

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 53

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 53

1st Session
44th Parliament
Tuesday
24 March 2026

1^{re} session
44^e législature
Mardi
24 mars 2026

Speaker: Honourable Donna Skelly
Clerk: Trevor Day

Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly
Greffier : Trevor Day

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Hansard Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Journal des débats et services linguistiques
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 24 March 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 24 mars 2026

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Good morning, everyone.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

KEEPING CRIMINALS BEHIND BARS ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 VISANT À MAINTENIR LES CRIMINELS DERRIÈRE LES BARREAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 23, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to enact the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund Act, 2026 and to amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 75, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 sur le Fonds Joe MacDonald de bourses d'études à l'intention des survivants d'agents de sécurité publique et modifiant diverses autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Ms. Laura Smith: It is my very great pleasure to rise in the House today in support of Bill 75, Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act.

Speaker, for far too long violent, repeat offenders have cycled through the justice system, putting families at risk and wreaking havoc in our communities. This legislation tackles those issues by strengthening bail compliance and holding criminals accountable and supporting law enforcement in protecting our fundamental rights to live in our communities in safety and without fear.

And that's why we passed landmark legislation, including Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act, Enhancing Access to Justice Act and the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act. And that's why we're here today with another example of us stepping forward and leading Canada in keeping people safe.

The Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act is the result of collaboration across government under the leadership of our Premier. For the purpose of my remarks today, I'm going to focus on issues that have a very profound impact on the residents of my riding and that of the entire province for that matter, which includes the fundamental right of people to feel safe in our communities. It seems quite simple, but this is what we're going to talk about today.

Mr. Speaker, over the past two and a half years, we've seen a very troubling rise in hate-driven attacks, particu-

larly in my riding of Thornhill, that have shaken the very feeling of safety that communities rely upon. People in my riding have experienced something no one in our province should ever have to feel: fear in their own neighbourhoods. I want you to think about that. They fear to be in their own neighbourhoods.

We've had multiple intimidating rallies that have taken place outside of synagogues and businesses, including one located beside a building that's home to many vulnerable seniors and individuals with complex needs. These individuals, who have spent their lives contributing to our communities, raising families and building this province—in that moment, they felt afraid to leave their own homes, afraid to step outside, afraid to go about their daily routines. That should stop all of us in our tracks, because when anyone—but especially our most vulnerable—feels trapped in their residence due to hate-fuelled intimidation, something fundamental has been broken.

Another hateful rally that took place outside of a synagogue—the largest congregation in my riding and, actually, in Canada, for that matter—targeted a place of worship that's meant to be a sanctuary—a place of worship, a place to gather, a place of peace. I recall the mob attempting to not just intimidate the community but also attempting to gain entrance to that place of worship. This was one of the lowest times I can recall where our community experienced what we thought was absolutely unthinkable. The worst part about it is that it happened again and again, and then we saw the hate elevated to an even more disturbing level.

Sadly, we've seen hateful words that have now become fully violent. Just two weeks ago, on March 7, shots were fired at that synagogue. Let that sink in: A place where families come together, where children learn, where communities are built, where people pray, and yet it became the site of violence. These are not isolated incidents; they are part of a pattern, one that is leaving everyone, but especially our Jewish community, feeling unsafe, targeted and uncertain about their future. No one should have to fear where they pray.

In Ontario, we won't tolerate hatred aimed at any one group, and we won't tolerate violence and intimidation aimed at any group. We won't permit these lawless few to prevent people from exercising their rights to go to work, to worship and to go to school in safety and without fear. People must be able to come and go freely, without the threat of intimidation, without the threat of a hateful rally. They have to be free of those threats. That's why we're exploring ways to protect and secure these spaces and make accessing them barrier-free. That's why this legislation matters so deeply, because at its core, justice policy

must do one thing above all else: It must ensure that people feel safe in their communities.

In response to these concerns, I was proud to convene a meeting, bringing together community leaders to discuss exactly what we're going to do to strengthen safety on the ground and ensure people feel protected in their own homes, their places of worship and in their businesses.

Speaker, our government showed up. The Premier was there in Thornhill, listening to the realities facing the families. His message was very clear: Intimidation and violence will not be tolerated, regardless of someone's religion. Because this Premier understands that the open display of violent rhetoric and actions have no place in Ontario. And, more than understanding, this Premier has taken real action.

The Solicitor General first spoke on this bill with this narrative, including ensuring secure, unobstructed access to key locations including places of worship, cultural hubs and critical infrastructure.

When these bad actors send a message of exclusion, of fear, of division, our response must be clear that this province will not tolerate it—full stop. We must ensure that our laws reflect the seriousness of these actions, that enforcement tools are effective and that those who engage in hate-driven conduct are held accountable.

But beyond that, we must also restore confidence—confidence for the seniors who want to walk outside their homes, confidence for the families who want to attend services without fear and confidence in communities who deserve to gather, to celebrate and to live freely. Speaker, this legislation is another step towards that, because our government, under the leadership of our Premier, is unwavering in this fight. We will not back down—not in my community. Nowhere in our province will we back down.

I'm now going to turn the page and talk a little bit about bail reform. Alongside these incidents, there are other concerns that continue to sadly resonate across my riding—and across this province, for that matter—and that's the necessity of bail reform. People are asking one simple question: How is it that individuals who pose a risk to public safety are able to cycle through the system so quickly? How is it that repeat offenders—something or someone with a history of violent or hate-motivated behaviour—are released, only for communities to bear those consequences?

0910

This is not about undermining the principles of our justice system. This is fundamental, this is foundational to who we are, but public safety must also be foundational. And right now, there's a growing perception—in many cases, a reality—that that sense of balance is not where it needs to be, and we cannot continue to see these situations where individuals are released without sufficient safeguards, only for further harm to occur.

Keeping in mind that our government has been consistently requesting that the federal government complete a full review on the interim release system, we know that we must pull out all the tools in our tool box for the safety and

the well-being of our residents. And I hear this not from just one group but from across the board—from families, from seniors, from community leaders.

Bail reform is not about being punitive for the sake of it, it's about being responsible. In my community, we have witnessed brazen surges of violence—home invasions with armed offenders breaking into people's homes, terrorizing family members and, in one case, the offender murdered the father of a child in front of that child. One such home invasion happened just two weeks ago, and the accused, who was charged with breach of a probation order for other offences at the time of the home invasion—let's put that into perspective: The accused at the time of the home invasion was out on probation.

Let's remember: Individuals who are arrested are arrested because police had grounds to do so. In many cases, we're talking about individuals who are repeat, often violent offenders. This is about ensuring that those who pose demonstrable risk are addressed and assessed properly. It's about restoring confidence because without confidence in the justice system, the social fabric begins to unravel.

Speaker, we owe it to our constituents to get this right. This legislation is part of that conversation. That's why our government is taking action and delivering on our promise by making bail more real and consequential for people accused of serious crimes. Our proposed changes would strengthen bail compliance by enhancing processes for debt collection, imposing mandatory cash security deposits, and improving tracking for violent and repeat offenders. I'm going to talk about those repeat offenders in just a little bit.

We're also introducing mandatory full cash security deposits for accused persons or sureties in the amount ordered by the court. Currently, if the court orders release on a promise to pay, there is usually no cash deposit required. This means that when a condition of bail is violated, it often leads to challenges relating to the collection of forfeited bail payments, including time and resources that must be expended to collect payment.

Mandatory cash security deposits create a new deterrence to remind offenders and would-be offenders that there will be consequences for violating conditions of their release. Because at the end of the day, the responsibility is quite simple: to ensure that 99.9% of the population—those who are law-abiding citizens—can feel safe where they live, where they gather and where they belong.

I'm now going to talk about something that's quite near and dear to me: I'm going to talk about Christopher's Law, which helps keep our communities and children safe by enabling Ontario's sex offender and trafficker registry. In my previous life just a few short years ago, I dealt with matters under the child protection act and, sadly, I've seen the underbelly of a system that has dealt with the most heinous offenders—those who have committed crimes under Christopher's Law.

For those of you who do not know, Christopher was 11 years old when a convicted child molester with a criminal record abducted the young boy from Brampton at a

shopping mall. The offender kept Christopher alive for 36 hours and assaulted him repeatedly before slitting his throat and dumping his body. After years of advocacy, Christopher's parents, the Stephensons, advocated for Christopher's Law, and the Ontario sex offender registry was created.

Sadly, those who have committed these heinous acts, the most vile crimes against our most vulnerable people—our children—those people were actually at liberty to make application to change their name. That's why, not long ago, the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and myself introduced Bill 138, Change of Name Amendment Act, which bans convicted sex offenders from making application for a legal name change. And because our priority was always on protecting the people and, more importantly, the children of Ontario, we were so happy to do that. She has a background in nursing. She truly cares about our community, and I appreciate her partnership. I want to thank her in this House for all of the work she did on that bill.

It actually felt very strange but shocking that heinous criminals who are listed on this registry under Christopher's Law could actually make application to change their name. Criminals would take advantage of this right to use a legal name change to distance themselves from a crime and create a new life. Sadly, their victims will never have a new life. The right to change one's name should not be abused, but our work changed that, and our government knew we needed to prioritize the rights of the victims over that of the criminals. These offenders under that registry are no longer able, through the legislation, to change their names. I was proud to be a part of a government that recognizes we have a shared responsibility to put our efforts into protecting the victims of these crimes—full stop.

Through the leadership of our Premier, a positive thing happened: We were very pleased when the change of name private member's bill was absorbed into the safer streets legislation, which is part of this bill that we're talking about today. Now, in that same spirit, we are honoured to continue that work. Today, our government, under the leadership of our Premier and the Solicitor General, is continuing that important work by exploring how to share information from that registry with the police to better protect our communities, our children, our families, to keep our kids safe.

Part of the research that went into our private member's bill on the change of name was very disturbing. We interviewed police forces and professionals in law enforcement to learn that violent sexual offenders, who prey on our children, had a very high rate of recidivism, and that means they're more likely to be a repeat offender. Sadly, these criminals who also prey on children are going to get back on the streets and they're more likely to perform these heinous acts.

As a legislator and, more importantly, as a mother, I think that our communities deserve better transparency in this information, and I know the sharing of the information on this registry, if that saves one child's life, we have done our jobs as legislators—because our government is un-

wavering in our commitment to public safety and our priority will always be protecting the people of Ontario.

I want to thank all the professionals within the police force, including the amazing team at York Regional Police, for their assistance in our private member's bill. Their dedication was truly outstanding, and they made a true difference for the people of Ontario.

I would be very remiss if I did not recognize the bravery, the resilience of the parents of Christopher Stephenson—Christopher, a boy whose legacy lives on through his parents' determination in creating the sex offender registry. I had the pleasure of meeting the Stephensons on a few occasions and I hope they know how much we owe them as a province and their commitment to the creation of this registry, by taking something so difficult—the loss of a child, through a horrific act, a violent act—and creating something so positive. I'm grateful. We're also very grateful to them for showing up and being there. They were always there for us, and now we need to continue to be there for them.

Another critical part of Bill 75 is its focus on the protecting responsible drivers' portion and making sure impaired and dangerous drivers are held accountable, because, regrettably, we've seen tragedies happen. Last summer, when 35-year-old Andrew Cristillo was killed in a devastating accident, leaving behind a wife, three children and a family forever altered. The driver of that other vehicle was facing previous charges for dangerous driving and stunt driving at the time of that crash.

There was another upsetting incident, just a few years prior, that happened in my riding of Thornhill, that took the life of 10-year-old Nikita Belykh when she rode her bike alongside the sidewalk of the North Thornhill Community Centre. The driver was charged with careless driving causing death. Mr. Speaker, no family should ever have to face the heartbreaking loss of losing a loved one or the trauma of that life-changing injury because of a dangerous and careless driver.

0920

Bill 75 explores requiring convicted impaired drivers to pay ongoing child support to surviving minor dependents because when impaired drivers kill a parent or a guardian the impact on that child is devastating emotionally and financially. Mr. Speaker, this is about justice and compassion. Families should not have to bear the financial burden of someone else's reckless choices, and our government believes in accountability for those they harm.

That's why we're consulting victims' families and legal experts and law enforcement to design the most effective approach. Under the leadership of our Premier, we're standing up for the victims and putting public safety first.

Mr. Speaker, when we step back and we look at what we're discussing today—community safety, bail, dangerous driving—it ultimately comes down to a shared responsibility, a responsibility to ensure that the people of our communities, the people of Thornhill, the people across the province, feel safe. This is a responsibility to ensure that our system responds appropriately when that safety is

threatened and a responsibility to set clear expectations around accountability and respect across the board.

This bill is a tribute to the memory of Christopher Stephenson. Please support this bill in memory of Nikita Belykh and Andrew Cristillo and support this bill for the safety and security of our ridings, not just Thornhill, not just York Centre, not just Eglinton–Lawrence, not just King–Vaughan, but for the entire province.

I want to thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this matter today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the speech that was made by the member. A question I have, though, with regard to victims: In 2019, this government cut \$17 million from victim service supports. As an MPP, I was dealing with my constituents who are involved with victim services and who are outraged that victims were being cut loose and money was being capped that needed to go to them to help them restore their lives.

Why did you take on victims that way and will you restore proper funding for victim services?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the member opposite. In my remarks, I talked about children who were killed, violent offenders who were perpetrating on these children, children who were riding a bike along a street just attempting to get to a community centre, and they were taken away quite quickly.

One of the things that we talk about in this bill is the impact on children that is so devastating and emotional—a family should not bear the burden of someone else’s reckless choices—and which provides that for drivers who kill a parent or a guardian, the impact can actually go to helping those kids get through the next 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 years.

This is about justice and compassion. A family should not bear that financial burden, and that’s what this bill is aiming to solve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: The member from Thornhill, in her comments, talked about the spike in hate crimes happening in many parts of Ontario. Often, Speaker, they happen right on the ground of houses of worship. Unfortunately, bad actors use the situation to commit targeted harassment.

We’ve heard from the Solicitor General that, as part of Bill 75, the government will explore the idea of barrier-free access. Could the member from Thornhill explain why and how the government is exploring it?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank my colleague. Ontarians have had enough of individuals and groups blocking roads and transit during commutes, harassing people in their communities or intimidating them at their places of worship. That’s why we’re doing it.

Regardless of ideology, there is simply no place in Ontario—these actions are not protest; they are coordinated acts of intimidation. That’s why, through the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, we’re exploring ways to give law enforcement the tools they need to protect our communities and places of worship and cultural centres.

It doesn’t matter what your background is. It doesn’t matter what your religion is. This covers everyone. No one should have to fear in their community centre. No one should have to fear to live in their home. No one should have to fear to go to pray. It’s about wide-scale, reactive movements that will really help the communities.

We’re going to be consulting with law enforcement and justice sectors to establish a path forward that ensures the rights of law-abiding citizens are protected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I note that it’s likely that parts of this bill will be challenged as unconstitutional because they fall under federal powers.

My question is, why is the government not addressing the backlog in the courts? Because we are seeing victims of sexual assault—and those people going free because their cases are never heard. So it seems to me that this is performative and that we’re not actually addressing the real reason that people are not being sentenced for very serious crimes.

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the member opposite.

This is exactly about tracking those violent offenders. I talked about Christopher’s Law, which the member from Kawartha and myself modified so that these individuals are not able to change their name, which makes them more trackable, but this goes even further.

Bill 75 makes part of the Ontario sex offender and trafficker registry publicly available, giving families the information they need to protect themselves. Transparency matters and being able to track people is really important. I, as a mother, think that this is a positive move in being able to know where the bad actors could possibly be. And the police would provide more transparency to that.

I was really happy when this extension of Christopher’s Law came forward because it deals with getting those people off the streets. We’re going to continue to work in that fashion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Brampton West.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I appreciate the wonderful member and my seatmate from Thornhill on her very passionate speech on this very, very important legislation.

She’s right: Public safety is the number one concern I’m hearing in Brampton West and across Brampton, Mr. Speaker. People call me every day. They’re really concerned about their safety and the safety of their loved ones. They demand the federal government—that bail reform should be done and also the amendment in the Criminal Code.

For years, Ontario’s bail system has allowed violent, repeat offenders to walk free on empty promises, putting families and communities at risk. When bail is forfeited, collecting payment is costly and often ineffective, leaving victims frustrated and law enforcement powerless. This revolving door undermines confidence in our justice system and jeopardizes public safety.

Can the member explain how this measure will strengthen compliance and protect Ontario families from dangerous offenders?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank my colleague and seatmate for that question.

Bill 75 delivers on our promise to fix the bail system. We're going to continue to speak to the federal government on the issue of bail, but we have to do our part.

The bail system has failed Ontario families for far too long, and violent and repeat offenders, like the ones that I've talked about today, have been cycling through the system with very little accountability.

By introducing a mandatory, full-cash security deposit, we ensure that bail conditions are very real and not empty promises. This reform sends a very clear message: If you break the law, there will be consequences—combined with modernized debt collection and enhancing tracking tools. That's why we're closing the loopholes on putting public safety first.

I want to thank the Premier, because he helped get Christopher's Law across, or the puck into the net, a little while ago.

0930

We're taking bold action on so many issues in our communities to restore confidence in our justice system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Question?

MPP Lisa Gretzky: The member from Thornhill talked a lot about tracking offenders, which is not a bad thing, but if you're tracking them and they're not actually having a day in court and having consequences for their actions, then that is not giving justice to the victims of crimes. When you are not funding the justice system and resourcing the justice system so that these offenders are being released, so that women who are nearly murdered by their partners are seeing that offender roam free, then you are not doing enough.

I'm going to go back to my colleague from Toronto—Danforth's question. He specifically asked you about your \$17-million cut to victim services. You talked about families in your community who have been impacted by crime. Do you not feel that they deserve to have proper funding for victim services so that they can get the supports they need?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the member opposite. I worked under the child protection act for the better half of 10 or 15 years, and when I first saw this legislation, I was actually fairly confident that this was going to be a very positive move. The problem is, when you have heinous criminals and they're on the streets and there is a bail system that doesn't enforce the cash portion and there's no cash deposit required, that means it's going to be all the more complicated when bail is violated. That leads to real challenges related to the collection of forfeited bail.

This is going to make a much more effective system. This is going to create resources through the payments that will be collected. Mandatory cash security deposits create a new deterrent to remind offenders and would-be offenders that there will be consequences for violating the conditions of their release.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you to my colleague from Thornhill for her debate speech and to this opportunity to speak.

It's really an honour, as always, to rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale—High Park, and this morning specifically to speak to Bill 75, Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act. Now, that is quite the title, I must say.

In addressing this bill, I want to first note that the issues being raised of community safety, these are issues of greatest importance. Every one of us in this chamber can agree—and I know that we speak for those that we serve—that the issues of safety are of utmost importance. If you don't have safety, it's very hard to have anything else. I know that this is something that we in the official opposition take very, very seriously: that all Ontarians deserve safe communities, and I do mean all. Whether that's your child walking home from school in the afternoon or a woman jogging through the park at night or people praying in their houses of worship or a Toronto cyclist biking to and from work or a young family settling into their new home or an unhoused neighbour taking refuge from the winter cold in a public space, every member of our community should be safe—every one.

It is the government's responsibility, 100%, to create safe communities throughout this province, and this means fixing the crisis in our courts to ensure that justice and corrections systems are properly funded and properly run. And just as important, it means that strengthening Ontario's community services is needed to help those in crisis—putting preventative measures in place to reduce the unsafe behaviours, to stop the violence before it ever starts. I think we can agree that stopping the violence before it ever starts is far better than punishment afterwards. Imagine a world with such low crime rates. For that, we need the multipronged approach to community safety.

This Conservative government has had eight years to deliver that. Think about that, Speaker: They've had eight years to take action and to keep Ontarians safe, yet year over year, they've failed to invest in the necessary resources to strengthen our community services or to fix our courts.

The Premier has refused opportunity after opportunity to bolster Ontario's social safety net, to fund those public services and wraparound supports so that we can tackle the root causes of crime and increase public safety throughout our province. He and his government have refused to implement policies that will truly make Ontario safe for everyone—policies that we know will reduce criminality, such as:

- getting people off the street and out of the encampments with accessible, safe, affordable housing;
- delivering more supportive housing supply to help people who cannot live independently stay housed;
- expanding OHIP coverage for mental health supports to help people who are in crisis before they harm themselves or others;
- increasing ODSP and OW rates above the poverty line to increase well-being and decrease exploitive crime;

—ensuring adequate treatment beds for mental health, for addictions, instead of the months-long wait-list that we have now—and that wait-list is even longer for those in northern Ontario and in rural communities;

—investing in positive parenting programs, emotional regulation instructions at school, and after-school programs to reduce community violence; and

—yes, declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic so that we can invest in coordinated, properly funded action to prevent violence and save lives.

This is not what is in this bill. But I want to speak to that because, in my riding, there was a horrific crime. Just a couple of years ago, a young boy was stabbed to death at the Keele subway station. No one wants change more than the mother of that young boy, Andrea. Her pain was, in her words, “unbearable,” but she felt it was critical that she speak out about what we needed most. In an emotional interview, she said, “Please, more needs to be done to help people in crisis. More needs to be done so that people don’t get to the point where they are in crisis. More needs to be done for social services, more investments in mental and physical health, more support for housing, so fewer moms like me will suffer.”

If we are truly going to create safer communities, these investments in our social safety net are critical. As my colleague from Toronto Centre has remarked in this chamber, the social determinants of health are exactly the same as the social determinants of safety. And yet the government continues to underfund these essential services. Just a few months ago, they voted down my motion to end gender-based violence by investing in affordable child care and community public services to ensure women’s economic security and safety.

With regard to this bill, what I find very puzzling is that this government also refuses to invest in fixing our broken court system. Ontario’s bail and court system has been underfunded and uncoordinated for years, including under the previous Liberal government. But for all this Conservative government’s tough-on-crime talk, they have failed, year over year, to invest and fix our broken court system to speed up access to trial. Last time I checked, Speaker, you cannot get a guilty conviction, as my colleague from Thornhill was asking for, if you cannot get someone to trial. That’s exactly what’s happening here in Ontario. Survivors of crime and their families are not getting justice. Ontarians aren’t getting their day in court, and as a result, serious criminals are walking free.

Fraud has more than doubled in Ontario, and yet a majority—think about that, a majority—of fraud cases are getting thrown out of court because of the backlogs and the understaffing.

Since the pandemic, we’ve seen the majority of criminal cases ending with charges being withdrawn, stayed, dismissed or discharged because the government refuses to resource our court system—56% of criminal cases ended that way in 2022-23. All across this province, serious criminal cases, including child luring, firearms charges and sexual assault charges, continue to be thrown out because of unconstitutional delays.

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If we are going to keep Ontarians safe, it’s very, very clear that we must fix our courts. We must clear that backlog. The crisis of overcrowding and understaffing in our jails has also meant that more cases are getting stayed or settled with shorter sentences due to the alarming conditions for workers and inmates.

So it is critical that we fix the courts, but that is not what Bill 75 does. It doesn’t take the steps that are needed to fix our courts. Schedule 2 of the bill introduces instead an upfront cash bail, which will require upfront payment of bail deposits by the accused or their surety instead of a promise to pay. This means that whether or not a person goes home or stays in jail before they have been found guilty while they are awaiting their trial could depend entirely on their ability to pay bail deposits out of pocket. Just think about that, Speaker. Those who are wealthy could pay to walk free while those who are low-income could sit in jail for months and months until their case.

The CCLA director of criminal justice, Shakir Rahim, has warned us that the Ontario government’s proposal to require cash bail creates a two-tier justice system, “one for the rich and the other for the rest of us.” When asked, the Attorney General wasn’t able to confirm whether Bill 75 would mean a person’s ability to pay would be at risk. He said, “I don’t think it would have an effect.”

With all due respect, Speaker, this answer from our Attorney General is not good enough, not when we’re talking about creating a two-tier system of justice which is going to have disproportionate effects on Ontarians who have low income, who are Indigenous, who are racialized, who are newcomers, on those who are unhoused, who are struggling to get on their feet. The Attorney General must be able to say, with certainty, how his government’s policy will affect the people of this province, and that effect should not exacerbate our already huge problems with systemic injustice.

I know where this leads, Speaker. I once marched with the Presbyterians in the United States carrying \$60,000, and we marched up to the bail court to hand it over so that the people who were poor could get out on bail. That is where we are headed today—again, following failed US policies—a bill that is almost certainly going to be constitutionally challenged because, as the CCLA has pointed out, the federal government is responsible for criminal procedures under the Constitution Act, not the province.

I am asking this government: Why will it waste taxpayers’ dollars defending a law that it knows will be unconstitutional just to gain political points? It will perpetrate injustice rather than investing in fixing the courts, in strengthening our social safety net. Ontario has the resources—they do—to truly create a safer community, and that’s what we have to prioritize.

Speaker, before I end my time here, I do want to speak to one of the more positive aspects of this bill. Bill 75 is yet one of those omnibus bills that has so many unrelated issues in it that it makes your head spin, but schedule 1 prohibits any provincial supplier from breeding cats or dogs for research, and it will also prohibit any invasive

medical research on cats, dogs or other animals, with exemptions. Cash bail, animal protection—all in one bill.

This, though, is a positive step, as I've heard from many of my constituents in Parkdale–High Park who are pleased that the government is taking steps to protect animal friends, to prevent the kind of invasive procedures we've heard about the dogs in London being subject to. But we're also hearing that there is a loophole, because in addition to the ban on breeding dogs and cats, an animal law professor from the University of Toronto, Angela Fernandez, tells us, "There needs to be a ban on importing them from other jurisdictions," or else this is useless legislation. "Research facilities will continue to experiment on non-locally produced dogs and cats brought in from the US" or the other provinces.

Schedule 5 amends the Highway Traffic Act to include tougher penalties for dangerous driving. We all know that road safety is something we've all long called for, and the NDP has tabled several versions of such a law, including the Moving Ontarians Safely Act and the Fairness for Road Users Act.

But these schedules—and schedule 5, which echo a provision in last year's Bill 197—are still unproclaimed. So how seriously can we take this particular piece of legislation and these changes when the government has failed to bring the provisions into force?

In conclusion, I want to say that this bill has a number of challenges to it, and it needs to go to committee, where it can hopefully be amended to make it better through our democratic process—something we've seen so rarely in my time over the last year.

Until the government gets serious about fixing the courts and the backlogs and investing in our communities, we really will not achieve a truly safe Ontario.

Interjections.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I'm going to continue. I thought I was going with some questions, no? Oh, I do have more time. Pardon me, I'm still getting into this new space of reality. I will continue because I did have more to say, but I was slowing myself down or skipping some pieces.

Here's what I want to talk about: I actually want to make sure that we also talk a little bit more about the Animal Alliance of Canada, who has also raised concerns about the legislation's over-reliance on the to-be-determined regulations. They've said it's very important that this government—and I want this government to hear me because this seems to be a challenge—does not move forward in secrecy, but makes them public so that our community experts can weigh in and we can have the opportunity to debate them.

As I was speaking to earlier, in schedule 5, the bill amends the Highway Traffic Act and introduces tougher penalties for dangerous driving. Now, these are good provisions because road safety advocates have called for something called the vulnerable road user law to address motor collisions where vulnerable users have been seriously injured or they've been killed.

We in the NDP agree in that we have also tabled versions of this law, including the Moving Ontarians Safely Act and

the Fairness for Road Users Act. But again, I am worried that this is empty if the government doesn't actually plan to put into effect this piece.

Speaker, so much of what's happening here is really about throwing these massive amounts of spaghetti to the wall and seeing what sticks. I'm really concerned that we do need the time to properly debate motions. This time allocation of motions, this refusal to go to committee with our bills, really means that when you take these omnibus bills, like Bill 75, you Frankenstein a number of pieces of legislation together. And then you don't properly give the body that has been charged by the people of Ontario the time to debate it—to discuss it robustly—and you don't give it the time it needs in the committee, where experts come and speak to it. Well, then we really are short-changing the residents of Ontario, and, worse, we may be creating situations, as we've seen over the last years, that make things worse: hallway health care that keeps on growing, legislation that causes more suffering to those who are underhoused, housed and even to the middle class. We're seeing more and more people suffer as a result of this lack of consultation, this deep secrecy that many of my constituents—and I know constituents from across the province—are worried about.

I really do hope that very soon we see an end to these kinds of bills that are omnibus bills, and that we see an end to the use of time-allocated motions and refusals to go to the committee, because Ontario deserves better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions, please.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you for your presentation this morning. One of the consequences of the bill, should it pass, is that drivers will face a lifetime suspension if they were to kill someone as part of their reckless driving. I think, of course, the goal of government and goal of law should be to stop people from dying in the first place.

And so I'm wondering if you could talk about some of the issues around driving safely and enforcing safe driving that this government has made more difficult in the last number of years.

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MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to thank my colleague for the question. I am representing the good people of Parkdale–High Park. We had a speed camera on Parkside Drive, and we lost a beautiful couple from the riding of Davenport who were killed when an individual sped down that road into their vehicle. We have seen an increase in speeding since that speed camera has been removed, and it is devastating for the members of my riding to know that this government is refusing to listen to the experts on what actually will increase our road safety and instead is just looking to punishment after. Isn't it better to save lives ahead of time than to put people behind bars and cause punishment afterwards?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Bill 75 proposes exploring options to make parts of the Ontario sex offender and trafficker registry publicly available, giving communities the information they need to stay safe.

Can the member from Parkdale–High Park stand in her place and support providing families with the tools to protect themselves from dangerous predators?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to thank my colleague. And again, I think that the best way that we can keep individuals safe is actually to get them to the courts. When we have the majority of criminals going free because they haven't had their day in court, then we have a much more serious problem, and I would say that we want to use all the tools that are currently available to us and this government is not doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for your comments today.

One of the things that we noticed is there is a pattern with this government of the Premier violating the law and then changing the law retroactively. For example, the freedom of information act—he has been ordered by the courts and been told he's not following the freedom of information law, he is violating that law, and he needs to release his phone records. So now he's going to change the law retroactively, so he doesn't have to release his phone records.

You were just talking about speed cameras, and this government—the cabinet ministers were caught 23 times. Their vehicles were caught speeding with speed cameras, 12 times going over 150 kilometres an hour, which is stunt driving. It's a whole different level of offence.

My question is, do you believe that this government is really trying to respect the law or to make people safer with this bill when they change the law every time the Premier is caught breaking the law?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you to the member from Spadina–Fort York for that question. I'm deeply concerned with whatever the Premier gets his hands on, whether that is our laws about speed cameras, freedom of information, Billy Bishop airport, Ontario Place, the science centre—it's almost as if this government headed by this Premier is more interested in playing with the city of Toronto and moving it about than it is actually with keeping vulnerable children safe, women who have faced abuse safe. This government is more interested in making their own friends, family, dentists richer and then hiding those pieces. So, no, I don't trust the government at this point with that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thanks to the member for her comments this morning. I've been listening carefully to the debate on Bill 75 the last couple of days. The opposition a few times has talked about investments in the courts, investments in our correctional facilities as well. We have 650 new spaces coming online in our correctional facilities across the province, in Thunder Bay, Kenora and Milton, with many more on the way with a great announcement in Brockville. A new judge was appointed in Halton region just last week, and we have a new courthouse coming to Oakville as well.

The budget is coming on Thursday. There is going to be great investments in that. I just wanted to know if the

member is going to be supporting our budget and our investments in our justice system.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to thank the member across from me for the question. He spoke about the new jails coming online, but my colleague from Thunder Bay says there's yet to be staff to support those investments there. We are also seeing in Ottawa—my colleague who visited the jails—that there are three people to a cell—a bunk bed and a mattress on the floor, which is literally the amount of room you have in there. How is that humane?

My concern is that this government has really lost the plot in so many ways. I will be waiting to see what they bring forward on Thursday. Miracles do happen. I am a Christian minister, after all, so I believe in them. I'll be adding my prayers tonight.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

MPP Wayne Gates: Well, I would like to say to my colleague, this government probably need more than prayers, but it's interesting that the—

Interjections.

MPP Wayne Gates: I only get a minute. Can you please not heckle me?

Listen, I've been here for an hour. We've asked two questions to this government, that you made a \$17-million cut to victim services. You're under RCMP investigation yourself, and then you're bringing a bill to say that we've got to stop the criminals. Well, the criminals are on that side of the House because you're under RCMP investigation. So I think that's very interesting.

The last part I want to say, although my colleague mentioned it, is that the Premier of Ontario was told by the courts that he has to give up his cellphone, and do you know what he did? Speaker, he changed the law, so he doesn't have to do it. Do you think that's right?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you for your question. Democracy is only possible when it includes transparency and accountability. When the courts order any member in elected office to hand over the tools that they have used to run government business, then that member is obligated to—and not only obligated to, but should feel a sense of duty and honour to do so. The fact that this Premier is hiding his cellphone records, the fact that this Premier is changing the freedom of information laws so that all journalists, all opposition members, all members of the public will no longer be able to have accountability and transparency is egregious, and it tells us that he's hiding something very serious.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: One of the important things on this bill, Mr. Speaker: We are exploring the requirement that impaired drivers who killed a parent or guardian have to pay ongoing child support to the victim's children. This is about accountability and supporting families devastated by the crime. I will ask the member, do you oppose making offenders financially responsible for the harm they caused?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to thank my colleague, and I want to thank him for his reference to accountability because I think it's very rich that this government is

looking for accountability in the public sphere when at this moment they are hiding from accountability in their work, in their places here in the House, hiding from accountability from the journalists and from the opposition members.

I have to tell you a story about an OINP recipient who had filed a freedom-of-information request, and they were missing pages that three months ago the other recipients were getting. Those pages told the story of whether that recipient was approved or not approved—another moment of this government hiding instead of being accountable for their actions. That's really where we have to put our focus, on accountable government. Then we can look at also holding everyone else accountable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Good morning, everyone. Bonjour, tout le monde. Ça me fait plaisir d'être avec vous ce matin après des vacances de Noël très longues. It's great to be here after a very long, extended winter break.

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Mr. Speaker, I've read the bill, all seven schedules, and I think it's safe to say that I'll be supporting it. But let's be clear about something: This bill, which the government will have you believe is about getting tough on crime, does not contain a single word—not one—about one of the most predictable, preventable and deadly crimes in our province. Not one mention of impaired driving, Mr. Speaker. Not one mention of alcohol, which, for this government, is actually quite astonishing. Not one mention of repeat impaired drivers, people who have already been warned, that chose to get behind the wheel of a car again. Is that an oversight or is it a decision?

Let's talk about what's actually happening today—not in theory, not in talking points, but the reality right now here in Ontario. The Ottawa police report that in the first two months of 2026, 139 drivers have been charged with impaired driving. In 2025, the OPP laid 12,000 impaired driving charges. In 2021, it was only 9,500. That's a 26% increase in four years under this government's watch. In 2024, 47 Ontarians died in vehicle crashes involving drugs or alcohol. That's nearly one person every single week, Mr. Speaker. Nationally, impaired driving is a factor in roughly one in five fatal collisions—one in five.

Behind every number is a family. And here is a truth that the House and the government cannot ignore: These deaths are preventable.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a new issue. We know about this problem. We've known it for decades. In fact, Ontario was once a leader in this issue. Ontario recognized the dangers of impaired driving long ago, before I was even born, introducing a warn range below the criminal level of intoxication in 1977 in order to intervene early, to try to get those people off the road before they committed a crime, before they killed someone.

We—this place, this Legislature, our society—understood that intervention saved lives. We built this system and designed it to stop impaired driving before it became fatal—or, at least, that was the intent. And yet, after 50 years, after eight years in government, after all this time, all of this knowledge, this government is not building on that foundation.

So you have to ask yourself, why? Well, we know they're tired. We know that they're out of ideas, and that's why they're standing still.

Now, to their credit, a couple of years ago, the government did pass some changes: short-term increases to roadside suspensions from three days to seven days, from seven days to 14 days, and, if you killed someone, a permanent suspension. We voted for that; we agree with that. That's great. But, as I mentioned earlier, should the intent and the effort not be put into stopping the deaths from happening in the first place? Should we not get tough on criminals before they've actually killed someone?

So in a bill titled Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, there's no evolution, there's no modernization and there's no strategy to deal with one of the leading causes of vehicle crime in our province. That stagnation from this government is evidence that they've simply run out of steam.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know that this government likes to advertise. They like to tell everyone how good they're doing. They're not shy about it. We see it everywhere. We see it during baseball games and hockey games and football games. I'm not home during the day, but I wouldn't be surprised if you saw it during the soap operas in the middle of the afternoon too. We see it everywhere: ads about building Ontario, ads about fighting tariffs, ads about economic strength—hundreds of millions of dollars in ads; relentless messaging. But when it comes to one of the most preventable, deadly risks facing people in Ontario, where is the campaign? Where is the advertising? Where is the government commercial that says, "Plan a ride home; take a cab; call an Uber; take public transit; stay overnight"? Where are those ads, Mr. Speaker?

I don't see them. I don't see a government of Ontario ad saying, "Don't drink and drive." I don't see a government of Ontario ad saying, "Spend the night. Make plans ahead of time." So where are they? Where's the strategy? Where's the advertising? Where's the leadership from the government?

Impaired driving, vehicle deaths and reckless driving: These are not just justice issues; they are behavioural issues, and behaviour changes and can change when government leads, not just with penalties—penalties are important—but with prevention, Mr. Speaker. Even if a fraction of those hundreds of millions of dollars that has gone into advertising—if just a fraction of that went into talking about impaired driving, about planning ahead, how many lives could be saved? How many families could be saved the grief of having to go through that? I guess we will never really know because this government has no strategy and hasn't taken that approach.

Mr. Speaker, if they were serious about public safety, they would focus on where the risks actually are. The evidence on this is clear. It's crystal clear, Mr. Speaker: Those who drive impaired repeatedly are the problem. Now, look, every case of impaired driving is serious, but repeat impaired drivers are the ones who cause the tragedies that are predictably avoidable.

This person has already been warned. They've already been caught and yet they still chose to get behind the wheel impaired, again and again and again. We can see it

coming. The police can see it coming. We can stop it if the government puts the effort into it. So where is that effort, Mr. Speaker?

To be fair, there is a degree of escalating consequences already in the system. But here is the question: Are they working? Because if they were, we would be seeing the rate of charges go down. We would not be seeing the repeat behaviour. We would not be seeing these predictable tragedies.

The issue still exists. And yet, despite that, the government continues to turn a blind eye, seemingly to ignore it, seemingly to allow it to get worse—or at least not want to have to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, let's take a moment to talk about what public safety would look like—what action on impaired driving from the government of Ontario would look like. If this bill is about keeping people safe, then we should talk about preventing impaired driving in the first place, which is why I talked about putting money behind advertising. This government has an advertising budget; they like to talk about advertising. Well, let's put it to some good use and stop bad behaviour before it actually happens.

When someone chooses to drink and drive, they're not just taking a risk. They are creating a risk and it's not just a risk to themselves; it's a risk to everyone else who's on the road, driving in a car, walking on the sidewalk, riding a bike, out and about with their family—and it's a risk that is 100% avoidable.

If you're caught driving impaired once, yes, of course, you should face consequences. If you're caught impaired driving a second time, those consequences have to escalate with the behaviour. I'm not talking about a seven-day roadside suspension of your driver's licence, Mr. Speaker, but real consequences that will force you to rethink your life decisions. Because at that point, it's not a mistake; it is a conscious decision to get behind the wheel impaired, again and again.

We should protect children. If someone drives impaired with a child in the vehicle, this is not just impaired driving. This is putting children's lives at risk, and we should treat it like that.

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Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, Ontario led with the warn range a number of years ago. Warn range was intended to be a warning so that you don't do it again before you reach the criminal threshold. So warn range once, that's fine; okay. Warn range repeatedly, we should take their car. If you keep getting warnings and warnings and warnings and your behaviour doesn't change, then obviously we need to escalate the penalties, so let's take their car away. Because if you remove the vehicle, you remove the risk. So let's do that right away.

Let's prevent impaired driving with the use of technology. We all know about interlock devices—they work. Let's use them a little bit more liberally with people who are caught at the warn range and who are facing penalties for their criminal behaviour as well.

We know that there's a difference between reacting and preventing. Most of us here are parents. We know that

there's a difference in how we teach our children at home. We teach them not to touch the burner ahead of time, not to get in trouble. Of course, there are consequences when they make mistakes or they get in trouble, but as parents, our goal is to try to teach them ahead of time not to put themselves in those situations.

That should be the goal of government as well, to stop those situations from arising in the first place so that we don't actually have to use the tough consequences that we've put into the law. So that we can save lives, not just punish people for taking them.

Mr. Speaker, schedule 5 deals with dangerous driving and we support that. But dangerous driving and impaired driving are not the same. And on impaired driving, which is the leading criminal cause of road death, this bill is absolutely silent.

As I've said, the government will spend millions advertising itself, patting itself on the back for things that have not yet been accomplished, for building Ontario, for fighting tariffs, promoting its so-called record, but not a single dollar spent on discouraging drinking and driving, on promoting the use of public transit, on calling an Uber, on staying the night. If they were serious about saving lives, they wouldn't just have harsh consequences for those who take them, they would put effort into saving those lives in the first place, stopping those deaths from happening.

So after eight years, it's clear this government is out of ideas, and that's exactly what this bill shows. It's got a strong title, but it doesn't have a strategy that's kept up.

Impaired driving is preventable. Impaired driving causing death is preventable—every single one of them. We know the risk, we know the patterns, we know what works, and we know this government isn't doing a goddamn thing about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will now move to members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ENERQUEST TECHNOLOGIES SOLUTIONS

Mr. Anthony Leardi: We have more great news from the riding of Essex, this time from the town of Harrow. Harrow has a great company called EnerQuest Technologies. EnerQuest is an electrical firm located in Harrow, Ontario. They make switchgears. The Southwestern Ontario Development Fund has worked with EnerQuest and granted them a \$1.5-million grant, which EnerQuest is now rolling into a massive multi-million dollar investment in the town of Harrow. EnerQuest will be investing \$15.8 million in the town of Harrow. They will be producing switchgears, moving production from the United States to Ontario and reshoring that production.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great success. It will protect 154 jobs already existing in Harrow and add over 100 new

jobs. These are good-paying jobs and will be great jobs for people living in Essex county.

I would like to congratulate EnerQuest on this fantastic investment and also thank the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade for this fantastic investment. We are creating jobs in Ontario, protecting Ontario workers and protecting Ontario businesses.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Good morning, Speaker. I rise today to recognize some exceptional students from Beal, CCH and Central in London, part of a group that organized and led a high school walkout to advocate for education investments and to fight against foolish cuts to the Ontario Student Assistance Program. I met with Madeline Glinoga, Haidyn Marchand, Saturn Beer and Calico Richard, and was deeply moved by their passion, leadership and commitment to standing up for what's right. These young leaders are not merely fighting for their own future, but for the future of all students in our community.

I also met with student representatives from Lucas, including Ashley Choi and Julie Yang, who told me about friends and siblings who are considering abandoning their programs in the middle of their degree and know many more who are potentially giving up on post-secondary education before it even starts.

Students are mobilizing and taking action, Speaker. Youth have the power to create change, and they are setting a powerful example for future generations of leaders. Their advocacy for accessible education is not just about protecting OSAP, it's about ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background or financial situation. Young people are asking: Are these changes a poorly veiled punishment for being poor? Education is a powerful social and economic mobilizer. Why on earth are Conservatives ruining that?

Speaker, students are showing us all what it means to lead with conviction. I'm proud to stand today to commend their dedication, determination and unwavering commitment to creating a better future for all. Thank you for inspiring us all.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Good morning, Speaker and everyone. Over the recent break, I had the opportunity to visit with several incredible community organizations in Toronto—St. Paul's, organizations that change lives every single day, often with far too little.

At Community Living Toronto, I saw how individuals with intellectual disabilities are supported to live independently, build connections and fully participate in their communities. Through Out of the Cold programs in my riding, I connected with Seeds of Hope, offering warmth, safety and dignity to people experiencing homelessness and hardship, powered by compassion and the community. And at SPRINT Senior Care, I heard a reality we cannot

ignore: More seniors than ever are relying on their services for meals, through Meals on Wheels, transportation and daily support, not as extras but as essentials.

But as that reliance grows, support just isn't keeping up. That's what we've been hearing. These organizations are being asked to stretch further, to serve more people and often with fewer resources. These are organizations that hold our communities together. Today, I want to recognize their work and say this: We truly hope that this government sees the light and provides the support to these organizations that they need, because when these organizations are strong, our communities are stronger.

LAMBERTHA DIRKJE GREIJ DANUS

Mr. Will Bouma: Lambertha Dirkje Greijdanus was born in 1942. Betty was born into war and Nazi occupation, a world where your neighbour might betray you to certain death. But her family faced down that horror. She was raised with a strong faith, raised to make her own decisions about her future. She was a full partner in a dairy farm in the Netherlands, which gave her and her future husband their start. Betty chose the traditional life of a dairy farmer's wife, where home and garden were her domain.

Her life was a distinctly Canadian life, leaving all she knew to move to Canada and start again. She had no patience for anyone who did not measure up to her standards of hard work and generosity, but she had a deep love for all living things. Her collection of stray barn cats never went without, and she made sure the small and the weak received just as much as the big and the strong. After losing her husband, she carried on and supported her son's dream of farming, which he does to this day.

Betty passed away last Tuesday. I am honoured to call her mem. Last week was a week of joyous happiness at her freedom from pain and dementia, and dreadful sadness at her loss.

Rest in peace, Mem. Until we meet again. Thank you.

1020

HATE CRIMES

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: The past several months have been extremely busy and meaningful in my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence. This time has allowed me to connect with local businesses, places of worship and, most importantly, the constituents I'm honoured to represent. I have experienced many uplifting moments. I attended mass at local churches and celebrated Purim at many synagogues across the riding. I also visited outstanding local organizations and businesses.

However, alongside these positive experiences, I must acknowledge a deeply troubling reality that many residents have shared with me, a growing fear and concern about rising anti-Semitism and hate in our community. This became painfully clear just weeks ago when shots were fired at the Shaarei Shomayim synagogue in my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence. This was not simply an attack on a building. It was an attack on the Jewish com-

munity, on people's sense of safety and on the values of inclusion and respect that we hold dear in Ontario.

No one should feel unsafe in their place of worship. No one should feel targeted because of their faith, identity or background. Acts of hate and intimidation have no place in Eglinton–Lawrence or any place in this province.

Speaker, we must stand united in condemning anti-Semitism and all forms of hate, and reaffirm our commitment to ensuring every Ontarian can live, work and worship safely and with dignity.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

MPP Robin Lennox: “The difference between where we are and where we could be is the greatest waste.” I read these words a couple of months ago, and they've stuck with me because what could better describe the current situation in Ontario? Where we are right now is defined by struggle for many Ontarians. For Sheena, it's working full-time and still not being able to pay for her diabetes medication every month. For Stuart, it's facing his second above-guideline rent increase and wondering how he's going to make ends meet. And for Lucy, it's watching her mother with dementia deteriorate while she spends days in a hospital hallway.

That's where we are right now. But where we could be could be so much better. If we had a government that centred policy-making on the needs of real people, we could do so much more. We could have an Ontario where we boldly invest in non-market housing solutions so that everyone can afford a place to live and homelessness is no longer a reality in our communities. We could have an Ontario that restores and expands public health care, finally offering the head-to-toe health care that Ontarians need, including universal mental health care and pharmacare. We could have an Ontario where our government stands up against corporate profiteering in our grocery stores and instead ensures that all working Ontarians can put food on the table at the end of the day.

That version of Ontario is within our reach, but it will take bold and visionary leadership to get us there. Anything else is simply a waste.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Just yesterday, I was informed by an employee that Niagara Health is announcing yet another round of layoffs and cuts. This time, it is PSWs and nursing staff taking the brunt. Niagara Health is facing a \$26-million deficit—more than double last year's—and has eliminated nearly 100 jobs already over the holidays, including front-line and support roles, in an attempt to try and balance their books.

Now medical and surgical floors at the St. Catharines hospital site will see PSW coverage go from 24 hours down to just 16 hours a day, stripping care away from the bedside and placing greater burdens on nurses already stretched to the brink. The reduction in shifts will result in the elimination of 20 full-time and part-time positions. At

night, just six nurses may be left to care for an entire floor. In the event of a code blue, it means there will not be enough nurses to support other patients while providing life-saving care. This is not a staff adjustment; it is a full-on patient safety crisis. Staff have been told that this round of cuts will not affect patient care. However, how can it not?

Speaker, I challenge the Minister of Health to come and work a day and night shift at the St. Catharines site and see for herself if cutting PSWs—

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

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Lorne Coe: Last week, the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and I launched a new homelessness and addiction recovery treatment hub in Whitby. Through this initiative, people facing housing instability, mental health challenges or substance use issues will be able to access coordinated supports focused on treatment and recovery.

Speaker, Whitby's HART hub will deliver services in collaboration with the Durham Community Health Centre, working alongside the regional municipality of Durham, GraceWins Peer Support, Victim Services of Durham Region and Lakeridge Health.

Speaker, we're building a stronger, more connected system of mental health and addictions care that better reflects the needs of communities like Whitby and which focuses on lasting recovery, reflecting, at the end of the day, our government's long-standing commitment to providing meaningful resources and compassionate care to those who need it most.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Jess Dixon: At the end of February, I had the opportunity to attend the Provincial Human Trafficking Symposium that was organized and hosted by Victim Services of Peel and Peel Regional Police, bringing together victim services groups, sexual assault clinics, survivors, prosecutors, police from all across the province.

I attended both days of the symposium, took a lot of notes, and I want to specially thank Sarah Rogers, who is the director of Victim Services of Peel, as well as Detective Sergeant Bob Hackenbrook of Peel Regional Police, who is the head of their vice squad and their human trafficking unit.

Over the two days, what I saw was just how seriously human trafficking is being taken in the province of Ontario. It was also very interesting to hear so many positive comments about provincial investments, the expansions to VQRP+, the use of human trafficking restraining orders—which was fascinating—the expansion of care units and the dedication and the passion of everyone that was there.

I also want to give a special shout-out to someone from this chamber, the MPP for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes—

Brock Laurie Scott. I could see her work in everything that happened at that symposium. Laurie has been an advocate for years, and while she is a silent partner, her work was incredibly obvious that day. Thank you, Laurie.

EID-UL-FITR

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Today, I want to wish all of my Muslim colleagues and neighbours Eid Mubarak. My heart is with those who gathered in local masjids, community centres, auditoriums, living rooms and neighbourhoods.

I was privileged to attend a number of Eid prayers and celebrations. I want to thank the Muslim Association of Canada, the Kitchener Masjid, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Waterloo region and others for your leadership. Because you lead and organize, nobody needs to spend Eid alone; people can celebrate, gather and pray in community.

I also want to give a shout-out to all of my beautiful friends and neighbours who invited me into their communities and homes to celebrate iftar. Thank you to the Rohingya Centre of Canada, the Grand River Friendship Society, Muslim Social Services, Asma'a Al-Wahsh from CAWA, Sudanese Canadian association, Palestinian Youth Movement, Coalition of Muslim Women, Wilfrid Laurier University students, Mifrah Abid from the University of Waterloo.

May the blessings and lessons from your fasting, charity and prayers during the month of Ramadan stay with you all year long. Eid Mubarak.

PETER CLARK

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: Yesterday in Ottawa, on crossing guard awareness day, a crossing guard was hit during a hit-and-run incident while helping kids get to school. I've just learned that he's passed as a result of his injuries. And so, could I have a moment of silence for his family? Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Orléans is asking for unanimous consent for a moment of silence to recognize the passing of a traffic guard. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

1030

SPECIAL REPORT, OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: a report entitled A Decade of Promoting Fairness: Expanding Access, Impact and Value from the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Zee Hamid: I'd like to introduce Mayor Meed Ward and Trustee Agnew from Burlington, Councillor Ali from Milton, Mayor Lawlor and Councillor Fogal from Halton Hills, and Halton's Trustee Gray and Trustee Oliver, as well as Donna Danielli.

Welcome to the House.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'm delighted this morning to introduce Gilbert Sharpe, who's no stranger to this House, and Dr. Edyta Marcon of the Translational Research Program at the University of Toronto department of laboratory medicine and pathobiology. They're joined by their many students, who I hope will all enjoy their time here at Queen's Park today.

Welcome.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to welcome, from the Western student council's Women in House program, Tanisha Modi, Erikka Ocampo and Malika Sidhu.

I also want to welcome my wonderful staff here today: Shelly Eh and Susan Cooke.

Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Mike Harris: I want to welcome and give a great shout-out to the Ontario Waterpower Association board. They're here today.

Annie, Bonnie, Caitlin, Julien, Karina, Michael, Oluseyi, Sophie, Stephen and, of course, Mr. Norris, we'll see you later tonight at your reception.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I'd like to recognize Avish Sareen, a legislative page from the city of Burlington. He's serving as page captain today and is joined in the gallery by his mother, Ruchika.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Today, the page captain is Jiyana Agarwal, and she's here with her mother, Komal, her father, Mayur, brother Artham and grandmother Kala Todi.

We also have students from the University of Waterloo: Luke, Talal, Zain, Abdullah, Robert, Jacob, Michael.

Welcome to your House.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'd like to welcome from my constituency office our PSW and social service worker students, Rachel Holmes and Kidane Abraha, and of course Courtney Sullivan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I'd like to honour Mr. Connor Hammill, who's here today with some faculty from Sheridan College and 18 graduating students. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to welcome, from the Western University Students' Council's Women in House program, Megan Das, Emma Fontaine and Jordyn Saari. Welcome to your House.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I would also like to welcome three women from Western University Students' Council's Women in House program today: Mina Sagheb, Sadi Duggal and Aanchal Narayan.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I rise today to make an introduction that I hope will be met with thunderous applause on behalf of the official opposition and the entire Legislative Assembly. It's my incredible honour to welcome the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Canadian Opera

Company and the National Ballet of Canada. They are hosting the arts at the park lunch reception in room 230.

And next Oscars season, please say something more like that, Timothée.

Mr. Dave Smith: From the Ontario Waterpower Association, I'd like to welcome Jessica.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I too would like to welcome Western University Students' Council delegates who are here for the Women in House program. In particular, I want to say hello to Amy, Sabreen and Caitlin, who are shadowing me today.

MPP Mohamed Firin: I'd like to welcome Darla Estayo, an intern from TMU, and she's joined by my constituency assistant, Mohamed.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Welcome back. I want to also welcome and thank the Women in House group for being here. It was a wonderful reception last night and wonderful to meet you all, but I particularly want to note Thoa Le, Anusha Das, Erikka Ocampo and Tanisha Modi. Thank you for shadowing me. It was wonderful.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I see that Patti Dalton is here. She's from the London and District Labour Council along with Stewart Wise. Welcome to the Legislature.

REMARKABLE WOMEN AT QUEEN'S PARK

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Colleagues, in 2025, I launched the Remarkable Women in the Workplace initiative. It's a monthly recognition program celebrating the outstanding women who work for the Office of the Assembly. These individuals exemplify dedication, professionalism and leadership in their roles, and this initiative is a small but meaningful way to honour their contributions to this Legislature.

Today, I am pleased to draw your attention to the Speaker's gallery and introduce our newest honourees:

—Anna Somers, special programs and events officer from parliamentary protocol and public relations;

—Danielle Ferris, legislative protective officer from legislative protective services; and

—Janey Chen, senior systems analyst and developer from information services.

Anna's professionalism and creativity shine in every event that she coordinates, ensuring visitors experience the best of the Ontario Legislative Building. She approaches every task with warmth, flexibility and meticulous attention to detail. Her calm, positive attitude and tireless efforts make her an essential part of our success and truly deserving of this recognition.

Danielle's dedication and positive energy have made a lasting impact since she joined the Legislative Protective Service in 2013. She excels in critical roles from training and ceremonial duties to supporting security initiatives, always going above and beyond. Her collaborative spirit and commitment to growth exemplify the values of service and leadership.

Janey's technical expertise and innovative approach have modernized and strengthened the assembly's digital

operations. Her proactive work ensures reliable systems that support members, staff and the public. Respected for her knowledge and collaborative spirit, Janey's contributions reflect the assembly's commitment to transparency and excellence.

On behalf of all members and staff, I extend our heartfelt congratulations and gratitude to Anna, Danielle and Janey. Thank you for your remarkable service to this Parliament.

Applause.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

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

Ladies and gentlemen, I will now introduce our pages: from Waterloo, Jiyana Agarwal; from Milton, Jasper Aiello; from Whitby, Ibrahim Baig; from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Else Engelhardt; from Kitchener-Conestoga, Jungwoon Han; from Mississauga East-Cooksville, Amanda Kapo; from Flamborough-Glanbrook—yes—Messk-Aljannah Khamis; from Willowdale, Chen Lin; from Oshawa, Ronald Lucero; from York South-Weston, Quentin Luong-Scott; from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Marigold Mason; from Oakville, Ava McAllister; from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Annie McNaughton; from Don Valley West, Liam Merber; from Etobicoke Centre, Niyanta Pokhrel; from Nipissing, Robert Robinson; from Burlington, Avish Sareen; from Scarborough-Guildwood, Sara Shah; from Hastings-Lennox and Addington, Lily Smith; from Brantford-Brant, John Thayil; from Scarborough Southwest, Devlin Tomlin; from Newmarket-Aurora, Eleanor Yiyu Wang; and from Richmond Hill, Vivian Xu. And I missed one: from Brampton South, Achilles Nayyar. My apologies.

Our new pages.

Applause.

1040

QUESTION PERIOD

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is to the Premier. Yesterday, Premier, we gave you an opportunity to reverse course. It is clear that you have not taken the time to listen to students and their families who are impacted by this government's cuts to OSAP.

I wanted to share something with the Premier today that I heard from a nursing student at Mohawk College recently and that she asked me to share. She says, "As a mother of three and a nursing student, OSAP is not just financial aid to me. It is the reason I am able to stay in school.... Choosing to go back to school was not an easy decision. It meant reducing my income, balancing clinical placements, assignments, exams and raising young children, including a baby who still needs daycare."

My question to the Premier is, what does the Premier have to say to students like this who are having to stop their education because of his cuts?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: The Premier and I have been very clear: The OSAP framework was unsustainable. In fact, the Auditor General stated it was unsustainable in 2017 as well, but a desperate Liberal government decided to move forward with 85% grants because they were desperate.

We understand that we need the financial aid not just for these students but for the next generation of students. When it comes to health human resources we do have our Ontario Learn and Stay Grant, in which we've invested over \$173 million, helping 13,000 students in health human resource programming.

We will continue to be there for our students.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Eight years in—eight years in—and they still can't stop blaming everybody else for their problems. This government may not be phased by the stories like the one I've just shared, but I am. I look up at the students in this gallery today. They feel the future slipping through their fingers. That is what they are telling us. They are just asking for a chance—a fair chance—to finish what they started, or start at all.

So I ask the Premier again: Will he listen to the students and the families across this province and stop his cuts to OSAP grants?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: The Leader of the Opposition is worried about her leadership slipping through her fingers. She's had her deputy leader go over to the Liberal side because that party is chaos.

We'll continue to be there. We just invested \$6.4 billion into the sector, the largest single investment into post-secondary education not only in Ontario history but Canadian history. We will continue to be there for the sector, as we always have been.

But I will remind the member: the Rae days. When she was a staffer in the Bob Rae government, tuition went up three times the rate of inflation at the hands of that government. And it went up three times the rate of inflation when the Liberals were in power as well.

So thank God we've been in power for the last eight years, because tuition would be over \$14,000 if you were in power.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, I wish I could say this was surprising, but none of it is.

I'll tell you the other thing I keep hearing from students is they think that the reason that maybe this Premier is making these cuts that are going to predominantly impact low- and middle-income students is because he can't empathize with them. He can't empathize with the experiences of regular young people and families in this province. As many young people have pointed out to me, he was raised with a silver spoon in his mouth, right? He's

been strolling down easy street his whole life. He never had to worry about affording tuition, like so many young people and so many families have to do today.

But I'm going to tell you this: Students in Ontario are not going to be just handed some sort of cushy executive job in their dad's company when they graduate. So doesn't the Premier get that not everyone in Ontario has it as easy as he did?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I am proud to be the first Minister of Colleges and Universities that is a college grad—and that was on purpose. We came from a one-income family. I had no silver spoon in my mouth. I've been called a burger flipper many, many times. I stayed because I wanted to open a business and going to university would have put debt on my career. I had to ensure I stayed local. I made the choice to stay local because I wanted to open a small business. I made the difficult decision to ensure I stayed local so that I afforded college to be able to open a small business.

I will remind you, the ratios from grants to loan are exactly in line with BC and Manitoba, your NDP friends.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Marit Stiles: Let's talk about another broken promise, shall we? End hallway health care—that was a promise made by this Premier eight long years ago. End the hallway health care that had run rampant after 15 years of a failed Liberal government. But here we are, eight years later, and it is worse than ever.

Speaker, I want to raise a few issues here with the Premier today, because this is apparently now the norm across this province. At Sudbury's Health Sciences North, 120 patients were treated in hallways daily this year. Just the other day, I was in Hamilton and I was sitting down with a steelworker who's getting cancer treatment. He's 66 years old. He spent nine hours in the hallway in the emergency room, and then he was told, "You know what? You're going to have to spend the night lying in the hallway at the hospital." Can you imagine?

Will the Premier explain why he has abandoned his promise to end hallway health care and abandoned so many patients across this province?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Since Premier Ford came into office, we have, in fact, expanded and increased funding to our hospital partners by over 50%. Are we working with them to make sure that they spend that money wisely? Absolutely. We are doing that work, ongoing.

But I will point to a quote that I received in December from Sudbury Health Sciences North: "We'd like to extend our appreciation for the base and one-time funding allocation provided to Health Sciences North. This funding allocation provides and enables the organization to continue to provide important health services to the people of northern Ontario." That's your Sudbury hospital.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Let me be very clear with this minister: We have lost more nurses in this province than they have hired. It is a net loss. I don't know what the Minister of Health doesn't understand about that. She can quote back all the CEOs she wants to at us.

Not only has this Premier failed to clean up the Liberal hallway mess, not only has this become the norm across this entire province, but this Premier has also decided that hallway health care isn't even worth tracking anymore.

Let me explain that. I would say that, I guess, when you're failing as miserably as this government is, you don't want to publish your test scores anymore. This is the pattern with this government. You got a Premier who's hiding his cellphone records. You've got a Premier who has now decided that the public shouldn't know the extent of the hallway health care crisis. Can the Premier come clean about why he is hiding hallway health care data from the people of Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Some 100,000 new nurses that have registered in the province of Ontario; 30,000 nursing students who are training in the province of Ontario; a Learn and Stay program that did not exist under previous governments, where nursing students get their tuition and their books covered in exchange for working in communities that need those primary care nurses, those world-class clinicians.

I look at where we have come, and I do not want to go back to what we were faced with when we had physicians who didn't want to work in the province of Ontario.

1050

We had governments that were simply not training health care professionals. Now, we have a program in place where we are seeing more people connected to primary care providers and ensuring that that support means it funnels through to emergency departments, to ICUs, to our home care workers and our long-term—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Final supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, it's very disappointing not to have the Premier be able to stand up and answer these questions—maybe a little bit of performance anxiety this morning.

I will say, what we are seeing here today is a net loss—a net loss. Let me give you an example, Minister of Health: In the past year, the government has fired 700 nurses. We are losing nurses faster than we can hire them. In places like Manitoba and Nova Scotia, they are guaranteeing that new graduates will have jobs, but not here—not here in the province of Ontario. Here in the province of Ontario, hallway health care is now the status quo; it is the norm under this government.

Can this Premier stand here in his place and tell me—are you not embarrassed to become the very thing that you campaigned against?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, you know, I've always found in debates that when you go personal, it's because you're not winning the debate.

I look at how we have transformed our health care system, how we are training more people as lab techni-

cians, in nursing, as nurse practitioners. We are making the investments in our education system. We are making the investments to ensure that our hospitals have the support they need—again, an over 50% increase in their baseline budgets. That means that they can focus on patient care.

And are we asking them to also ensure that the money that we are flowing is being spent on front-line patient-focused care? Absolutely we are. It is partly why we need to do this work. If we're going to make those investments of over 50%, we're also going to ensure that money—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. John Fraser: After eight years of this Premier and his out-of-gas Conservative government, the things that people count on, they're just not there. Ontarians aren't asking for much. They just want their kids' schools to be safe places to learn and to work; they're not. They want their sons or daughters to graduate from college, university or get a trade without crushing debt. Well, the Premier's piling that debt on now and making life harder.

So my question for the Premier is—life is hard already, Premier. Why are you making life harder for Ontario families?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: You used the word “gas.” I really like that because who was it that cut the gas tax? Was it those folks?

Interjections: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Did they vote for that?

Interjections: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Did we put it forward?

Interjections: Yes.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: And did we vote for it?

Interjections: Yes.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: And did we pass it?

Interjections: Yes.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: On behalf of all Ontarians, lower gas taxes.

Madam Speaker, we worked early in July 2022 to cut the gas tax. This government had the vision to put more money back in the pockets of people—\$12 billion more back in the pockets of the people of Ontario.

Because God forbid that the NDP or the Liberals ever had \$12 billion to spend, we all know how they'd spend it. They'd keep it all in their pockets instead of the people's pockets and instead of the pockets of businesses. That's why this government is making life more affordable for the people of Ontario and the businesses of Ontario—putting money back in their pockets.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I know the half-trillion dollar man loves debt, but he shouldn't be foisting it onto Ontario families.

While the Premier is focused on things like floating convention centres, luxury spas, airports—I'm trying to

figure out what's next. Could we have a Ferris wheel here at Queen's Park and free candy for the kids? That's not what Ontarians are looking for. So if you're out of a job in Windsor or Kingston or Thunder Bay or Sault Ste. Marie, you don't care about Billy Bishop; you want a job.

The Premier's record? Folks, the Premier's record—you should all hear this. Listen: 1,000 fewer manufacturing jobs than there were in 2018.

So my question for the Premier is, Speaker: Life is hard already. Why is the Premier making it harder for Ontario families?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Well, my honourable colleague here did mention debt, so I'll come to that. I hear the word "debt" or "deficit," and just to remind everyone in the House: We have the lowest deficit and debt relative to our economy in over 15 years.

Because under their leadership, do you know what happened? They raised taxes, they built nothing, and credit rating agencies, what did they do? They downgraded the government under the leadership of the Liberals. And what are we doing? We're using debt to build infrastructure—\$230 billion of infrastructure. And do you know what that does? That builds hospitals. That builds roads. That builds schools, long-term care. That builds transit. All for not just this generation but future generations—putting the people of Ontario to work, not just for today but for tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Final supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: If you wonder why we're half a trillion dollars in debt, just read that answer.

After eight long years, this government and this Premier are out of gas, out of ideas, tired and out of touch. Two million people still don't have a family doctor. They don't want a luxury spa; they want a doctor.

We've had record ER closures in this province, and this morning the northern hospital association said to us, "We're on the brink. We can't survive on a shoestring budget." And while the Premier is focused on his fantasies, our health care system is drowning.

So I'm going to ask again, and maybe the Premier can answer: Life is hard already. Why are you making it harder for Ontarians?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, \$91 billion—\$91 billion. When we took over, it was in the low \$60 billions. This Minister of Health, this Premier, this government, every one of us invested in health care from \$60 billion to \$90 billion, making sure that we invest right across, in acute care, in home care, in long-term care, in mental health and addiction care.

And do you know what happened with that investment? The CIHI data comes out and tells us we are leading the country in attachments to family doctors—leading the country. But does the Minister of Health stop there? She says, "No, that's not good enough. We need to attach every single Ontarian to a family doctor," and thanks to the leadership of the Minister of Health, along with Dr. Jane Philpott, we are on the path to making sure that everybody—everybody in Ontario—has access to a family doctor. That's what government does.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Again, after eight long years, this Premier and his Conservative government are so out of touch, they can't see that there's an affordability crisis. And if you needed any confirmation on that, you just have to look to what the Premier and his party did to young people and their families when they broke OSAP, driving young people and their families further into debt. And don't ask me—just take it from Leigh: "I am a single parent on low income sending my daughter to university to become a mechanical engineer so she will not have to struggle like me. And now after her first year she may not be able to afford to go for her second year."

So, Speaker, why is the Premier and his party making life harder for young people and their families, and will they fix OSAP ASAP?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: The interim leader needs to stop fearmongering and recognize that we have a higher grant ratio than under 15 years of Liberal government.

That member actually ignored the Auditor General in 2017 when they were desperate, and they decided to hopefully hang on to government and increase it to 85%. The Auditor General made it very clear it was unsustainable, Speaker.

Since the federal government has changed our career colleges and the uptake of OSAP, we saw a \$2.3 billion pressure this August, if we did not act. We are acting, Speaker, to ensure that OSAP is sustainable, not just for these students but for the next generation's students behind them as well.

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

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Mr. John Fraser: I can understand where the government's coming from because you have a Premier who's put no value on education ever. If this was such a great announcement they made, why was the Premier nowhere to be seen?

You just don't understand, Premier, that the most valuable thing in the global economy is highly trained, highly skilled, healthy people. If you did, you wouldn't let our hope for the future wither.

Don't take it from me—ask Sayed: "I'm waiting to start college this September, and I come from a low-income household. I have been trying to find a job, but it's very hard right now"—right, Premier—"OSAP is my only real hope to afford my education and work toward my dreams. Grants make a huge difference for students like me."

Speaker, why are the Premier and his party making life so much harder for young people and their families?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I would just remind the member of our \$6.4-billion investment into the sector, which is going to add another 70,000 newly funded seats, and that's on top of the 20,000-funded seats in budget 2025—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Scarborough–Guildwood will come to order.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: The output in funding for our sector has gone from \$5 billion last year to \$7 billion this fall—that’s a 30% increase. We’re bringing more seats online for our youth to ensure that there is a seat for them at colleges, universities and Indigenous institutes, if that’s where they choose to go.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Final supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Well, I’m not sure what \$6.2 billion in 2005 would be in 2026 dollars, but I know it is more historic than the historic thing you’re talking about.

But it’s not about historic; it is actually about what is happening to families. What is happening to families is the Premier is piling on debt, like the finance minister is, to Ontario families every single day. The thing that’s going to get us out of this thing is making sure that we have people who can compete in the new economies, in the global economy.

Just don’t take it from me—here is a message from Abigail: “The job market is scarce and everything from school to food is getting more expensive on the daily. Money has always been a stressor, and these cuts are making me unsure of how I can pay for my future, something I always have been passionate about.”

Back to the Premier—one answer; that’s all I’m asking for today: Why are you making life so much harder for young people and their families in Ontario?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: If the interim leader wants to talk about historic, let’s talk about historic increases in tuition under your watch: 83% increase in tuition—that is three times the rate of inflation. Are you proud of that?

Interjections.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: He’s ignoring me. But regardless, we’re going to continue to be there.

I hope that member is clarifying to the students that our universities have \$1.8 billion every year of grants that they give out, as well as our enhanced Student Access Guarantee. But I know he’s not doing that. He’s fearmongering them, Speaker.

The money will still be there for OSAP. If they received OSAP last year, they’re going to receive OSAP this fall, so please clarify to the students that the supports will continue to be available for them.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: The FIFA World Cup is right around the corner, and it should be illegal to scoop up and resell tickets for anything above face value. New Democrats have been saying this for years, while this government has defended greedy resellers and the big corporations that rip off fans.

But this weekend, the Premier has taken a miraculous 180 on this issue and now agrees with the NDP. Lucky for him, we’ve already introduced a bill to make it happen. So

now that we are all in agreement, will this government pass into law today our fans first act to make it illegal to resell tickets for anything above face value?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: It’s great to see that the NDP is changing their stripes here, because if I’m not mistaken, over the past eight years, they’ve voted against every single affordability measure we’ve brought to this Legislature, whether it was the gas tax cut, the one-pass fare—whatever. We could go on and on.

Bottom line, our Premier has made it very clear: He cares about affordability. He cares about the people being able to go to cultural and sporting events. I agree with him and that’s why we’ll be putting forward legislation this week that will put fans first, that will allow tickets to be resold in the province of Ontario only at face value, unlike the previous Liberal proposal, which had a 50% mark-up.

We are going to have enhanced transparency, face value for consumers. We’re on the side of consumers. We’re going to keep fighting for the people.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: The Premier had eight years to put fans first and did nothing. Taylor Swift fans were locked out by bots snatching up tickets minutes after they went on sale. When the Blue Jays fans were priced out of their own stadium, the Premier shrugged his shoulders and told Ontarians to stay in their man caves. The World Cup is coming to Ontario and it’s already too late for FIFA fans who can’t afford the predatory resale prices.

Over the last two years, the Ontario NDP has put in two motions calling on this Premier to ban the sale of ticket resells above the original face value and he did nothing. Speaker, why would anybody believe him now?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order. I’m going to ask the members to come to order. The chatter across the aisle has to stop.

I recognize the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Let’s be clear: Ontarians deserve a ticketing system that works for fans, not just price gougers. That’s why we’re taking real action for the people—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: That’s why we’ve taken real action, Speaker. Not only that, we’ve banned ticket bots with penalties of up to \$50,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for companies. We require all-in pricing in Canadian dollars and no hidden fees. We mandate resale agreements, meaning if a ticket isn’t valid, the consumer will get their money back. Then we made it illegal to list tickets that you don’t actually have.

Our enforcement on this, Speaker, will only be increasing going forward. We’re focused on helping the consum-

ers of Ontario, helping the people of Ontario afford the tickets to go to the concerts, to the shows they want, whether it's the Maple Leafs or Taylor Swift or FIFA that's coming up, and we're looking forward to that. In Ontario, people will be able to go to these because we care, first and foremost, for the people of Ontario and affordability.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Adil Shamji: Earlier this month, the Premier proposed to change the very freedom-of-information laws that hold our government accountable. It was the most transparent attempt to hide from transparency—an attempt he felt necessary because after eight long years, all he can do is hide from his broken promises.

Protect Ontario from tariffs? He made them worse. Protect Ontario from job losses? He made those worse. Protect Ontario from criminals? He got shaken down by crooks after home care patients had their health information stolen for ransom, and that man let the criminals collect. Now he's going to miss an April 1 deadline imposed by the federal government to stop illegal user fees and extra charges in health care.

Will the Premier reimburse every single bill that Ontario patients receive from their nurse practitioner after April 1 or will he continue to break the law?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. You know, there is—

Interjections.

Interjection: Yes, you can't say that.

Mr. Adil Shamji: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Thank you.
The Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As I've said previously, when you're not winning an argument, you go low.

Back to nurse practitioners: There is no doubt that Ontario has been a leader in engaging and embracing nurse practitioners in our world-class health care system. We were, of course, one of the first jurisdictions that actually ensured that nurse practitioners were not only being trained in the province of Ontario but were being embedded in our primary care teams with our family physicians, with nurses, with mental health care workers, with dietitians.

We are actually training more nurse practitioners in the province of Ontario now because we see the value and that the work that they do is so important in our home care, in our long-term care and in our hospitals. We'll continue to make those investments because we know that nurse practitioners who are trained in the province of Ontario and working in the province of Ontario do exceptional work.

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

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Mr. Adil Shamji: Madam Speaker, of course she didn't answer the question, so back to the Premier.

The Premier is always writing a letter to blame someone for something, but how many letters has the man actually read in the last eight years? Has he read the letter from the federal government that he received about one year ago, in which the feds mandated a deadline to fully fund all medically necessary services provided by NPs and to stop private billing? The deadline for that mandate: April 1, 2026. That's next week, Premier.

Eighteen months ago, I wrote legislation to fully embrace nurse practitioners in our public system, and every single one of these Conservative MPPs voted no. They voted to make the lives of their constituents more expensive. They voted to leave tens of thousands of them without access to primary care.

Will the Premier comply fully with the Canada Health Act, and will he completely fund all medically necessary care provided by nurse practitioners?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: A \$3.4-billion investment in inter-professional primary care teams means that nurse practitioners, doctors, physicians, RNs, dietitians, mental health workers are actually working together. The member opposite is suggesting that we want all these stand-alone individuals to be able to bill when we know patients want and practitioners want the ability to work together in an interprofessional team.

The \$3.4-billion investment means we are doing that—240—where we have had multiple new expansions in Sudbury, in Ottawa. I can name every community in the province of Ontario that has a new or expanded community health centre, interprofessional primary care team, family health team. That's making the difference, where those individuals are working together with their clinical partners to serve who? The patients of the province of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Speaker, people in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora are relying on our government to maintain a strong economy, to create good-paying jobs and to support public services. But with tariffs and trade uncertainty affecting the lives of people here at home, it is clear that our government must continue to do more to protect Ontario businesses and families.

The minister has outlined many times that our government has a plan to invest, to build, to grow and to prosper.

Through you, Speaker, can the minister please tell the House what measures our government is taking to protect Ontario now and into the future?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: This one's a lot tougher than the one I got before. My thanks to the great member for that question.

Madam Speaker, trade pressures, supply chain disruptions and shifting markets are sending unpredictable shocks through economies everywhere, but our govern-

ment has stood up and faced those challenges head-on. We put \$12 billion back into the pockets of Ontario families, created one million more jobs and led our nation to unlock interprovincial free trade. We have done all of this without sacrificing our historic investments in public services, including health care, education, social services, all the while cutting taxes.

Our plan is working, and we will continue to deliver on our mandate to protect Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Newmarket–Aurora.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the minister for his answer. At a time when workers, businesses and families are facing real economic uncertainty, people in my community are encouraged to see our government taking action to support them and to protect their livelihoods.

However, Speaker, it is important that we maintain our course and not let down our guard. We must keep building critical infrastructure, putting more money back in people's pockets and supporting public services while keeping taxes down.

Through you, Speaker, can the minister please tell the House how our government will continue to protect Ontario's economy and ensure lasting prosperity for the residents of Newmarket–Aurora and across this great province?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you again to the member from Newmarket–Aurora for that terrific question.

We have seen other jurisdictions, other provinces, raise taxes and cut public services. We here in Ontario have chosen another path, a path to continue to deliver on our economic plan for growth and for prosperity. Our government is choosing to act by boosting competitiveness to empower businesses, lowering costs to support families and making historic investments to strengthen our services.

This Thursday, March 26, I will release our 2026 provincial budget, and with it I will reveal the next steps in our government's plan to deliver growth and prosperity for Ontario today and for future generations.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. On Thursday, we will be grading the government's budget on whether it fixes the issues that actually matter: health care, education, housing, affordability. After eight years of this government, a lot of things need fixing. We have a doctor shortage. We need more teachers in classrooms. The cost of rent and groceries keeps going up and up and up.

My question is this: Is the budget going to trot out the same game of cuts and favours to friends, or are you actually going to start fixing the problems that you are responsible for creating in the first place?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, let me understand the question from the member opposite. Should we continue making historic investments in health care? What do you think folks?

Interjections: Yes.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Historic investments in making sure our students in our schools and more money gets to teachers like the teacher card, \$750 of supplies. Should we do more of that?

Interjections: Yes.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Should we continue to improve the lives of our most vulnerable by investing in social services? What do you think?

Interjections: Yes.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: And should we continue to invest in the economy so that people have a good-paying job here in this province, like investing \$210 billion in infrastructure? What do you think? Is the answer yes or no?

Interjections: Yes.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: The answer is yes. And what do they say? The answer is no.

So Madam Speaker, stay tuned. Only two more sleeps and we will reveal our plan to build Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: They weren't very enthusiastic yeses there, Minister.

My question is back to the Premier. I'll tell you who's really concerned about the budget: young people, especially the young people who are going to be out on the lawn today, because they know this government is not working for them. They face high rent. They face rising tuition. They face high grocery prices and rising unemployment. They do not want to be saddled with more student debt. They want good jobs and they want a future here.

So on budget day, my question is simple: When it comes to helping young people get ahead, do you honestly think your budget is going to pass the test?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I don't know. I hope my budget passes. I think we've got a good shot.

Let's think about this: youth unemployment. What we're working on is making sure that everyone has an opportunity in this great country, just like my parents who came here with no job, no money in their pockets. And what did Ontario and Canada give them? An opportunity.

Let's think about the Minister of Education, who is making sure that our teachers are supported, making sure our students, with the curriculum—whether it's skilled trades, health care work, whether it's education—are having the best opportunity for once they graduate.

Post-secondary education—our great Minister of Colleges and Universities, who has put in another \$6.4 billion to make sure that those students have the opportunity to pursue their dreams.

And then when the great economy—when you have a million new jobs created, but you're out of a job, guess what? The Minister of Labour steps up with skills and

development training, and reskilling and retraining so that you can continue to have a good-paying job.

And guess what? Every minister and every government member is investing in nuclear, in critical minerals, in infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, we've got a plan and that plan is working.

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STUDENT ASSISTANCE

MPP Tyler Watt: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Last week, at an OSAP demonstration, I met this awesome high school student named Noah. Noah is the oldest of four and helps care for his grandmother at home with his single mom. Noah has a dream of being a lawyer, but because of this government's cruel changes to OSAP, he's worried that he'll graduate buried in debt. This out-of-touch Conservative government says that there's no money for students like Noah, that it's unsustainable, but somehow, we have enough money for a new convention centre in downtown Toronto or the Premier's fantasy tunnel under the 401.

After eight long years, why is this tired government making life harder and more unaffordable for young people like Noah?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'm not sure what that member's talking about, about no money—\$6.4 billion is a pretty significant amount of money. Part of that is \$3.3 billion for those high-cost, high-priority programs that our province desperately needs; \$1.7 billion for 70,000 newly funded seats, and that's on top of the \$750 million for 20,000 new STEM seats last year; and \$284 million for small, northern, rural and French institutions—I will remind that member that his party, the Liberal government, called it a no man's land in the north, but we are investing in our northern institutions—as well as \$57 million for Indigenous institutes.

Speaker, \$7 billion is going into operating finding this September. That's an increase of 30% since last year.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I'll remind the leader of the third party to come to order.

Back to the member for Nepean.

MPP Tyler Watt: This minister needs to update his references. He's accusing us of things that were said in the 1990s, honestly.

One of the reasons why I'm here today is because of what this government did to OSAP in 2019. When I was a student nurse, I was one of the students that lost a bunch of OSAP because of your hundreds of millions of dollars of cuts to the program. You tout all these new seats and schools, but you're completely ignoring the fact that it's unaffordable.

I'm asking you again, do you think all of the students outside right now are here to thank you? No, they're here

protesting the unaffordability crisis that you've created for them, and they're fighting for their future.

Speaker, through you to the Premier: Will this out-of-touch government scrap their changes to OSAP and fix OSAP ASAP?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I will remind that member, the only member that's left from 2017 is the interim leader. They ignored the Auditor General—you ignored the Auditor General. Everyone was decimated because the Auditor General understood that it was unsustainable. Speaker, they broke OSAP. We're bringing sustainability back to OSAP.

He knows it. He's not even listening to my answer because they know the reason we have unaffordability is because of the 83% increase in tuition when they were in power. There's not a tax that the Liberals don't like, and tuition is a tax to them.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. While the Premier talks about spending billions on a tunnel and an island and an airport, people are telling me they are tired—tired of working so hard to make ends meet while the wealthy and well-connected get richer. Now the Premier is piling more debt onto students and their families by cutting OSAP. That's why thousands are on the front lawn today protesting. They understand that these cuts will hurt low- and middle-income families and students the most. Cuts like this are why the rich are getting richer and everyone else is out of luck.

Is an island airport more important than our children's future? Will the Premier reverse his cuts to OSAP?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Madam Speaker, that's the reason they should never ever be elected again in the history of Ontario. I'll tell you why: The island airport is going to be 2,500 jobs in construction and tens of thousands of jobs in tourism. They don't want it. They'd rather have a little cow pasture there. They want to close down the airport—just close it down—the crown jewel.

Then let's talk about the convention centre. They're all right being in last place in North America. They're all right being in last place in every category there is. We're going to build a world-class convention centre. We are not going to take the back seat to little cities like Baltimore that are eating our lunch because we don't have a proper convention centre. We're going to build a two million square-foot world-class convention centre.

Let's talk about the 401 that goes right up towards your town, and there's congestion that's costing us \$57 billion of lost economic growth because we're absolutely—

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, that answer shows how the Premier is out of touch with people all across this province. I want to remind the Premier that the province of Ontario is bigger than the city of Toronto.

Families across this province, especially in rural communities, are struggling to get by, pay for housing, pay

for groceries, and the Premier is spending billions in Toronto. Meanwhile, students are struggling to pay rent; they're struggling to pay for groceries; they're struggling to pay tuition—all going up because of this government's policies.

I'm calling on the Premier today, Speaker, to get back in touch with the real affordability crisis that's happening, actually stand up today and look students in the face and tell them he'll reverse his cuts to OSAP because they deserve an affordable future.

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you to the leader of the Green party. I find it pretty rich, Madam Speaker, that up in his area, in Guelph, Linamar is investing a billion dollars. Do you know why Linda is investing a billion dollars? Because she's told me we've created the environment and the conditions; we have the brightest people; we're graduating 80,000 STEM graduates, going up to 100,000 STEM graduates. That's what we're focused on.

And congratulations: Because of us, Guelph has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the entire province—not because of you—because of the environment we have created. And more and more companies are going to his riding; more and more companies are coming from around the world to invest because we've cut \$12 billion off the backs of the people and off the backs of businesses.

One other point, Madam Speaker—it looks like you're getting up. One other point: Someone said about crime—my member over there. Let's talk about crime. Your federal cousins are—

Interjections.

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

NUCLEAR POWER FACILITIES

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the Minister of Energy and Mines. Ontario is delivering real results when it comes to clean, reliable energy. With the completion of the Darlington refurbishment, our province has shown that we can deliver one of the largest nuclear projects in the world on time and under budget.

Speaker, we know that at a time when Ontario families and businesses are looking for certainty, affordability and reliability, that kind of performance, under the leadership of this Premier, our government is setting the standard for how major energy projects should be delivered.

Speaker, can the minister explain what this milestone means for Ontario's energy system and our economy?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Whitby for his strong support, like the Minister of Education, for Ontario's nuclear sector.

I also want to announce to the Legislature today that after a large-scale refurbishment, the largest in the world, OPG has returned the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station ahead of schedule and \$150 million below budget. That is a real material win for the people of Ontario and for Canada's clean energy future.

Our Premier has a vision to build made-in-Canada energy. Energy sovereignty starts here at home. Some

90% of that refurbishment—93% to be specific—was invested in this country. The Liberals would have closed the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station as a demonstration of a different approach of turning away from made-in-Canada solutions.

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We're doubling down on Canada. We're firing up the supply chain. We're supporting workers and affordable power for another 40 years.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Minister, for the important update. Families and businesses in Whitby are encouraged to see our government taking action and delivering major infrastructure projects that support reliable, affordable energy in their community.

Ontario's success at Darlington is drawing attention from across the world. Countries that once turned away from nuclear power are now reversing course as they face rising demand, higher prices and growing concerns about energy security. At the same time, electricity demand here in Ontario is expected to grow significantly in the years ahead.

Speaker, can the minister explain how Ontario is building on this success to lead globally, while meeting growing demand at home?

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: After years of shortsighted decisions that ignored energy security and affordability, jurisdictions around the world are reversing course. Ontario is taking a different approach.

We are committed to being a global leader in nuclear technology. That includes the G7's first small modular reactor at Darlington, a nation-building project that will power 1.2 million homes, create 18,000 jobs and add over \$38 billion to our economy. Our government is supporting good-paying jobs and building the nuclear infrastructure needed to make this province an energy superpower.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Students at Fanshawe College in my riding are already facing the reality of graduating into a worsening job market. With unemployment rates in London now 8.9%, what does this government do to help students? They remove the six-month interest grace period and cut OSAP grants, forcing students to take on more debt. This is the future this government is setting up for them: borrow more, rack up interest sooner, and good luck finding a job.

How can this Premier stand by and justify making things harder for students?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I just want to clarify: There still is a six-month payment-free grace period after graduation. These are not your standard bank loans; OSAP is prime plus 1% once they graduate into their future careers.

We need to understand that the sector has changed significantly since the federal government has made significant changes. The Auditor General came out yesterday. We trusted the federal government too much with the international students, and now we have the chaos we're living through right now, Speaker.

I think you should read the Auditor General's report yesterday, from the federal government. It really clearly articulates they've created a mess with the international students. That's why we've invested a historic amount of \$6.4 billion for the sector to ensure stability. The federal government created instability; we're creating stability for the sector so that the students at Fanshawe will have a job and a career after they graduate from their college.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: When the government announced their OSAP grant cuts up to 60% in February, hundreds of London high school students rallied against these cuts. They told me that they already had made plans and applied for college and university programs, and paid the \$150 application fee based on the previous system. Now, after this government's reckless OSAP cuts, students are reconsidering their university and college offers, because they just can't risk thousands of dollars of more debt in an uncertain job market.

Premier, why are you so callously choosing to cut OSAP and pull the rug out from under grade 12 students?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: The opposition needs to stop fear-mongering with cuts. The only thing I've cut recently is my hair, to get back into this House.

Speaker, OSAP will continue to be there for the students because we're ensuring sustainability for the sector. The Liberals decimated OSAP. They did not listen to the Auditor General when the Auditor General said these grant-to-loan ratios are out of line and unsustainable.

I will remind that member that the NDP in both BC and Manitoba are well in line with our grant-to-loan ratio, as well as the federal government.

Please ensure that the students know that there are a lot more supports available than just from the government. As I mentioned earlier, our universities give out \$1.8 billion of grants and bursaries every single year, and that's on top of our enhanced Student Access Guarantee.

It's interesting that they ask the questions about OSAP, but nobody will listen to the answers I'm giving them. And that's the problem. They're giving half the information to the students and sending them down the wrong path.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: This government prides itself on their efforts to make Ontario great again, yet it wants to make it harder for students to seek higher education. The Premier has chosen to prioritize luxury spas, booze in corner stores and strip clubs instead of education.

Students need to go to school to learn the skills and trades that will help all Ontarians, and OSAP is a lifeline

to many. The Ontario federation of students says that the government-proposed changes to OSAP downloading education debt will be a “devastating blow” to students.

Why is the Premier making it harder for young people in Ontario to build a better future?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'll remind that member that before we came into power in 2018, tuition went up 12% over two years under the Liberal government. We are the government that cares about affordability for our students. We cut and froze tuition in 2018, which is going to continue to save \$1,800 per university student and \$450 per college student, and those savings will continue to be felt by the next generation of students. During that time that we froze tuition, average tuition went up 18% to 41% across Canada, and we froze it during that period.

The sector has changed significantly. We've put a modest 2% increase on tuition, which amounts to about 18 cents a day for a college student and 47 cents a day for a university student.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Kanata–Carleton.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Ontario students are being asked to take on significantly more debt under these new OSAP rules, with grants being reduced and loans making up a much larger share of the aid. For many low- and middle-income students, grants were the difference between accessing post-secondary education or not attending at all.

Across decades of data from organizations like the World Bank and the OECD, it has been proven time and time again that societies with higher levels of education tend to be richer, healthier, safer and more stable. Why does the Premier not want that for the people of Ontario, and why does he insist on making life harder for students and their families?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: It's very ironic coming from that member when under the Liberal government—we had the highest tuition in Canada when we came into power because of their actions, because of the 83% increase in tuition, which was three times the rate of inflation. They do not care about affordability—

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, my gosh.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: You do not. You do not, because if you did care about affordability—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Through the Speaker.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: —if you did care about the students, understanding the changes to OSAP, you would clarify to them that 25% is much more generous than the 15 years under the Liberal government. It was only 15% grants, and the interim leader knows that. He's actually listening this time, Speaker, which is really great to see.

We've saved \$1,800 per university student and \$450 per college student. It's our government that cares about affordability.

As I said earlier, history speaks for itself. If the Liberals were in power right now, our tuition would be over

\$14,000 a year because you tripled tuition at the rate of inflation.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Anthony Leardi: My question is for the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response. We know that when communities across Ontario face emergencies such as flooding, extreme weather and other unexpected events, being well prepared at the local level can make all the difference in protecting people and property. Municipalities, volunteer organizations and First Nations partners have told us that having the right training, equipment and local capacity is essential to responding quickly and effectively in a crisis.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is strengthening the readiness of our local communities and organizations to better prepare for all types of emergencies?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question.

Madam Speaker, a safe, practised and prepared Ontario comes when communities and organizations have the resources they need to respond efficiently and effectively in times of crisis.

Just last week, I announced our government is investing \$5 million for the third consecutive year into the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant, to help communities across the province prepare for and respond to emergencies. This investment provides communities and organizations up to \$50,000 to enhance their emergency response capabilities through purchasing critical equipment and delivering emergency management training.

We are preparing and planning: collaborating with an extensive network of emergency management partners, First Nations partners and municipalities to ensure the safety of the people of Ontario. To date, 342 communities have received a combined \$15 million in funding through this program.

Speaker, when it comes to emergency management, our government is doing everything possible to ensure Ontario is ready for any challenge we may face.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I thank the minister for that response.

Emergency management requires sustained, province-wide investment and strong local partnerships. Communities in every region of Ontario face different risks and challenges, and they rely on our government to ensure they have the tools and the training they need before emergencies strike.

Can the minister speak further about how the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant fits within our government's broader plan to strengthen emergency management across Ontario?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I thank the member again for the opportunity to speak about our government's continuous work to improve emergency preparedness across Ontario.

Madam Speaker, the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant is part of our historic \$110-million investment to strengthen emergency preparedness in Ontario. Over the past months, I've had the opportunity to visit grant recipients in communities across the province, from Thunder Bay and Timmins in the north; to Leamington, Lakeshore and Chatham-Kent in the southwest; and on to Cornwall, Rideau Lakes, Akwesasne First Nation and Napanee in the east.

Through the grant, recipients have been able to make impactful investments in their communities by purchasing generators, water purification systems, chainsaws, drones and securing the necessary training to effectively respond during emergencies.

This is Ontario, united in purpose to protect and support one another.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Rob Flack: I'd like to introduce two great municipal champions—they were supposed to be here; I don't see them: the mayor of Burlington, Marianne Meed Ward, and the mayor of Halton Hills, Ann Lawlor, who I'll be meeting with very shortly.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

SUPPLY ACT, 2026

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2026

Ms. Mulroney moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 95, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026 / Projet de loi 95, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2026.

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): Minister, do you wish to explain the bill?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: The Supply Act is one of the key acts in the Ontario Legislature. If passed, it would give the Ontario government the legal spending authority to finance its programs and to honour its commitments for the fiscal year that closed at the end of March.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It is my honour to rise and table petitions on behalf of thousands of people around the province, and particularly in the school boards of Ottawa–Carleton, Hastings and Prince Edward, Kawartha Pine Ridge, Trillium Lakelands, York region, and Simcoe.

The petitioners all note that the government has cut more than \$6.3 billion out of our schools since 2018 and that has had wide-scale negative effects on every part of our education system, including larger class sizes, cuts to special education, a lack of mental health supports, and a growing problem with violence.

What our schools really need is increased investment to bring down those class sizes, to hire more caring adults, make sure that every child has the supports that they need.

What the government has instead been doing is taking away the voice of parents and communities and workers from our schools, by seizing control over our school boards and shutting out the voices of parents and the people who work in our education system every day.

What they are calling on the Legislative Assembly to do is to make the necessary investments so that we can lower class sizes, so that we can meet the needs of every child in Ontario.

I'd like to say thank you to the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario for collecting all of these signatures and for their commitment to our kids and our education system in Ontario.

I wholeheartedly support these petitions. I will add my name to them and send them to the table with page Avish.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

MPP Tyler Watt: I rise today to table a petition, on behalf of students across Ontario, calling on the government to fix OSAP ASAP.

I have over 3,000 physical signatures here, backed up with 16,000 signatures online. This is clear evidence that these changes are not in the best interests of students or our future workforce and Ontario's economy.

Access to post-secondary education should not depend on family income or willingness to take on overwhelming debt.

I'm proud to table this petition on their behalf. I fully endorse this petition, and I will affix my name to this and give it to Jasper to bring to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I bring a stack of petitions today, collected by ETFO in my area—southwestern Ontario, and specifically London–Fanshawe riding.

It's such an important issue. What's happening is, teachers, students and families are all on the same page when it comes to education, because this government has cut \$6.35 billion from education since they've been in

power for eight years; that's since 2018. That is such a long time to neglect a public education system. And what happens when that occurs, when people cut funding from an important source of investment? Larger class sizes; an increased violence incidence in class because the students who need additional supports are not getting those supports.

Mental health is such an issue right now. If we don't support our youth in public school and get those resources to them when they need them, those things exasperate later.

They're asking for smaller class sizes so that they can have a quality of education, so that teachers can have good relationships and good interactions with students.

So, please, we want to make sure this government understands that we need investment in our education system because we're building the future of workers. It relies on our economy—our education system is better, and our economy reaps those benefits.

Speaker, I'm going to present these petitions to the table. I agree with them, and I'll be signing them and giving them to page Avish to deliver to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm very pleased to be able to stand in my place and present a petition sent to me from across Durham region, from teachers and educators in my neck of the woods.

You might remember that I had been a teacher in Durham up until 2014, and things were getting pretty challenging under that Liberal government.

But since this government came to power in 2018, more than \$6.3 billion has been cut from public education. Class sizes are larger, violence is increasing, and students don't have the special education or mental health supports that they need.

What's needed are smaller class sizes, as outlined in this petition, and more resources for education workers.

Speaker, it is always the right time to invest in public education, but especially at this moment in time, as everyone is looking at the future. This is the time to be investing in education in the future.

So I support this petition calling on this government to reduce class sizes in our public elementary schools, and as it says—petition the Legislative Assembly to make the necessary investments in public education to lower class sizes, increase student supports, and ensure students have the schools that they need and, arguably, the futures that they deserve.

Of course, I support this. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Quentin.

SUBVENTIONS DESTINÉES À L'ÉDUCATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier Ashley Colton, qui est de Lively dans mon comté, ainsi que 640

élèves et résidents d'Algoma et 820 résidents de Rainbow District School Board, puis Algoma District School Board.

On sait qu'en ce moment, il y a eu plus de 6,3 milliards de dollars de coupures budgétaires dans l'enseignement public depuis que le gouvernement de M. Ford est au pouvoir. On a vu une augmentation de la taille des classes, une augmentation de la violence et des lacunes dans les services d'éducation spécialisée et de soutien, surtout en santé mentale, pour les élèves qui en ont besoin.

L'augmentation de la taille des classes nuit à la qualité de l'enseignement, réduit l'accès aux ressources pédagogiques et diminue considérablement l'interaction entre les enseignantes ou enseignants et leurs élèves, ce qui porte préjudice surtout aux élèves qui ont besoin de soutien supplémentaire.

La grande majorité des parents et les élèves et les enseignants ou enseignantes sont favorables à des classes moins nombreuses et souhaitent que tous les élèves bénéficient de la meilleure éducation possible. L'Ontario dispose d'un système d'enseignement public reconnu à l'échelle internationale, qui nécessite une attention particulière et des investissements afin de garantir la réussite de tous nos élèves, incluant tous les pages qui sont ici aujourd'hui.

Et ils demandent, donc, à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de s'engager à réaliser les investissements nécessaires dans l'enseignement public afin de réduire la taille des classes, de renforcer le soutien aux élèves et de garantir que chacun d'entre eux, les élèves, dispose de l'éducation et du soutien dont ils ont besoin dans une bonne école.

1510

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer, et je demande à Robbie de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm proud to be tabling a petition entitled "Reduce Class Sizes in Our Public Elementary Schools." I want to thank the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. I want to thank the thousands and thousands of parents, educators, students and all who have been signing this petition.

Come on. Everyone understands that when you have classrooms bursting at the seams, two kids per seat, that's not working. It's not working for educators. It's certainly not working for students. That's not giving them the best educational outcome.

It's unfortunate that thousands have to come together to petition this government to do the right thing, which is to shrink down the classroom sizes.

Give those students more time with their educators. Don't have them elbow to elbow in classrooms. We are shortchanging them on their education.

And this government is just putting less and less money into our education per student, when you look at today's dollars. This is not the right way forward.

I want to thank all those who signed the petition. And I want to thank the Elementary Teachers' Federation of

Ontario for doing the right thing: standing up for students, standing up for educators.

Let's get those classroom sizes down smaller.

I will of course be signing this petition and giving it to page Annie.

EDUCATION FUNDING

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, this petition is entitled "Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly: Reduce Class Sizes in Our Public Elementary Schools." There have been stacks and stacks of petitions from all across the province brought forward on this. It has to do with the fact that since 2018, since the Conservatives formed government, there has been a \$6.35-billion cut to our public education system. That means that we're getting larger classrooms; that we have classrooms where they don't have the faculty to help students who have additional needs, who require an EA. That means that students are being overwhelmed, and parents are being overwhelmed, trying to adjust to the lack of funding that's going to our schools.

We know a strong education system is fundamental to moving forward and the success of what's going to happen for future generations as we compete globally in the economy.

We have an internationally recognized public education system that is second to none, but we cannot keep expecting to keep that threshold with cuts of \$6.35 billion. It's just not acceptable.

So I support this petition, where they're calling on all of us at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit to making the necessary investments in public education to lower the class sizes, to increase student supports, ensure students have the schools they need.

Basically, our kids deserve the best. We should be giving it to them. We need the Conservative government to be on board for that.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier Réjeanne Sauvé d'Azilda dans mon comté pour ces pétitions. They're called "ServiceOntario in Gogama."

The residents of Gogama and the surrounding communities, such as Biscotasing, Mattagami First Nation, Ramsey, Shining Tree, Westree, do not have access to essential government services provided by ServiceOntario.

A ServiceOntario kiosk in the community of Gogama would provide easy access to provincial services, such as renewing your health card, your driver's licence, vehicle registration, and providing other provincial government documentation.

They would like to have a ServiceOntario kiosk in the community of Gogama that would save time and money for everybody who lives in and around the watershed. The watershed is an area in my riding where, from that point, all of the water flows north. It's called the watershed because it sheds water toward the north; south of this, it

goes south. There are many communities—First Nations and non-First Nations—that live there and that need those services.

So they are asking for the government to allow the establishment of a ServiceOntario at the JR Corner Store in the community of Gogama, to serve not only Gogama, but all of the surrounding communities.

Right now, the closest ServiceOntario is one in Sudbury, which for most people is about a 200-kilometre drive. And there's one in Timmins—if you live in Bisco or Westree, same thing; it's over a 200-kilometre drive. In the winter, on Highway 144, it's not easy to do. They would be happy to have a clinic come to their community on a regular basis and save them that travel.

I fully support this petition and everybody who has signed this petition, and I'll ask my good page Robbie to bring it to the Clerk.

TUITION

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled “Fight the Fees!” It's timely; outside the door, you can hear people saying, “Hands off our education.” It has to do with the cost of post-secondary education. These are petitions that were tabled before we went on a several-months break.

I want to share that since 1980, tuition has increased by 215%—that's under the Liberals and the Conservatives. That means that about 50% of students who graduate have a median debt of about \$17,500, which takes almost 10 years to repay. So when you factor in the changes to OSAP, further loans are going to mean even higher debt and longer to pay off.

We also recognize that in 2018-19, there was a \$1-billion cut to assistance through OSAP.

They also tabled a bill—it was supposed to be the Student Choice Initiative—which was defeated in the courts because it was unconstitutional.

What they're petitioning for is free and accessible education for all. They would like more grants, not more loans—it's the opposite of what the government is doing right now. They want to legislate the students' right to organize—which they won in court already and would win in the future as well.

Obviously, I support the petition. I will provide my signature and give it to Else for the table.

SERVICES DE LABORATOIRE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier Monique Gagné qui est de Val Therese dans mon comté pour cette pétition. Elle s'appelle « Gardons le laboratoire d'analyse médicale dans le Nord ».

Je ne sais pas si vous le saviez, monsieur le Président, mais LifeLabs, qui est le plus gros laboratoire dans tout l'Ontario, a été acheté par une compagnie américaine. Cette compagnie américaine veut fermer son laboratoire à Sudbury.

La fermeture du laboratoire à Sudbury veut dire, dans un premier temps, perte d'emplois. Le laboratoire sert de

place de placement pour—quasiment tous les étudiants de Cambrian et de Boréal vont là. Si le laboratoire n'est plus là, les étudiants devront aller ailleurs.

Il sert également, dans des moments—on n'en veut plus de pandémie, mais il y a des urgences qui se passent où tu as besoin d'un accès au laboratoire médical. Ça aide. Mais tout ça, ça s'en va.

Il y a des opportunités dans le Nord depuis plusieurs années. Les petits hôpitaux du Nord demandent à faire l'analyse des tests de laboratoire qui sont faits dans la communauté. Ça aiderait à garder les laboratoires ouverts dans les petits hôpitaux du Nord. Ils sont capables de faire les choses plus rapidement parce que tu n'as pas de transport à faire. Tu gardes le laboratoire dans ta communauté.

Donc, ils demandent à ce que le ministère de la Santé prenne des mesures immédiates pour que l'analyse de tests de laboratoire continue à se faire à Sudbury, et que les travailleurs et travailleuses ne perdent pas leur emploi, et que les petits hôpitaux du Nord puissent facturer pour les tests de laboratoire communautaire qu'ils feront pour leur communauté.

Je suis parfaitement en accord avec la pétition. Je vais rajouter mon nom et je demande à Quentin de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

KEEPING CRIMINALS BEHIND BARS ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 VISANT À MAINTENIR LES CRIMINELS DERRIÈRE LES BARREAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 24, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to enact the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund Act, 2026 and to amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 75, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 sur le Fonds Joe MacDonald de bourses d'études à l'intention des survivants d'agents de sécurité publique et modifiant diverses autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: We are debating, for those who are listening or viewing today, Bill 75, the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this legislation, which will, if passed, continue to keep Ontario safe.

I regularly check in with the brave men and women who put on their uniforms every day—our Durham Regional Police Service officers, our firefighters, as well as the 911 civilian members who help keep Durham region community safe.

1520

Thank you to those who serve, for your service. I want to be very clear that our government will always have your backs.

We'll also stand with the associations that represent the men and women who keep Ontario safe. That's the Police Association of Ontario. That's the Durham Regional Police Association. That's the Ontario Provincial Police Association, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. That's also OPSEU, which represents our amazing correctional officers.

For all those associations that support their members and families, I want to say thank you. Thank you for your work.

There's one more association that's equally as important, and that's the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. I can't thank the chiefs across our province enough, who, like the Durham Regional Police Service chief, Peter Moreira, and along with the Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario—they also play a vital and critical role.

The number one issue I hear at the door, regardless of where I go in my riding, whether it's up at Myrtle Station or it's down around the waterfront, is community safety. "How is your government going to keep my family safe?" That's what people want to know at the door—the right that allows hard-working families to wake up their children or grandchildren in the morning, see them off to school, check in on our loved ones and seniors, go to work, shop and, yes, to pray safely.

We share common values of decency and tolerance. In my Whitby riding, probably one of the most diverse in the fastest-growing region in the province, you witness people getting along, understanding that we want to live our lives, but we want to do it safely.

It's an honour to attend the Whitby fire and emergency services and police graduation ceremonies. What's clear in talking to the attendees at those ceremonies is that the interest of people who want to become police officers and firefighters has never been higher, because they have a government, our government led by Premier Ford and Solicitor General Kerzner, that does not hesitate, has never hesitated, to bring forward Bill 75, the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, because we know everything revolves around public safety—everything; economically, from a health care perspective, from an infrastructure perspective. Everything revolves back.

I'd like to turn now to some of the key aspects of the proposed legislation that showcase how hard the Ministry of the Solicitor General, the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Transportation—and the other ministries that have collaborated with the Solicitor General to come together in this justice bill.

Our government is taking action and delivering on our promise to fix the broken bail system by making bail more consequential for people accused of serious crimes. Our proposed changes would strengthen bail compliance by enhancing processes for debt collection, imposing manda-

tory cash security deposits, and improving tracking for violent and repeat offenders.

Introducing mandatory full cash security deposits for accused persons or sureties in the amount ordered by the court: Currently, if the court orders release on a promise to pay, no cash deposit is required. What does that mean? Well, it means that when a condition of bail is violated, it often leads to challenges related to the collection of forfeited bail payments, including time and resources that must be expended to collect payment. Mandatory full cash security deposits create a new deterrence to remind offenders and would-be offenders that there will be consequences for violating conditions of their release, as there should be.

Let's remember, individuals are arrested because police had grounds to do so. In many cases, we're talking about individuals who are repeat, often violent offenders.

And for the government—we will always prioritize the 99.9% of the population who are law-abiding citizens.

As is currently the case, the courts will continue to determine the appropriate type and amount of bail. We will engage with justice, legal and law enforcement stakeholders to establish a best path forward—one that will be provided in a future regulation.

Speaker, we have listened to our policing partners, like the Durham Regional Police Service, who stress that bail must mean something. Our government is delivering on a promise to fix the broken bail system and hold offenders accountable. By tightening bail requirements with tougher rules and stronger enforcement, we're building on our work to keep Ontario communities like Whitby and other parts of the region of Durham safe.

The proposed new measures in the legislation are the latest step in our ongoing work to strengthen Ontario's justice system—from investing millions of dollars to build court capacity, to increasing access to justice with modern solutions—and we will continue taking decisive action that hard-working families want to protect Ontario.

I'd like to have the Legislative Assembly hear some of the comments from key stakeholders.

For example, Mark Baxter, president of the Police Association of Ontario, had this to say about the proposed legislation:

"The Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, 2025, sends a clear message: Protecting Ontario's communities and our members comes first. For far too long, violent and repeat offenders have cycled through the justice system, putting families at risk and wreaking havoc in the communities we serve. This legislation tackles those issues and introduces tougher bail requirements—like full cash security deposits—to ensure dangerous criminals are kept off our streets."

Chief Mark Campbell, president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, had this to say:

"Everyone should be able to live and work in safe communities. As police leaders, we know that many Ontarians are concerned about the impact of crimes on their safety and well-being. Preventing crimes from occur-

ring, supporting victims of crime, and holding offenders accountable must remain top public safety priorities.”

Darren Montour, president of the Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario: “The Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario (IPCO) welcomes the province’s commitment to strengthening public safety and ensuring accountability for violent and repeat offenders. Our communities, particularly First Nations communities that face disproportionate impacts of crime and victimization, deserve meaningful action that keeps families safe. Measures that reinforce bail compliance, enhance correctional capacity, and support victims of crime are essential steps forward.”

Clearly, we’re not following what happened in the prior government led by the Liberals—and, yes, supported by the NDP—where they didn’t prioritize public safety.

Speaker, earlier this year, on August 3, 35-year-old Andrew Cristillo was killed in a tragic accident, leaving behind a wife, three children and a family forever altered by this tragedy. The driver of the other vehicle was facing previous charges for dangerous driving and stunt driving at the time of the crash.

No family should ever face the heartbreak of losing a loved one, or the trauma of a life-changing injury because of a dangerous and careless driver.

That’s why, under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is taking action to reduce dangerous and impaired driving and hold offenders accountable.

If passed, the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act will improve safety on Ontario’s roads and highways by introducing new measures to target high-risk driving behaviours, including dangerous driving, careless driving and driving while suspended. Some of the features include allowing police to immediately suspend a driver’s licence for 90 days and impound a vehicle if they have reason to believe a person is driving dangerously; an indefinite driver’s licence suspension upon conviction of dangerous driving causing death; exploring the best way to hold impaired drivers who kill a parent or a guardian responsible for financial support of the victim’s child. Had these measures been in place, Andrew Cristillo would still be alive today.

1530

Meanwhile, Ontario is continuing to make the necessary investments to increase capacity in the adult correctional institution system. These investments include adding permanent beds and retrofitting, repairing and reopening former correctional institutions to ensure no violent, repeat offender ever walks free as a result of a lack of correctional capacity.

Where are we building these new correctional capacity buildings? We’re building in Thunder Bay. We completed a modular build in Kenora. We’re building a new modular build in Niagara. We’re building a new modular build in Sudbury. And we’re expanding units that were previously closed in London and in Toronto.

We’re not going to stop. We’re going to be ambitious in eastern Ontario. We’re going to build in Kemptville. We’re going to expand in Brockville. We’re going to build an expansion in Quinte.

These expansions are absolutely essential to modernize our correctional system. Unfortunately, they were neglected by the Liberal government, which closed seven jails despite rising populations.

Speaker, to support public safety personnel and their families, the government is proposing to expand access to the Ontario Immediate Family Wellness Program, embedding in the process the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers’ Survivors Scholarship Fund in statute and implementing new measures that will protect the safety of correctional officers in adult correctional facilities.

Correctional officers are the men and women dealing with some of the toughest situations. They’re the ones managing inmates, handling high-stress environments, and stepping into situations that can turn dangerous in a split second. The Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act focuses on practical steps to make sure that people working in these tough environments feel protected, respected and, yes, backed up.

One example is the plan to expand the canine detection program across our correctional system. If you’ve ever seen these dogs in action, you know how incredible they are. They can pick up scents that we could never detect, and they can help stop dangerous drugs and other illegal items from getting into these facilities.

This government is steadfast on combatting contraband, as it threatens staff, puts inmates at risk, and creates chaos inside the facilities. I want to reiterate that contraband is dangerous for everyone—both the staff and inmates.

By expanding the canine detection program, the idea is simple: more searches, more often, in more places. If we can catch dangerous substances before they get inside, we reduce harm, make the work environment safer, and cut down on incidents that put everyone at risk.

This is just one proposal, but it speaks to a bigger message. We need to have our public safety workers’ backs. They don’t ask for much. They show up, they do the job, they deal with stress most of us will never experience, and they do it because they care about keeping the rest of us safe. So when we talk about strengthening laws or tightening security, it’s really about supporting the people who make these systems work. They deserve that support, and as a province, we’re stronger—absolutely stronger—when we stand behind them.

When we talk about public safety, especially the safety of our children, it’s a conversation about our values, our responsibilities and the future we want for our children, our grandchildren.

One of the most important tools we have in safeguarding our communities is Christopher’s Law—Ontario’s sex offender and sex trafficker registry. Many of you are already familiar with its purpose, but it’s worth reflecting on why it exists, and how far we’ve come in strengthening it. The registry was created under a previous Progressive Conservative government, led by Premier Mike Harris, and it represented a landmark moment in Canadian public safety. It was the first legislation of its kind in the country—bold, focused, and built with the needs of

families in mind. Christopher's Law was established with one central purpose: to keep our children safe. It ensures that police services have accurate, up-to-date information about convicted sex offenders and traffickers. This allows them to monitor individuals who pose risks, act quickly when concerns arise, and maintain the vigilance needed to protect the most vulnerable among us. The law was a forward-looking step then, and it continues to evolve today.

Over the past year, the government has taken important action to strengthen the registry even further.

One significant improvement was expanding Christopher's Law to include individuals convicted of child sex trafficking. These crimes are among the most disgusting imaginable, and those who commit them must be fully held accountable.

Another key enhancement has been prohibiting registered offenders from changing their names or using aliases on social media. In the digital era, it has become far too easy for individuals to conceal their identities online. This loophole puts communities at risk, so, naturally, we had to close it. With this change, offenders cannot evade monitoring or hide behind new identities, and parents can have greater confidence that our system is keeping pace with modern challenges.

The government is taking another serious step with the proposed Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, and we're exploring ways to responsibly share certain information from the registry with the public. There are many considerations—privacy, investigative integrity, and the needs of law enforcement—and these must be weighed carefully. But the central goal is clear: ensuring that individuals and families have the information they may need to keep themselves and their children safe. To that end, the government is directly engaging with police partners, legal experts and subject matter specialists. The objective is to expand access and to do so with transparency, clarity, and a continued focus on protecting victims and preventing harm.

Speaker, I'm about to reach the conclusion of my remarks. But I want to be very clear that this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, will never stop working to keep the people of this province safe. We're keeping criminals safely behind bars, where they belong. We are strengthening penalties for dangerous driving, strengthening the sex offender and trafficker registry. And make no mistake about it, we will protect the fundamental right of everyone in Ontario to live in their communities, to go to and from worship and education, and conduct their daily lives free from intimidation.

This is about the Ontario we all want to live in. This is about the public service we do every day to allow people to live in the type of Ontario they want to live in—the Ontario where we're safe to take our kids to parks; the Ontario where we're safe going to the synagogue, mosque, or any other place of worship; the Ontario we all know and love.

We will always protect Ontario. There is never going to be a doubt about that.

We all have that simple, inherent right to live safely in our own homes and communities. I'm confident—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions, please.

M^{me} France Gélinas: How can the member reconcile that you want to prioritize the safety of people, the safety of all Ontarians—that includes northern Ontario—but you closed the OPP detachment in Gogama, which means that the people of Gogama, Mattagami, Westree, Shining Tree, Biscotasing don't have access to police at all, though Highway 144 doesn't have anybody.

1540

How can you reconcile that you want safety for all, but you close the OPP detachment in Foleyet, which leaves those people hours away from the South Porcupine detachment? That makes no sense.

You also were planning on closing the detachment in Noëlville, and it's only because people started to shout really, really loud that you finally backed down.

How do you reconcile that you will stand up here and tell us that you will prioritize public safety by this government, but yet in northern Ontario, what we see is the closing of OPP detachments that leave us hours away from—when you call a police officer, it will take hours for them to come to help you.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the member for that question. It's clear that this government has taken action in many areas, including policing. I can talk particularly about the investment of millions of dollars in the Durham Regional Police Service to police the largest upper-tier government across Ontario. Added to that, investments in victim services protection as well—well over \$1 million in Victim Services of Durham Region.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: As a social worker, I've seen the explosion of people using strangulation during sex, and so now there has been a big explosion of that and violence in intimate partner relationships, but I haven't seen any move from this government to protect young people from the harmful effects of violent pornography. We're not doing anything to prevent the escalation of this type of violent sexualized act.

I appreciate that you're making an effort to try to address violence in communities, but actually, I've seen at least four mental health services in Ontario that address folks who have problematic sexualized behaviours closed down, three by the federal government and one by this government.

What are you doing to prevent the rise in violent sexualized behaviours?

Mr. Lorne Coe: We continue to stand up for victims of crime and create safer communities across the province. Our hearts always go out to victims of crime, and we always believe that each of us have an inherent right to live safely, free of indiscriminate violence in our own homes.

Last year, we invested more than \$3 million in the victim support grant towards 24 projects across the province to support victims and survivors of sexual violence,

intimate partner violence, domestic violence, human trafficking and more. To date, the Ontario government has invested \$13 million for 103 projects since 2021 to enhance services and supports available to victims and survivors.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Will Bouma: Under the current system, sureties often provide outdated or incomplete information, making it difficult for courts and for police to enforce bail conditions. This lack of accountability creates loopholes that criminals exploit, allowing repeat offenders to evade consequences. Ontarians expect a justice system that works, not one that rewards dishonesty.

We heard that Bill 75 modernizes bail debt collection and requires sureties to provide accurate, up-to-date information. Could the member please outline how these changes will close enforcement gaps and ensure that bail conditions are meaningful and enforceable across the province of Ontario?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I touched on this to some degree in my comments earlier: For years, offenders have walked free on promises to pay that were never enforced, leaving victims frustrated and, frankly, communities at risk, including my own. Bill 75 changes that by requiring full cash deposits up front. For me, this is a common-sense measure that ensures accountability and deters violations.

It's also about fairness. Those accused of serious crimes should not get a free pass—absolutely not. Our government believes in consequence for criminal behaviour and this reform reflects that principle. By making bail meaningful, we're protecting families, supporting law enforcement, and importantly, restoring integrity to Ontario's justice system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: This bill proposes stiffer penalties for Highway Traffic Act violations, but due to severe blockage in Ontario courts, hundreds and thousands of Highway Traffic Act cases were thrown out last year, including thousands of careless driving charges and thousands of stunt driving charges.

Does the member understand that stiffer penalties are meaningless to the victims where the case never goes to trial, or even to the officers that charged these careless drivers and offenders, when they see that they arrested them and they're walking away?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Part of my presentation talked about the impact of Andrew's Law and MTO's actions going forward.

Ontarians have had enough of individuals and groups, for example, blocking roads and transit during commutes, harassing people in their communities. Regardless, I'm going forward.

In the case of Andrew's Law in particular, there are actions that I've highlighted in talking about that. It's going to improve the safety of Ontario's roads and highways by introducing new measures to target high-risk driving behaviours, including dangerous driving, careless

driving and driving while suspended. I cited some of those examples: allowing police to immediately suspend a driver's licence for 90 days and impound a vehicle if they have reason to believe a person is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: You did so well this morning. I want to thank the member from Whitby for his comments and for the great, strong championship he does for public safety in his community of Whitby. He's a really strong champion. I thank you for your comments this afternoon.

Speaker, families deserve to know if dangerous individuals live in their communities. But under the current system, access to information about sex offenders is difficult to access. Bill 75 explores making parts of the Ontario sex offender and trafficking registry more publicly available to empower families and protect communities.

Can the member explain how this measure will improve transparency and help Ontarians know that their neighbourhoods are safe?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, I really appreciate that question because this particular bill, I think, speaks as one of the key parts of this legislation.

Transparency—and I know my colleagues will agree—is a powerful tool for public safety. Our government is committed to empowering communities. Part of what I spoke about today is empowerment, isn't it?

This measure responds to calls from victims and advocates for greater access to critical information. Speaker, we're going to strike the right balance between privacy and protection, but our priority is absolutely clear. We're going to give families the information they need to protect themselves—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague from Whitby. I wanted to ask about this bill because it talks about the importance of keeping criminals behind bars, but we know, at the same time, that more than 50% of charges against criminals have been plea bargained or eliminated because the courts don't have the resources to hear them on time.

As well, there's a part of the bill here, which I think is really important, about stunt driving causing death and how you'd be held accountable for that. But there was a similar bill from two years ago for people who are drunk driving causing death. That bill, which is a Conservative bill, has not been enacted. So I'm wondering if the member would agree that if we're truly serious about protecting citizens from criminals, we have to ensure that the courts have the resources to properly prosecute people and that the bills that are passed have to be put into force.

1550

Mr. Lorne Coe: Well, I thank the member for Sudbury for that question. I want to take a passage from Hansard during yesterday's debate. It's right here: "We cannot forget that the system we're building is a system that has to address the issues relating to public safety and ensure that people who are offending are"—yes—"dealt with

appropriately, but at the same time are not given a free pass out as a result of a bail system that's not working. There is a balance there, and our government is working to build the system to ensure that we in effect"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader directs debate to continue.

I recognize the member from Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Please continue the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It's a pleasure to be rising here again.

Interjections.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: And thank you to the members of the government for celebrating the fact that I'm able to rise again after more than three months to speak on behalf of the good people of Ottawa West–Nepean, who are facing many challenges, like people across the province of Ontario, with the cost of living, with the inability to afford housing, with the crisis in education, and now the cuts to funding for post-secondary education and the greater indebtedness of students. So I'm very happy that we're back here, that I'm able to bring these concerns from the people of Ottawa West–Nepean here, and that we can actually debate what are the appropriate policy solutions to the many challenges that people are facing in Ontario right now.

But as I begin, Speaker, I want to take a moment to express my sincere condolences to the family of Peter Clark—who died this morning after being hit in a hit-and-run accident—a crossing guard at a school in Barrhaven, and to the staff and the students of the school that Peter Clark served, who were used to seeing him every morning, who benefited from his support in getting them safely to school.

I had the opportunity to speak with a crossing guard in Ottawa West–Nepean last fall when I was out speaking with parents at schools, and it was very clear in my conversation with her that this is something you do out of a passion for the safety of our children. She shared with me the concerns that she had about seeing cars speeding down Woodroffe every day, and this was around the time that the government was talking about taking away speed cameras. She told me about the difference she had seen when the speed cameras came in, and the concerns she had about removing them. But it was very clear that this is a job you get into because you care very deeply about our kids and because you believe that they should be arriving safely at school every single morning. So it's absolutely devastating to know that somebody who had that passion, who played that role, has been killed in an accident.

My deepest condolences to Peter Clark's family, and to the staff and students who have been affected by this.

I'm speaking today about the government's Bill 75, which is another omnibus bill brought forward by the

government. It's called Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, but it includes measures on animal testing, training for forensic pathologists, the recording of inquests, driver's licence suspensions and scholarships for the survivors of public safety officers, so there's actually a lot that's in this bill that has nothing to do with the title.

I'm hoping the government will allow this bill to go to committee, unlike the 12 bills that they did not allow to go to committee last year, which included their budget and their fall economic statement—major bills with a lot of things crammed into them, Speaker—because scrutiny is all the more important, and hearing from the public, from experts, from people who will be impacted by legislation is all the more important when you are putting so much in a single bill, and there's less time for MPPs to even provide that scrutiny and debate. So I hope that the government will allow that opportunity, will allow people to come and share their perspective and talk about what's in this bill and how it will impact them.

But because there is so much in this bill today, I'm going to focus my remarks on the changes to the Bail Act, because this is an area where we see the government's actions do not match their rhetoric. It's something that we see a lot from this government. They tabled a bill last year called supporting kids, which was actually taking away the voices of parents and communities, and it was making it much harder for post-secondary students to provide supports for one another like food banks and sexual assault centres. The government tabled this at the same time that they were cutting funding from our school system, so supporting students was a headline, but it wasn't actually the actions that the government was engaging in.

They've had "building homes faster." We've had multiple bills on building homes faster, and housing starts are at historic lows. They've got advertising. If you're watching on CBC Gem, you'll get served three or four advertisements in a row about how amazing our health care system is, which is fantastic because when you're sitting in the emergency room for 12 hours and you're watching CBC Gem trying to pass those 12 hours, you can see this advertisement several thousand times, which I'm sure will be a great comfort to you as you're waiting for your health care.

The government's rhetoric on tough on crime is just another example of where their actions do not meet their rhetoric, do not do what their words are saying. When we look at what the government's record actually is on tough on crime, there is the Premier's Paul Blart: Mall Cop routine of chasing down people in the Home Depot parking lot and then telling people to shoot home intruders, which is just a recipe for accidents. My uncle was killed in a firearms incident that happened in someone's home, so you can imagine how I feel about telling people, "It's fine. Just shoot. Don't ask questions." It's a good way of making sure that innocent people get hurt.

But when it comes to criminal justice, their actions just simply do not match their words. In 2022-23, more than half of criminal charges—56% of criminal charges—were stayed, withdrawn or dismissed. So more than half of the

charges that were laid by police where they felt, as a member of the government said earlier, that there was enough evidence to proceed to charges—in more than half of those cases, there was no decision made by a court. There was no guilty finding by a court because those charges were withdrawn, dismissed or stayed. That's because our court system is in complete disarray because of the lack of resources that the government is putting towards it.

In Canada, we have a principle that's been determined by the Supreme Court that there must be timely access to justice. For court cases at the Ontario Court of Justice, they have 18 months to get to trial. For cases at the Superior Court, they have 30 months to get to trial. If the timelines extend beyond that window, then prosecutors must make a good argument about why it has extended beyond that in a way that has not harmed somebody's right to a speedy trial; otherwise, the case will be dismissed.

What we're seeing are many cases in which prosecutors are not meeting that threshold. The trial is not occurring within that time frame, and the prosecutors are not able to offer a convincing reason to a judge about why they were not able to do that or why that is not harming the rights of the defendant to a fair trial.

If you were actually serious about doing something about that, then not only would you want to invest in resources to fix those delays, to fix those timelines, but you would also want to make sure you knew why it was happening. You would want to make sure that you were tracking what was happening so that you would know whether or not things are moving in the right direction or whether they're moving in the wrong direction or whether you've stalled out. But the government has flatly refused to actually track reasons why criminal charges are stayed or withdrawn, despite the fact that the Auditor General recommended that they do that seven years ago now, Speaker. They've had seven years to take action on that and they've done nothing, because if people don't know why it's happening, then apparently it's not happening and there's no need for concern.

But the truth is that this is having a serious impact on people, because people who are the victims of crime want to have their day in court. They want to get to see the perpetrator face justice. They want to get to go and share their victim impact statement, to get to talk about what this crime has done to them, what it means for their lives, and they want that to be taken into account in what consequences are delivered by a judge. But when a case is not going to trial, that's not happening.

Victims are being completely denied access to justice. They're being revictimized by our justice system. That's not keeping people safe, and it's not keeping criminals behind bars if they're being released without ever going to trial because the government wasn't willing to invest the resources to make sure that that timely trial was actually happening.

1600

I want to talk about a specific example of what this looks like, which is the Elgin Street courthouse in Ottawa,

where they have too many cases assigned to each individual courtroom. They cannot possibly hold every case that is assigned during a single day, during that day, and so cases are being bumped every day because there's just not enough time.

A retired Ontario judge wrote in the *Globe and Mail* last month that it is not unusual to have 18 to 20 hours' worth of cases scheduled in a single Ontario courtroom for six hours' worth of hearings a day. So three times the number of cases that they can possibly hear are being scheduled for a single courtroom.

If the government was actually serious about protecting people—ensuring that victims have their day in court, ensuring that criminals are behind bars and are being kept behind bars—then they need to invest greater resources to reduce trial delays. They need to support legal aid funding so that there's effective representation at every stage of the process, so that there are not delays because somebody doesn't have effective representation. The government hasn't done any of that. What they have done is they have created an online portal that lawyers are saying is actually creating more delays. They're making the problems even worse.

So what does that mean for our jails and for the people who are in jail? Well, two weeks ago, I had the opportunity to visit the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre, and I learned a lot from that visit. My colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane told us all before Christmas that we should definitely visit our local jails if we had not done so before; that it was really important for us, as legislators, to have that first-hand knowledge and experience. I'm very glad that I listened to the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, because he was right. I did learn a lot. There is a lot that is very difficult to understand until you see it personally. I was incredibly shocked by the conditions not only for the inmates, but for the staff, and what it means for them when our jails are so overcrowded. The Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre is overcrowded by 20%, so it is very routine that there are three inmates to a cell built for two, and what that means, when you actually see it—the cell is the size of a bunk bed plus a mattress on the floor. It's not like there is room around the mattress on the floor; there's literally the bunk bed and the mattress. Because inmates are in their cells for most of the day, that means there are three people on top of each other all day long, and that's also how they sleep. In each unit of the jail, there was a board that had all of the cell assignments. The commissioner, who was taking me around, showed me that on the vast majority of boards, there were more papers for each cell than there were beds in the cell. So the vast majority of cells in the prison are overcrowded.

The Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre is a remand centre. Everybody who is there is waiting for their day in court. These are not people who are serving their sentences. They are waiting for trial, whether it's their initial trial, whether it's a bail hearing, whether it's an appeal. That is why they're at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. And because of that, there's no programming or very little programming. There's very limited support

for people with addictions. There's no kind of post-secondary education or training programs. There's very limited counselling. When so much of your time is spent in pretrial detention in a centre like this, that contributes to the rate of recidivism, because people aren't getting any support to turn their life around. They're not getting support with their addiction. They're not getting support with their mental health challenges. They're not getting support to find gainful employment when they get out of jail. So keeping people in remand centres like the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre, where the conditions are terrible, where they don't have access to any kind of programming, is not actually reducing the rate of crime in the province; in fact, I would say it's the opposite of that.

The most shocking thing that I learned at the OCDC is that they are seeing a significant rise in the number of people arrested who have mental health and addictions challenges. One of the people had been there for 18 years, and she said it's getting worse and worse, but they've never seen it this bad. They're seeing many people arrested who are being taken by police directly to the hospital. They are not coming to the jail first; they are going directly to the hospital. But because they're in custody, it's not the police who stay with them at the hospital; it's corrections staff who need to go from the jail to the hospital. There are two people for every patient who is in custody, which means that over the course of a day, it's four corrections staff who will be in the hospital for every one patient who's there.

Some days, they have as many as 10 patients in the hospital, so 40 officers over the course of a 24-hour period will be at the hospital and not at the jail. But there are not extra staff for the jail just because 40 officers are at the hospital. So, that means that a reduced staff is trying to cover and ensure the safety of everybody who is in the jail in the meantime.

They had explained this to me before I went on the tour and it sounded shocking enough, Speaker, but you really have to see for yourself what that means in practice, because we're not talking about one room. We're not talking about a spoke-in-hub situation, where it's easy to access one part of the jail from every other part of the jail. We are talking about a jail that has had additions built on over the course of 50 years, and so it's a bit of a maze.

If they have eight or 10 people on a night shift because there are so many officers who are at the hospital and not in the jail, then this is already creating a safety situation for the inmates and for the corrections staff. If there's an emergency, then all of these staff have to come running to address that one emergency, but they also have responsibilities to ensure the safety of every other inmate. For some inmates, that means you need to be checked on every 30 minutes, but when they have people with mental health and addictions issues—particularly people who are on suicide watch—they might need to be checked on every 15 or every 10 minutes. Well, how do you do that while you're trying to respond to a crisis in one part of the jail, and you have this massive facility around you with

overcrowded cells, and you're supposed to be checking on and ensuring the safety of all the inmates?

It is an absolutely unsafe situation, and the government needs to provide the resources to ensure that the inmates and the staff will be safe, because this is having an immensely negative impact on the mental health of the staff. We're seeing burnout; we're seeing mental health challenges. It's not a fair situation to put people into and we need to be doing much better.

But ultimately, Speaker, staffing is not the solution here. When we're seeing more and more people coming with mental health and addiction challenges, we need to be addressing that upstream. We need to be making sure that people aren't ending up in jail simply because they have a mental health challenge, or simply because they have an addiction. There's a complete lack of access to mental health supports in the community. There's a complete lack of access to supportive housing units in our community. There is not always a bed available in a recovery or treatment program when somebody says they're ready to be treated.

I've heard from Salus, when they came to the finance committee meeting in Ottawa, that it can take up to four years for somebody who has been through an addictions treatment program to get a bed in supportive housing. And in the meantime, they may have relapsed four or five times, because you can't expect somebody to complete recovery and then go back out onto the street and simply stay clean until there's a bed available for them four years later.

Speaker, the cost of a month in incarceration is \$11,000, and the cost for a month of supportive housing is between \$2,000 to \$5,000, depending on the level of support needed. So we are paying more than twice as much to house people with addictions and mental health challenges in our jails as we are in supportive housing. That makes absolutely no sense, especially because the corrections staff told me they're seeing some of these people with addictions and mental health issues again and again and again, because jail is not the appropriate place to treat those challenges, especially when you don't have programming in the jail.

So instead of building housing or supportive housing, the Solicitor General is just saying, "We'll build more jails." The government has introduced legislation to criminalize people for not being able to afford \$2,000 a month in rent, so now we will pay \$11,000 a month to house them in the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre.

When the government is constantly looking at the most expensive option rather than the cheapest and the best for keeping people safe, you have to start asking who is going to benefit financially from that scenario, Speaker.

1610

And then this bill, by saying they're going to demand cash bail now, is going to create a two-tier criminal justice system in which rich criminals, who may, for instance, have pocketed public money or broken provincial rules to benefit their personal friends, get to walk free because they have money, while people who are barely getting by are

waiting in jail for incredibly long periods of time. Whether or not they actually ever get their day in court or not, they've lost their job; it's made it harder for them to ever get back on their feet.

So now we have this situation where if you're rich, you're fine; if you're poor, too bad for you, you're going to keep on being poor. We're not going to help you. We're not going to provide housing. We're not going to provide supports. We're not going to allow you to stay employed. It makes no sense. It's not actually about keeping people safer.

And then, Speaker, I just want to say quickly, because I'm running out of time, there is still the possibility of getting greater credit for time served than one to one if you can show that your conditions have deprivations compared to what you would have in another prison, or if you're subject to particularly harsh conditions. Well, that's what you're seeing in an overcrowded jail. So we're essentially putting people in a position where they will spend less time in jail, ultimately, because of the conditions in remand. It makes no sense. We need to address the court backlogs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions, please.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The member made reference to court time. I happen to have a bit of experience on that.

One of the things that happens in courts is that they set a schedule for trials, and then your trial is set for a certain date. They tell the defendant and the defendant's lawyer, "Please come back to court on this certain date for your trial." And then the prosecutor lines up all the witnesses—it might be any number of police witnesses; let's say three or four—and the prosecutor. They show up in court, and the defence lawyer shows up in court, and the defendant doesn't show up in court. Now you've taken all those people, all those police officers and everybody off the street, and you've wasted the court day, and that leads to backlog. That's why we need to get the defendants into court with a proper bail system.

Does the member opposite agree?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Well, if the member has experience in the court system, then the member would know that it is not every defendant who fails to show up for their court date. The member would also, I'm sure, have spent at least some time in law school talking about human rights and would know, therefore, that we can't just undermine the human rights of every single person who's been charged with a criminal offence in Ontario by locking them up to make sure that they show up in court on the appointed date.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: We're talking about safety here and making our communities safe. When people don't end up having justice in court, how does that impact public safety? And when criminals get out, what, 60% earlier, how does that affect safety in our communities?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to the member from Kitchener Centre for that question. I think for offenders

who are walking free because their charges have been dropped, withdrawn or stayed, that creates a sense of impunity, that they can do whatever they want and the system is not going to hold them accountable. And when over half of charges are being withdrawn, dropped or stayed, they're right. We are holding very few people accountable for what they're doing.

And for victims, it tells them that you're not going to get justice in Ontario. You're not going to get your day in court. The system is not going to be there for you. You're not going to be able to share what happened to you. You're not going to know that the person who did it to you will face consequences, and you're not going to have the satisfaction of getting to say on the record what happened to you and what impact that had on you.

It's a completely backwards system in which people who are committing crimes are going free of consequences, and the people who are experiencing crimes are receiving these—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions? I recognize the member from Sudbury.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you to my colleague from Ottawa West–Nepean as well.

I was reminded of the number of people who are homeless because they can't afford the escalating rent that has been caused by the Conservative government. When you can't afford \$2,000 for rent and you end up sleeping in the park, you could be fined \$5,000. I remember at the time thinking maybe the Premier thought that would be a big enough deterrent while he is riding in the back of his chauffeured limousine.

Why is it that, somehow, the math to charge someone \$5,000—or to not be able to afford a \$2,000 rent and bring rent down doesn't seem common sense to them, but having that individual, who basically is only guilty of not being able to afford rent and sleeping in a park, makes sense to the Conservative government that they'll spend \$11,000 per month to have that person housed in a jail?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you very much to my colleague from Sudbury for that excellent question. I think really the only way that kind of math that you talked about, where it's \$11,000 a month to house somebody in a jail, it's \$5,000 a month for supportive housing and if we were just outright going to pay their rent so that they would be housed in an apartment or a house and not the park, it would be \$2,000 a month—I think the only way you can make that kind of math make sense is if you are driving around in a chauffeured limousine; if you not only get to live in your multi-million-dollar family home, but you also have a lovely cottage that you can go to on weekends. I think that's the only way that you can believe that people are living in our parks because it's a lifestyle choice to set up a tent in the park and not because you are just so desperate because you can't afford a home in the province of Ontario. And I think that's also the only reason that you could have a government refuse to take any action to ensure that we are building homes and we are making

them affordable so that nobody in Ontario has to live in a park or in a homeless encampment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: It sounded like the member, in the answer to the previous question and the answer to the question that she gave just now, was afraid, or it sounded like she was concerned about costs with regard to running a system and such. I can tell you that the loss of a court day is a massive loss of costs to the system in paying the judge, in paying the court staff, in paying the prosecutor, in paying the witnesses and taking them off the street and requiring them to appear in court. That's why it's so important to compel the accused to appear on the day of trial, because the losses are massive when the accused doesn't show up. The costs are massive to the system, and those have to be borne by the taxpayer, who needs protection.

I accept that the member is concerned about cost. Can she elaborate on her concerns about costs?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I understand that the member studied law and not math, but I'm really not understanding how the member can think that locking people up at the cost of \$11,000 a month is very cost-effective as opposed to one lost day of court time, especially when we're not talking about a scenario where every single defendant is not showing up when they are summoned to court. And it's not like every single defendant is out on the street, waiting for their court date, choosing to decide whether or not they will show up.

We have a bail system for a reason. Judges make decisions based on the risk that they are assessing. It is impartial judges who are deciding, "Is this person likely to show up or not if they are released on the street?" I think that is far more cost-effective than us paying \$11,000 a month to lock up every single person who's been charged with a crime in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further question?

MPP Jamie West: In previous questions, there seemed to be a lot of focus on someone not showing up on their court day. I just want to clarify that during your debate, I believe you said that for a six-hour court day, there has been scheduled 16 to 20 hours' worth of cases. So in the rare case when a defendant doesn't show up for their trial, that isn't really the issue we're facing. What we're facing is an issue of underfunding for the court system because you cannot do 16-plus hours of work in six hours.

So we have a system where people who are victims of crime don't get their day in court, and people who are criminals and could be legitimately charged and held accountable for it are being given reduced sentences or let go to commit more crimes. Am I adding this up properly?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member for Sudbury for that question. You are adding it up correctly.

The government really seems to be struggling with this scenario. When you have three times the number of cases scheduled for a single day than can possibly be heard in that courtroom, then you are asking a lot of police officers,

a lot of attorneys, crown prosecutors, witnesses to come down to the courtroom, knowing they will never get a hearing that day in court. You are spending resources transporting inmates from jail to the courtroom even though there is very low likelihood that they will actually get a hearing that day.

1620

If we are actually concerned about costs, then upfront investments to ensure that we are having speedy access to justice, ensuring that criminals who are genuinely guilty are staying behind bars—but that we're not wasting the time of everyone in the system and spending money locking up people in detention who will ultimately be found not guilty.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

MPP Jamie West: I know there are high levels of suicide and alcoholism in the police force. Do you think it's a lack of resources and services from the Conservative government to allow them to be successful and keep criminals in jail that leads to this sort of stress in mental health?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Absolutely—and thank you to the member for Sudbury for that question.

I think when you get involved in law enforcement, it's because you want to keep people safe. You want to know that bad guys are behind bars. And when you are continually in a position where there's enough evidence for you to press charges and the majority of those aren't even going to trial because of delays in the court system, that must be incredibly frustrating—to know that you're not able to keep everybody safe because you're being failed by the court system.

We're seeing the same thing among corrections officers. There's a very high rate of burnout and mental health challenges because they are not able to keep everybody safe. They are being asked to do more than a human can possibly do.

I think we owe it to our police officers and our corrections officers to properly support them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): We move to further debate. I recognize the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair.

After, I think, 103 days, this is my first chance to debate in the Legislature. I have a couple of chances to do it today. And later tonight, I'll get a chance to put my hip waders on and talk about the Skills Development Fund, as I walk into that cesspool that is the Skills Development Fund—but not for now. We're here to talk about Bill 75.

There are some good things in Bill 75, but I'm really puzzled—I've had a piece of legislation on the books for a couple of years now, and it's called the Sacred Spaces, Safe Places Act. It's all about creating bubble zones around places of worship, because we've had some problems. In previous years, when we had problems around abortion clinics, we created bubble zones. So I put it forward. I think it's reasonable. I think it's thoughtful. I

think it's something that people are looking for. I've talked to the Solicitor General about it, and many other members. Actually, I've offered the bill—if another member wants to take it or put their name on it and wants to debate it, I'm happy to do that. It's just a good idea. The Solicitor General, as we were having a conversation, said, "Well, it's in Bill 75." I said, "Okay." I'd read Bill 75, and we had the conversation. I left and said, "I'll check." I couldn't find it. Then I thought, "Well, maybe I'm just not that smart. I'll get some smart people to look at it and tell me whether it's in there or not." Those smart people looked at it, and it's not there. I really have a lot of respect for the Solicitor General. I love the Solicitor General. He's great. But it's not there. So what I found out, what I understood was, it's in their narrative. "It's in our narrative. It's what we're saying."

What you're saying and what you're doing—they have to align to say that you're doing it; you can't just say it. That's kind of a consistent problem with this government. Words should lead to deeds.

I would just encourage the Solicitor General, when it gets to committee—because I think it's going to get to committee—to put some words in there that will match the deeds we're talking about, because it's not there. There are no protections, and the narrative doesn't protect anybody. We didn't do a narrative around abortion clinics. We did bubble zone legislation. People who are worshipping, whatever their faith or their belief, are vulnerable. They should feel safe. I think that's something we should all say out loud.

I'm a bit surprised that the Solicitor General thought that that would be sufficient for me—to tell me that there was something there that wasn't really there. I hope that's not the message to the communities that are looking for those kinds of protections. They need more than a narrative.

There's a lot of narration going on in this place; we're all part of it. What people look for are results.

As I said, there are some good things in here. The devil is in the details. It needs to get to committee.

I do want to take issue, because I think we're on—maybe this is the fifth or sixth crime bill. If anybody knows, yell out a number. But we're not in double digits.

It has been eight long years. And by the Premier's own admission—and actually, not just his own admission; by his own encouragement and declaration—crime is up. Crime keeps going up. It's bad. Crime is bad. It has been going up. Well, the Premier has had eight years. You've all had eight years. Crime going up eight years? It's on you. How many years is it going to take for you to take some responsibility for a decision in government? A dozen? Twenty? Really?

The reason that crime has gone up—there are a lot of reasons. There's poverty. There's mental health—that's a big one that's not getting addressed. It's also the fact that our courts are jammed, that our justice system is releasing people because their jails are too full, and people are waiting too long for justice. That's a government problem. Mental health? That's a government problem. That's part

of the problem. People are suffering and not getting the help that they need.

I'm not going to be negative about the bill, but I'm going to say that the things that you need to do aren't getting done. Protecting places of worship? Not in the bill. Funding the courts? Not in the bill. Mental health support for people struggling in our communities? Not in the bill—not there. I'm not saying nothing has been done, but I'm saying it's clearly not enough, and it should be a bigger priority for the government.

Those are my comments on Bill 75, and I hope they're helpful.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a question for the member, who talked a lot about the narrative that we see with this bill and other justice bills.

This is a government that is talking about careless driving or dangerous driving, and this idea that if you do the crime, you'll do the time; that they're going to have stiff penalties and whatnot. But what we see is that in so many cases, those charges don't lead to convictions—that they plead down; that either they don't get their day in court or that they plead down to a lesser charge, and then it's a slap on the wrist.

I have a bill, Bill 47, the Fairness for Road Users Act, that imposes greater consequences for drivers.

How come the government is not willing to look at the bigger picture? As you said, it's about narrative. Why aren't they really fixing this, when they do know what the solutions would be?

Mr. John Fraser: It is pretty amazing that the government—the Premier, especially—talked tough on drunk driving, but then we found out that the courts were bumping everybody down. Why were they doing that? The government order from COVID. That continued on—not enough money in the courts. You have more serious offences. Our jails are not safe places to work or to be.

Justice is a process of fairness. You have to make sure there's enough resource there so that it's fair, because when it becomes unfair, then crowns, judges—people—have to make decisions that aren't easy decisions to make. That's on the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

1630

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member for those remarks.

This bill covers a lot of ground. Many, many areas touch upon how we can tackle the offenders, the criminals—careless driving, impaired driving, dangerous driving—and how we can strengthen this law.

One of the things Bill 75 proposes is exploring the option to make the Ontario sex offenders and traffickers registry publicly available, giving communities the information they need to stay safe.

Do you oppose providing families with the tools to protect themselves from dangerous predators?

Mr. John Fraser: As I said, with this bill, you have to give communities the tools they need to keep safe.

My point is that the Premier keeps saying, “Crime is up, crime is up, crime is up.” We just had eight years. It’s worse. And in any other universe, if you’ve been around for eight years and something gets worse, it’s kind of your problem. So, yes, you want to see that, but that’s not the only thing that needs to happen. When a case gets thrown out or someone isn’t incarcerated because it has taken too long or there’s no place to put them, whose problem is that? Is that the criminal’s problem? No. That’s our problem. That’s my point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the member for his contribution to this debate.

I want to read into the record what the Canadian Criminal Justice Association said—they were founded in 1919—with regard to the bail section: “Bail must be compatible with the presumption of innocence and the right not to be denied reasonable bail without just cause. A regime that conditions liberty on the immediate availability of cash fundamentally undermines this presumption by substituting financial capacity for individualized risk assessment.”

What do you think about that?

Mr. John Fraser: Well, people with money will get better access to justice. That’s what it means.

They want to talk about bail because they don’t want to talk about the things that they’re not doing. The courts don’t have the resources that they need. Things are backed up. Jails are overflowing.

“We’re going to get bail cameras,” the Premier says. They’re already in there—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I know that all of us in this place care about safety in our communities. I think we all agree on that. How to get there is a different story.

I always like to refer to things that work in other places. I know in Iceland, for example, they’re investing in youth, free transit and free recreation, and that has reduced youth crime by 50%. So I encourage everybody to look at what Iceland is doing. It’s very effective; maybe not as sexy as people in uniform, but—sorry, that came out wrong. But it’s very effective.

I do love our youth hubs, and they’re amazing, and we just need one in Kitchener, please.

We’ve seen a deterioration in our rehab. There are like zero regulations on rehab. Anybody can get rehab; the system is very private. If you want public rehab, the wait time has gone from one month to about 10 months. And then we have folks who need housing and health care.

I just opened up my paper a few weeks back, and a judge was scolding the people in the court, saying, “Why are we here, looking at a man who is dealing with mental health struggles, creating crimes in the community because he has no housing and there’s a total poverty issue? This is not how we should be using court time.” This is what the judge is saying. And I do pick fault at the government for making something criminal that we were

doing something to solve in the past; for example, closing all the safe consumption sites, then making it illegal to do drugs in public, and then putting people in jail for doing drugs in public. You are creating a pipeline for folks with mental health and addiction issues to end up clogging up our court system. So when we create the crime, we’re going to have more crime as well.

I do have an issue with our homelessness issue, with the rates of homelessness in our communities. What I’m seeing now is that we’re not funding expansion in our operating dollars of supporting housing. In fact, I heard from CMHC that they will not build new buildings because we don’t have commitments from this province to pay for the operating costs. Ontario could be missing out on millions and millions of dollars of constructing new supportive housing, which is the housing health care we need to make sure folks don’t commit more crimes and get the help they need. We’re missing out on that.

What we need is rehab. We need housing so people can have a roof and food. I’ve heard from many folks that they get out of jail, they don’t have proper clothes for the winter, they don’t have a bus ticket to get home to their family, they have not been rehabilitated, and they don’t have any supports when they get out. So what do they do? Smash a car. “Send me back in so I can be alive in the winter and I have a roof and food and three meals a day.”

By not addressing homelessness, by not addressing addiction and mental health, we’re creating more public problems.

Our jails also have issues. I think they’re number one in Ombudsman’s complaints, and maybe number one in human rights violations. If you look at the data from our Ombudsman, it’s like double the number two position—all the complaints about our jails right now. We know they’re over capacity. Maplehurst is at 150%. I haven’t been able to go there because I don’t think they want me to come in and see what the conditions are in this jail.

I read in the paper that one of the local murderers, serial killers, who’s a repeat offender, had his charges cut by 60% because of the deplorable conditions he was living in when he was in jail, awaiting trial.

Lots of people are getting out for time served. They don’t even serve their time after their court date—60% less on their sentences. That’s not okay.

I appreciate that you want to build more jails. I wish we would build more affordable housing.

Then, the issue with our courts—I can’t imagine if my daughter was abused and then there’s maybe a less-than-50% chance that there would be justice for her. Again, I open up the paper and I hear of rapists and murderers just walking away because they didn’t get their court date on time. Can you imagine being a family member of somebody affected by that, or an individual whose family member was murdered, or you yourself were abused? What is going on here? More than 50%—I think it was 58,000 charges were stayed, dismissed or withdrawn; 56% of cases don’t have their day in court.

While I understand the argument from the member from Essex, the bar association doesn’t think that this is

going to solve the problem. The bar association says we need to fund things better. So we need to look at alternatives. We need to look at court staffing, restorative justice for folks who want it. We need to help the Attorney General, because the LTB is broken, the OLT is broken, our courts are broken, and we're wasting taxpayer dollars by doing the wrong thing that is not evidence-based.

We need to address systemic issues. We need to use electronic disclosure processes, for example, to make the system more efficient. We need to fund court staffing, transportation and facility management to reduce the system delays that make criminals go free.

Criminals are going free; more than half don't even have a day in court.

We need to do pre-screening. We need to fund prevention programs, like helping men with mental health issues. Men are disproportionately represented in our courts. They're more likely to die by suicide and have addiction issues. Let's get more mental health for men as well.

In closing, I appreciate that the government wants to address public safety. This is a misguided approach to a real problem. It's not based in evidence. The bar lawyers do not agree with it.

The Globe and Mail said, "Deep, structural issues plaguing Ontario"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions, please.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague from Kitchener Centre for her remarks this afternoon on a very important topic, Bill 75.

As we've been going through the debate, I've been listening to my colleagues across the way comment on this piece of legislation, and I know one aspect of that is around amendments to the sex offender registry. I was just wondering if the member opposite supports our government's initiatives around that, and to ensure we're protecting those communities with those individuals who may be living there.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: There isn't evidence to support that that makes our communities safer. I believe in evidence-based decision-making. I also believe in opening up and finding experts in the not-for-profit sector who address people with sexualized behaviours.

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Right now, people in the not-for-profit sector don't get paid enough, so they leave and they go to the private sector. It is costing our child welfare systems, for example, bazillions and bazillions of dollars to pay for private care. We have been shutting down charities and not-for-profits that help people with sexualized behaviours. We need to be expanding this support and paying people properly so that we can retain experts in the not-for-profit sector.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This bill talks about sureties, and sureties really are not bail supervision professionals; they're people who reach out—they could be your parents, your grandparents, your siblings, your aunts and uncles, which really is off-loading responsibility to private

citizens. But there are solutions that we could have, which are community programs like the bed programs, the bail supervision verification programs, which are actually cost-effective and proven as an alternative to pretrial detentions. They have caseworkers who help with finding people housing, monitoring mental health, monitoring addictions.

Can you talk a little bit about how we need more of the bail supervision verification programs in communities, which will help people who are out on bail meet those requirements and have those supports so they're not reoffending and going back into the system?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I was a social worker for 20 years, and I could have bet money on the fact that people aren't going to show up. My work was to get people to show up, because I had a relationship with them. I bought them Iced Capps—I called it "junior chicken therapy"—because I was nice. I built relationships over time.

Right now, our systems don't have trust; they don't have trust at all. Unless you build that trust and help people find a path forward that's hopeful, where they're not going to be isolated, punched down—right now, this just punches down on poor people. There are already a lot of people who end up in criminal situations just because they're poor and they can't pay for rent. I would love anything that is not that—that builds relationships, builds supports in place, to help people move forward in life and reach their potential.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the member for your remarks this afternoon.

As I've listened to the debate, I've heard members of the opposition as well as the third party say they're going to support Bill 75.

I think we all recognize that work needs to be done to help public safety.

I just wanted to ask if the member is going to be supporting Bill 75.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Right now, I don't have a lot of faith that in the committee you're going to take this seriously. There are some major problems with this bill that need fixing, and my experience in committee has not been great. I brought forward meaningful solutions from experts in the field. And I don't see a lot of consultation in this bill. The lawyers don't agree with it—the people who run our courts and are in charge of this system.

I would like to see from this government that they're collaborative, that they're ready to take input from experts and make the changes that need to happen to make this bill actually work. As it is right now, there is lots of good in the bill related to other things, but when it comes to public safety—it's not based in evidence, and we need to make changes to make it actually effective.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: It's an honour to stand before the House today to share my strong support for Bill 75, the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, 2025, the next step

in our government's plan to enhance Ontario's public safety and justice systems.

If passed, Bill 75 will make our roads and highways safer. It will provide stronger protections for children and other victims of crime. And it will hold offenders more accountable while enhancing bail compliance and enforcement. Through this bill, our government is also standing up for police, firefighters, correctional officers, and other public safety personnel.

Critically, the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, 2025, reaffirms our government's commitment to remain tough on crime and to do everything in our power to protect Ontario.

Today, I will focus on a few key elements of this justice package, particularly those related to bail reform and enhancing support for public safety personnel.

Speaker, our government is proud to be leading the way when it comes to meaningful bail reform. We recognize that the current system is not keeping pace with the realities faced by our communities, our law enforcement officers, and the victims of crime. That is why we have taken decisive action and why we are continuing to push forward for broader reforms at the federal level.

Let me begin with one of our key priorities: strengthening accountability within the bail system. For too long, forfeited bail has not been consistently enforced. When individuals fail to comply with their bail conditions, there must be real consequences. That is why we have called on the federal government for a crackdown on forfeited bail and want them to improve the tools to be available to ensure that debts owed to the justice system are actually collected. Accountability cannot be optional; it must be guaranteed.

Our government is embracing innovation to better protect our communities. We have launched the Provincial Bail Compliance Dashboard, a state-of-the-art system that represents a major step forward in how we monitor high-risk individuals. This dashboard allows police services across Ontario to share real-time information, ensuring that front-line officers have immediate access to critical data about individuals on bail, particularly those charged with firearms-related offences. Right now, approximately 2,300 offenders are being tracked through this system. This is not just about technology; it is about giving our officers the tools they need to act quickly, decisively and effectively. It is about preventing crime before it happens, rather than simply reacting after the fact.

But we know that tools alone are not enough. That is why we are making significant investments to strengthen Ontario's bail and justice systems. We have committed \$112 million over three years to support innovative programs, including the Bail Compliance and Warrant Apprehension Grant. This initiative funds dedicated police teams that focus specifically on monitoring high-risk individuals who are out on bail. These teams play a crucial role in ensuring that those who pose a risk to public safety are closely supervised and that breaches of bail conditions are addressed immediately.

Speaker, despite these efforts, it is clear that more needs to be done. Too often, we are seeing dangerous repeat offenders being released back into communities only to reoffend—just turn on the evening news. This is unacceptable. Ontarians deserve to feel safe in their homes, in their neighbourhoods and in their daily lives.

That is why Bill 75 is such an important step forward. This legislation is part of a comprehensive, four-point bail reform strategy designed to strengthen compliance, close gaps in the system, and keep repeat offenders off our streets.

First, the bill introduces legislative changes that would enhance the administration of bail liens and improve collection tools, helping ensure that bail-related debts are successfully collected.

Second, we are proposing changes that would make cash security deposits mandatory. Currently, the system relies too heavily on promises to pay by accused persons and their sureties. In cases of bail non-compliance where forfeiture is ordered, it can take significant time and resources to collect those funds. Mandatory cash deposits would encourage compliance and address these challenges.

Third, we aim to support legislation with a broader bail reform strategy that incorporates the latest technologies to monitor offenders and sureties more effectively. We must also examine the bail prosecution system to ensure it has the capacity and expertise required to meet the challenges of today's evolving criminal landscape.

Finally, we are proposing to move forward towards a user-fee system for GPS monitoring. These electronic tracking devices, such as ankle bracelets, are highly effective in monitoring individuals on bail but are also costly. A user-pay approach would help offset these costs and would support victim services and other critical systems.

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Electronic monitoring devices such as ankle bracelets have proven to be highly effective in tracking individuals and ensuring compliance within bail conditions. However, they do come at a significant cost. A user-pay system would help offset these expenses while allowing us to reinvest in victim services and other critical areas.

Public safety is not only about laws and systems, but it's also about protecting the people who dedicate their lives to protecting us. Our public safety personnel—police officers, correctional staff, firefighters and others—work tirelessly, often in dangerous and unpredictable conditions. They put themselves on the line every day to keep our communities safe. They have our backs every single day, and we want them to know that we have theirs as well. We owe them not only gratitude, but our full support.

That is why this bill includes measures to strengthen the resources available to those on the front lines. Some of these measures may appear modest, but they are essential.

For example, we are expanding the canine detection program to increase the number of searches in correctional facilities. This will help prevent the entry of illegal and

dangerous substances into our jails and remand centres, improving safety for both staff and inmates.

We are also investing in the modernization and expansion of our correctional system. Through our plan to enhance correctional capacity, we are committing over \$55 million over three years to add more beds and reduce overcrowding. Since January 2024, we have already added 395 beds, with plans to add more than 700 additional beds by 2027. This includes a new facility in Thunder Bay; modular expansions in Sudbury, Niagara and Milton; and a significant expansion of the Toronto South Detention Centre. These investments are essential to ensuring that our facilities are safe, secure and properly staffed, and that our correctional workers have the space and resources they need to effectively do their jobs.

As I have said at the outset, Bill 75 covers a great deal of ground. It is comprehensive, forward thinking, forward looking and absolutely necessary. If passed, this will help protect responsible drivers. It will stand up for our most valuable citizens, especially children. It will make it more difficult for offenders to exploit weaknesses in the bail system. And it will improve the lives and working conditions of our public safety personnel.

One other thing I just want to point out is that there is the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund, which stands to pay a powerful tribute to bravery in service. It provides educational support to the spouses and children of fallen public safety personnel. This important program was established in memory of Constable MacDonald, a brave and selfless Sudbury police officer who was killed in the line of duty. This is essential as part of this justice act.

The Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, 2025, reaffirms our government's unwavering commitment to remain tough on crime and protect the people and everybody here in this province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: The Conservatives are great at naming bills—Bill 75, Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act.

With regard to the Bail Act, all they're really doing is instituting cash bail.

The reality is that this government has been great at increasing fines but not increasing prosecution or actually penalizing people or catching perpetrators in so many different areas. In fact, so many people who have been accused don't even get their day in court. Victims do not get their day in court, as well, to face those who have affected them or have victimized them, in so many cases.

Really, how is this government moving the needle to make this province any safer when it comes to anything with regard to crime—because it doesn't seem to be the case, other than just catchy bill titles.

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: We are talking about criminals here, and we're talking about accountability. I've met with Toronto police; I've met with many different police services, and one of the biggest issues they have is, people are caught and people are released. These people put their lives on the line each and every day for each one of us.

We're talking about criminals and putting them behind bars. The issue they have is around compliance with bail. And so, with surety bonds, it's very difficult for them, when it's just a promise to pay and then the criminal is gone.

This is important, this justice act—to put criminals behind bars and to hold accountable these criminals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Speaker, my question is to the member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

For years, Ontario's bail system has allowed violent repeat offenders to walk free on empty promises, putting families and communities at risk. When bail is forfeited, collecting payment is costly and often ineffective, leaving victims frustrated and law enforcement powerless. This revolving door undermines confidence in our justice system and jeopardizes public safety. Our government promised to fix this system and restore accountability.

Can the member explain how this measure will strengthen compliance and protect Ontario families from these dangerous offenders?

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: Thank you for that question.

Bill 75 delivers on our promise to fix a broken bail system that has failed Ontario families for too long. Violent repeat offenders have been cycling through the system with little accountability. By introducing mandatory full-cash security deposits, we ensure bail conditions are real, not empty promises. This reform sends a clear message: If you break the law, there will be consequences. Combined with modernized debt collection and enhanced tracking tools, we are closing loops and putting public safety first.

Under Premier Ford's leadership, we are taking bold action to protect communities and restore confidence in justice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

MPP Jamie West: All afternoon, during this debate, we've been talking about people who are charged with certain things, and the Conservative government has been treating them as if they are convicted as criminals.

I just want to know—right now, the Premier is under RCMP criminal investigation. He's trying to pass an FOI so they can't have access to his phone. Would you believe that the Premier, right now, is guilty, or is he considered innocent until proven guilty?

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: I don't believe that question has any relevance to the justice act. So that's my answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the member from Eglinton—Lawrence for her comments this afternoon and the great work she's doing as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance. I'm looking forward to the budget later this week.

Speaker, under the current system, sureties often provide outdated or incomplete information, making it difficult for courts and police to enforce bail conditions. This

lack of accountability creates loopholes that criminals exploit, allowing repeat offenders to evade consequences.

People in my riding of Wellington–Halton Hills expect a justice system that works, not one that rewards dishonesty.

We heard that Bill 75 modernizes bail debt collection and requires sureties to provide accurate, up-to-date information. Can the member outline how these changes will close enforcement gaps and ensure that bail conditions are meaningful and enforceable across Ontario?

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: For years, offenders have walked free on promises to pay; they were never enforced, leaving victims frustrated and communities at risk. Bill 75 changes that by requiring full-cash deposits up front. This is a common-sense measure that ensures accountability and deters violations. It's about fairness. Those accused of serious crimes should not get a free pass. Our government believes in consequences for criminal behaviour, and this reform reflects the principle. By making bail meaningful, we are protecting families, supporting law enforcement and restoring integrity to Ontario's justice system. This is fair, and it's the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?
1700

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I wanted to ask a question about reckless driving. I believe it's claimed too many lives, including the life of Andrew Cristillo. Families have demanded action, and our government is responding with Bill 75, which introduces immediate roadside penalties for dangerous drivers, including licence suspensions and vehicle impoundments, along with other tougher penalties.

I invite the member to explain how these measures, in her opinion, will make Ontario roads safer and send a clear message to dangerous drivers out there that their dangerous driving will not be tolerated.

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: No family should lose a loved one because of reckless driving. Bill 75 responds to the Andrew's Law petition with tough new measures, including immediate roadside penalties, a 90-day licence suspension and a seven-day vehicle impoundment for dangerous drivers. We are also increasing penalties for careless driving, driving with a suspended licence and distracted driving. These reforms send a clear message that dangerous driving will not be tolerated in Ontario.

Our government stands with victims and families, and we're taking decisive action to make roads safer. This is about accountability, deterrence and protecting lives, not leniency for lawbreakers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocovic: I want to once again return to the other question. I, of course, wouldn't accuse the member of not understanding the legislation, but what this government is doing is substituting ability to pay with risk. If you have a high-risk offender that has the ability to make bail and pay cash, they get out. You're not changing anything. You're not making it any more safe.

What you're doing is allowing criminals that have the ability to make bail to get out, and if they can't, they won't.

So, presumably wealthy criminals will have no issues; there's no change. It doesn't matter how dangerous they are. You are not making any change with regard to risk. It is just about the ability to pay. Do you understand that that is not making people any safer?

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: Let's remember, individuals are arrested because police had grounds to do so. In many cases, we're talking about individuals who are repeat, often violent, offenders. And for our government, we will always prioritize the 99.99% of the population who are law-abiding citizens. As is currently the case, the courts will continue to determine the appropriate type and amount of bail. We will engage with justice, legal and law enforcement stakeholders to establish a best path forward, one that will be provided in a future regulation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions? Further questions? Too late. We've run out of time.

I will go to further debate. Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Kerzner has moved second reading of Bill 75, An Act to enact the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund Act, 2026 and to amend various other Acts.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

REAPPOINTMENT OF CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

RENOUVELLEMENT DE MANDAT DU MÉDECIN HYGIÉNISTE EN CHEF

Hon. Steve Clark: I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"We, His Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the reappointment of Dr. Kieran Moore as Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province of Ontario as provided in section 81(1.1) of the Health Protection and Promotion Act to hold office under the terms and conditions of the said act for a term of five years commencing June 1, 2026.";

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Mr. Clark has moved government motion number 13. I'll go back to the House leader to speak about it.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I want to indicate to the House that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston and the member for Essex. They're both the parliamentary assistants to our outstanding Min-

ister of Health and Deputy Premier, the Honourable Sylvia Jones.

Speaker, I'm not going to speak at length because I want the two parliamentary assistants to be on the record, but suffice it to say the government is very happy with Dr. Moore in his capacity as Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province of Ontario. We're looking forward to hopefully unanimous consent by the Legislative Assembly. I know that all parties want to get on the record for this reappointment. This was a motion that I tabled last year in the fall Parliament, but we decided that we would table it today, giving the House ample opportunity to debate it before the June 1, 2026, deadline that is in my motion.

And, with that, I'll defer to the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

Mr. John Jordan: I'm honoured to speak in favour of reappointing Dr. Kieran Moore for another term as Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Ontario requires a Chief Medical Officer of Health who has health knowledge and experience, expertise, stability and the trust of the public and stakeholders, and I would say very strong communication and collaboration skills.

Dr. Moore previously served as medical officer of health for Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington Public Health. His career reflects deep involvement in public health and service for the people of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington and the surrounding region and partnerships with neighbouring health units like Leeds, Grenville and Lanark.

ConnectWell Community Health, where I previously worked, was part of Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Health Unit, and those health units work together and now form part of the Southeast Public Health unit. I can attest to his impact on our community surrounding Kingston as a health care professional and educator and valued member of the Kingston community.

He is a professor of emergency and family medicine and public health sciences at Queen's University. Dr. Moore served as program director for the public health and preventive medicine residency program at Queen's University and has also served the community as an attending physician at Kingston General Hospital and Hotel Dieu Hospital.

Dr. Moore contributed as principal investigator for the Canadian Institute of Health Research, the Canadian Lyme Disease Research Network and was recognized as a champion for public health and primary health care by the Association of Ontario Health Centres—of which I was formally a member—now referred to as the Alliance for Healthier Communities.

Emergency response is one of the clearest examples of why this position matters. When outbreaks occur, when new diseases emerge, environmental hazards threaten communities, it is the Chief Medical Officer of Health who provides the steady, informed leadership necessary to guide both government and the public. Their voice can calm fear, combat misinformation and translate scientific uncertainty into practical, actionable guidance.

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Under his leadership, the former Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington Public Health unit adopted a proactive approach to COVID-19. The region experienced consistently low mortality rates and minimal hospital impact. This record made him a clear choice for Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Dr. Moore began his tenure in June 2021 during a pivotal phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The transition required selecting a leader with exceptional public health expertise to continue Ontario's fight against COVID-19, and Dr. Moore was the ideal candidate to lead Ontario's public health system during this critical period. He guided the province through its largest vaccination campaign and the reopening after pandemic lockdowns, bringing together all health service providers and stakeholders.

My experience working with the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit from the perspective of a health service provider, ConnectWell Community Health, and with the medical officer of health for that health unit, Paula Stewart, reaffirmed the importance of partnerships, stakeholder engagement and coordination of services. Dr. Moore was part of the collaboration and reached a vaccination rate of over 90%, working with CHCs, doctors, paramedics and pharmacists.

Dr. Moore's leadership, expertise and unwavering commitment have positioned Ontario's public health system for continued success. His contributions shaped Ontario's response to and recovery from COVID-19 and will continue to guide public health initiatives in the future.

Moving forward, Dr. Moore has used lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic for proactive planning and investment in public health infrastructure. Reflecting on both the challenges from the pandemic and effective strategies helps Ontario prepare for future infectious outbreaks. Investing in preparedness is more effective than facing the costs of being unprepared, like increased illness, mortality, social disruption and economic losses.

Dr. Moore continues to lead preparedness efforts, including working with the city of Toronto and Ontario Health to prepare for the international football associations' World Cup this summer and collaborating with the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response. A strong and secure public health system is necessary to maintain preparedness and safety as future outbreaks are unpredictable.

Immunization is an essential part of preparedness. It is one of our strongest tools to prevent future outbreaks and immunization is recognized as one of the most cost-effective health interventions. It prevents the spread of preventable infectious diseases, keeping Ontarians safe and healthy. Vaccines help guard against serious illnesses that circulate in schools, workplaces and communities. They are especially crucial for vulnerable groups: young children not yet fully vaccinated, individuals unable to receive vaccines due to medical conditions, older people who are more susceptible to illness.

Dr. Moore is a leading advocate for immunization benefits and demonstrated that throughout the pandemic. He oversees ongoing efforts to modernize and expand immunization programs. He champions the development of a single electronic health record, accessible by all providers to make immunization records easily accessible and reduce administration time for our health service providers.

He increased the number of registered health care providers, like pharmacists and midwives—and the expansion of their scope—authorized to administer vaccines, which greatly assisted with that vaccination record. He strengthened connections to primary care and our paramedics for timely immunizations—partnerships which are so important.

Immunization campaigns are among the most effective tools for protecting Ontarians and maintaining the resilience of the health care system. Ontario's government remains committed to improving immunization access and uptake, in partnership with Dr. Moore.

Ontario aims to be a leader in immunization, leveraging investments to enhance residents' health and well-being. Achieving this requires a coordinated approach involving all levels of government, public health units, primary care providers, hospitals and communities.

Dr. Moore's dedication to continuous improvement and preparedness, informed by experiences during the pandemic and recent respiratory seasons, ensures Ontario remains ready to face new challenges. Ontario's ongoing efforts, guided by Dr. Moore, promises a healthier, safer future for all.

Our government remains committed to working with Dr. Moore to build a robust public health system for Ontario. Dr. Moore will be trusted to lead the public health system into the future, ensuring vigilance and preparedness against potential threats.

Thank you, Speaker. I will now turn it over to the member from Essex.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Essex.

M. Anthony Leardi: En préparation pour notre discussion cet après-midi, j'ai eu l'occasion de jeter un coup d'oeil à la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé. J'ai pensé que ce serait une bonne idée de considérer un peu les pouvoirs dont le médecin hygiéniste en chef—le candidat, monsieur, dont nous avons parlé—ses pouvoirs qui sont énumérés dans cette loi.

Ces pouvoirs sont énumérés dans l'article 13, dans le cas précisé au paragraphe 4. Ce sont des pouvoirs dont le médecin en chef ou un inspecteur de santé peuvent s'arranger dans le cours de ses responsabilités. Donc, j'aimerais énumérer quelques-uns de ces pouvoirs, par exemple :

« —l'évacuation du lieu;

« —la fermeture, par le propriétaire ou l'occupant, de l'ensemble du lieu ou d'une partie déterminée;

« —l'affichage dans le lieu d'un avis relatif à l'ordre de fermeture;

« —l'exécution des travaux qui y sont spécifiés dans ou sur le lieu qui y est précisé ou près de celui-ci ...

« —le nettoyage et la désinfection, ou une seule de ces mesures, de la chose ou du lieu qui y est précisé;

« —la destruction de la matière ou la chose qui y est précisée;

« —l'interdiction ou la réglementation de la fabrication, du traitement, de la préparation, de l'entreposage, de la manutention, de l'étalage, du transport, de la vente, de la mise en vente ou de la distribution d'un aliment ou d'une chose. »

Donc, j'ai énuméré quelques-uns de ces pouvoirs qui sont spécifiés dans la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé. J'ai fait cela pour démontrer que le poste dont notre candidat est proposé d'occuper, c'est un poste très important dans notre province.

Je pense que le député qui vient de parler a aussi souligné le fait que le poste dont le candidat est proposé d'occuper, c'est un poste très important pour nous, et c'est pour ça que nous avons déclenché cette discussion cet après-midi pour discuter le candidat, son expérience et son expertise pour remplir ce rôle.

Having said that, I would like to pass to some other matters and to talk about the resiliency of Ontario society and the importance that we place on the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

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This position, of course, exists for the purpose of guiding the province not only through those matters which are predictable and which are seen, but also through other health challenges which might not be foreseen; or offering direction that is grounded in science and in public health, with a deep understanding of how diseases spread and how communities function; and, above all, how risks can be reduced and how we can all reduce those risks before they reach a critical point. These are, obviously, most obvious during moments of crisis. But of course, the value really lies in the quiet times that lead up to the crisis, when prevention, planning and long-term strategy take place quietly behind the scenes.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health serves as the primary voice advising the government. He also advises other health care providers and the public on issues affecting population health. This responsibility requires sound judgment and the ability to interpret complex scientific information in a way that is clear and accessible not only to the experts, but also to members of the public.

I think that we can all say that during times of overwhelming health concerns, people will look to this office for guidance, and they're going to look for guidance that is steady, credible and rooted in scientific evidence. And that matters enormously, because when people trust the guidance that they're receiving, then they're willing to follow it. Co-operation prevents illness, protects vulnerable people, and can even save lives.

The protection of the public health also requires eternal vigilance, because health threats rarely announce themselves in advance. Sometimes they appear quite suddenly.

Sometimes they build over time and then take you by surprise.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health is responsible for monitoring data across the province and watching for patterns. He works with experts, and this ongoing analysis helps prepare us for outbreaks of disease, environmental hazards, chronic disease trends, and other trends which might be evident through demographics or social behaviour. By detecting these trends early, we can certainly help prevent the spread of disease and have greater success with public health.

When emergencies do arise, such as the outbreak of disease or other urgent threats, the Chief Medical Officer of Health can provide the leadership necessary to coordinate the response. We have a lot of partners to coordinate in the response to a health crisis—public health units, hospitals, schools, long-term-care homes, laboratories, first responders, other levels of government—and they all need clear direction, because without coordination, responses can be slow and leave communities vulnerable. That's why this province needs to move quickly, delivering accurate information and mobilizing resources in order to reduce harm in times of crisis.

That's why we need a calm and steady leader, a person with experience, a Chief Medical Officer of Health who can fulfill that role, because that role is crucial in preventing illness through long-term planning and system-wide guidance. We have a lot of preventive measures that we can take in order to fulfill these necessities: vaccination, screening programs, nutrition, physical activity initiatives, mental health supports, environmental protections. Those are all part of the package that we can have when we have the strategic direction from this office.

Public health is effective when it stops illness before it happens, addressing biological risks and also other conditions that influence health. This position helps ensure that policies are shaped with the realities in mind, drawing attention to inequities and encouraging solutions that benefit all.

Communication is also very important from this office. This is an age when information spreads rapidly, and misinformation can also spread rapidly. The public needs a reliable source of information, and that reliable source of information should be the Chief Medical Officer of Health. It is useful for him to explain the risks clearly, provide timely updates, and speak in moments when the public is seeking guidance.

Good communication can be a guide to how people should behave, to counter harmful information, and strengthen public confidence in health measures. When complex issues arise, people depend on the Chief Medical Officer of Health to help them understand what is happening and why the actions that are being taken will protect them and keep them healthy or, at least, avoid the worst consequences of what is occurring.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health plays a central role in reviewing the practices and identifying problems, offering support when necessary and stepping in to correct issues that could compromise public health services. This

is a form of provincial oversight—to have a Chief Medical Officer of Health—and it's going to help maintain a strong and reliable system, ensuring that every community, whether it's a large one or a small one, rural or urban, benefits from safety and good advice.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the role is its long-term vision. Public health challenges do not fit neatly into short timelines. They evolve slowly and require sustained attention. The Chief Medical Officer of Health helps to prepare for unknown future threats, whether they be pandemics or shifts in population due to demographic health. This requires leadership that can think ahead and maintain focus even when the issue is not in the spotlight. A Chief Medical Officer of Health helps government see beyond the immediate demands and invest in the resilience of the system as a whole.

So the role of the Chief Medical Officer of Health is not only one to deal with disease if and when it breaks out, but also to help prevent it. We can attribute many of the improvements in life expectancy, we can attribute many of the improvements in quality of life and also many of the community well-being improvements that we take for granted, as the result of strong public health leadership. When this leadership is strong, the province is safer, healthier, and better prepared for the challenges of the future.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health provides stability, scientific guidance, and clear decision-making in a world where health threats can evolve rapidly. It's an office that ensures that the health of the population remains a central priority, and that decisions affecting millions of people are grounded in the best available knowledge. It's a role that quietly protects the public every single day, often without any recognition, and yet its impact is felt through the health and safety of every single individual.

For all of those reasons, I will support the motion being put before the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to put a few words on the record regarding the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario, Dr. Kieran Moore, who was first promoted to this post in the middle of the pandemic, in 2021. The Chief Medical Officer of Health who had handled the pandemic from 2020 to 2021 retired, and he came in.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health in Ontario is the senior public health physician and a key adviser to the government on health issues. He is responsible for overseeing public health programs, managing health emergencies, and issuing directives to promote and protect public health. In Ontario, he reports to the Deputy Minister of Health—and I will come back to this fact in a minute.

1730

The key responsibility of our Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Moore, in Ontario has to do with managing emergencies and risk management; to make sure that he exercises independent powers to respond to public health risks as well as emergencies. He has advisory roles. He advises the Minister of Health as well as other government

officials and the public on public health initiatives, such as communicable diseases, which unfortunately are making a comeback in Ontario, as well as vaccine programs, which I would say still need some improvement in Ontario.

Also, the Chief Medical Officer of Health assists in leadership, in monitoring and setting standards for the 34—I think we still have 34—public health units across Ontario, as well as directing provincial strategies. One of the strategies that many public health units talk about is the opioid epidemic that we have—unfortunately, we have not heard too much from the Chief Medical Officer of Health about this public health emergency in our province.

Reporting: The Chief Medical Officer of Health submits an annual report to the Legislative Assembly on the state of public health in Ontario.

I want everybody in this House to know that Ontario is the only province in all of Canada—including 10 provinces and three territories—where our Chief Medical Officer of Health reports to the Ministry of Health and to the Legislative Assembly. I have tabled bill after bill—the first time was on November 6, 2020—to make the Chief Medical Officer of Health an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, so that he is no longer an employee of the Ministry of Health. You just heard the important role that a Chief Medical Officer of Health needs to play. A Chief Medical Officer of Health needs to be able to speak to the public directly, needs to be able to speak to us, as legislators, directly, but in Ontario, he cannot do this. He is an employee of the Ministry of Health. He has to do what his employer tells him to do, which is completely opposite to what a Chief Medical Officer of Health should do. So in November 2020 I tabled a bill to make the Chief Medical Officer of Health an independent officer of the Legislature, like in other provinces, so that in a public health emergency, a select committee will be appointed to receive direct and transparent advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

I know we all want to forget the pandemic, but it's hard—it was there. It was a public health emergency. And when the Chief Medical Officer of Health was speaking with different MPPs—I was one of the MPPs who got to listen—it was always with staff of the Ministry of Health who would decide what questions we could ask and what questions we couldn't; what questions he could answer and what questions he could not. This is wrong. The Chief Medical Officer of Health is there to protect the public and should be able to speak his mind, even if it goes against the beliefs of the government that happens to be in power at the time.

The government in power during the pandemic was the Ford Conservative government, who did not like some of what the Chief Medical Officer of Health wanted to say and kept it quiet. This is wrong. It should not be happening.

The bill that I put forward would also see a provision for a temporary Chief Medical Officer of Health if the office is vacant.

I introduced it in 2020. We debated it in second reading. On December 1, 2020, this government voted it down. I brought it back in 2022. I brought it back on November 2, 2025, just before this House rose.

This has to change. The Chief Medical Officer of Health needs to be an independent officer of this Legislature. He needs to be able to speak his mind, no matter what the political view of the party that happens to be in power at the time. He is there to protect the public. He is a physician who knows public health and knows how to protect us, even when he says things that we don't want to hear.

Most of the time, public health is not sexy. It works behind the scenes. When public health works really good, we all stay healthy—the water that we drink is good, the food that we eat in restaurants is safe, the daycares we send our kids to are safe. All of this happens, why? Because we have strong public health that does their work.

In my neck of the woods, a lot of the water we drink—I don't have drinking water where I live; most of the people in Nickel Belt and many people in northern Ontario do not. We rely on wells. We rely on other sources of drinking water. We rely on the health unit to make sure that the water we drink is safe.

Same thing with the opioid epidemic—I couldn't help but be saddened by an article that was just put into my local paper, where the local public health unit is telling people what to do with the toxic drug supply that is in our community right now. Every single week in Sudbury, two to three people die of an overdose. Many, many others overdose.

There are a whole bunch of people who work in mines. There are more mines in Nickel Belt than in any of the other ridings. There are a lot of people who work in mines. They work 10 days in, 10 days out. After they've done 10 days at the mine, that means they have gone 10 days without having a drink of alcohol, without using any cannabis or any drugs, without having any sexual relationships with anybody. So when the 10 days are over and they come back home, all of the EMS know that they will get an increase in calls for overdose. Those are people who have good jobs, well-paying jobs, who have gone through the trades, who are doing everything right, but we let them die. Why? Because this government refuses to call the opioid epidemic an epidemic that it is. Why? Because our Chief Medical Officer of Health is not allowed to come and speak up because he is an employee of the Ministry of Health.

I could go on as to the weakness of our public health system because of the system we have in place in Ontario. Let that sink in—no other province does that. No other province has a Chief Medical Officer of Health who is an employee of the Ministry of Health and reports to the Legislative Assembly. Only Ontario does this. It does not serve us right. It puts people's lives at risk. It puts people's health at risk.

Those people know how to keep us healthy, but when they're not allowed to speak up—and you can go talk to any one of the medical officers of health in any one of the

34 public health units that exist, and they will talk to you on a one-on-one, but they are afraid to speak up, because if they speak up, they're afraid of retaliation from this government for saying things that don't please the Conservative government. This is wrong. Health care should be above politics. Keeping people healthy, keeping people alive should be above politics, but it is not in this province, and it needs to change.

Dr. Kieran has done a good job within the limitations of the position that he has, where he is an employee of the Ministry of Health. As an employee, you do what your boss tells you to do. Although your boss knows absolutely nothing about public health and you are the Chief Medical Officer of Health of the province, you don't get to speak up, because you're an employee of the Ministry of Health. This is wrong. This has to change.

And on this, I will let my colleague say a few words about Dr. Kieran Moore, who is being reappointed for another five years. Thank you for all you do, Dr. Moore. I know it's not easy.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Adil Shamji: I'm pleased to rise on this occasion to speak to the motion which, if passed, would see the reappointment of Dr. Kieran Moore as the Chief Medical Officer of Health here in the province of Ontario.

I want to begin by acknowledging the fact that I've had the pleasure of having multiple conversations with him. I know him, from those conversations, from studying his education and seeing the work that I know he tries to do, to be a smart, hard-working, honourable, intelligent and well-intentioned man, and I thank him for his work. Of course, he is a colleague. Like myself, we are both family and emergency physicians. He has additional qualifications, of course, that make him suitable to serve as our Chief Medical Officer of Health. Those qualifications include the fact that he is a specialist in public health and preventive medicine, with extensive additional training in disciplines such as sports medicine, tropical medicine and the like. As though that's not enough, he has a master's degree in public health.

I'm convinced he's suitable to carry on for another reason. As I look across what used to be a great province, prior to the last eight years under this government, I can't help but notice that Ontario has devolved into multiple crises: crises facing housing, education, health care, cost of living. Many of my constituents and people from across Ontario would agree that Ontario has become a disaster, which is why I completely understand that this province would choose a Chief Medical Officer of Health who has a master of science degree in disaster medicine. Of course, the hope is that he could come in and clean up the mess that this government has created, but as I will illustrate in the minutes to come, it doesn't matter how qualified and intelligent and honourable and dignified a Chief Medical Officer of Health is that you choose, he is limited in his

ability to have a profound impact by what this government allows him to do.

Despite his intellect, his hard work, his training and his well-intentioned good, hard efforts, let's reflect on the public health outcomes in this province over the last few years. It's easy to begin with how we fared during COVID-19, one of the most challenging health crises our province has ever felt. We had a government that put us repeatedly into reactive lockdowns and waited too long to pull the trigger to make sure that patients and society were kept safe. We had a situation in which long-term-care homes were mismanaged so poorly that the military, our national defence forces, were called in to do the work that our public health and health care system were supposed to do. And as though that's not worse enough, when we had an unacceptable number of deaths in those long-term-care homes, under truly pitiful and undignified circumstances, the only response that this government had was to introduce legislation that would protect the worst long-term-care offenders from being sued for negligence.

This is the same government whose public health response was so poor that the Red Cross, a not-for-profit charitable organization, was called in to save a hospital in Ottawa; a government whose public health response was so bad that adults were getting moved into pediatric intensive care units; a government whose public health response was so bad that across this great province, patients played Hunger Games in the hope that they might be able to get access to life-saving vaccines. And that's just COVID-19.

Time and time again, this government has stymied the efforts of its public health officials to implement effective and life-saving public health interventions. We see literally unfolding before us the amalgamation of our province's local public health units, a system of centralization that eliminates their ability to respond in a timely, contextual and local manner to the public health challenges that are being faced in small communities across the province.

One of the reasons that public health units are being incentivized, if I'm to be euphemistic—coercive, if I'm to be accurate—one of the reasons that they are being coerced to centralize is they're being starved of funds and the only way that they can hope for a handout is they're being told, "Only if they amalgamate first."

But because of successive years of public health underfunding, we now see those public health units being forced to make difficult decisions. On the few occasions that they get last-minute funding, it's too late to save programs. Vital interventions like doing eye testing are now gone. Local public health officers are finding that they don't have adequate staff to launch local vaccination campaigns. They're being forced to make difficult decisions because every single dollar they spend is a massive opportunity cost, and they can't do all of the essential work that they need to. I know that Dr. Moore would like to see them have the funding that they want,

but this Minister of Health and that Premier won't let him have it.

Under this government, we continue to see illnesses that were once eradicated in this country. We faced the worst measles epidemic, at one point in the last year or two, in all of North America, and I'm including the United States as well. That's not something to be proud of.

It is a measles epidemic that continued for far too long—a measles epidemic in which we did not see our public health officials coming out, updating the public, letting them know how they could be protected or launching effective, province-wide vaccination campaigns. We saw school lockdowns because this government did not learn from lessons that they should have learned during the rampant school lockdowns during COVID-19, and I continue. This government is so committed to stymying its public health responses.

I was listening very carefully to my colleague the member from Nickel Belt and her advocacy to have an independent Chief Medical Officer of Health. While there is absolutely merit to this call, there was a time when even though we had a Chief Medical Officer of Health who resided within the ministry and was not an independent officer of the Legislature, at least we had an independent Ontario science table that could offer independent analysis and evidence that could be delivered to stakeholders, politicians and this government.

This government has no interest in that, so they shut that down as well, because they're not interested in having an evidence-informed approach to public health. This is the same government that has thrown up its hands and abandoned all attempts at engaging in any kind of health promotion.

Constituents in my riding and citizens across this province have seen no shortage of advertisements about the Ring of Fire, about Ontario Place, but they haven't been hearing about how they can find a family doctor, about how they can get vaccinated, even in the midst of that measles outbreak. This government no longer engages in any meaningful health promotion campaigns. Again, I know that Dr. Moore firmly believes in the value of these, but if we have a government that won't listen to him, what is the point?

We've had doctors call for the declaration of a state of emergency around intimate partner violence, another public health issue and challenge that this government chooses to ignore.

Hon. Greg Rickford: That's not true.

Mr. Adil Shamji: I have a member across the House who seems to think that this government is being serious about intimate partner violence even as we've seen, in the midst of women's month, unprecedented levels of intimate partner violence. In fact, I saw with my own eyes, working in the emergency department during COVID-19, that the levels of child abuse, intimate partner violence and elder abuse skyrocketed to levels I had never seen in my clinical career. So there is categorically an urgent need to address this, and none of us on this side of the House are seeing

anyone on that side of the House take any action whatsoever or take this issue seriously.

Next, I'd like to turn to another public health catastrophe under this government, and that is its lack of action to address the opioid crisis. We saw opioid deaths skyrocket during COVID-19, and every step that this government has taken has largely been to stick its head in the sand and ignore the services that public health professionals, physicians and addiction doctors are calling for in order to save lives and keep people alive for long enough to address the challenges that they face with their mental health and addiction crisis.

This is not a government that is serious about public health. This is a government that professes that it will protect Ontario but fails to protect its economy, fails to protect its education system, fails to protect its health care, fails to keep criminals behind bars and successfully does actually only one thing: try to protect itself and its Premier.

I will conclude by reiterating the fact that Dr. Moore is a hard-working individual. As a physician who stepped into public service like myself, I understand many of the challenges that he is facing and the sacrifices that his family makes in order for him to be able to do the work that he does. But I know that he shares my frustration that so much of what our clinical training has taught us, so much of what the evidence guides us is simply impossible to implement when we have a government that is more satisfied with putting its fingers in its ears, throwing tantrums, stamping its feet and engaging in performative things rather than actually doing the hard work and delivering the public health interventions that our province needs to ensure that we have a happier, healthier and brighter Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate? Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Clark has moved government notice of motion number 13 relating to the reappointment of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Orders of the day?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: No further business for the day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): This House stands in recess until 6 p.m.

The House recessed from 1753 to 1800.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): There being no private members' public business proceeding today, pursuant to standing order 100(e), as no business is designated for consideration, we will now move on to the late shows.

Pursuant to standing order 36, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The member from Ottawa South has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I recognize the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Speaker. I guess I'm like Steve Earle: I ain't ever satisfied.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: I knew you'd get that. Nobody else got it. Nobody else behind the dais got it either.

You know what? I'm actually excited that I am the first late show of this session, so it feels like a very special honour to be here. As I said earlier—come on, it's the first late show—I'm going to put my hip waders on and I'm going to talk about the Skills Development Fund.

A few of the highlights: \$10 million to strip-club owners; \$2 million to the family dentist; \$1.8 million, I think, to Keel Digital Solutions, the company that was lobbied for by the minister's friend who had a director that took the minister to a hockey game.

The reality is, the government made choices not on what was good for people, but what was good for the government. Eight years later, under this Premier and this tired government, life is harder. Life is harder for Ontarians. When they see \$2 million for the family dentist, they go, "My school is not working. It's not working for my kids. The government is making my son or daughter have more debt when they try to get a degree, a diploma or a trade. They're not helping them. They're making life harder for me."

Now, the Skills Development Fund is supposed to be an investment in people; an investment in helping people develop skills, contribute, get jobs and start companies, but that's not what happened. How do we give \$10 million to a club owner? That's not skills development; that's backfilling somebody's payroll. That's paying something that they would already have to pay to hire the people they needed so their organization would work.

You know, everything is going up. The cost of living, cost of housing, home heating and electricity are going up. Class sizes are going up. Wait times are going up. The number of kids not getting what they need in school is going up. People without a family doctor are going up. All the things that are supposed to be going down are going up. The Premier has got it upside down. This Ford only goes in reverse.

It's not just me being dissatisfied with the answer; Ontarians are dissatisfied after eight years of this Premier and this government making life harder for them. They don't want a lot. They just want for their schools to work. They just want their son or daughter not to have to go into

crippling debt to have a future. They want a doctor. They want their ER open. They want their hospital to work. And for the 700,000 people—and that number is growing every day—who are out of work in this province, they just want a job.

The problem is that this Premier isn't focused on it. It's focused on things like the Skills Development Fund, which is about rewarding friends and donors and lobbyists. It's not about helping people; it's about helping the party.

And with all this stuff going on this week, we've had operation distract: distract from skills development, distract from the FOIs, distract from OSAP. And what do we have? We've got Billy Bishop. We've got a floating convention centre floating out there in the middle of Lake Ontario. We've got pepper spray. We've got BYOB—not BOIE. That's something totally different, and that's okay.

The stuff that's important to people isn't getting taken care of, and that's making life harder for them. And the Skills Development Fund—we haven't forgotten it. We're not going to forget it. That's one of the reasons that people are angry and upset.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from York South–Weston.

MPP Mohamed Firin: Speaker, Ontario is facing real economic pressure. Tariffs are driving up costs for businesses and for families. Global competition is intensifying, with countries around the world competing for the same talent, the same investment and the same resources Ontario needs to grow. Here at home, one in three tradespeople are nearing retirement. That creates real pressure on our economy, our industries and our ability to build. It affects the homes we need to construct, the infrastructure we need to deliver, the hospitals we need to staff and the projects we need to build our province. It affects employers who are ready to grow but cannot find the skilled workers they need, and it affects the workers who are looking for the training and the opportunity to build a better future for themselves and their families.

Speaker, the challenge is clear. Over the next decade, Ontario will need more than 400,000 additional skilled trades workers in critical sectors like construction, manufacturing, mining and health care. That is a defining economic challenge for this province, and if you want Ontario to remain competitive, resilient and self-sufficient, we need to meet it head-on.

That is exactly what our government is doing. While others talk, our government is acting. We're investing in workers, investing in training, and building the skilled workforce Ontario needs to stay strong in the face of global uncertainty. We understand that a strong economy depends on a strong workforce. We understand that if Ontario is going to compete, workers need the tools, training and pathways to succeed. And we understand that when workers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

Speaker, one of the most important tools helping us do that is the Skills Development Fund. Since 2021, the Skills Development Fund has supported more than 1,000 projects and trained over 700,000 people across Ontario—

training that they needed for better jobs and bigger paycheques. These are practical investments in the people who keep this province moving. They are helping workers build careers, helping employers find talent and providing key sectors with skilled workers.

The results speak for themselves. Through the first five rounds of the fund, we've trained 156,000 construction workers, 144,000 manufacturers, 62,000 people in the health care industry and 22,000 in mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction. And within 60 days of completing training, more than 100,000 people found work. These are real results. Those are real jobs. Those are real opportunities for Ontario workers and their families.

But the real story of this fund is not just told through numbers; it's told through people. It's told through the people like Waheed, a 22-year-old who enrolled in the Operating Engineers Training Institute of Ontario crane apprenticeship program. With support from the Skills Development Fund, he gained the training, confidence and practical skills to begin a rewarding career in the skilled trades. It is told through people like Noah, who left university during the pandemic and joined the Ontario Shipyards. Through Support Ontario Youth, he registered as an industrial millwright and now is preparing for his exam. And it's told through people like Quentin from Fanshawe College, who trained through an SDF-funded electrical vehicle upskilling program and is now helping prepare the next generation of workers for Ontario's growing clean energy future.

Speaker, that's what this fund delivers: real training, real opportunity and real results. It's helping apprentices in Niagara, miners in northern Ontario, veterans retrain for cyber security careers, newcomers bridging their credentials, people with disabilities who are entering the workforce and young people who discover the skilled trades for the first time.

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At a time when Ontario needs workers, our government is stepping up to train them. At a time when employers need talent, our government is helping to deliver it. At a time of global uncertainty, our government is making sure Ontario remains competitive, self-reliant and self-sufficient. We'll continue to stand up for workers, invest in skills and protect Ontario's economic future, because when Ontario workers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Next, the member for Orléans has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Education. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I recognize the member from Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I do rise tonight because I was not satisfied with the government's answer on my question about special education from last December, and because

families across Ontario still are not getting the support that they need.

Mr. Speaker, for me, this debate started with one child, an 11-year-old girl named Juliet—bright, determined, thriving in French immersion; a child who showed exactly what inclusion can look like when the system works. But this school year, everything changed because the support wasn't there in the classroom. Juliet went from learning alongside her peers to sitting at her desk with colouring sheets—not because she couldn't learn, but because there was no one there to help her. Her father said something to me that should stop all of us in our tracks. He said, "She went from thriving to just being a bum in a seat."

Speaker, that is not education, that is not inclusion and that is not acceptable in Ontario.

Now, something important has happened. After this issue was raised at the Legislature, after that video was shared and seen by hundreds of thousands of Ontarians on social media, Juliet has received the support she needs in her class, and that is an amazing thing. It is absolutely the right outcome. But it raises a bigger question: If the system only works when your story goes viral, then the system is not working. Because for every Juliet whose story is heard, there are countless other children across Ontario still sitting in the classroom without any support, falling behind, being managed instead of being taught—still effectively bums in seats.

When we talk about this problem, we should be honest about its scale. Ontario's schools are now facing a multi-billion-dollar funding gap—more than \$6 billion since 2018, when you account for inflation and enrolment. In Ottawa alone, the public board has a \$300-million gap. And boards are now spending more on special education than they receive from their government—in some cases, more than 25% above their allocation.

That is the reality behind this Conservative government's rhetoric, and we see the impact every day in classrooms. The funding for a student with special needs often amounts to just a few hours of support per week—not per day, per week—which means, in a real classroom, support is inconsistent, stretched and often simply not there. And that is how a child who can learn ends up colouring in the corner.

This problem is structural, Mr. Speaker. Too much of the funding is based on projections, not on actual, identified needs of the child in front of us. So when the formula misses the mark, the student pays the price. It's not the fault of teachers. It's not the fault of principals. It's not the fault of school boards. They're doing everything they can with what they have. It's a failure of the government to provide resources.

After eight years in government, this is no longer someone else's problem. This is their problem. It's their Conservative government's problem. After eight years, they don't get to say that they're working on it. After eight years, they don't get to say that they just need more time. After eight years, this is their system and these are their results.

We have a government that is looking tired, Mr. Speaker. They're starting to look worn out. They're running out of steam. Because when the same problems keep showing up in our schools, in our health care system, in affordability, it tells you something. It's not a government that's fixing problems. It's a government that is managing decline.

Mr. Speaker, Juliet is back to learning, but our job in this Legislature is not just to fix one case at a time. It's to build a system that works for every child so that no parent in Ontario has to ever say again, "My child is just a bum in a seat."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your time. And I would just like to point out that, after over a 100-day absence from the Legislature, it is Ontario Liberals who are here to the end of the night holding the government accountable while the NDP in official opposition have gone home.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I would caution the member on his reference to attendance.

I recognize the member from Markham–Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: I want to thank the member opposite for the opportunity to rise tonight to speak to the important issue of special education funding. Because, unlike the member opposite, I believe that facts matter, and the record of this government is clear.

Every single year since 2018, our government has increased education funding. We have increased per-pupil funding by more than 23% and special education funding by over 36%, bringing it to the highest level in Ontario's history. These are not just numbers. This is real, sustained investment in students.

These investments have supported the hiring of over 4,000 additional educational assistants to help our most vulnerable learners succeed in the classroom. We have also increased annual special education funding to approximately \$3.85 billion, ensuring that students with complex needs are receiving more support than ever before. And, Speaker, we are doing all of this while enrolment has remained stable or declined, meaning more support per student, not less. This is the record of this government: consistent investment, targeted supports and a relentless focus on student success.

But we know that funding alone is not enough. We have also been clear that accountability matters, because every dollar invested must actually reach students in the classroom. This is why we are taking action to ensure school boards remain focused on their core mandate:

supporting students, including those with special education needs.

Now, Speaker, let's contrast that with the record of the previous Liberal government. When they were in power, they forced school boards across this province to cut millions in special education funding. This is their legacy: cuts to the very students who need the most support. Liberal cuts and underfunding are why we increased special education funding by almost 40% since 2018. They also oversaw an education system where accountability was weak and where dysfunction too often took priority over student achievement.

Now, we see the same pattern from the opposition today. They continue to defend a status quo where school boards waste resources on internal disputes, mismanagement and priorities that have nothing to do with helping students succeed. We have seen examples across the province where trustee dysfunction has diverted attention away from classrooms and from special education supports.

That's simply unacceptable, because every dollar that is wasted is a dollar that is not going to a child who needs extra help. This is why our government is taking a different approach. This is why we are acting when boards fail to meet their responsibilities.

Speaker, our priority is simple: putting students first. That means ensuring that students with special education needs have access to consistent, high-quality supports no matter where they live. It means supporting teachers with the resources they need in their classrooms. And it means giving parents confidence that the education system is working for their children.

Unlike the opposition, we are focused on outcomes. We believe in an education system that is transparent, accountable and student-centred; an education system where resources are used responsibly; an education system where teachers are supported; and, most importantly, an education system where every single student has the opportunity to succeed.

Speaker, we will continue to make the investments, continue to strengthen the accountability and continue to do the work required to build the best education system in the country, because at the end of the day, we will always put students, parents and teachers first.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): There being no further matters to debate, pursuant to standing order 36(c), I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House now stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1821.

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Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux
Ciriello, Monica (PC)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
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Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
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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	
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

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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
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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, Hon. / L'hon. 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)	Kiwiwinoong	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	
McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
McKenney, Catherine (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	

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Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	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 (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. 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
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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	
Vacant	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough- Sud-Ouest	