasons to do that—many that we've talked about—particularly given the dedication and hard work of varsity athletes in Ontario. I want to congratulate them. Actually, many have finished their season. It's been a tremendous season, wherever you were competing. And then I think what's also important is so many of those varsity athletes return back to their home clubs and home communities for the summer, and they play a really important role, inspiring that next generation of athletes and helping to lift them up. I know that that's the case in the club for my son at the moment.

I thought today, though, I would speak to three things in this: Why does it make sense to recognize varsity athletes? Why should we consider going a little further than that in supporting varsity athletics in Ontario and, I would argue, in Canada? And then how could we actually keep our best talent in Ontario?

So, why do I support recognizing varsity athletes? Well, as you mentioned, I do know first-hand a few perspectives about varsity sports. I was a varsity athlete at McMaster University in the 1990s. I was a competitive swimmer until third year, and then I played varsity water polo and varsity rugby my fourth year, which was, I call, my evolution to land. I was a little bit swum out at that point. And then after that, I continued to train, playing rugby as I worked at the hospital down here as a radiation therapist delivering cancer treatment. I did that for a few more years and eventually had the privilege of representing Canada with the Canadian women's rugby team at the World Cup in Amsterdam.

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I only raise that because I think it's really important. Like you mentioned, the member from Simcoe–Grey, you actually get your best lessons for life from sports. When I think about it, you really learn what hard work is—true hard work—what true resilience is. I think really important is this routine practice of reflecting on what went well in a race and what could you do differently next time; taking the time to celebrate when something went really well; again, picking each other up as teammates when maybe you've experienced a loss.

I think, as a varsity athlete especially, you really learn what it means, even in individual events. You're required to do whatever is asked of you. Whatever position is needed on that field that day, you do it. As a swimmer,

every once in a while, I got called upon to race events I never wanted to, but you did it because it was all about the team part of the sport.

As a swimmer, you train 23 hours a week, usually. Certainly, that's what my boys are right now. Twice a day, you're in the pool; early mornings, dry land. You learn these skills of time management: How can you effectively get your training in, rest, but then study, meet your work commitments, whatever it needs to be? Athletes are often, as you've said, our very best students as well because they know how to juggle all those priorities.

When we think about sport—again, I always like to bring things back to our society, our economy etc.—these are some of the best people that we have that would be long-term contributors in leadership roles or in other roles in our society.

Today, I will say I continue to have a front-row seat on varsity athletics, though I'm slightly washed up. It's been three decades since then as an athlete, and I'm primarily a busy carpool mom. My son is currently a varsity swimmer here in Ontario—he swims for Carleton while he's studying aerospace engineering. My younger son, Oliver, is a serious swimmer and he's entering grade 11, and so he's starting to think about where he will go to university. In fact, he is about to dive in the pool at 4 o'clock to race the 1,500 freestyle. I'm just going to take a minute to wish him luck. He's representing our great swim club in Etobicoke—Lakeshore called Lakeshore Swim Club. It's one of the very oldest clubs in all of Canada. Anyway, I am proud of them and their teammates, and they're so committed to their sport.

But what I've experienced, though, now given his age—because he's going into grade 11 next year—is that families are starting to make choices for their competitive athletes. The question is always: Do I send my child out of the country to train and go to school, or do I keep them here in Canada? Does it give them better access to a combination of education and the ability to be coached? Canada does have great athletics teams. We've listed all of the Olympians that have come from graduating from universities. But a lot choose to go south of the border.

We've been trying to invest in sports infrastructure, like the Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre as a centre for all elite athletes to train, and try and keep our talent, but, unfortunately, even swimmers like the amazing Summer McIntosh, who actually started her swimming career swimming in Etobicoke, or Josh Liendo, have made their way to the US to train. I think that the schools there and elsewhere in the world invest in athletics. They see it as that; they see it as an investment. They're offered scholarships and support to do that.

This is what will lead me then to my second point, which is why we should consider a little bit more than recognition. I will support this bill, and this has to be the start to recognizing varsity sports, but we could go a little further, actually. A recent study conducted by the OUA in 2022, which is Ontario University Athletics association—they did a conservative estimate on the impact of varsity sport on the economy. The total annual invested in OUA

varsity sports through various revenue sources, including ticket sales, is about \$132 million. Universities fund athletic programs through a combination of revenues. Some of it is from student fees; a lot of it is donor-raised money. The impact, though, that they looked at when they looked at the impact of all of the Ontario varsity programs was—the impact on those local markets was \$303 million to \$637 million. That's actually a pretty decent rate of return. If we could continue to bolster, could it actually help to support economies more generally? I was happy to see that analysis. I was happy to see a potential business case for athletics.

Again, I see the Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre as a great example of when you invest in an athletic facility, you actually really impact the community around it. My high school years were spent in Scarborough. I remember that part of the city until the 2015 Pan Am Games, and since then, we've seen it really develop: the U of T campus, the hospital—there's more and more reasons to be out there. That facility was a catalyst for some level of transformation, and we've seen it in other places. We've seen it down at Welland, at the open water centre. We've seen it up at the Markham Pan Am Centre as well, where they hosted the water polo and synchro swimming. Now, York University has a campus up there. So these are opportunities. This is an opportunity to see sport as a very integrated part of our economy, a way to develop communities as well as, of course, benefit the health of people.

I think that the challenge for our post-secondary institutions, though, which my colleague has highlighted, is they're feeling a lot of financial pressures in other ways. We know that. We've already talked about the decline in investment from the government in post-secondary education, which will be \$13 billion next year. It will go down in three years to \$12.8 billion—ignores inflation. So we're reducing, reducing. We're forcing more and more choices. We also have caps on tuition fees, so that's no longer an option. I have seen this throughout my life, and career athletics, no doubt, will be early on in the crosshairs for things that will need to be reduced.

I think that we already have mentioned that Ontario's universities have the lowest per-student funding in the country. My worry is this will mean more of our talented kids will seek scholarships and athletic supports elsewhere, outside of Canada. So many families I know have made that choice. They're trying to support their kids' dreams of going to the Olympics. But wouldn't it be great to really think about how we could strengthen our varsity athletics here in Ontario and Canada? And given the situation in the US, I actually anticipate a lot more people would like to choose to stay here and see that as part of the promise to develop our great athletes of the future, but we need to see public education, see sports, see creating the conditions for universities to be successful as a priority for that to occur.

I will offer: If the member across ever wants to think about how we could really support the full development of

varsity athletics in this country and in this province, I would love to sit and put our heads together.

Lastly, I think we really do want to think about keeping our talent. I have to say, as a woman athlete, I'm so pleased to see where women athletics have gotten. I'm so inspired, having your mum here, who was a varsity basketball player a few decades before us. I think it took women like her really leading. I think about when I played for Canada. I had a little support, but now, we have so much more—and the women's rugby team will be playing at the World Cup in England this summer. They're ranked second in the world. Let's see how they can do.

Sport has a way of uniting people. It has a way of bringing communities together. Thank you again for bringing this motion forward. I couldn't support it enough.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to my colleague's private member's bill, which would proclaim the first week of October every year as Ontario University Athletics Week. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Sport and as the MPP for Burlington, I know how important university athletics are to the fabric of our communities and to the development of our future leaders.

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Every year, nearly 9,000 student-athletes participate in Ontario university athletics, also known as OUA. These are high-performance athletes who balance rigorous academic schedules with intense training and competition. Speaker, as I'm sure you can imagine, it is no small feat. Ontario University Athletics Week would allow us to recognize their efforts, celebrate their achievements and highlight the incredible impact of university sports in our province, because this is about more than what happens on the field or in the pool. Sport teaches commitment, resilience and integrity. It helps students push beyond their limits, learn how to work as a team and develop the leadership skills they carry with them for life.

We see the impact of OUA athletes well beyond graduation. Some go on to represent Canada on the international stage. Others play in professional leagues like the CFL, the Canadian Elite Basketball League and the Canadian Premier League. There are now even more opportunities for women, thanks to the new Northern Super League for women's soccer and the Professional Women's Hockey League. These leagues are creating a new era of sport in Canada, and OUA alumni are at the very heart.

Others take on leadership roles in their community and in their workplaces. In fact, almost 95% of women in C-suite positions were former athletes. Nearly 70% of top CEOs played post-secondary sports. Speaker, these statistics speak for themselves. Athletes help shape the very fabric of our society. They are role models for young people, showing what can be achieved through hard work, discipline and perseverance. They embody values like teamwork, resilience, respect and fair play—values we need more of in every corner of our society.

OUA athletes also give back. They coach youth leagues and teams. They visit and speak in classrooms. They lead community initiatives and support causes that matter in communities across the province. In short, they bring people together. Whether it's through a championship run or a local community fundraiser, sports unite us across backgrounds and beliefs. Athletes help build a sense of belonging and shared identity. They are leaders, they are change-makers and they are community builders.

Their influence doesn't end when the game is over. It lives on in the people they touch, and we know this doesn't happen alone. I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the coaches, the athletic directors, the faculty members and the volunteers who support and mentor these student-athletes every step of the way. Their dedication makes all of this possible.

Speaker, we also need to recognize the unsung heroes behind our university student-athletes: their parents and their families. Long before universities, these families are a bedrock of support. They invest countless hours and resources, driving to practices—yes some at 4 a.m. in the morning—cheering from the sidelines, and funding equipment and travel. They also instill a sense of discipline, resilience and a tireless work ethic, shaping not just athletes but responsible young adults.

At university, this sport evolves. Families become academic cheerleaders, understanding the dual demands of rigorous training and demanding course work. They provide emotional anchors during tough times. They celebrate victories and offer a stable home base. This unwavering dedication, though often unseen, supports a student-athlete's ability to excel both in their sport and in their studies.

Sport is something that binds us all—we all have a connection to it—and I hope members from all parties do the right thing and support our athletes and this bill. Ontario University Athletics Week is a meaningful way to spotlight the perseverance, pride and passion that define university sport in the province of Ontario. It's an opportunity to celebrate athletes and to inspire even greater participation and support in the years ahead.

I'd like to thank my colleague and member from Simcoe–Grey for championing this legislation and thank also Ontario's student-athletes for representing your schools and communities with such pride and purpose. We're proud to celebrate you.

I would encourage all members of this House to reflect upon the moments that Ontario university athletics have brought them and their communities and vote in favour of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I'm going to put a parental lens on varsity sports.

I want to congratulate the member from Simcoe–Grey for bringing this forward because it gives us all an opportunity in this House today to reflect on why sport, in and of itself, matters. It's interesting.

I grew up in a family that loves sports. My mother was a Clifford Swing Skirt. If you think about that, she played fastball with steel cleats—that was a sport. My father coached my brother in hockey and hardball. My sister and I played tri-county fastball, and our younger sister played provincial ball.

Then we move on to the next generation. My brother's kid, my nephew Todd, made a trip as a bantam to the eastern Canadian fastball championships and won gold. Then the very next year, he returned as a midget, and they won silver.

There's no better sense of building community and bringing people together than that experience of driving kids to practice, sitting on the benches as parents and learning about each other, because some of those provincial teams travel quite a distance to come together as a team.

In my specific example, we were absolutely spoiled. My husband and I just have such pride in Deidra. She was a really good hockey player and a really good fastball player. We actually thought coming out of high school after having a really good high school hockey career—her dad had tracked every faceoff and all the stats. She actually made her own trip to the eastern Canadian fastball championships and won gold. She was the winning run in the 12th inning back in that particular competition. Son of a gun, if she didn't go to school at Brock University for fastball. We didn't expect it, but, boy, we were so proud of her.

Fast-forward: She ended up teaching internationally, and she's just finishing up an amazing career. She was the department head for science at an international school where, just prior to going to Kuwait, she met her husband on the ball field, who happened to be a varsity athlete as well. He and the member from Simcoe–Grey can compare notes about meeting their wives through sport.

That said, they've spent eight years in Kuwait. When they come home this summer, they're moving on to the oldest international school in São Paulo, Brazil, and they're going to continue to share their love of sport.

Thinking about this debate, I asked them to share their reflections, and I'm going to read them in. Deidra Schiestel's reflections on varsity sport experience are these:

“When I was recently asked in my master's program how I make connections in my community, my answer came easily—at the softball field.

“Playing varsity softball in university”—she was a Badger—“was the beginning of something much bigger than the game itself.

“It taught me how to show up for a team, push through challenges, and grow alongside others who shared a common drive.

“Years later, I found that same sense of community here in Kuwait, still playing ball semi-competitively”—she's coming home in a cast, FYI. It's like, “Well, were you safe? Were they out?” They were safe. It's a long story there too. She loves playing ball—“and meeting people that have become lifelong friends.

“Softball has always been more than a sport for me—it's been a place of belonging, resilience, and friendship that continues to shape who I am today.

“Now, I have the opportunity to pay it forward by coaching high school teams, including soccer and track and field, where I hope to pass on the same values of teamwork, dedication, and connection to the next generation of student-athletes” and community.

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She caught Jonathan Courvoisier's eye on the ball field. He went to North Bay. He was a Laker at Nipissing. He played four years of varsity soccer. Jonathan's reflections are these: “Varsity sports gave me the space to embrace my competitive spirit and strive for excellence.

“It taught me how to set meaningful goals—both short-term and long-term—and commit fully to achieving them, whether that meant improving my personal skills or contributing to the team's success.

“Being part of a team sport humbled me; I quickly realized I wasn't always the best, but that was never the point. I learned to lean on my teammates, to grow by learning from them, and to realize that our strength came from lifting each other up.

“For us to succeed as a team, I had to develop key interpersonal skills like communication, active listening, and open-mindedness.

“I had to set aside my ego and stay open to feedback, understanding that true progress happens when everyone works together.

“Varsity sports taught me how to collaborate with purpose, build lasting relationships, and contribute to something greater than myself.

“Those lessons continue to shape who I am today—on and off the field.”

Ladies and gentlemen, that's why it's so important to celebrate varsity sports.

If I had time, I would go on to talk about Doug Wood, the most celebrated Canadian pole vaulter in this nation. He actually built a facility in Bolton that saw Alysha Newman train there. And why do we know Alysha Newman's name? She won bronze in pole vaulting in the Olympics just last year in Paris.

Doug Wood grew up in Wingham, Ontario. He's in the Caledon Hall of Fame, as well as the Wingham Hall of Fame. I remember going to high school, and Mr. Campbell set up a special spot in our auditorium for Doug to train. People are making sure athletes can train here at home.

Thank you for bringing this bill forward. Sport matters.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member for Simcoe–Grey, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank all of the other members tonight who stayed to speak to this.

I think we have an opportunity to end this session on a high note. On that point, to my colleague the Minister of Rural Affairs, it was great to hear the story about the pole vaulter. You know what they say about pole vaulters? They're always moving up in the world.

But I do want to speak to two elements that came out in the conversations. One is part of our economic environment for athletes and for sport, and the other is about community building.

The first one, on the economics: When I was rowing in 1992, I had an A-card, which means we were ranked in the top four in the world. We got \$650 a month—that was our annual stipend from the federal government—and if you got that money, you didn't qualify for any provincial money. So if I wasn't married and didn't have a supporting family, I couldn't pay the bills. My rent was more than \$650.

Today, we have evolved to where our A-carded athletes are earning about \$21,000 a year. They can qualify for subsequent provincial funding as well, and they can also receive sponsorships, which wasn't really an option when I was rowing.

The world has changed, but we all know things are getting more expensive, and facilities are becoming more and more expensive. It is obviously a challenge and one we need to work on.

Community, I think, is a real element in sport. It supplies the community to the kids. My sons all played hockey. I coached them in hockey and soccer, and I also coached at our canoe club. It really provides an instant community for the kids, but also for the families. There's that instant connection; there's a community there, and so it really does help to build communities, and the knock-on effects are huge.

In the last time I have, I'd like to pay tribute to my first coach, Doc Fitz-James, at Western Ontario—an incredible man, an incredible mind. He was a microbiologist who took time to coach us in rowing and developed many incredible athletes.

Finally, to my good friend, Blair: I started rowing with Blair at Western. He was already an international athlete, having represented Canada at the world juniors. He came and trained with me for senior B. Blair was one of the strongest people I knew. He had a diagnosis of Parkinson's, and it only made him stronger. His resilience really shone through, and he will always be a role model for me.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Saunderson has moved second reading of Bill 22, An Act to proclaim Ontario University Athletics Week.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 100(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House—yes, I recognize the member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Madam Speaker, I ask that we refer this bill to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy, please.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Heritage—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): That one? Okay.

In that case, that is agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, October 20, 2025, at 10:15 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1555.

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| Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC) | Oakville | Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises et de l'Approvisionnement |
| Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC) | Mississauga—Lakeshore | |
| Darouze, George (PC) | Carleton | |
| Denault, Billy (PC) | Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke | |
| 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 Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence |
| Fairclough, Lee (LIB) | Etobicoke—Lakeshore | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---|---|---|
| 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 | |
| Firin, Mohamed (PC) | York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston | |
| Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC) | Elgin—Middlesex—London | Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord | Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario |
| Fraser, John (LIB) | Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | Leader, Third Party / Chef du troisième parti |
| French, Jennifer K. (NDP) | Oshawa | First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC) | Newmarket—Aurora | |
| Gates, Wayne (NDP) | Niagara Falls | |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) | Nickel Belt | |
| Gilmour, Alexa (NDP) | Parkdale—High Park | |
| Glover, Chris (NDP) | Spadina—Fort York | |
| Gretzky, Lisa (NDP) | Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | |
| Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC) | Brampton East / Brampton-Est | |
| Gualtieri, Silvia (PC) | Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville | |
| Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC) | Milton | Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Solliciteur général associé responsable de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution |
| Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Oxford | |
| Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC) | Kitchener—Conestoga | Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles |
| Hazell, Andrea (LIB) | Scarborough—Guildwood | Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC) | Thunder Bay—Atikokan | Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers |
| Hsu, Ted (LIB) | Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles | |
| Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC) | Dufferin—Caledon | Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé |
| Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC) | Chatham-Kent—Leamington | Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise |
| Jordan, John (PC) | Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston | |
| Kanapathi, Logan (PC) | Markham—Thornhill | |
| Kernaghan, Terence (NDP) | London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord | |
| 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 Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives |
| Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC) | Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre | Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée |
| Leardi, Anthony (PC) | Essex | Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement |
| Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC) | King—Vaughan | Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines |
| Lennox, Robin (NDP) | Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre | |
| Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC) | Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek | Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport |
| Mamakwa, Sol (NDP) | Kiiwetinoong | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC) | Durham | Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs |
| McCrimmon, Karen (LIB) | Kanata—Carleton | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|---|--|
| McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC) | Brampton North / Brampton-Nord | Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiles et du Multiculturalisme |
| McKenney, Catherine (NDP) | Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre | |
| 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 |
| Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC) | Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest | Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie |
| Pang, Billy (PC) | Markham—Unionville | |
| 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 | Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
| 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 | |
| Pinsonneault, Steve (PC) | Lambton—Kent—Middlesex | |
| Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC) | Timmins | Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord |
| Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC) | Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry | Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité |
| Racinsky, Joseph (PC) | Wellington—Halton Hills | |
| Rae, Matthew (PC) | Perth—Wellington | |
| Rakocevic, Tom (NDP) | Humber River—Black Creek | |
| Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC) | Kenora—Rainy River | Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu |
| Riddell, Brian (PC) | Cambridge | |
| Rosenberg, Bill (PC) | Algoma—Manitoulin | |
| 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, Chris (PC) | Sault Ste. Marie | |
| 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, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC) | Flamborough—Glanbrook | Speaker / Présidente 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 | Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Smith, Laura (PC) | Thornhill | |
| Smyth, Stephanie (LIB) | Toronto—St. Paul's | |
| 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 des Petites Entreprises |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|---|
| Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC) | Scarborough—Rouge Park | Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances |
| Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC) | Huron—Bruce | Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales |
| Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC) | Vaughan—Woodbridge | Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé |
| Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC) | Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington | Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Tsao, Jonathan (LIB) | Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord | |
| Vanthof, John (NDP) | Timiskaming—Cochrane | Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle |
| Vaugeois, Lise (NDP) | Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord | |
| Vickers, Paul (PC) | Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound | |
| Wai, Daisy (PC) | Richmond Hill | |
| Watt, Tyler (LIB) | Nepean | |
| 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 | |