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Mardi
14 avril 2026

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Clerk: Trevor Day

Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 April 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 avril 2026

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

THE SPEAKER

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

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to take this opportunity to make two observations. On behalf of the House, I'd like to congratulate you on your first anniversary of your election as Speaker.

Applause.

CLERK'S BIRTHDAY

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, I'd like to extend, through you to the Clerk, wishing him a very happy birthday.

Applause.

Singing of Happy Birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Thank you very much. That's probably why he was so delayed this morning. We almost missed the opening to get in here.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUTTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT FIRST ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 DONNANT LA PRIORITÉ À LA RÉUSSITE DES ÉLÈVES

Mr. Calandra moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care / Projet de loi 101, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'éducation et à la garde d'enfants.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Let me at the outset just say that I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security.

I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak about Bill 101, Putting Student Achievement First Act, which was introduced yesterday. As you know, Madam Speaker, this is the second in a series of reforms since this Parliament returned after last year's election. It really builds on

the previous Bill 33, which we passed—it was introduced last June and passed last November.

I think it bears some importance for us to look back a little bit, as I think we always do, when trying to frame why it is that we have brought a bill forward and the changes that are embedded in the bill. I think it's always important that we look back a little bit and see some of the changes that have led up to this bill which was introduced yesterday.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I've mentioned this on a number of occasions: When we were returned to office back in 2018, following 15 years of Liberal governance in the province of Ontario, we inherited an education system that was really struggling in a number of different areas. Most importantly, student achievement was struggling. Obviously, student achievement should be top of mind for any Minister of Education because I know it is top of mind for every single educator across the province of Ontario. It is one consistent theme that I have heard as I have travelled across the province, as I've spoken to teachers, educators, anybody really associated with the education system—when I speak to parents. The number one focus, they tell me, always should be on student achievement, and they have been really frustrated by some of the distractions in the system.

When you look back to 2018, we saw a system that was struggling under, really, an ideologically driven education agenda by the previous government. Ultimately, we had things like—I know we all know about discovery math and the struggles that our kids were having under discovery math. They had strayed away from some of the proven methods of delivering curriculum. In particular, our reading and writing scores were not achieving at a level that I think made parents comfortable. It certainly did not make educators comfortable.

The system itself was turning into a system, as I said, that was ideologically driven, but really, there was a lot of division within the system. A lot of that division, of course, came because for over 50 years—we can't just put it all at the foot of the previous Liberal government. I think that would certainly be unfair because it has been governments of all stripes for 50 years that had made the decision to download responsibilities for education to school boards and trustees. The reality was, they neither had the expertise nor did they have the authority to make the types of changes that were necessary to ensure that our kids were achieving their best and that our educators had the opportunity to give our children the best.

That is why we started to make changes. In 2018, as I said, our math scores were not where they should have been. Our reading and writing scores were not where they

should have been. There was division within the system. Teachers, by and large, were being put in the middle of fights between school boards and parents, and that's not where they wanted to be.

In 2018, we came to government and it was started almost immediately by former Minister Thompson, who really put a stop to many of the changes that had been on the docket, had the previous government been re-elected—put a stop to those changes, retrenched and said, “Okay, what is it that we need to do to not only pause the reforms that had been taking place and had not been successful but put ourselves back on a track to a back-to-basics approach?” Those reforms were continued by Minister Lecce.

I think it bears in mind reminding, and I know nobody wants to be reminded of it—I certainly don't—the fact that really early on in our first term we were confronted with a global health and economic crisis, the likes of which we had never seen. We were shortly into our first mandate when that hit, and it really changed everything.

The opportunity existed for us to just simply say, “We're going to just deal with that,” and we did—more successfully, I would say, than almost any other jurisdiction in the world. But we didn't just stop there. We said that we have to continue on. The challenges that the province of Ontario are facing, not only because of the global health and economic crisis, are there, but the systemic problems that we see within governance, within the Ministry of Education, within other parts—the infrastructure deficit, the health care deficit, the transit and transportation deficits—they were all still there, so we decided we needed to move forward. And that continued on with education.

Despite the challenges that we were facing with respect to COVID, the minister at the time and the government at the time decided they were going to move forward. We seized on some of the challenges that COVID offered us as well. We kept the school system going—that was really important—but at the same time, we looked at what we needed to do in order to move things forward. That was when we really doubled down on a back-to-basics curriculum in some of the core areas of education, because we knew from educators that that was the way that our children were going to succeed—that proven ways of delivering curriculum, that had served Ontario students and educators well for years, that was the way that we were going to get back on track. That was, really, the start of really fundamental change within the education system—this move towards depoliticizing the system, this move towards listening to teachers and educators, and really also listening to parents, because they're obviously very, very important in all of this.

I remember, myself, going to one of my kids' parent-teacher interviews. I was put in front of the teacher, a wonderful teacher, and they put a math problem in front of the parents, because we were doing a group of us. We thought we had got the answer correct—it was a very simple math problem; we thought we had got it correct and we were all pretty happy with ourselves. I thought, “It's not that hard to get that particular one correct.” In all honesty,

it wasn't a challenging one. But we had actually gotten it all wrong, because the answer wasn't what was important; how you discovered the answer was more important. So those parents who got it wrong, got it right, and those who got it right, got it wrong.

0910

As a parent, you're thinking, “I don't know what the heck you're talking about. I have no understanding of what that means. I have no understanding of what my child is getting out of a system that teaches them that they don't need to be correct.” I knew that we had to start making some changes in the system.

Minister Lecce really led a lot of those initial phases, and you're starting to see it in the EQAO scores. We are starting to see a steady increase in EQAO scores across the province of Ontario, especially in reading and writing. The scores that our students are achieving now are some of the highest scores that we have ever achieved in the province of Ontario. International testing as well confirms that since we went back to a back-to-basics and proven way of delivering that curriculum, we are starting to see achievement the likes of which we haven't seen for many, many years in the province of Ontario. Again, it was a more consistent way of delivering it, with leadership from the Ministry of Education, that has led to these results.

We also saw, though, that our math scores, while increasing—starting to increase, as opposed to falling year over year—we're starting to trend up in the right direction, but not in the fashion that we were happy with, certainly not in the fashion that educators were happy with and parents either. So we have doubled down on some additional investments in that—again, started by my predecessor—to put more supports in the system for math, because we want to see those achievements increase as well.

Look, it really started in 2018. Again, when we were elected just a year ago—I guess this House met for the first time, ironically, a year ago today. As the House leader just mentioned, it's the one-year anniversary of the first female Speaker's election to the Chair, and we then were faced with a global tariff war. It's no secret why people turn to Progressive Conservative governments in the province of Ontario in times of crisis, because they know that a Progressive Conservative government will have the interests of the people of the province of Ontario first and foremost, and that the way you build a better education system is through a strong economy. So it is no coincidence that, of course, we were elected a year ago.

At that point, we brought forward Bill 33, which was the first companion piece of legislation, frankly—the precursor to this one. Bill 33, just to remind everybody, was a bill that came out of a lot of dysfunction that we were seeing in local governance, in particular in a number of school boards.

Mr. Speaker, you will know, of course, that we have assumed responsibility for eight school boards in the province of Ontario—about 40% of the students in this province are directly under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. There were a whole host of reasons why this had to happen across the province of Ontario, but Bill 33,

in particular, made it easier for the ministry to assume responsibility when school boards were falling off the rails.

Under the old system, before Bill 33, a Minister of Education really had to wait until a school board and its students were in absolute crisis before stepping in. To put it into context, one of our school boards, school board Near North, which encompasses Parry Sound, North Bay—it is a very large board. They were in a surplus budget situation, so there was no reason for the Ministry of Education to ever have to look at the Near North school board. But then it came to light that at this school board, there was a new school that they were building: a new Parry Sound high school and an elementary school; they were combining them into one super school.

Approval for that school had been given, I think, 14 years earlier—14 years earlier they had started deciding to build this new super school. During this construction, it came to light that there were massive, massive problems with this build and more needed to be done. Now, the minister did not have the tools to step in and do something about it. As minister, I was to sit back, because the board was in a surplus situation, and allow the problems to continue unabated, or without interruption, unless I followed an arcane series of rules and regulations in order to get to a point where the minister could assume responsibility for that board.

Now, we passed Bill 33. It allowed us to step in really quickly. Once Bill 33 was passed, it set out new standards for the minister to move in. It's a responsibility—let's not take that for granted—the Ministry of Education is assuming responsibility; it's taking more leadership, and I have no issue with that at all. I think Ontarians would appreciate that.

But let's look at what happened in that board. We got into the board, and what we found out after an independent investigation is that the elected trustees were actually ignoring conflict-of-interest rules. They didn't care to learn what the conflict-of-interest rules were. Some were voting to benefit themselves. Still other trustees were going out into the community sowing division within the community to try to change a decision that they themselves had made earlier on.

Bear in mind, a 14-year project was on their plate, a school that was three quarters of the way built. They then decided that they didn't want it any more. They wanted a change. So they go out in the community, and they start sowing division within the community to try to get parents upset, educators upset, to try to stop a build.

At the same time, they had come to an agreement previously that they were going to transfer two of their schools to the French school board, which was bursting at the seams and is still very popular. The ministry funded significant repairs, funding about \$15 million to the French board to repair the older schools to be ready for the French board. And this school board decided, "We're going to go out in the community, sow division between French-speaking parents and English-speaking parents to try and get the school to be stopped so that we can keep those two schools and we can disadvantage the entire

system," because they wanted to keep one particular school where one trustee had his wife teaching at—conflict-of-interest rules be damned. So we stepped in.

And then when we stepped in, we realized that not only was it a problem with governance at this board, but the entire capital build of this school was in a catastrophic state to the point where we had to step in. We've had to bring outside assistance from the Halton school board to help us build. Portions of the school are being demolished before a student has even set foot in the building.

The previous school that kids were at, the Parry Sound High School, which has served the community for over 60 years, is partially demolished. Kids were moved back into a partially demolished school. They're learning right now in a demolished school that is being made available to them. Trustees, of course, saw no problem with this.

Now, it goes even further. You had a director of education at the Near North District School Board who decided that he didn't want to be in the same building where his superintendents were, where the public service were, so he decided to uplift himself, close a school and make the school his office. So he and an assistant went to a closed high school—a beautiful closed high school that was closed under the Liberal government's time in office—and, like Saddam Hussein, he had himself a wonderful palace, this guy.

Then, to make matters worse, he gave himself a raise.

Interjection: Why not?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes, why not?

So he gave himself a raise. Now, in giving himself a raise—how did he give himself a raise, you ask? Well, he gave himself a raise to a level that is illegal, first of all, because he wasn't allowed to pay himself that much, but he did something very unique. He decided, as opposed to the trustees giving him a review of his job performance, that he was going to do it himself.

I know many of you are too young to remember Stuart Smalley. That's a Saturday Night Live character who looks at himself in the mirror and says, "I'm great, and I'm going to have a wonderful day."

So this director of education looks at himself in the mirror and says, "I'm doing a damn good job. I've got a school that's half demolished. I'm by myself, away from my bureaucracy. I haven't met with any of my superintendents in years. The trustees who are responsible for hiring and firing me have given me the opportunity to review myself. I'm going to give myself a damn good review."

0920

And he did: He gave himself a wonderful review and then paid himself more than the director of education in Toronto, for a board of some 10,000 students. This went on and on and on. You ask yourself, "Well, why didn't trustees, who have the ability to fire—why didn't they just fire him?"

Interjection: Walk him out the door.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Walk him out the door, as I think everybody else would do. Well, they thought it was perfectly fine—perfectly fine. I asked my ministry, "Why are we not stepping in to do something about somebody who

has broken the rules, is paying himself more than he can be paid when students are learning in a half-demolished school? What is our responsibility here? Where is the leadership from my ministry in order to stop this from happening?" Well, the tools weren't there.

That's a long-winded way to say that's where Bill 33 came in.

There are still other boards that we took over supervision of because of Bill 33. The York Catholic board: We took control of the York Catholic board recently. They have gone through eight directors of education in the last nine years, I think, so one a year, basically. Whereas Near North wouldn't fire anyone, York Catholic was like—

Interjection: A revolving door.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —a revolving door of directors of education. Now, imagine the impact that has on educators in the system and the public service that surrounds them.

Now, they went to a whole other extreme, the Catholic board in York region. They then decided that they couldn't stomach each other—the trustees—so they have spent more money fighting each other in court than they have on some of the important educational programs within the York Catholic board. And all the while, who's put in the middle of this conflict between trustees and parents? It's teachers. It's always teachers that are going to be put in the middle of this.

You have the Peel District School Board. Well, for years, they kept inflating their numbers, saying, "We have this many students." Despite the ministry saying, "You're not going to have that student enrolment," they would say, "Yes, we have this enrolment," and they'd provide us with a budget that suggested that they had a balanced budget, then halfway through the year say, "We made a mistake. We now have a deficit. But don't worry, we're going to go into our reserves and we're going to balance it." So they would give you a fake deficit number every year. Before Bill 33, we had no tools to step in. Peel region—we stepped in and we are putting that back on track.

Similarly, in other boards—the Toronto Catholic board, the Toronto public board: These are boards where some of the challenges they face are certainly of their own making; some are more historical. Frankly, I am very sympathetic, as I said, to Toronto schools. I mean, it was a shock to a lot of people that Toronto schools have pools. You go to different parts of the province and they say, "What are you talking about, Toronto schools have pools?" And I said they do because many, many years ago, the city partnered with Toronto—many, many, many years ago—to bring in pools as a part of their infrastructure. At some point, Toronto no longer supported the pools at those schools to the extent that it used to when they were built, and the board is responsible for that. Through no fault of the board, they have an infrastructure piece where they need assistance, which created a pressure on them. So I'm very sympathetic to things like that.

But at the same time, you had trustees who'd get there and then put all kinds of pet projects in place, which distract from the work of educating. It causes challenges to student achievement. I was brought into the office by

one director of education of one of the supervised boards, Toronto, and they showed me the desk—it was a fairly large desk, to be honest with you, a big desk—and it was full of reports, a massive stack of reports after reports after reports. I asked the director, "What are you showing me?" I thought it was just a long decision, something that had to be made. He said, "That is five years, \$5 million worth of reports, and no decision on a school construction project in Toronto." That decision was made by a supervisor within 45 minutes. That school is now being built, and in two years those kids will have a state-of-the-art facility—45 minutes—

Interjections.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's actually quite interesting. Recently, my team was on the phone with a couple of members of the opposition, the official opposition—an issue in a Toronto board, the Toronto District School Board, a safety issue for parents, which we were able to resolve for them in 30 minutes. The message back to us was, "We have been trying for three years to get trustees to take us seriously." Now, this is—I won't say which member of the opposition; if they ask me a question today, I'll make sure that I highlight that meeting, but I won't do that here, today. But this was a member of the opposition—I think Dianne Saxe is the councillor in that area—who said, "For years, we have been fighting to get them to appreciate that this is a safety concern and they just simply would not listen to us. And yet here we are, 30 minutes into a meeting, and we are having our safety concerns addressed." So all good stuff.

This bill goes a step further, obviously. This bill limits the Toronto trustees to 12 from the over 20 that they have right now—it brings them in line with the Catholic board. This bill caps their honorarium at \$10,000. It limits their expense accounts—very, very limited expense accounts for trustees across the board. It freezes the amount of trustees across the board, so if you're a board with five trustees, you're frozen at five trustees; if you're a board with 10, you're frozen at 10; and it brings Toronto's down to 12. I think those are all very important investments. It allows the trustees to do what they keep telling me that they want to do, it allows them to keep doing what the opposition says is the most important role of a trustee: to represent the community and bring that voice to the board. But it strips them away of much of everything else that they do that would cause division within our school system.

Going forward, every school board will have a CEO who will be responsible for the day-to-day management, financing, human resources, capital and construction projects throughout a school board. The CEO will be responsible for that, and a chief education officer will be responsible for all of the academic portions of a board—so separating those two positions which are currently housed within one person's office.

The CEO will bring forward a budget. They will create the budget, they bring that budget to the board, and trustees will have the opportunity to review the budget, to make suggestions and, ultimately, hopefully pass the budget

if it makes sense. If they choose to not pass the budget, they can ask for changes from the CEO. The CEO can turn down that board and send the budget to the minister for changes or for approval. It is, again, refocusing our trustees on what their oversight job is and what they keep telling me is their most important function: to represent parents' voices to the board. So we're going to allow them to do that.

Moreover, we are changing bargaining in the province of Ontario. With the addition of CEOs across the province of Ontario, school trustees will no longer be invited to the bargaining table, with the exception of Catholic trustees. As you know, Catholic trustees retain a denominational role—it's a constitutional right that they have, and we are going to respect that constitutional right, but those things that fall outside of denominational will be the responsibility of the CEOs. They, through the directors of education, will be representing our communities and school boards at local bargaining, and no longer will trustees be doing that.

We go another step further. We took a look at all of the fees that were being paid by trustees—well, they weren't paying them; they were actually insisting that the board pay for a number of fees. These are association fees—not just travel to conferences and things like that. One board had—well, we're still compiling the list. It's basically millions upon millions of dollars that was being taken out of education to support random associations. So we are banning the use of education dollars for the use of outside associations in any form, which will directly put money back into the education system. If the trustees want to have these associations and they want to pay for them out of their honorarium, they can do so, but they're not allowed to do so with money that is meant for the education system.

Let's be clear that the changes to how boards are governed and the reduction in the role of a trustee to a much less divisive role makes things a lot clearer, and I think—not I think—I know will put the focus back on student achievement. It will allow us a more consistent level of delivery across the province of Ontario, absolutely. I know the opposition is going to light their hair on fire and say, "Oh, my gosh. This means that the ministry is going to govern from Queen's Park, all of the boards." If I wanted to do that, I simply would have gotten rid of all of the school boards. I respect the fact there are some local nuances that need to be shaped by school boards. That's why they're still there. That's why we never contemplated removing them. But I also accept the fact that the Ministry of Education should be responsible for student achievement, in co-operation with our educators. It is the leadership of the Ministry of Education that should lead that step towards student achievement, and this bill allows us to do that. I accept that responsibility. It is a way of making sure that we have a more focused, centralized delivery.

0930

This bill also talks about curriculum—standardizing the curriculum resources that are allowed. I keep hearing it from teachers over and over and over again that our curriculum that we have been providing our teachers is too open for interpretation. It means that they have to do so much more than just teach. They have to scour the Internet

looking for ways of helping teach their classes and that leads to inconsistencies from board to board and from classroom to classroom. We are going to provide that centralized access to ministry-approved curriculum tools.

Recently, as you know, Madam Speaker, we introduced a new history curriculum, we introduced a new kindergarten curriculum, which leads that, which is very, very focused and provides a great deal of focused, academic goals for our students. Our educators are very excited by that, and they want to see that process continue.

We're also doing a couple of other things that I'll highlight before I turn it over. We talked to a lot of high school teachers, and they told us that they need better tools to manage their classrooms, and one of the things that they are challenged with is chronic absenteeism in the classroom. We saw that before the pandemic; we've seen it after the pandemic—that absenteeism has continued to increase. One of the tools that teachers were asking for is a return to a different matrix for grading.

This bill will restore written exams in every school board. I know it's hard to believe, but when we took over supervision of both Thames Valley and Ottawa public, we had to reinstate final examinations because the students there did not have final examinations. Province-wide, there will be a final examination period. All students from grades 9 to 12 must write a final exam. It will be weighted up to 20% to 25% of their final mark. But equally important, a student's mark will also be dependent on their attendance and their participation. So for grades 9 and 10, 15% of their final mark will be for participation and attendance and, of course, 20% to 25% a final exam, and the same goes for, of course, grades 11 and 12.

What teachers are telling us is that this will help them control their classroom, that there is nothing more challenging than when students pop in and out and there is nothing a teacher can do. There is nothing a teacher can do because the majority of their mark was dedicated just on completing their coursework. As important as that is, I think we can all agree that in the real world, you have to show up, you have to participate, you have to be part of the team in order to get the best.

I was FaceTimed—not far from you. A group of teachers last night FaceTimed me. It was an unknown caller; frankly, I don't know how they got my number, but they did. Anyway, they FaceTimed me; I turned it on and there was a group of teachers who basically just said, "Thank you. This will really lead us down a path of getting better control of our classroom."

The other thing I just really want to briefly talk about is school board communications. I'll end on this. School boards will no longer be allowed to communicate—boards themselves, not trustees. Trustees, you can fill your boots; you can communicate any way you like and can be held responsible for that. But school boards, themselves, will no longer communicate on anything outside of educational matters.

I've said it a million times: I could care less what the Toronto District School Board's opinion is on a global conflict. It's of no interest to me and I don't think it's of

any interest to parents. I don't care what the York region Catholic board might think of Donald Trump and Pope Leo's ongoing tiff. It's of no consequence to me. What I care about is, how are my kids doing in school? Is it a snow day? How did the sports team do? Are there other things to be made aware of? School boards will be refocused on communicating only those issues that matter to parents and that are important for the school community.

There is a lot more in here. I know that I'll have another opportunity at other phases of this to get into it, but I think equally important is the amazing work of the minister of post-secondary education. He can talk about how well received that has been. But, Madam Speaker, again, I look forward to the rest of the debate on this.

With that, I will turn it over to the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):

I recognize the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the Minister of Education for bringing this legislation forward.

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

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

The people of Ontario are the greatest asset that we have. We will do whatever it takes to protect Ontario, and that includes protecting our students. By creating the right conditions for students to succeed, both during their academic journey and in their future careers, Ontario will continue to build a strong, resilient economy.

That brings me to my main focus today: teachers. Teachers shape the lives of young people every day. They are mentors, role models and leaders in our classrooms. The strength of our education system depends on their skill, dedication and readiness to meet the needs of today's learners, which is why Minister Calandra and I have introduced legislation to modernize teacher education. Should the bill pass we would create a more nimble and responsive pipeline of highly skilled teachers who are ready to meet the needs of students, families and the communities they serve.

Ontario's teacher education system has long been respected for its quality, but communities across Ontario need more highly skilled teachers to give students the best possible start to their education. That is exactly what this legislation would do.

Before I get into the details, let's take a quick look at how we arrived at our current model. For years, Ontario's teacher education programs were delivered over two semesters with a minimum 40-day practicum. In fact, 80% of the teachers in our world-class system today were trained through this model. At that time, Ontario graduated

9,000 teachers annually. But in September 2015, the Liberals made the programs four academic semesters, with an average of an 80-day practicum spread out over two years. This change resulted in admissions to teacher education programs dropping by 50%, threatening our pipeline of highly skilled teachers and deterring excellent candidates from a fulfilling career.

Over the last 10 years, Ontario has continued to grow, especially in the last few years. That means more families need excellent teachers to give their kids the best start to their educational journey.

School boards across Ontario are telling us the same thing: The demand for teachers is increasing. We especially need French-language teachers, French as a second language, technological and rural and northern teachers. At the same time, there are capable individuals who want to become teachers but face barriers, including time, cost and rigidity in current teacher education pathways.

Our plan to modernize teacher education has three pillars. First, with this legislation, we are proposing to shorten teacher education from the current two-year, four-semester program to a one-year program delivered in three consecutive semesters. By shortening teacher education to one year, we would prioritize in-class learning, break down barriers to students launching their careers and get teachers into classrooms sooner.

Should the bill pass, teacher programs at all of our 14 publicly assisted or three private institutions that offer initial teacher education would offer the shortened program by May 2027. To be clear, these proposed changes apply across the board to both English-language and French-language teacher education programs. Our approach is province-wide, consistent and focused on meeting student needs wherever they live and learn.

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Research and stakeholder feedback consistently show that teacher readiness is driven more by the quality of practicum experience and mentorship than by program length alone. This is the lived experience of educators, school leaders and teacher candidates themselves. Plus, many other provinces offer shorter, more flexible pathways into teaching while maintaining professional standards.

We have reviewed teacher education programs across multiple Canadian jurisdictions and found no consistent evidence that longer programs alone lead to better prepared teachers or improved student outcomes. What does make a difference, Speaker, is the quality of practicum experience, strong mentorship and structured classroom immersion.

Ontario needs a system that prioritizes classroom readiness, while allowing qualified teachers to enter the workforce sooner, which is why the second pillar of our plan to modernize teacher education is to establish a new minimum length of practicum across all programs. Across the country, practicums range from 70 days to 120 days.

Teachers, faculties, students and school boards have been clear: In order to best prepare for a successful teaching career, our teacher candidates need as much time as possible in the classroom during their studies. We see it across

every single sector, from STEM, health care, teaching and skilled trades: The more time a student spends learning the job while studying, the better equipped they are to succeed and stay in their chosen career.

In order to strengthen our pipeline of highly skilled teachers who can hit the ground running upon graduation, under this legislation, we would be consulting with the sector to identify a practicum length that best prepares future teachers to thrive in the classroom. And then we would build that practicum length into every single teaching program in Ontario—from North Bay to Kingston to Windsor—so that every community has access to teachers who have the hands-on skills they need to give our kids an exceptional education.

Across our province, there are passionate, dedicated individuals with relevant work experience who want to enter the teaching profession, and that experience would make them a better teacher—experience like early childhood education diplomas and working as an educational assistant. We believe these individuals should be recognized for their experience. Under this legislation, Ontario would explore opportunities to create accelerated pathways into teaching for qualified candidates.

The goal is straightforward: to allow some candidates to complete their program in a shorter time frame by reducing duplicative coursework, or adjusting practicum requirements, while still meeting regulatory standards. This flexibility is especially important for mature learners and second-career applicants, for whom time and cost can be significant barriers to pursuing a teaching career.

So we're looking into how we can diversify entry pathways including the responsible use of prior learning assessment and recognition, or PLAR for short. PLAR allows candidates to demonstrate prior learning gained through work, study or life experience, and receive credit where appropriate. This tool already exists within Ontario's post-secondary system and is supported through ministry guidelines and existing funding.

By expanding these pathways responsibly, we can reduce unnecessary duplication of training, attract skilled candidates into high-demand teaching areas and remove structural barriers, all without compromising quality or consistency of education so that our children get the best possible teachers for their classrooms.

Speaker, we recognize that shifting program design requires careful implementation, which is why our government would work closely with the universities that offer teacher education, as well as the Ontario College of Teachers, to ensure a smooth transition. We would identify what core courses must remain in the one-year program to keep producing highly skilled teachers while accommodating a new, elongated practicum. In addition, we'll also be providing transition funding to our institutions to support the cost of transitioning the program.

This program will not go into effect until May 2027, meaning all of the programs that begin before then, like the ones this fall, will follow the existing format, keeping things straightforward for our current students—because our students' success is the main focus of this bill, and

their future success is exactly what we had in mind by choosing the start date for this program.

Our proposed start date of May 2027 means our first cohort of students under the new program would graduate by May 2028. This graduation date better aligns with the K-to-12 school calendar, so that our students have finished their education right when our school boards are looking to hire for the fall, increasing our students' ability to be hired and start their meaningful careers sooner.

By bringing these three pillars together—a one-year teaching program, a longer, standardized practicum and recognizing prior relevant learning—we would break down barriers, prioritize in-class learning and create a nimbler and more responsive pipeline to meet the needs of students and families. This efficient, high-quality program would allow more people to launch their teaching careers sooner while ensuring that parents and their children have access to well-prepared teachers—because when it comes to protecting our province's future, that means protecting our children's future, and that starts with ensuring our teachers have the skills they need to empower our children to reach their full potential.

But our work doesn't stop there. Like we always have, our government is backing this plan with critical, decisive investments. Through budget 2025, we invested nearly \$56 million to train 2,600 more teachers by 2027—especially for northern, rural and remote communities. From this investment, we're teaching more than 500 new teachers in French-language and French-as-a-second-language education programs. On top of this, we've doubled the amount of French-language teaching students enrolled at the Université de l'Ontario français.

Speaking of French teachers, in 2021, our government launched a French teacher recruitment and retention strategy to increase the supply of French-language teachers in Ontario. To date, we have invested more than \$30 million to bring more French teachers to communities that need them the most. As a result of these critical investments, Speaker, the French-language teacher shortage has been reduced by 30% since its peak in 2022.

And, of course, as part of our historic new funding model that will bring an additional \$6.4 billion to the sector—the single-largest investment in post-secondary education not only in Ontario but Canadian history—we are investing \$150 million into our teacher education program, funding 4,000 more seats and increasing per-student funding by 27%. Because we know if we want to protect Ontario families' access to high quality K-to-12 education, we cannot only ensure the teacher program is efficient, well-focused and responsive to parents' needs, we must also ensure that we're expanding enrolment and ensuring our schools have the support they need to deliver a world-class education.

Not only will our new funding model raise operating funding to \$7 billion this fall, which is a 30% increase over this year, it also includes \$1.7 billion in additional funding to support 70,000 more seats in economy-driving sectors like STEM, health care and the skilled trades—and, of course, teacher education, which means while today,

we're supporting over 12,000 teaching students across Ontario, through this record-setting investment, we will expand capacity and train even more teachers for classrooms today and into the future.

These targeted expansions reflect the demands of Ontario's labour market and the skills employers consistently identify as critical to long-term growth. We're expanding the programs students want while building the workforce Ontario needs because that is how we protect this province.

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Under this legislation, our government is also taking steps to streamline performance and accountability for our colleges, universities and Indigenous institutes. Following the introduction of our historic \$6.4-billion funding model into the post-secondary sector, our government has modernized and strengthened our funding agreements with each post-secondary institution to include stringent performance metrics, like graduate employment rates, economic impact and hands-on learning. We're seeing first-hand how our schools are meeting the needs of students, employers and our economy, and we've tied a portion of their funding to their performance to ensure our institutions continue to deliver a world-class education.

To reduce duplication and administrative burden, under this legislation we are proposing to absorb the accountability and performance mandate of the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario into ministry functions. We would also bring their free speech reporting function into the ministry as well.

Our government is leading by example, Speaker. As colleges and universities find efficiencies and focus on their core mandate, our government would also eliminate duplication, find efficiencies and deliver savings for taxpayers. This absorption would ensure institutions continue to find efficiencies and remain focused on their core mandate: equipping students with the skills they need to thrive in high-demand careers. With proposed savings to be reinvested in student success, our government would be ensuring that our higher education system is building the most competitive workforce in the G7.

In closing, as Minister Calandra and I say often, education is about the students. It's about giving the students the support they need to succeed in the future, whether that's K-to-12 students or post-secondary students. It's about giving students the support they need to succeed, and that is exactly what this legislation would do for our teachers and our children. By working together with our exceptional faculties, our school boards and the OCT, we would launch a more nimble and responsive teacher education pipeline that is ready to deliver an exceptional education, no matter what the province may face.

I say this often, but, as a proud husband of a teacher and a father of three young children, I see first-hand every day the incredible impact Ontario's teachers have on our children. Our proposed changes in this bill will not only ensure we have more teachers to give our children the best start to their education, but it will make sure those teachers are highly capable of leading a successful, fulfilling career—the type of career where children far into their adulthood

will look back and remember the teacher who made a difference.

I'm confident that teachers trained through our proposed new program will protect our children's future, protect our pipeline of skilled teachers and protect Ontario.

Thank you, Speaker, and I ask for your support of this bill as we move forward.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to ask my question to the Minister of Education. It seems as though, in hearing this government speaking, they've undergone a miraculous conversion. This was the same government that cut \$6.4 billion out of education. They had an attack on educational assistants with the unconstitutional Bill 28. They set up a snitch line on educators in 2018 and forced online learning, even knowing that it was not pedagogically appropriate for all students. They've also set up this supervisor scam, blaming trustees for their mistakes in education. Not only that, but they have also shut down special education advisory committees from being live-streamed, thus removing accountability.

My question to this government: Given their miraculous conversion, will they finally fund education appropriately, value teacher professional judgment, address violence in schools and finally stand up for the words they claim?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, I think the member is debating the wrong bill. The bill that's in front of us here is a bill with respect to school board governance. It is a bill with respect to the delivery of curriculum. It is a bill that the Minister of Colleges and Universities has brought forward to improve teacher education, which, frankly, every single school union, teachers' union has been asking for for a very, very long time. That is what is before him. It is a bill that puts more resources into our schools. It is a bill that structures the management of boards away from division and back to the focus on student achievement. It is a bill that gives teachers better management control of their classroom and greater expectations on our students when it comes to how they are to achieve the best of themselves.

So I think if the member looks at that particular bill, the bill which is in front of him, he will have a decision to make: whether he's going to support this bill—support students, parents and teachers—or support his union friends.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: The minister has named time and time again some really extreme cases of mismanagement to justify this bill that concentrates powers at Queen's Park, that removes essential powers from school boards. But I'm just wondering, why is he using a sledgehammer to crack a nut instead of addressing those extreme cases—instead of penalizing all the boards across Ontario, even the ones that are being exemplary in their practice?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, I'll let the Liberals defend out-of-control spending. I'll let the Liberals defend a system of governance that they created which focused more on division as opposed to bringing people together, Mr. Speaker.

The bill that is before the House is a bill about the Ministry of Education showing leadership to have delivery of education that is focused, that is consistent across the province of Ontario. If that leadership doesn't come from the Ministry of Education and from the government, then I'm not sure who it's supposed to come from.

The big problem that we have in the education system today—which I hear from a lot of parents, which I hear from a lot of teachers—is that it is inconsistent, that it is open to interpretation, that if you go to Toronto, you learn one thing, if you go to Toronto Catholic, you learn something else, and if you're in Peel, it's something completely different.

So, yes, I have a difference of opinion with the member opposite. I think that the Ministry of Education for 50 years has downloaded responsibility, and this bill is about the ministry showing the leadership that is required to give our students the best opportunity to succeed.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Parents in my riding tell me they expect their school boards to focus on student achievement and not on infighting and political games. We've seen the York Catholic District School Board burn through seven different directors of education in nine years and rack up at least \$400,000 in costs from constant trustee fighting.

Can the Minister of Education speak to how Bill 101's new chief executive officer model will bring the kind of professional, qualified leadership our school boards need to put students first?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I thank my colleague for the question. Yes, by separating the role which is currently held by one person, the director of education, into two distinct roles—one that focuses exclusively on academic achievement, which is the educational director in each board, and another that focuses on the business management end of it, the capital, the staffing and the budgeting—it allows us to have a more consistent, less partisan voice for bringing forward that budget.

We've seen, of course, it's not only once a year that trustees bring budgets forward; it is done throughout the year when they try to undercut each other with different motions at the table and they change their mind constantly. That does not improve education. So this system here that we're bringing in, with a CEO, is about focusing those aspects that should be managerial with a CEO and those aspects that should be academic where they belong with an educator, who can focus exclusively on student achievement.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Education. There are 76,000 qualified, OTC-certified teachers in this province who are not currently teaching. We are seeing thousands of education workers being laid off across this province. So clearly the problem is not just the recruitment of new teachers; the problem is the retention of existing teachers. We need to make the investments in our classrooms that will support student learning and create positive work environments for educators.

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My question is, why does this bill do nothing on the retention side to be able to retain teachers in Ontario?

Hon. Paul Calandra: First and foremost, I think the Minister of Colleges and Universities has outlined in his reforms some of the things that we are hearing directly from teachers. So, in the bill, it also provides a significant increase in funding for what we call associate or mentor teachers. These are the people that help the next generation of teachers be prepared for the classroom.

One of the things that the minister has done in his portion of the bill on teacher education is—not only is it short and more concise, but it is about increasing the amount of time that a student teacher spends in front of a classroom. Because we've heard it over and over and over again: If you want to keep them in the classroom, they need to spend more time in front of the classroom before they get in there permanently so that they know how to manage a classroom. That's why in those first few years, we were seeing such challenges with the system that was brought in by the Liberal government, of course supported by the member opposite.

So the changes by the Minister of Colleges and Universities are a direct response to those teachers that said, "We need more help in the first few years if we're going to stay in the system."

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much for the explanation of your new bill, to the Minister of Education.

You mentioned a school in Parry Sound, I believe, where students were studying in a kind of construction site of a school. I'm wondering what your government is going to do to address the backlog of disrepair. Second public school in my riding is in desperate need of a renovation. It has been on the top five TDSB shovel-ready school list for over eight years, and I just wonder when they could expect their rebuild.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's a great question because the member's not wrong: We did inherit a massive repair backlog from the previous government. We have put significant resources into catching up—the largest capital infusion in the province's history.

I acknowledge it's still not enough but that's one of the reasons why we want to refocus our boards of education, right? Because when they start wasting money on things outside of their mandate—when they start wasting money on pet projects—that is direct funding that does not go to repair a school.

So the member is absolutely correct, and this bill, with Bill 33, allows us to address those backlogs much quicker. I thank her for her support on both of those.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Hon. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Colleges and Universities. Time and time again, I've heard from parents, I've heard from people that want to be in teachers' college, that it's too long, and I'm happy that we're addressing that issue. I wondered if the minister, in

the short time that I have left him, could build on that condensation of the teachers' college program?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for that question. Yes, going from a four-semester to a three-semester program will save students approximately \$3,000, but it's going to save a year of their time as well, Speaker. Our old system—the one-year system, prior to being changed to a two-year system—only had about 40 days of practicum. Our system currently has about 80 days, and we're going to ensure that they have more time in the classroom, but it's also a quicker, more efficient program.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me to rise today, as I was a former lead educator, prior to entering this great chamber.

I wanted to begin my remarks by stating that I will be sharing my time with the member from Ottawa West–Nepean, as well as the member from Humber River–Black Creek.

Speaker, Conservatives have never seen a service or a core aspect of our free and democratic society that they haven't wanted to cut, gut, privatize and find a way for their connected cronies to skim off of the top and fill their pockets.

When we see bills titled such as this one, when it comes from a Conservative mouth, it really is garbage, vacuous and a false title. Because we see the track record of this government—really attacking education, undermining education, attacking educators and really disregarding students across the province of Ontario.

Since they first took office, they've cut \$6.4 billion out of our education system. They've also engaged in an unconstitutional attack on educational assistants with Bill 28. Remember the bill that was until it wasn't? They understood that it was not going to stand up.

We also saw that they set up a snitch line for educators when they were first elected in 2018. This is a government that does not respect the discipline of teaching. And by extension, they do not respect students. Otherwise, they would fund education appropriately.

We also saw a government that would force online learning. Now, while this isn't discussed in Bill 101, we know that this government is just really picking around the edges, trying to find ways to put their friends and their insiders in positions of power so they can skim money off of the top of our public funding.

We also have heard a lot today about trustees. And while I won't defend all of the actions of all trustees, I will say this government has used them as a false opportunity for them to really seize the reins of power.

In my school board, or in the school board that represents the largest portion of London, Thames Valley District School Board, we saw this minister come in and take the board and place it under supervision. They appointed a very highly paid, really lucrative position to a supervisor—and that is not actually represented on the sunshine list.

But you see, I think one of the reasons they wanted to push these trustees to the sidelines was because trustees in Thames Valley spoke truth to power, Speaker. They wrote letters to the Minister of Education, both in 2021 as well as 2023. In 2021, it was July, and in 2023, it was June 6. These trustees were calling out this government for not paying its bills.

You see, since 2019, there have been statutory benefit increases to the Canada Pension Plan as well as EI. And these were statutory increases that the government was not paying. They were not paying their bills. They were cutting and underfunding Thames Valley by somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$13.2 million.

This is something that they knew they were doing. It was like that person, you know, you go to dinner with and suddenly, as soon as the bill arrives, they have to go to the bathroom, or they suddenly get a phone call. The Conservatives don't want to pay what they owe.

It's also distressing when we see this lack of transparency and accountability from this government, because they cut off the public livestream of the Special Education Advisory Committee.

As anyone ought to know, a parent of a young person who has special needs or who has exceptionalities has an incredibly busy life caring for a person. Sometimes they may not be able to take that young person with them. Sometimes they may not be able to find child care. And so being able to attend these meetings virtually was really something beneficial to them. But yet, this government shut that down. They stopped those parents from seeing and from advocating and from being a voice for their children.

And as I understand it, I don't believe this connected, Conservative supervisor in Thames Valley has even attended one of these meetings.

This government, if they truly wanted to actually put their money where their mouth is and actually have the backbone to stand behind the words that they would claim, they could fund special education appropriately.

You see, with this government, they don't fund students properly. The Grants for Student Needs and the funding formula are broken. It has been long broken. Funding each student as though they are a cookie-cutter model and then passing over purses of money to school boards with the hopes that they spend it on students—there are two problems with that: (1) There is no guarantee it will be spent on the students who need it; and (2) There is no guarantee it will be spent in a developmentally appropriate way.

If we opened the funding formula and made sure that students with exceptionalities were funded based on their needs, we could ensure that that funding would follow them and that it would also be prescribed in ways that are set out under their individual education plan, or IEP. That way, the experts would actually have a say in ensuring that that student had all of the things that they required.

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You see, this government does not pay educational assistants nearly enough. They are paid mercenary wages by this government and they're disregarded, and I suspect it's

largely because it is a female-dominated profession, as is education. This is why all of these care professions in Ontario are often disregarded. They're undermined and they're underpaid because this government really does not pay women appropriately. Today is Equal Pay Day. The government is nowhere near paying women what they deserve, what is fair and what ought to be legal.

I would also say that this government, when it comes to education, talks about how education should be run like a business, yet this government has shown how they are really ineffectual and pathetic at running a business themselves. When it comes to the creation of new schools, why is it that in the province of Ontario, any time a new school is finally opened, it's woefully inadequate? Its parents are ready. They show up, and that new school has to be populated with five, 10, 15 portables because they, in their so-called business minds, can't project that eventually that school that they're going to open is not going to meet the needs of the population.

So, instead, school boards then have to go and purchase temporary accommodations in the form of portables, which are not ideal learning environments. We know that schools are built based on a certain population. That means that their gymnasium facilities, their washroom facilities are all based on a certain student number. But when you open a school and have to put 10 or 15 portables there, those accommodations are nowhere near enough.

I would also like to say, Speaker, that in this world, we have legislation governing that video games, movies and television all have warnings on them when there is coarse language, when there are depictions of violence in them. You know, this government has chosen to ignore the massive problem of violence in our schools. Children in schools are seeing things that their parents would not allow them to watch on a screen.

But worse yet, at least there is a critical distance when a young person is watching something on a screen. What they're seeing in classrooms right now is absolutely unacceptable. They're seeing students attacking educational assistants. They're seeing students attacking educators. They're seeing students use some of the most vile, misogynistic language to their teachers—and we're talking about young people. This government is okay with that because they have not addressed violence in schools, they have not brought down class sizes and they have not made sure that there are adequate mental health supports for young people.

Throughout the pandemic, the official opposition said, "Because of the way in which this interrupted society, we have to ensure that students have the supports that they need and that they deserve because of that lack of socialization for that extended period of time." This government said, "Everything's fine here. Nothing to worry about. Everything will be just great." Well, we're seeing the consequences of that. One day, these young people will be looking after us in our old age, and I shudder to think because of the way this government has let them down.

Yet this is all part of the Conservative program. I remember back when the Harris Conservatives went and

moved administration and teachers into different bargaining units. What they did was try to divide and conquer. They made it so administrators in schools and educators were in different bargaining units and, that way, would be fighting with one another.

We also had the Minister of Education, John Snobelen, who was caught on a hot mike saying that if we manufacture a crisis in education, it will justify and allow the public to agree with the cuts that they wanted to make. You see, the Harris Conservatives cut a billion dollars out of education—money that has never been returned.

Nobody believes the miraculous conversion of this government, that they actually stand up for students, that they actually stand up for educators and that they actually stand up for parents. What they're hoping to do is to destroy, to privatize and find a way for their cronies to fill their pockets with public dollars. We have so many titles, like with Bill 101, and they are self-reflexively, ironically titled. I wonder if Conservatives actually believe that they stand up for students, because—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I'm sorry to interrupt the member, but it is now time for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING IN WINDSOR–TECUMSEH

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I rise today to draw the House's attention to an issue affecting Ontario's advanced manufacturing sector, particularly in my riding of Windsor–Tecumseh, which is home to many of the skilled workers and businesses that anchor Canada's mould-making industry.

Mould-making is foundational to manufacturing. Every vehicle, appliance and medical device depends on precision tooling produced by Ontario companies operating in an integrated North American supply chain.

Historically, United States section 232 tariffs were applied based on steel content and manufacturers structured contracts, pricing and production in good faith, under that long-standing interpretation and existing trade agreements. But last week, a US presidential proclamation modified the application of those tariffs, creating serious uncertainty. There's concern that certain covered derivative products may now be subject to tariffs applied to the full customs value of a finished mould, exposing manufacturers to substantial and unanticipated costs after contracts were signed. That uncertainty is already affecting investment decisions and production timelines in Windsor–Tecumseh.

As Ontario continues its economic recovery, I recognize this government's strong support for manufacturing, and I call on the government of Canada to act immediately

to provide clarity and relief so Canadian manufacturers, workers and jobs are protected.

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF LONDON AND AREA

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I rise today to speak about the profound impact of Big Brothers Big Sisters of London and Area and the essential role they play in strengthening our communities.

I've had the opportunity to meet with the team here at the Legislature and also in my riding in London. I've seen first-hand their passion, their dedication and their unwavering advocacy for young people. Their commitment to building strong, supportive relationships is not just inspiring, it's making a real difference in the lives of youth and families across the region.

For decades, this organization has created life-changing mentoring relationships to help young people realize their full potential. For youth facing adversity, mentorship is not simply a support, it is prevention. It provides stability, guidance and a consistent, caring presence that can truly change the trajectory of a young person's life.

Today, like many organizations across our province, Big Brothers Big Sisters of London and Area is navigating changes in its funding landscape following the conclusion of a long-standing partnership. While transitions like this are a natural part of evolving priorities, they also highlight a growing challenge: the increasing demand for services alongside uncertain and shifting resources.

We know the need is real and growing. More young people are seeking connection, guidance and support. Mentoring programs are stepping up, but they cannot do it alone.

I encourage all of us, and our broader communities, to stand with these organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters of London and Area as they continue this important work, because when we invest in young people, we invest in a stronger future for everyone.

SPECIAL-NEEDS CHILDREN

MPP Andrea Hazell: Speaker, today, I stand before you to shed light on a pressing issue that affects many families in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood: the challenges faced by parents of children with special needs. These families are navigating a complex landscape within the current underfunded school system that is filled with obstacles that often leave these parents feeling like the government has failed their children.

Let me share a story of the dedicated mother of twins who are both deaf, blind and non-verbal. Like many parents, she envisioned a bright future for her children filled with opportunities and support. However, the reality has been starkly different. The lack of specialized teachers and intervenors has left her feeling isolated and overwhelmed. Despite her relentless advocacy for the support for her children's needs, this mom has found herself in a

heartbreaking position. She had no choice but to leave her job to care for her twins full-time.

This is not just one mother's story; this is the reality of many parents in Scarborough navigating a failing school system while trying to support their children with special needs. These parents are the unsung heroes fighting tirelessly for the rights and needs of their children, yet they often feel unsupported by the very system meant to help them.

Mr. Speaker, families are struggling, not just to meet their children's educational needs—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Members' statements?

1020

HATE CRIMES

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: Speaker, I was woken on Good Friday morning by a frantic business owner in my riding, whose restaurant was riddled with bullets shot overnight. She was targeted simply because she was Jewish. There has been an alarming rise in hate crime in recent years, including its disproportionate and devastating impact on Ontario's Jewish population.

Hate crimes in Ontario have risen at an alarming rate in recent years, targeting communities based on race, religion, sexual orientation and identity. These acts do not only harm individuals; they fracture the very fabric of our society. This is why I will be bringing forward a private member's motion calling on the government to establish a specialized hate crime crown prosecution team. This unit would allow for direct advice to police, improve coordination and ensure consistent, expert prosecution of hate crimes.

Speaker, we cannot accept a reality where people are targeted, harassed or intimidated simply because of their religion, culture or colour of their skin. We must all come together and uphold the values of inclusion and safety that define our province.

I urge all members to support this motion when it is debated on Thursday.

COST OF LIVING

MPP Catherine McKenney: One in four households in Ottawa cannot afford to eat, and that number has nearly doubled since 2019. This is a food insecurity emergency, and it is a housing crisis. When rent consumes everything, food is the first thing that gets cut.

A client at the Parkdale Food Centre in Ottawa was evicted because she chose to feed her son instead of paying rent, and, as a result, she lived in a tent for two months. The research is unambiguous: Food bank use spikes before homelessness spikes. People who are housed use food banks to stay housed.

A recent Ottawa Food Bank report put it simply: Deeply affordable housing isn't just a housing solution; it is a food insecurity solution. In 2024 in Ottawa, a min-

imum wage earner, after paying rent and buying food, had \$100 left over for the entire month—\$100 for everything.

Speaker, hunger is not inevitable; it is a policy choice. And right now, this government is making the wrong choices: cutting the budget for housing programs, grossly underfunding Ontario Works and ODSP, letting rents spiral while families choose between a roof and a meal—and not to mention, paving over the land that farmers need to grow our food,

No food bank should be a city's social safety net, Speaker. What Ottawa and Ontario need is deeply affordable housing, and they need it now.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, the Durham Regional Police Service is receiving \$389,000 as part of the Ontario government's continued investment to help protect hard-working families in the region of Durham. The funding is being delivered through the Victim Support Grant Program for Project RISE—Resilience, Intervention, Support and Engagement for Vulnerable Youth.

Speaker, Project RISE responds to the increase in youth victimization by strengthening and sustaining the Missing Persons Project, the human trafficking crisis counsellor program and the development of a child and youth advocacy centre. Through this investment, our government is delivering critical support for young people and their families, while also ensuring that Durham Regional Police Service has the resources needed to protect at-risk youth and work alongside community partners to build a safer, stronger and more inclusive region of Durham for all.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. John Vanthof: Yesterday in the House, we were talking about highway safety on 11 and 17. A member of the government asked me, "What can we do immediately?" And I'll give you an example.

During our tour, we interviewed a tow truck operator who continually pulls transports out of the side of the highway. He asked a driver who was fully licensed if his air was working. Trucks have airbrakes. Actually, your commercial licence is AZ: A for the truck and Z for the brakes. He asked him if his air was working because it's much easier to pull the truck out if the air was working. The driver, who was supposed to be fully trained and tested in Ontario, didn't know what he was talking about; didn't know what air brakes were.

In another case, at a contractor, a driver came with a transport to deliver a package. The contractor went to the truck because he thought it would be a small package. It was a loader bucket, so he told the driver, "Well, our yard is a mile down the road, just back the truck up and there will be a loader waiting for you." The driver told him, fully licensed and trained in Ontario, "I can't back up." So you want to change things—

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

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING IN OAKVILLE NORTH—BURLINGTON

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Earlier this month, I took part in an announcement by Vac Aero International that Boeing will be making an investment of \$7 million in their facility. This new partnership will help drive innovation, create 3,000-plus good-paying jobs and reinforce Ontario's role as a key player in the global aerospace supply chain. Founded in Oakville in 1959 with headquarters in Burlington, Vac Aero is a leading vacuum furnace manufacturer to aerospace and high-tech industries worldwide.

Last week, I had the opportunity to meet with the leadership team of Canadian Hospital Specialties, an Oakville-based company that plays a vital role in delivering supplies to hospitals and health care providers across our province and beyond. Their made-in-Ontario approach is something that all 400-plus employees are immensely proud of.

These are just two examples of leading, innovative companies that call Oakville North—Burlington home and are positioning Ontario as a global leader in advanced manufacturing. At a time of ongoing global economic uncertainty, Ontario remains focused on creating the conditions for businesses to succeed and workers to thrive, because when we protect Ontario's economy, we are securing opportunities for our families, for our communities and for future generations.

ARTEMIS II MISSION

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: At 8:07 Eastern Standard Time on Friday, April 10, 2026, Artemis II splashed down in the Pacific Ocean. On this trip, Jeremy Hansen, born in London, raised in Ailsa Craig and Ingersoll, Ontario, became the first Canadian to travel to the moon. This mission has inspired people of all ages and all walks of life. We got to see these science superheroes go farther than any human ever before, and we shared their sense of awe of the universe and our humanity.

I want to thank NASA and the astronauts: Christina Koch, the first woman to ever travel to the moon; Victor Glover, the first person of colour to travel to the moon; and Reid Wiseman. I also want to thank Jeremy's parents, Gary and Nancy; his wife Catherine; and their three kids for sharing him with us. I want to thank Jeremy: Thank you. You are a gift to our province and our nation.

But it was the words of Victor Glover that stuck with me. He said, "In all of this emptiness—this is a whole bunch of nothing, this thing we call the universe—you have this oasis"—the earth—"this beautiful place that we get to exist together."

These astronauts remind us that there is no planet B. May we remember that every day and only take what we need and treat this blue gem of a planet like we ought to,

as special, for it is the only place in the whole universe that is made just right for us. Let us not take it for granted; I know Jeremy won't.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Ontario is rising to meet today's economic challenges with strength, resilience and decisive action, and I am proud to highlight how the 2026 Ontario budget is focused on what matters most: growing our economy, creating jobs and improving efficiency for families in Markham–Thornhill and across Ontario.

Our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, Minister Bethlenfalvy and our dedicated team, is building a self-sustaining economy. Madam Speaker, we are taking bold action on housing by partnering with the federal government on an \$8.8-billion agreement to reduce development charges. This means municipal development charges could be reduced by up to 50%, helping lower the cost of new homes.

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There has never been a better time to buy a new home in Ontario, Madam Speaker. This is a transformational step. Thank you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for his leadership.

We are also cutting the small business corporate income tax by \$1.1 billion to save more than 375,000 small businesses up to \$5,000 per year. Thank you to the Associate Minister of Small Business for her leadership.

Thank you to Premier Doug Ford and our government for bringing hope and optimism to the people of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Folks, if I could have your attention for a moment, in the Speaker's Gallery today, we have visitors from Ireland: Claire Fitzgibbon, the consul general and Cahal Sweeney, vice-consul general of Ireland. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Will Bouma: In recognition of World Liver Day, please join me in welcoming Adam Marsella, vice-president of patient access and public affairs at Novo Nordisk Canada Inc.; Michael Betel, president and founder of Fatty Liver Alliance; and Lindsay Myles, past president of the Canadian Association of Hepatology Nurses to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

MPP George Darouze: It's a pleasure to welcome Steve Velthuis, Colette Lacroix-Velthuis, Greg Scrivens and Patricia Scrivens from my riding of Carleton, who have been incredibly supportive over the years and whom I've had the privilege of knowing for a long time.

I'd also like to congratulate Patti-Anne, who will be receiving the Queen Elizabeth II Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship today.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mme France Gélinas: It is World Liver Day, so please join me in welcoming Adam Marsella, who is the vice-president of patient access and public affairs at Novo

Nordisk Canada; Michael Betel, who is president and founder of Fatty Liver Alliance—"foie gras"; and Lindsay Myles, the past president of the Canadian Association of Hepatology Nurses to the Legislative Assembly.

Please remember to come to their reception at 5 o'clock in 228.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'd like to welcome my friend Heather Richmond to the Legislature today. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'd like to welcome our legislative assistant Stacey Danckert to the House, along with numerous family members who are joining us: Brian Robertson; Bradley Woodward; Carrie Sellers; their children, Grace and Madeline Watt, and Emily and Leah Woodward. Thank you for being at Queen's Park and thanks for the great work you do for us.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to wish a warm welcome to the Professional Engineers Government of Ontario: Nihar Bhatt, Rana Masoudi, Shairose Alarakhia, Alain Miruho-Balihuta, Prakhar Shrivastava, Sunaina Menezes, Andrea Brown and Matthew McEwen. Thank you and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's my great pleasure this morning to welcome John and Barbara Stone to the House today. They are the proud grandparents of David Stone, who is a page.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would like to welcome Kendal McKinney from the research and action committee, member of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups; Orlando Buonastella, from Injured Workers Community Legal Clinic; Marvin Mulder; and Jim Zhang—all here to represent injured workers. Welcome to your House.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Although they're not in the House today, I know they're watching on TV. I'd like to welcome my aunt Jessie and my uncle Des, from Edmonton, Alberta; my uncle Paul from White Rock, BC; and my uncle Jim—I know; I'm sending you strength and prayers today.

MPP Mohamed Firin: I would like to welcome Ayan Said Asir from my riding of York South–Weston. Welcome to your House.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I can't let anyone from Ireland come to the chamber without welcoming them warmly. I know you did already, but I just really want to give an extra warm welcome to the consul Claire and Cahal from the Irish consulate in Toronto. Thanks for being here. Toronto's better with you in it.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: I would like to welcome Ganesh and Sasi, proud parents of page Saasana. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Adil Shamji: I'd like to welcome Adam Marsella, vice-president of patient access and public affairs at Novo Nordisk Canada; Michael Betel, president and founder of Fatty Liver Alliance; and Lindsay Myles, past president of the Canadian Association of Hepatology Nurses. I look forward to meeting with you this afternoon to discuss liver health.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I am pleased to introduce Shannon Bilmer's class from North Toronto Collegiate Institute to Queen's Park today, and my nephew, Brian Mulroney—but it turns out he did not make it—so welcome to Queen's Park.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On a point of order, I recognize the member for Bay of Quinte.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: If you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to wear green ribbons in recognition of liver health.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Bay of Quinte is asking for unanimous consent to wear green ribbons in recognition of liver health. Agreed? Agreed.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I would now like to ask our pages to assemble in front of me.

This being the start of a new session, of course, we have a new group of young pages with us, and I'd like to introduce them to our members: from Orléans, Daryush Asher; from Hamilton Centre, Charlotte Aberdeen Immacolata Buist; from Windsor West, Owen Everett Cargill; from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Catherine Charpentier; from Markham-Stouffville, Saasana Ganeshanathan; from Scarborough-Agincourt, Hagop Gokchenian; from York Centre, Spenta Kanagaraj; from Oakville North-Burlington, Myra Kaushish; from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, John Lepack; from Dufferin-Caledon, Henry Lloyd; from Mississauga-Erin Mills, Navya Madkan; from Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte, Ella Masson; from Toronto-Danforth, Lavinia Matthews; from Nickel Belt—actually from Capreol, yay—Gerald Osezua; from Etobicoke North, Hanuj Patel; from Wellington-Halton Hills, Manuthi Ranasinghe; from Huron-Bruce, Lucas Ryan; from King-Vaughan, Aadyant Shrivastava; from Nepean, Nihaal Singh; from University-Rosedale, Regan Sorensen; from Simcoe-Grey, David Stone; and from Eglinton-Lawrence, Petra Visnjevac.

Our new group of pages.

Applause.

QUESTION PERIOD

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Hi. Good morning, Speaker.

In 2018, this Premier ran on a promise to end the Liberal-era hallway health care, to end what he then called an epidemic in our hospitals of staff being stretched too thin, of patients receiving care in hallways and in broom closets.

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Eight years later, those words certainly ring hollow today. Just this week, Global News reported that hospitals have to use storage closets and office spaces to treat patients, because after eight long years of broken promises, hallway health care has become storage-closet health care.

My question is to the Premier. When are you going to live up to your commitment to end hallway health care and broom-closet health care?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The one thing that the member opposite and I will agree on is that health care and the Ontario government were in shambles, when we formed government, under the Liberal watch.

We have seen so many positive changes. I want to highlight one in particular: Michael Garron Hospital actually had an Accreditation Canada review where they received—wait for it—99.9% on review. That suggests that the innovation that is happening at Michael Garron, whether it is moving from spaces that are now patient-facing spaces, is the innovation that we need to see across Ontario. And that Accreditation Canada rating is the highest rating that has ever been given to an Ontario hospital, so congratulations to Michael Garron Hospital.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The leader of the official opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Innovation, eh, Speaker?

Michael Garron Hospital serves thousands and thousands of families all across Toronto's east end. For many residents of Toronto's east end and Scarborough, this is their closest emergency room and their only way to get the care that they need when they need it.

But patients at Michael Garron are now being treated in storage closets. I can tell you because I've been there many times, and the hallways are lined with patients. It's as if the Premier saw the Liberal era of broom-closet health care and said, "Let's one-up them. Let's put them in storage closets."

Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Does the Premier have an actual plan to end hallway health care, or is it just going to be more press releases and more hollow announcements?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Since Premier Ford took government, we have seen an additional 3,500 beds being made in the province of Ontario—3,500. We are on track to actually add an additional 3,000 hospital beds in the province of Ontario. Why? Because we see an aging population. We see a health care system that was, frankly, ignored for too long, and I do not want to go back to those dark days.

We are seeing investments of \$60 billion in hospital capital that equate to 50 different hospital capital projects—so new hospitals, expanded hospitals, renovated hospitals and, yes, even Michael Garron Hospital, because we know, when we invest in people, when we invest in capital, when we invest in our hospital system, we have a

stronger population. And we're going to keep on going because we see the changes happening.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Invest in health care? My goodness, the only thing they're investing in is the privatization of our health care system.

Promises made, promises broken by this government: Some 2,000 people a day are being treated in hospital hallways right now, under your watch, after eight long years. Now they're being moved into storage closets, and this is success? This is something to stand up and be proud of? How can you possibly be proud of that? When are you going to actually start acknowledging the disaster that we are facing in our health care system?

My question to the Premier is very simple: When is the Premier going to start showing up for the people of Ontario and release a plan to end hallway health care?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Let's talk about what some of those investments have actually meant to the people of Ontario and how they are impacted.

We made changes very early on to make sure that alternative-level-of-care patients who should not have been in hospitals—they should have been in community, in long-term care, getting support in home and community care—we've actually freed up, with those initiatives, the equivalent of two medium-size hospitals. That's the change that we made, and we see the impacts.

And it's not just us that are seeing it. The Montreal Economic Institute in 2024-25 said ER wait times are tied. Ontario is tied for the shortest median times across Canada.

When we invest in our people, when we invest in our capital, we see those changes happening, and I'm going to keep going, because I've seen the impacts.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Ms. Marit Stiles: My next question is to the Premier of this province—I hope he answers a question. Yesterday, the Minister of Education tabled a very disturbing piece of legislation. It is basically another big power grab by this government. They are constantly changing the rules so they don't have to follow the rules that already exist. They couldn't make it clearer that they don't care about the students, they don't care about the parents, they don't care about the teachers or the communities.

Why is the Premier allowing the Minister of Education to take power and agency away from parents, students and communities?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: In fact, we're doing no such thing. What we're doing is refocusing the education system back on student achievement. I know that's something challenging for the Leader of the Opposition to accept.

Look, we've said right from the beginning we want leadership to come from the Ministry of Education. For

too many years, the Ministry of Education has downloaded responsibility to the school boards, which have put anything but student achievement first. This bill—in addition to Bill 33, in addition to the very real reforms that were brought in by previous Ministers of Education since 2018—is putting us back on the right path to focusing exclusively where parents and teachers want us to be focused on: student achievement, full stop.

I will not apologize that the Ministry of Education should show the leadership that parents have been calling for. If it's not the Minister of Education, if it's not the government, who the heck is supposed to show that leadership? So I will not apologize—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I want to be very clear: This legislation has absolutely nothing to do with students, with kids, with making our schools better; it is only about taking power away from schools, from educators, from parents, from communities and—guess what?—consolidating it in the hands of the Minister of Education.

What is interesting is that the minister has also evaded any accountability for the impact of whatever decisions he's going to make. The legislation mentions liability 43 times and mentions students only five times. Do you know how many times it mentions classrooms? Zero.

Nobody has ever worked harder than this government to cover their own behinds, and let me tell you, if they were doing the right thing, they sure as hell wouldn't be doing that. When students don't have basic supplies, why is the minister more focused on protecting himself?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I will caution the member on language.

I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Paul Calandra: This, coming from a Leader of the Opposition who says that giving teachers a \$750 supply card is a frill, and that if they ever got the opportunity—now, let's be honest: They're never going to get the opportunity to govern, right? We tried that show once for five years; it was a disaster, so they'll never get the opportunity to rip that supply card out of the hands of teachers. I'll tell you that.

But what this bill does is it restores leadership from the Ministry of Education, yes. It professionalizes bargaining in the province of Ontario, yes. It gives our classroom teachers in the high school level a better opportunity to manage their classrooms, yes. It is insisting that students participate in order to get marks. It insists that they go to school and that attendance be a part of that, and that there are exams that have to be taken into consideration as well.

I've gotten message after message from classroom teachers at the high school level who are telling me, "Finally, somebody has actually listened to us." And do you know what they're also saying? That the changes that the Minister of Colleges and Universities has brought in will not only bring more teachers into the system, it will keep them in the classroom longer, because we listened, finally.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, under this government, children are struggling more than they ever have, in our classrooms that are overcrowded. Our education workers are burning out faster than we can hire them. Parents have nowhere to turn because they—this minister and his \$400,000 supervisors—are laying off teachers and vice-principals. And now they're looking at how much property they can sell off. There are fewer education workers, there are fewer teachers, there are overcrowded classrooms and still there is nothing—nothing—to support that child in a classroom who needs help right now, today.

I want to know: If this legislation is so great, why does the Minister of Education need immunity?

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Hon. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, what the bill does is refocus the education system on student achievement.

Now, I notice that the Leader of the Opposition isn't talking about the new role of a CEO, which ensures that the management of a board is run by a professional while the academic part of it is run by a qualified educator. She doesn't want to talk about that.

She doesn't want to talk about the things in the bill that have to deal with student achievement. She doesn't want to talk about curriculum. She doesn't want to talk about attendance. She doesn't want to talk about the things that the Minister of Colleges and Universities has brought in because it's supported broadly by our teachers, it's supported broadly by our parents.

She goes to one small part of the bill, which is about bargaining. Well, you know what we're going to do about bargaining? We're going to professionalize bargaining, take it away from school trustees, put it into a cadre of professionals who can represent their community, Madam Speaker, and I will not apologize for ensuring that leadership comes from the Ministry of Education so that we can have a concise and more consistent level of education not only in Toronto but province-wide.

EDUCATION ISSUES

Mr. John Fraser: My question is to the Premier. After eight long years, this Premier and this government are adrift. Just look at the announcement of Bill 101 yesterday.

Bill 101 is going to hurt kids. It's going to hurt our kids by not fixing what's wrong with our schools. Bill 101 is not going to make one child's class smaller, it's not going to get a child who has exceptional needs the help that they need and it's not going to address the mental health crisis in our schools.

Our kids are hurting, our schools are not safe places to learn or to work, and this minister should be focused on class sizes and helping our kids instead of hurting them. Will he do that?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Do you know when we started doing that? In 2018 when, after 15 long, miserable, dark years, the people of the province of Ontario threw that lot out of government and never allowed them to come back, Madam Speaker.

It's been three elections, and this person is again the leader of the Liberal Party. He was after the first loss, they brought him back, they brought somebody else, they brought him back, he lost again. They brought him back three times, right? They've lost three times, but what have they learned through all of that, colleagues? What have they learned? Nothing. Nothing. And they're upset because we're refocusing a system on—wait for it—student achievement.

While they want to support their trustee buddies, what we're going to do is professionalize education. We're going to ensure that our teachers have the resources that they need and that our schools are safer. While they were pulling police out of the schools, we're putting them back in the schools. You know why? Because we trust them. You know who else we trust? We trust our educators. That's who we trust, and we trust our parents to deliver the best possible education for our students, and that's what this bill does.

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

Mr. John Fraser: This government has made a mess of our schools over the last eight years. They're not safe places to learn or to work. And the appointment of CEOs is just supervision by another name.

If you want to know what Bill 101 is going to do, how it's going to hurt kids, just take a look at those supervised boards. What's happening there? Changing bell times, cutting special education, firing teachers, firing vice-principals, surplus properties and closing schools, all without anybody's input who has a kid in the school.

This minister is behaving like he's some sort of benevolent dictator. Will the minister focus on getting class sizes down instead of making them his political playground?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member references bell times; I've heard this a few times. It was actually school trustees at the Toronto Catholic District School Board who negotiated that and gave it to the unions, so his friends are the ones who negotiated that away. He talks about decisions in his own community—

Mr. John Fraser: It's the kids. Bell times matter to parents, you moron.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: In his own community, people were begging for us to take over that school board. Why? Because under Liberal—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize.

Mr. John Fraser: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I am cautioning members about parliamentary language. I have no problem warning and naming members today.

I apologize. Start the clock.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Sorry, I actually didn't hear that.

But, Madam Speaker, look, he personifies everything that was wrong with 15 long years of Liberal rule—the arrogance that comes from that party and that member.

For 15 years our students were failing. Under Conservatives, our students are doing better in reading and writing, and math scores are going up. Under Conservatives, we have the highest graduation rates ever.

But under an arrogant Liberal government who think that they know better than teachers, that they know better than educators, they know better than parents—it kills them that we're putting the system back where it matters, in the hands of our teachers, in the hands of our parents, and ending the conflict between teachers and parents and putting—

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

Mr. John Fraser: Well, if that's true, then that's the pot calling the kettle black because I've never met a minister more arrogant than the one across from me.

This government is tired and out of touch. And while this minister is scapegoating other people and pointing the finger and blaming them, he should maybe take a look at his own government—you know, the one that tried to sell off the greenbelt, or the MZOs, or that sketchy Skills Development Fund and millions of dollars for a strip club owner and the Ford family dentist. So maybe the minister should say to the Premier, “Why don't we get a supervisor, a CEO for our government, to clean it up?”

After eight long years, you've made a mess of our schools. Class sizes are too big, special education has been starved and we have a mental health crisis that you guys are just ignoring. Will the minister actually do his job and address those three things?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look at the irony of that question. Colleagues, help me out here. The member opposite is asking the minister to take responsibility for issues within education. But when he has a bill in front of him that will allow the minister and the ministry to show that leadership, he then criticizes the very tool that allows us to bring on that leadership. So I will say to the member, put your money where your mouth is.

Now, it should not be very difficult for a Liberal because they're always putting their hands in your pocket, right? They're always putting their hands in your pocket. They always know better than people.

But I will say this to the member: This is what this bill is about. It is about leadership. It is about the ministry stepping back up to the plate to deliver a consistent level of education province-wide. And you know who wants it? Our teachers want it. Our parents want it. That's why they threw that lot out after 15 long, miserable years of failure. They know that we're moving in the right direction. Put your money where your mouth is: Vote for the bill and put us back—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

SCHOOL BOARDS

CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Speaker, yesterday morning, the Minister of Education stood in this House and said he would not interfere with the governance of francophone school boards. I took him at his word. My mistake, because when I read his bill, I was totally flabbergasted. What we see in that legislation is clear: It's a significant centralization of power at Queen's Park.

And the minister now points to the fact that certain provisions of this bill, like the CEO model, do not apply to francophone boards. Well, that's fine, but it's actually a cosmetic distinction when his own bill still gives him the power to issue directives, control budgets and intervene directly in board decisions.

So I will ask the minister, how can he claim to protect francophone governance when this legislation gives him the power to override it?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member will know, as I said to her yesterday—the member texted me right away, and I told her that you have to read the bill. What she was saying was incorrect. The French-language boards are exempt from these provisions in the bill. I mean, it is stated right there: They will not be part of this governance change.

But I get it; they're going to continue to stoke fear. But the reality is our French-language boards are doing a very good job. They have a constitutional and a charter right, and we are going to respect that. I've said that over and over again for the last year: that I would do nothing to intervene in the charter and constitutional rights of our Catholic system and of our French-language system. This bill protects the French-language system in its entirety, but still, obviously, a minister should have the tools to work with the French-language boards when they fall off the rails. That's not happened in our French boards, but obviously, we're going to show that leadership on behalf of students and parents should that situation arise.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Ottawa–Vanier.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Speaker, I need to insist: Francophone school boards are not like other boards. They exist to fulfill rights protected under section 23 of the charter, rights that have been clearly and repeatedly affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada. This is not a policy preference; it is a constitutional obligation. And yet, this bill concentrates decision-making in the minister's hands and removes key safeguards to ensure real community control.

As the minister, does he understand that this level of centralization puts his government on a direct collision course with those constitutional rights, and is he prepared to defend that in court?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Nothing the Liberals would like more than to waste education dollars in court, right?

The bill quite clearly exempts our French-language boards from the provisions. There is no CEO going to a

French-language board. Trustees will still be negotiating in the French-language boards.

Now, what I have done, I will admit, is I have reduced the salary of the French-language trustees in the Catholic system as well. I have reduced them to a maximum of \$10,000. The charter does not guarantee a salary. It is something that I think that we have to remain consistent province-wide, but those additional authorities will remain with the French-language boards. It is very clear in this bill. It is something that I have said repeatedly over and over and over again over the last year.

I think the member opposite, if she spends a little bit more time reading the bill—and I can appreciate it; it was only released yesterday. I know that she has a special focus on that, but I think she will find that this bill protects French language in a way that has never been done before.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: That's fine, but if that's really the case, put a provision in there that says the bill doesn't apply to those French school boards.

Madame la Présidente, le ministre dit qu'il protège les conseils scolaires francophones, mais son projet de loi fait exactement le contraire. Il retire des mécanismes indépendants, concentre les pouvoirs à Queen's Park et se donne le dernier mot sur les décisions qui devraient appartenir aux communautés.

Exempter les conseils francophones du modèle de PDG, ce n'est pas une protection, c'est un écran de fumée. Alors la question est simple : comment peut-il prétendre respecter la Constitution, alors que son projet de loi affaiblit concrètement le pouvoir des francophones sur leur propre système scolaire?

L'hon. Paul Calandra: Madame la Présidente, comme vous savez, nous avons fait beaucoup d'investissements dans le système francophone. Je suis très fier. Nous sommes toujours très fiers de nos conseils scolaires francophones. Mais ce projet de loi va continuer de protéger le système dont nous sommes très fiers.

The member knows full well the bill exempts our French-language boards from the provisions. The member knows that in the bill French-language boards will not get a CEO. The member knows, in the bill, it states quite clearly that French-language trustees in both systems will continue to be at the local bargaining table. We've removed that power from the English-language boards, but the French boards will continue to do that. Why? Because there is a charter guarantee.

That is why we took the time to introduce a bill that protects the charter rights of francophone learners but also recognizes the fact that our French-language boards have done a remarkably good job and they need to continue to be supported. We will continue to do that. Bill 33 was a first step, and this is a second step in protecting those rights.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My question is for the Premier. Scarborough is the largest and fastest-growing region of Toronto and the people there are tired of the long bus rides it takes to get around. Luckily, there is a solution. It's called the Scarborough Eglinton East LRT, and it would run from Kennedy station to Malvern Town Centre for 27 stops over its 19 kilometres.

In fact, it's the city of Toronto's number one transit priority today, but, Houston, there's a problem. This government refuses to commit to the plan and so this important line sits in limbo. Will the Premier today commit to building the Scarborough Eglinton East LRT to give the people of Scarborough the transit they need and deserve?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We have made the largest and most historic investment into public transit in Scarborough's history. When for 15 years the members opposite from the Liberal Party ignored Scarborough, Premier Ford stepped up and invested the largest investment in Scarborough's history.

And guess what? That member voted against the Scarborough subway extension—a subway that will move over 100,000 members of the Scarborough community and give them the rapid transit that they've been advocating for for 20-plus years.

We got the shovels in the ground. The Premier put this plan forward. We're getting shovels in the ground. You see the construction happening and we're going to move the people of Scarborough, who were ignored for 15 years under the Liberal government, supported by the NDP.

We have record investments into Scarborough. We're going to continue to build on that progress and we're going to continue to deliver for the people of Scarborough.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Humber River—Black Creek.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Again, I encourage the minister to try riding a bus in Scarborough.

Under this government's mismanagement, the Eglinton Crosstown took 15 long years to finish and it only peeks its head into Scarborough. The last time the Scarborough subway made the news was when the drill got stuck in the tunnel, and the line has an estimated opening date of the year after the Leafs win the cup.

Speaker, Scarborough needs the Scarborough Eglinton East LRT. So yes or no: Will this government commit to building it?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: It's a shame that that member, when the NDP and the Leader of the Opposition had the opportunity to support better transit options for the people of Scarborough, what did they do? They stood in the way of every piece of legislation we put forward to move the construction of that quicker. They stood against every single opportunity to support the construction of the Scarborough subway extension. It's a shame, because it's going to move over 100,000 Scarborough individuals every single day when it's constructed.

It was this Premier who got the shovels in the ground. It was this Premier who stepped up for the people of Scarborough, who have been ignored for far too long because of the inadequate work that the previous Liberal government did for that community. We're building hospitals there, we're building transit and we're going to continue to invest in that community. We're going to continue to build the rapid transit that they deserve and need.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Adil Shamji: There's a remarkable fact buried in the new education bill: The CEO of a school board will have more job requirements than the Premier of Ontario. That new school board CEO, once appointed, will be untouchable without ministry approval. A new chief education officer, hand-picked by that CEO, will oversee student achievement—not elected, not accountable to parents, only accountable to this government.

It's a pattern we know well: Weaken local voices, centralize control and leave real classroom problems untouched—the mental health crisis, special education funding declining and classes overflowing.

Madam Speaker, why is the Premier preoccupied with simply consolidating power and cutting teachers when he should be cutting class sizes?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: What a gross party the opposite party has become. Think about this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I'll ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Withdraw.

This is a party now that—they get a few questions, and what do they do? They insult people. The member opposite decided he was going to call me a name that he would probably not repeat outside, and now the member opposite tries to poke fun at a Premier who has been elected three times by the people of the province of Ontario—three majority governments by the people of the province of Ontario.

You know who decides the qualifications of a Premier? The people of the province of Ontario. That's who decides the qualifications of a Premier. This is a Premier who understands what it means to make a payroll. This is a Premier who understands what it means to build. This is a Premier who, since taking office in 2018, has restored confidence to the province of Ontario, helped create a million jobs, brought back transit and transportation opportunities, rebuilt hospitals, is rebuilding our long-term-care system and pouring billions of dollars into education. You know why we're doing that? Because for 15 long, miserable years, that party failed—

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: My question was on education, and the Premier's track record on education clearly speaks for

itself. Look at the state that it's in right now. Certainly, after eight excruciatingly long years, this government's only solution for overflowing classes is to appoint 72 executive positions while simultaneously undermining the authority and democratic mandate of trustees. That's 72 minions of the Premier as he strengthens his authoritarian, Trumpian stranglehold over Ontario—his latest step in weakening our democracy and hiding from accountability.

1110

The Premier's government says it needs to rein in spending and increase accountability. That's an incredible idea from an incredible government.

Madam Speaker, why does the Premier think we should trust him to deliver fiscal responsibility and positive outcomes in education when he hasn't delivered fiscal responsibility and positive outcomes for Ontario?

Hon. Paul Calandra: What an absolute joke that party has become, right? What an absolute joke. It is unbelievable to me. We are facing a global tariff war and the members opposite think, "Well, the best thing to do is start insulting." Do you know why they insult? It's because they have nothing to offer the people of the province of Ontario.

Obviously, they haven't read the bill, because do you know who's going to be appointing CEOs? Trustees will be appointing CEOs—not the Premier, not me, but elected trustees will be appointing CEOs.

Do you know what we're going to do in the education system? We're going to continue to unravel the mess that they left us in. Under Conservatives—highest graduation rates ever. Under Conservatives, we have the highest scores in reading and writing. Under Conservatives, math scores are finally starting to increase. Under Liberals, their curriculum people go to jail, their chiefs of staff go to jail. What do we do? We build a bigger, better and stronger province of Ontario. Do you know why? Because we actually care. Because when the economy goes, there's more money for health and there's more money for education.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Billy Pang: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Our government was elected on a mandate to grow our economy, attract investment and create good-paying jobs for workers throughout Ontario.

Across the advanced manufacturing, life sciences and tech sectors, we are creating the conditions for businesses to succeed and giving companies the confidence that Ontario is the best place in the world to do business. And despite President Trump taking aim at our economy and raising global uncertainty, Ontario remains a stable, reliable and predictable partner that businesses know they can trust.

Speaker, can the minister update us on the investment landscape in our province?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Well, 2025 was yet another successful year for investment in the province of Ontario. Last

week, StatsCan came out with the number: 750 companies landed here in Ontario, invested \$35 billion and hired 64,000 people. That brings the total since our election to \$222 billion worth of investment here into the province.

But, Speaker, this doesn't happen by accident; it's the result of pro-growth, pro-business policies that are giving the companies the confidence to invest, to expand and to continue to hire right here in Ontario, and we're not slowing down. We will continue to fight to land job-creating investments in every region of the province.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the minister for that response.

It's clear that Ontario continues to see strong investment figures across all sectors of our economy. As we build on the figures from last year, we must continue to cut red tape, lower the cost of doing business and keep tax rates low to encourage the kind of economic activity needed to keep our province growing. Whether it's advanced manufacturing in southwestern Ontario, life sciences in the GTA or resource development in the north, every region of Ontario has a role to play in our economic success story.

Speaker, can the minister share more about how our government is ensuring that the investments continue to reach every corner of the province and support workers and families across Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, in Mississauga, AstraZeneca, \$820 million to advance clinical delivery of new medicines, 700 new jobs; in Temiskaming Shores, Electra, \$100-million investment to build a cobalt sulphate refinery, 53 new jobs; in St. Thomas, \$3.2 billion to build North America's largest synthetic graphite processing facility, 300 jobs; Ranovus; Marvell; Linamar; Connectrix—and the list goes on and on and on of companies that have landed here in the province of Ontario, because we are laser-focused on bringing more investment, more jobs, more growth to every region throughout the province.

Speaker, we will not be slowing down any time soon because that's how we protect Ontario in times of global economic uncertainty.

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

MPP Lise Vaugeois: On June 24, the United Steelworkers and an established, respected industrial developer presented a business plan to the ministry of forestry to purchase the Terrace Bay mill. This proponent offered two options: Use the mill to continue producing pulp or convert the mill to produce biofuels.

Can the Premier explain to the people of Terrace Bay why after 10 long months the government has not responded to this proposal?

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

Hon. Mike Harris: It's great to be able to stand here today and, on behalf of Kevin Holland, our Associate

Minister of Forestry and Forest Products, answer this question.

I think we've gone back and forth with proponents in the municipality in Terrace Bay for many years and are looking to try and revitalize this facility where we can. As it sits right now, the facility, unfortunately, is quite in disrepair, and we're continuing to work with different proponents to be able to revitalize the facility, as I said.

We'll continue down that path and thank you very much for the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I will say, talk is cheap. The same company with the same proposal is now repurposing an idled mill in Quebec. The Ontario government has clearly abandoned the community of Terrace Bay, leaving them with toxic waste and the loss of their tax base.

Can the Premier explain why the offer by a company now operating successfully in Quebec was not good enough to be taken seriously in Ontario?

Hon. Mike Harris: Listen, I can tell you that this government here in the province of Ontario, led by Premier Ford, has invested more into the forestry sector than any government in the history of Ontario.

Most of the members from the north on that side of the House will know very, very well that we take it very seriously here. We're working with the federal government to be able to try and deliver tariff relief and duties on softwood lumber. We're working with folks across the north to be able to revitalize the sector. There's going to be some great news coming out over the next couple of weeks as we look forward to hosting many members from the forestry industry association here in Toronto.

Speaker, stay tuned. There's going to be great things happening for the forestry sector in this province.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: The question is for the Premier. I've been speaking to educators, parents and students across Ontario, and their concerns are deeply troubling. We're seeing a rise in violence in our schools, class sizes that are way too large and students with special needs aren't getting the support that they need. And now this government wants to collect less data by removing the requirement of school climate surveys where students and parents provide anonymous feedback on what's going on in schools. As a result, we'll know less about bullying, less about safety, less about student mental health and well-being. It will make it harder for school principals and superintendents to improve student achievement like the minister wants to do, and it will make our schools less safe.

Speaker, why is this government putting its head in the sand and running away from collecting the data?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Actually, what we're doing no such thing, Madam Speaker. What we're doing is absolutely removing the requirement that boards have to

complete a climate survey. But when asked, “What did you do with these surveys? What results have come out of them,” there were very few boards that could actually highlight what the results of all of the survey work was. So boards can still do a survey—it’s not mandatory anymore—but what we would rather see is results of the work and the funding that we are providing.

I want safer schools. I don’t need to know if a school board itself thinks its school is safe. That’s why we brought police officers back into our schools. I want better governance in our schools. That is why I brought a bill forward to include governance. I want student attendance to improve. That is why I brought a bill forward that includes student attendance as part of their final marks.

1120

I would suggest to the member—while Liberals like to talk about things, Conservatives actually like to move forward and accomplish things. That is why our graduation rates are higher and that is why our students are moving in the right direction, and we’re going to double down on that work.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: It’s clear that the minister is missing the mark, because that data from school climate surveys paints an important picture on what’s happening in classrooms and schools. If the minister understood this, he would then know that principals and superintendents can do targeted interventions in certain schools, where they’re seeing changes in behaviour or very concerning patterns.

The minister spoke about police in schools. I don’t think we should be talking about, “Let’s start putting kids in handcuffs in schools.” Ask a lot of communities around this province: They need to invite the police into the schools, and it will work better that way because it builds trust with racialized communities and it builds trust with Black communities.

What this Premier and this government is doing: They’re not addressing the real issues in our schools, and it’s quite clear that their half-baked plan was created to save face after a crisis created of their own making. It’s a distraction from eight years of weakening public education.

If the minister doesn’t want to collect the data, will it mean that no one will ever know how much they failed their schools? Speaker, why is the minister making our schools less safe?

Hon. Paul Calandra: You know what? This is a classic example of a member who will say something here but will definitely not go back to his community and say, “I want a climate survey.” I can guarantee you that, because asking a child, a grade 4 student, if they identify as a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, has nothing to do with a safe school. You know what has something to do with a safe school? Acting on what we see in our school. That’s what it means.

When we brought in a bill to bring police back to school, that’s about a safe school. When we bring a bill

forward to protect our teachers, that’s about improving education. Somehow, for this member, a climate survey every two years will give the data that will fix schools. Well, how has that worked out under 15 years of Liberal governments? Lower class results and lower student achievement. Under Conservatives, we’re going in the right direction—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order. Order.

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Ajax has been warned.

Interjection.

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

Question?

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. Life is already unaffordable in Ontario—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize.

The member for Waterloo will come to order.

Back to the member.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Life is already unaffordable in Ontario, with sky-high housing prices. Now people are stressed every time they go to the gas pump, but instead of making life easier for people to get off gas and save money, the Premier has made it harder. From ripping out charging stations to axing the EV affordability rebate, the Premier has gotten in the way of building a thriving EV market in Ontario to make life affordable for the people of this province. Over and over again, the Premier says yes to oil and gas giants like Enbridge and no to making EVs affordable for working people.

Why is the Premier so opposed to making people’s lives cheaper by helping them to get off high-priced gas and drive an EV fuelled by made-in-Ontario electricity?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I will just assert to the members opposite, the number one issue afflicting Canadians is the cost of living, which is why our government and Minister of Finance implemented a gas tax cut, because 90% of Ontarians drive a combustion engine. While we appreciate the market is EV friendly, our Minister of Economic Development has attracted \$40 billion of EV investments, not in spite of but because we have lowered taxes and red tape, which you have stood in opposition to.

Our government is committed to affordable power. It’s why we use competition to drive down costs, unlike the former Liberals, whose sole-source energy contracts were 10 times above the market, 400% higher.

There is no virtue in sending families into energy poverty, which is why our government is going to stand up for affordability and stand firmly against the federal Liberal industrial carbon tax.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: This government could save people over \$2,000 a year in fuel costs if they would actually make EVs affordable for people. Our investments in EV plants—which I support—are at risk because the Premier says no to EV affordability rebates.

Around the world, EV sales are going through the roof—40% globally—but they are tanking in Ontario. As a matter of fact, all over the world, they're going up. They're going down in Ontario. You know why? Because this government refuses to support working people—everyday, average folks—being able to afford an electric vehicle. If the Premier was truly serious about helping people save money, they would get big oil off their credit cards.

Speaker, will the Premier put the people of Ontario before oil and gas profits, and bring back the EV affordability rebate so they can get big oil off their credit cards and out—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Madam Speaker, if the member opposite is encouraging this government to reinstitute rebates for \$100,000 vehicles, you have something coming to you. Because our government campaigned in 2018 to end those rebates, not because we opposed the use of consumers using their own judgment, but we believe consumers will make those decisions without government subsidies.

Actually, what the member opposite is advocating for is corporate welfare to these industries. We'd rather reduce costs for every family by—

Interjections.

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

The member for Orléans will come to order. The government side will come to order. The Minister of Education will come to order. I'm going to start naming people. We've got 12 minutes left.

I apologize to the minister. You may continue.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Madam Speaker, I will conclude with this: In order to make life affordable, we need to keep taxes down. There is one political party in this Legislature that stands alone having never raised a tax. Our Premier has campaigned on a 10-cent reduction in gas tax, and the one thing the unifies New Democrats, Liberals and Greens is that you have systematically opposed putting a 10-cent reduction in every single family's pocket. You'll have to take that in the next election to the people of Ontario—how it is justifiable to add hundreds of dollars to the pocketbooks of every family in this province.

SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: My question is for the Minister of Sport. Speaker, across Ontario, families rely on local arenas, fields and recreation centres as places where kids learn teamwork, stay active and build lifelong connections. As our communities grow, so does the need for modern, accessible spaces that can keep up with demand and support healthy, active lifestyles. That is why our government's plan to protect Ontario includes making strategic investments that strengthen our communities and support the well-being of families. While some members opposite continue to oppose these kinds of investments, we know that supporting grassroots sport and recreation is essential to build stronger, more resilient communities.

Through you, Speaker, can the minister share with this House how our government is helping protect Ontario and ensure families have access to the facilities they need?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Thank you the member for the question.

The word is access. I know I've talked to a lot of people in this House, and they spend time in their communities and they volunteer coach. But you know when you hear from coaches, "Why do I have to practise at 5 in the morning? Why can't I get on that field at 6 o'clock with my 10-year-olds. I have to wait till 9 o'clock"—it's about access, or lack thereof.

That's why this government and this Premier, the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance understand how important CSRIF, the Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund, is, to the tune of half a billion dollars that are coming into our communities, supporting families, building those communities and creating access for young people. They deserve the opportunity, like most of us did, as they grow up.

Who knows where that's going to lead, Speaker, but we need to give families those opportunities—and, more importantly, those kids—to learn and get involved in sport, because so much more comes from that. And I'll have something about that in my supplemental.

1130

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

Speaker, I'm thrilled to hear that our government is creating more opportunities for children and families in our province to stay active and healthy in their communities by increasing access to modern, reliable recreation infrastructure. These spaces not only bring people of all ages together and help strengthen communities, but they also open the door to host more tournaments and events.

Through you, Speaker, can the minister tell the House how our government's investments will help create jobs while driving economic growth and activities in communities across Ontario?

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Thanks again to the member for all his work that he does in his community, and understanding and allowing me to reflect a little bit on the other

side of sport in our communities. I've talked about the impact that it has on the youth and the families and how important sport and recreation is, but not so fast only on that front.

Sport tourism is a huge driver of the economy in our province, to the point where we like to say the world comes to Ontario to compete both locally and internationally. When you look at the economic impact and the benefits, people don't realize it and don't pay attention to it.

For years, tournaments have come into communities small and large, whether it's Burlington or a small town up north. What they do as a result of that tournament, what they leave behind and the economic impact are very significant to the local economy. Hotels, food, restaurants, gas: Those are the things. Sport tourism is driving the economy and helping build Ontario, and that's exactly what we're going to continue to do, thanks to CSRIF.

PAY EQUITY

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Speaker, today is April 14, Equal Pay Day. It is the day that the average Ontario woman who worked all the way through 2025 finally earns what the average man earned by December 31.

Hard-working child care workers, nurses, educators, PSWs, social workers—the care economy is built on the backs of women, and you can't outsource these jobs. They are tariff-proof jobs. You can't outsource your daycare to New York or your shelter to Detroit. But the cuts in this year's budget to the sectors that women work in guarantee that they will still not receive equal pay for work of equal value.

Speaker, my question is simple: When will this government pay women what they are worth?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Speaker, our government believes that women deserve fairness in the workplace. That starts with transparency, accountability and real opportunities. Ontario has long had a Pay Equity Act that requires equal pay for work of equal value and obligates employers to correct gender-based wage discrimination.

We know, however, that the gap persists and that factors like hours worked, caregiving responsibilities and workforce participation all play a role. That's why we've taken action to require greater pay transparency so that women are not lowballed from day one.

We've seen the number of measures being taken throughout the seven iterations of the Working for Workers acts that are encouraging more women to get into high-paying jobs and have financial independence. When salaries are disclosed up front, it helps level the playing field and address the inequities before they begin. We are backing the workforce, and we know women play a strong role—

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: The steps that my honourable colleague across the aisle mentioned do matter, but the fact is, we cannot close the pay gap until we fund our care economy. It is that simple.

I want to tell you about Erin. Erin was able to flee an abusive relationship when they found work in child care, but now they might have to leave because of the poverty wages. They simply can't pay their bills.

In fact, the majority of ECEs—listen—leave within three years of getting that job. Why? Because they simply cannot pay their bills on a full-time salary. These workers, 96% of whom are women, care for our children, but this government doesn't care for them at all.

Today is Equal Pay Day. It is past time to deliver public, not-for-profit \$10-a-day child care that pays women what they are worth. Will this government do it?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: From day one, we have worked hard to ensure that women have financial independence, and we've made some significant changes to how we are operating. For example, we're backing the workforce that supports families. Early childhood educators and supervisors who are, yes, as the member said, predominantly women, are seeing real wage increases, long before—we did this despite the NDP and the Liberals, who wanted to keep things the same.

We increased the wage floor through Ontario's child care workforce strategy. We are aligning starting wages for our registered early childhood educators and licensed child carers with those in school boards, closing the gap, because we saw many ECEs leaving licensed child care, where we need them, and going to the school system. We are seeing significant increases in ECEs coming back into the workforce, and we are the government that created laddering programs and opportunities to increase wages. We did that all—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

EDUCATION ISSUES

MPP Andrea Hazell: My question is to the Premier. I've spoken with many school principals across Scarborough–Guildwood, and what they're telling me is alarming. One school has over 1,500 students and only two principals. This puts the students in an unsafe learning environment—nothing new here, all across Ontario. That same school has 150 students on a wait-list, not because of space but because there are not enough teachers.

This government claims enrolment is down, but, surprisingly, in Scarborough, enrolment is rising and classrooms are beyond capacity. With 900 teaching positions cut, this forces schools to rely on non-certified emergency staff. In my riding, there are 20 schools relying on that, and in Scarborough, there are 50, because we don't matter.

To the Premier: Why does this government continue to fail parents and students in Scarborough?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I don't know why the member feels that Scarborough doesn't matter; we feel just the opposite.

The member is quite correct. One of the challenges that we had with the Toronto District School Board under the previous administration of trustees was their inability to move quickly to address situations in different parts of the TDSB, whether it is an increase in enrolment in Scarborough while we're seeing decreases in enrolment in downtown Toronto. That is one of the fixtures that we're seeing under supervised boards, is the ability to move quickly to address challenges in different parts of the educational system.

The member hits the nail on the head. Under trustees, it was laboured and, often, decisions were made not in the best interests of students. As the member would know, a majority of trustees in the TDSB came from the old city of Toronto, sometimes disadvantaging those students in Scarborough.

Under this new model, that will no longer be the case. Academic decisions will be made via the chief education officer, and we'll ensure a consistent level and delivery of education province-wide.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood.

MPP Andrea Hazell: Let's dig a little bit deeper, let's peel away the onion here, let's talk about who's paying the price: The parents, the students, the teachers are all paying the price for this reckless decision of this government.

A mom in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood raising four children with special needs—there are almost no specialized teachers and critical supports like intervenors in her school in Scarborough. In Scarborough, families are still being told there are no spaces for children with special needs. It gets worse: A father in my riding travels out of Scarborough 50 minutes and comes back into Scarborough to his work. That is atrocious.

Madam Speaker, through you, I ask the Premier: Why does this government continue to fail parents and students with special needs? Scarborough is listening, Scarborough is watching—there will be another election.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know there will be another election. I've just run in three and we've done very well, in part because of the work that we're doing in Scarborough.

It is always interesting to see a Scarborough member from the Liberal Party get up and start talking about it. I know that member is the only one who remains from her caucus from Scarborough. This is a Liberal team that just completely ignored Scarborough. Under Liberals, schools were closed in Scarborough. Under Liberals, transit, transportation—forget about it. Under the Liberals—never made any investments in health care. Under Liberals, they didn't build long-term-care homes—none of that, none of that.

Now, what remains consistent about the Liberals and this member in particular is that, when the Minister of Finance brings forward investments in Scarborough, they still vote against those investments for Scarborough.

So nothing has changed. In 15 years of governance, they didn't change. Eight years where we're bringing things, they still vote against Scarborough. But people in Scarborough know they can count on us to deliver for them.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, before we move on to votes, I would like to acknowledge that we have a former member with us in the gallery: representing the riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore in the 42nd and 43rd Parliaments, Christine Hogarth.

DEFERRED VOTES

BUILDING HOMES AND IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 POUR LA CONSTRUCTION DE LOGEMENTS ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE L'INFRASTRUCTURE DE TRANSPORT

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 98, An Act to enact the Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts / *Projet de loi 98, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 sur l'harmonisation des tarifs et l'intégration des transports en commun et modifiant diverses lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1146.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, please take your seats.

On April 1, 2026, Mr. Flack moved second reading of Bill 98, An Act to enact the Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts.

On April 13, 2026, Mr. Clark moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Mr. Clark's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pirie, George
Anand, Deepak	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Quinn, Nolan
Babikian, Aris	Gualtieri, Silvia	Racinsky, Joseph
Bailey, Robert	Hamid, Zee	Rae, Matthew
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hardeman, Ernie	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Harris, Mike	Riddell, Brian
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Sylvia	Rosenberg, Bill
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Trevor	Sabawy, Sheref
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jordan, John	Sandhu, Amarjot
Cho, Stan	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Ciriello, Monica	Kerzner, Michael S.	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Clark, Steve	Khanjin, Andrea	Saunderson, Brian
Coe, Lorne	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Cooper, Michelle	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Graydon

Darouze, George	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Laura
Denault, Billy	McGregor, Graham	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Firin, Mohamed	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Flack, Rob	Pierre, Natalie	Vickers, Paul
Ford, Doug	Pinsonneault, Steve	Williams, Charmaine A.

Coe, Lorne	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, Dave
Cooper, Michelle	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Graydon
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Laura
Darouze, George	McCarthy, Todd J.	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Denault, Billy	McGregor, Graham	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	McKenney, Catherine	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Mulroney, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fife, Catherine	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Firin, Mohamed	Parsa, Michael	Vanthof, John
Flack, Rob	Pasma, Chandra	Vaugeois, Lise
Ford, Doug	Pierre, Natalie	Vickers, Paul
French, Jennifer K.	Pinsonneault, Steve	West, Jamie
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gates, Wayne	Quinn, Nolan	

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Blais, Stephen	French, Jennifer K.	Rakocevic, Tom
Bourgouin, Guy	Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy
Bowman, Stephanie	Gélinas, France	Schreiner, Mike
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Gilmour, Alexa	Shamji, Adil
Burch, Jeff	Hazell, Andrea	Shaw, Sandy
Cerjanec, Rob	Hsu, Ted	Smyth, Stephanie
Clancy, Aislinn	Kernaghan, Terence	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Collard, Lucille	McCrimmon, Karen	Vanthof, John
Fairclough, Lee	McKenney, Catherine	Vaugeois, Lise
Fife, Catherine	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Watt, Tyler
Fraser, John	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 72; the nays are 33.

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

Mr. Flack has moved second reading of Bill 98, An Act to enact the Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts.

Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Same vote? No.

The division bells rang from 1150 to 1151.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On April 1, 2026, Mr. Flack moved second reading of Bill 98, An Act to enact the Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Gélinas, France	Racinsky, Joseph
Anand, Deepak	Gilmour, Alexa	Rae, Matthew
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rakocevic, Tom
Bailey, Robert	Gualtieri, Silvia	Rickford, Greg
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hamid, Zee	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Hardeman, Ernie	Rosenberg, Bill
Bourgouin, Guy	Harris, Mike	Sabawy, Sheref
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Burch, Jeff	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kanapathi, Logan	Sattler, Peggy
Cho, Stan	Kernaghan, Terence	Saunderson, Brian
Ciriello, Monica	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Khanjin, Andrea	Shaw, Sandy

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Blais, Stephen	Fairclough, Lee	Schreiner, Mike
Bowman, Stephanie	Fraser, John	Shamji, Adil
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Hazell, Andrea	Smyth, Stephanie
Cerjanec, Rob	Hsu, Ted	Watt, Tyler
Clancy, Aislinn	McCrimmon, Karen	
Collard, Lucille	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 89; the nays are 16.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard a no.

Hon. Rob Flack: I'll refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): It is therefore referred to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

FEDERAL BY-ELECTIONS

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

Mr. John Fraser: Last night, two new MPs were elected here in Toronto, so I'd like to congratulate Dr. Danielle Martin and Doly Begum. I look forward to—

Interjections.

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

The House recessed from 1155 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BISHOP BRIGANTE COLON CANCER PREVENTION ACT, 2026

LOI BISHOP BRIGANTE DE 2026 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DU CANCER DU CÔLON

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act with respect to the age for colon cancer screening / Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé en ce qui concerne l'âge pour subir un dépistage du cancer du côlon.

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): Do you wish to explain the bill?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is kind of with mixed emotions that I bring this bill back. I introduced it for the first time in 2024. Bishop Brigante was here at the time. He was a very well-known Toronto hip hop artist who developed colon cancer and wanted the screening age to be lowered. Bishop Brigante died on March 30, 2025. Now the Canadian Cancer Society and researchers from Canada and Ontario have put forward recommendations that the screening age be lowered to 45 for every Ontarian.

So I table this bill again—I hope, in memory. The short title of the bill is the Bishop Brigante Colon Cancer Prevention Act, and I hope it will pass.

PETITIONS

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Ted Hsu: I have a petition from my riding of Kingston and the Islands.

It is calling on the government of Ontario to extend provincial funding for the Kingston consumption and treatment services site for a minimum of six months following its scheduled closure, and in any event until a new HART hub is fully operational. That will ensure a safe and coordinated transition for vulnerable residents and community partners.

HIGHWAY 69

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over my riding. It's called "4-Lane Highway 69 Now!" Online, we get about 600 names every single day on this petition.

People want Highway 69 to be safe. Last week, we had two deadly collisions that shut down Highway 69 for a long time. We have now two more families who are

grieving loved ones who died on Highway 69. There are 68 kilometres of Highway 69 that are a two-lane highway. It is very dangerous. Those three people who died last week were on this stretch of 68 kilometres that is only two lanes.

The Premier, at every election and in between, promised us that they would four-lane Highway 69. It has not been done. Too many lives have been lost. Too many people have had accidents. It is too dangerous. It needs to change.

The petition says to negotiate seriously with land-owners to immediately fund, tender, and begin construction of the remaining 68 kilometres of Highway 69 and establish a clear, public timeline for completion.

We've waited long enough. Too many people have died. This needs to change.

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Ted Hsu: I have a petition entitled "Petition to Raise Social Assistance Rates." It is petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to double social assistance rates, namely for OW and ODSP.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'd like to thank David Soulliere and Jean Soulliere from Amherstburg for sending me this petition. It is an Ontario-first petition.

It talks about how Ontario is the number one market for 15 US states. It talks about how both senators and representatives of the House of Representatives have voted against Donald Trump's tariffs. It also talks about how the United States Supreme Court has ruled that Donald Trump's tariffs are, in fact, illegal.

This petition calls upon the government of Ontario to take steps by adopting regulations to make Ontario-made goods, services and supply chains in the public sector procurement system number one. It makes it the first step that people ought to take when they are purchasing goods and when they are seeking services with taxpayers' money.

I support this petition. I will sign it and give it to this fine page, Owen, to bring to the Clerks' table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

MPP Jamie West: This petition is a petition to reduce class sizes in our public elementary schools. It's very timely, with the recent topic that we'll be debating this afternoon.

What it talks about is that since 2018, there has been \$6.35 billion cut from public education. That has meant that there have been larger classes with less resources. Parents at home may be wondering why their kids don't have the support that they used to have. Well, it's because it's very difficult to fill in the gaps of almost \$7 billion.

Basically, what they're asking for in this petition is that they want the classes to be smaller, like they used to be, instead of larger. And they're asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit to making the necessary investments in public education to lower class sizes, to increase student supports, and to ensure students have the schools they need.

I fully support this petition. It's a no-brainer for us. The better our youth do, the better our future will be. I will affix my signature and provide it to page Daryush for the table.

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Mr. Ted Hsu: I have a petition from many members of the Queen's University community who point out the broad benefits to the common good that come from Ontario's universities.

They ask the government to invest in Ontario's future by following their own blue-ribbon panel report and boosting Ontario universities' base operating funds by 11.75% annually for a five-year period, to bring Ontario close to the Canadian average, which is not the case currently.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Deepak Anand: This is from residents of southwestern Ontario, and they're reminding us that Ontario is the number one export market to 15 US states—and it's further saying that not only are we spending the stuff; we're sending the stuff. We are actually helping many people in the US, working every day.

Further on, it's talking about "both sides of the aisle"—politicians on both sides are supporting us, and they're against Donald Trump's tariffs.

This petition is reminding us about Ontario being the engine of the economy for Canada and saying that we are spending many things within Ontario, buying many things in Ontario, and we should consider buying from Ontario companies—Ontario-made products.

I sincerely want to say thank you to all the residents who took the time to make this petition and send it to us, so that we can continue to work, make, build a stronger Ontario.

I am fully supporting this, and I'm going to hand it over to this handsome gentleman, John, with my signature.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a whole whack of petitions here entitled "Stop Privatization and Support Staffing Ratios." They have been completed and sent in by RNs and health care professionals at Lakeridge Health and across Durham region.

They have highlighted that understaffing is negatively impacting the quality of public health care. When we think of longer wait times, unreliable access to care, unmanageable workloads, deskilling of health care work, many more issues—issues like this.

The understaffing is causing significant burnout for nurses and for health care professionals, and unfortunately, it's driving them out of the profession.

1510

What we need to see are better staffing ratios. They will restore our public health care system so that it can meet the needs of Ontarians.

They have highlighted that the Ford government has undermined the public health care system by taking money that should be used on staffing and instead is making deals with private, for-profit corporations to deliver that health care.

These folks have called on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to mandate staffing ratios for nurses and health care professionals across the health care system in Ontario; to develop staffing ratios in consultation with nurses and health care professionals through their unions; and to use health care funding to ensure that Ontarians can access the care they need within the public system, rather than privatizing health care through outsourcing services to private, for-profit corporations.

Of course, we all want our health care system to be the best it can.

So I support this. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Petra.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Myrna and Donna MacWilliam from Val Caron in my riding for these petitions. They're called "Save OSAP, Fund Education Now!"

As you know, Speaker, the Ford government has decided to increase tuition for colleges and universities at the same time as they will be really gutting the OSAP grants. Cutting the OSAP grants means that many students coming from low-income families will be buried in thousands of dollars of debt before they even graduate or get their first job. Lots of people in my riding are choosing between an education and a lifetime of debt.

For years, both Liberal governments and Conservative governments left Ontario ranking dead last when it comes to per-student funding.

Students should not have to pay the price for government failures, and they deserve a government that invests in their future.

They petition the Legislative Assembly to direct the Minister of Colleges and Universities to reverse the cuts to OSAP grants, stop the government tuition hikes, and provide colleges and universities with the funding they need so that Ontario's young people can get ahead.

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Jamie West: I want to thank Sally Palmer for collecting these petitions to raise social assistance rates. I

think she collects them for every single riding. It's so important.

What they talk about is that when you're on OW, Ontario Works, it's \$733 for an individual. If you're an individual on ODSP with a disability, it would be \$1,408. Everyone in this chamber knows that's not enough to cover your rent, let alone food, hydro and any other expenses. Basically, we're taking a segment of our population and forcing them to live below the poverty line, which is probably connected to the reason we have so much of a rise in the number of homeless and people in precarious workplaces. We really need to address this and take this seriously.

They are petitioning the assembly to double the social assistance rates for OW and ODSP so that people can live in dignity and so that we can support people to have brighter futures.

I fully support this petition. I want to thank Dr. Palmer again for collecting these signatures. I'll provide it to page Livy with a signature for the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Doug and Donna Stuart from Garson in my riding. They are part of parents from the Rainbow District School Board that have signed and sent this petition, which basically says that the Ford government has cut \$6.35 billion from public education since they came into power in 2018, which has resulted in larger class sizes. We've seen an increase in violence and inadequate special education and mental health supports for the students who need those services.

The larger class sizes have a negative impact on the quality of education. It also reduces teaching resources and diminishes teacher-to-student interactions, which is not good for our students.

The majority of parents, students and educators support smaller class sizes and want the best education possible for each and every one of the students.

So they petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit to making the necessary investments in public education to lower class sizes, increase student supports, and ensure students have the schools that they need.

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

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is the number one export market for 15 U.S. states, and we help keep millions of Americans working;

"Senators and representatives from both sides of the aisle have voted against Trump's tariffs;

"The U.S. Supreme Court has declared President Trump's tariffs to be illegal.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario should adopt a regulation or regulations, and issue procurement directives as appropriate, that would prioritize Ontario-made goods, services, and supply chains in public sector procurement, including capital infrastructure and construction projects, supporting Ontario's economy and workers."

I fully support this petition. I'm going to attach my name to this petition and present it to page Nihaal.

LABORATORY SERVICES

MPP Jamie West: This petition is very timely. It's about keeping medical testing in the north.

I know those of us who were on House duty yesterday were really uncomfortably warm here. But where I live in Sudbury, there's still another two and a half feet of snow on the ground. That's because we had a major snowstorm that shut down all the highways. It didn't matter, because you couldn't even make it off the street, let alone to the highway.

This is about keeping medical testing in the north. A large American company bought LifeLabs and decided they would close the testing facility in Sudbury. So that doesn't affect Sudbury alone; it affects all of the northern communities that rely on that testing. The plan basically is to ship that to southern Ontario.

We know from Highway 69—the two fatalities last week, the snowstorm the week before—that you cannot always get to southern Ontario adequately. This means that people who require medical testing are going to be struggling to have their test results returned on time. It also means that people who have thin veins, people who are elderly and bruise easily may have to do their tests over again.

It also creates a situation where we're going to lose up to 40 jobs in Sudbury. That means that young people who are doing the Learn and Stay grant in the north for medical lab technologists won't be able to take advantage of those slots in northern Ontario.

Basically, what they are asking for is that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, all of us, work to ensure that the closure of LifeLabs doesn't happen, that we maintain medical testing in northern Ontario.

I obviously support this. This is a major issue in Sudbury and northern Ontario. I'll affix my signature. I'll provide it to page Petra for the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUTTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT FIRST ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 DONNANT LA PRIORITÉ À LA RÉUSSITE DES ÉLÈVES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 14, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care / Projet de loi 101, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'éducation et à la garde d'enfants.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'll be sharing my time today with the member for Humber River–Black Creek.

This is the government's latest education bill, and nothing in this bill is actually about improving student outcomes. What it is actually about is centralizing even more power in the hands of the Minister of Education here at Queen's Park and creating a new layer of bureaucracy while limiting the advocacy and supports that parents actually receive.

The bill is entitled Putting Student Achievement First Act, which is another Orwellian title like the Conservatives love to use. Pay close attention, Speaker, because Orwell will be coming up again later in my remarks.

The bill is called Putting Student Achievement First Act, but when we look at what's actually in the act, there's only one clause in here that's on student achievement. But do you know what there is, Speaker? There are 57 clauses on legal protections for the minister, cabinet and the minister's appointees. This would be like if I wrote a novel and I mentioned dragons once, but I said that my novel was about dragons. No publisher would market that book as a novel about dragons, but if I mentioned pirates on every page, the publisher would tell me that it was a book about pirates.

When we have a bill that mentions liability 43 times, mentions student achievement three times, you have to ask: Is this a bill about student achievement, or is this a bill about protecting the Minister of Education?

1520

If this were a bill that was titled according to what's actually in the act the most times, then this wouldn't be protecting student achievement; it would be protecting the Minister of Education's—there's an unparliamentary word I'm not allowed to say, Speaker, but it starts with A and it has three letters; or, if you prefer, if you are a fan of Slow Horses, the TV show, or the novels by Mick Herron, this is London Rules.

The bill mentions liability 43 times. Do you know how many time it mentions students, Speaker? It only mentions students five times. It mentions class sizes zero times; classrooms, zero times; mental health, zero times; special education, zero times. So if this is about student achievement—

Interjection.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Yes, the government House leader said, "That's horrible," and I completely agree with him.

It is absolutely horrible that you would market this bill as being about student achievement when it doesn't even mention classrooms, mental health or special education.

What it does repeat over and over and over again is "liability." If this was about student achievement and fixing what's wrong in our education system, why would the Minister of Education or cabinet need "liability"?

I'm a parent of three children who are in our schools. I speak with parents, teachers, education workers and principals every single day. And I can tell you, if this were a bill that was about ensuring that all of our classrooms had pencils and paper, the minister would have nothing to worry about—legal pursuit or court cases. If this was a bill that was about reducing class sizes or hiring more EAs, he would not need immunity; there would be no parent in the province who was trying to take him to court. If this was a bill about ensuring that every school had regularly scheduled access to a mental health professional, the minister would have no reason to be invoking London Rules. If this was eliminating the special education deficit and ensuring that every child had the resources that they need to learn and to be safe and supported at school, nobody would be thinking about consulting a lawyer. If this was about repairing our schools and making sure that the roofs weren't caving in on our kids' heads, nobody would be thinking about a court challenge. If this were a bill that sought to ensure that every child's teacher or education worker feels safe in our schools, the minister would have no need to concern himself with immunity against parents.

But what kinds of things might you want to consider protecting yourself against court challenges on? Well, if you're firing teachers, education workers and principals, that might make you feel like parents are coming after you. If you're closing special education classes in schools, that might make you feel vulnerable to a court challenge. If you're increasing wait times for assessments, well, somebody might want to take that to the Ontario Human Rights Commission. If you're cutting Indigenous programs, that might lead to a constitutional court case. If you're cutting funding for classroom resources, not fixing our schools even as they're flooding; if you are quietly selling off public land in a non-transparent process, those are all situations in which you might feel like you need to protect yourself against legal challenges. These are all things that his supervisors are doing. The Minister of Education's hand-picked appointees who have taken over eight school boards in the province are doing all of these things currently in our school boards. And do you know what? The bill gives them immunity too. There's a whole section granting the minister's supervisors immunity for everything that they're doing in our schools.

What other kinds of things might you want immunity for? Giving roles to Conservative insiders and allowing them to bill \$400,000 a year that's coming out of our classrooms, while those same people are making decisions in the dark without consulting parents; in fact, even refusing to meet with parents, teachers and education workers.

Another thing you might want to protect yourself against parents for is cutting \$6.3 billion out of our education system over the past eight years. And if the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario just came out yesterday and said your budget is cutting another \$500 million from education this year, that might be something else you feel like you need to protect yourself against parents and kids

and teachers and education workers for. Because none of this is addressing the challenges in our education system. What it will do is make all of the challenges worse, while making parents, teachers, education workers and communities more helpless, more sidelined from our schools. They are losing out on vital advocacy and support. They are having their voices shut out of the process.

This bill is creating new CEOs, chief executive officers, not in charge of corporations, in charge of our schools in Ontario—CEOs who will have the powers of the supervisors. They will be just like the supervisors. They are going to be people who have business or finance experience, but no experience in education, no experience in child well-being or in supporting kids. To them, just like they are to the supervisors, our kids are going to be line items. They are just going to be one among a series of numbers that the supervisor or CEO is trying to balance, with no concern for how the items that they are cutting impact our kids, our kids' education and our kids' safety.

These new CEOs aren't accountable to the community. Only the minister will be able to dismiss a CEO. The board of trustees for the English public and Catholic boards will be able to hire the new director of education, who's now renamed a CEO, but they won't be able to dismiss that CEO, regardless of how blatantly that CEO makes decisions that harm our kids, that harm our communities or ignores the voices and needs of the local community.

Our democratically elected and accountable trustees will not be able to dismiss that person without the written permission of the Minister of Education in Queen's Park. And we already know what this minister's vision is for our kids.

These CEOs will also be able to overrule our democratically elected trustees when it comes to budgets, because the minister said yesterday that he's giving himself the power to approve budgets when trustees don't approve the CEO's budget. So any time trustees stand up to a CEO and say, "Your budget does not reflect the needs of our community; it does not reflect the needs of our kids," the CEO can go running to the Minister of Education in Queen's Park and say, "You approve my budget." And guess what, Speaker? The CEO will have their budget approved.

The CEO can even be granted the power by the Minister of Education to determine what our democratically elected trustees can and can't discuss or adopt as motions at school board meetings. This CEO is going to be a mini emperor of our school board, just like the Minister of Education wants to be the emperor of the education system in Ontario.

So let's take a look at the record of the supervisors that the minister has appointed to see what we might see from CEOs with business qualifications but no educational experience. And top of the list is firing teachers and education workers. This is the list of the recent firings done by the minister's hand-picked Conservative supervisors:

—in the Toronto District School Board: 289 teachers, 186 support staff positions, including ECEs and safety monitors, and 40 vice-principals;

—in the Peel District School Board: 331 teachers;
 —in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board: 120 elementary school teachers; and
 —in the Toronto Catholic District School Board: 77 front-line instructors.

Those are all positions that are gone from our schools in boards that are under supervision by this minister's appointees.

The supervisors are cutting programs like the international languages program in the Toronto Catholic board, which means that more than 19,000 students are losing access to the language instruction that they received on a daily basis in their schools—all with a stroke of a pen by an unaccountable supervisor who didn't consult anyone in the community.

In special education, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board supervisor is closing eight special education classes. Now, the supervisor said to parents in a SEAC committee meeting that special education would be the last thing he would cut. So if he's cutting eight classes out of the last thing he would cut, Speaker, then you have to ask yourself, what else is Bob Plamondon going to cut from our schools?

In the Toronto District School Board, not only was the first thing that the supervisor did to increase class sizes for kids with disabilities and special needs, but he's pausing enrolment at two schools that exclusively support kids with special needs: Heydon Park and Eastdale Collegiate. He says he's not closing them, but if you pause enrolment and there are no new students coming, Speaker, then you are de facto closing them because sooner or later you are going to run out of students there.

1530

In the Thames Valley District School Board, there are kids who are sitting at home right now who should be in school but aren't because they're not getting the supports that they need to be there safely. And you know what, Speaker? Not only are they at home because they don't have supports, but the board hasn't even done the work to identify what supports they need because wait times for assessments have doubled under the Conservative minister's hand-picked supervisor.

And do you know what the supervisor's solution is to this wait-list that has doubled on his watch? It's to require a pre-assessment in order to get an assessment but with new rules about who qualifies for an assessment. So they're not going to clear the list by making sure kids get timely assessments; they're going to do it by telling a whole bunch of kids they can't have an assessment and they're not going to get any diagnosis.

Another thing we're seeing from the supervisors: cuts to Indigenous programs, the very first thing that the supervisor in the Dufferin-Peel Catholic board did—a great move, Speaker, at a time when our province is supposed to be committed to reconciliation and to honouring the treaties.

In the Ottawa-Carlton District School Board, the supervisor, Bob Plamondon, cut funding for classroom supplies, textbooks and resources at a time when our schools don't

even have enough paper and pencils. I had a classroom visit in February, Speaker. I like to bring some pencils and pins along to share with the students, and when I asked the teacher at the end of the visit how many pencils she wanted, I could see her eyeing the stack of pencils in my bag. I said, “Would you like them all?” and she said, “Yes. This will only last us the rest of the month,” because they’re getting no pencils from the school board, and yet Bob Plamondon cut funding by 17% for classroom supplies this year.

Another thing Bob Plamondon is doing in Ottawa is quietly selling off public land. He listed a school, Grant Alternative, with a private real estate agency without telling anyone, even the municipality. The neighbours who live around that school found out because they found the listing on the real estate agency’s website. Nobody knows what’s happening. Nobody knows who is bidding on this school, what this land might be used for. The municipality was sidelined entirely, so my constituents had no opportunity to weigh in on how they thought that land should be used to continue to benefit the public. The municipality had no chance to say that that land could be used for recreation or for health care infrastructure or for affordable housing. Nobody gets to decide how that land will be used except for Bob Plamondon, and he is not accountable to anybody in Ottawa. He has made that more than clear on more than one occasion, telling parents he has no responsibility to answer our questions.

The supervisors are also using the personal information of parents to send misleading information about what they’re doing. The Ottawa-Carlton District School Board has my personal email address because my daughter goes there. They do not have it so that Bob Plamondon can send me propaganda on what he’s doing, and yet that’s what I’m getting. Because I’m the education shadow minister, because I know how to read an audit committee document, I know that what Bob Plamondon is telling me does not align with the facts. But many parents don’t know that, and so what the supervisor is doing is a form of gaslighting. It’s using people’s private information that was given to the school board to communicate about how our children are doing to share propaganda instead.

Meanwhile, supervisors aren’t communicating in any other format. They’re not answering questions; they’re not answering phone calls and emails; they’re not holding meetings. In fact, the meetings that are still being held—the parent involvement council, the special education advisory committee—have banned live streams, so only if you have the privilege to be able to attend a meeting at the board office in person after school do you get to know what happened in those meetings. In fact, they’ve even changed the minutes, so if you’re a committee member and you weren’t at the meeting, you don’t get to know what happened at the meeting.

Now, with the new model of education under this Minister of Education, trustees can raise concerns about all of these things. They can say that the community doesn’t support it. They can say that community members and parents have concerns about what’s happening. They can

say, “We need more resources in our classrooms.” They can say, “Don’t cut a program.” They can say, “Don’t sell off this land,” or they can say, “Make sure it’s offered to the municipality to benefit all of us.” And the CEO can just rule their motion out of order. He can prevent them from even discussing it or, if they adopt it, he can say, “It’s not effective because I said it wasn’t a real motion.” He can refuse to include it in his budget, and then when trustees don’t want to pass his budget, he can send his budget off to the Minister of Education for approval.

This is not the model of education that parents and communities want. We want to have a say in our local schools. We want decision-makers in our local school to be accountable to us. We want their decisions to be transparent, and we want communication to be honest and accountable. But this is the minister’s vision of education.

Speaking of the minister, let’s talk about the new powers he’s giving himself under this act, and that starts with the power to set rules and policies for what books and instructional materials are okay to be used by schools and how they may be selected.

This may sound familiar to you, Speaker, because Alberta did this a few months ago. Here’s how it worked in Alberta: Nearly 200 books were banned from their schools, including—and you can’t make this up—George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. So the government doesn’t want people to read about dystopian futures in which governments can mislead us about what’s happening. You honestly can’t make this up. So apparently the minister took a look at what Danielle Smith was doing in Alberta and said, “Hold my beer. I can do that here.”

Et le pouvoir de décider quels livres et quels outils d’instruction les conseils scolaires peuvent utiliser s’applique aussi aux conseils scolaires francophones qui ont un droit constitutionnel de gérer leur propre système d’éducation par et pour les Franco-Ontariens.

La décision sur quelles ressources peuvent être utilisées dans les écoles francophones devrait être une décision prise par les Franco-Ontariens, par leurs représentants, et par leurs enseignants et enseignantes. Ils savent ce dont ils ont besoin. Ils savent quels livres reflètent leur expérience, leur langue, leur culture. Ils savent même quelles ressources ont un bon niveau de français, parce que trop souvent, sous ce gouvernement, ils sont forcés d’utiliser soit des ressources ou des livres en anglais, soit des documents qui sont mal traduits de l’anglais.

Les Franco-Ontariens se sont battus pendant des décennies pour la reconnaissance de leur droit. Le ministre ne peut pas l’abroger simplement parce qu’il le veut.

The minister will also have the power to decide how students will be graded and tested across the province, even though he has no experience in education and a long track record of failing to consult with people who do, including teachers and education workers.

The minister can set regulations regarding budgets, including the power to approve budgets himself, to ban school boards from paying certain kinds of expenses, and when trustees don’t approve the CEO’s budget, then it goes to him. So a business person with no education ex-

perience gets the final say over how education will be funded in Ontario.

The irony about the minister setting regulations about budgets, Speaker, is that throughout core education funding in Ontario, the government is not actually funding what they are telling school boards they have to do. There's an \$850-million shortfall in special education funding. There's a \$300-million shortfall in statutory funding for CPP and EI and sick leave. There's a shortfall in student transportation. The Minister of Education is going to give himself the power to say, "This is how trustees or the CEO have to shape budgets," but he's not providing any additional funding. There is not a word here about the minister's obligation to fund what he is telling school boards they have to put in their budgets.

The minister is giving himself new powers to set communication policies for boards, which will include public communications made by board members acting as representatives of the board. So he can block trustees from communicating with their constituents. If he thinks that trustees are being too critical of his government's policies, too critical of the CEO's policies, he can tell them they can't communicate any longer. If he thinks trustees are spending too much time advocating for supports that students need but that he doesn't want to give, he can block them from communicating. He can even block them from trying to explain to their constituents what is happening at board meetings, why certain decisions were made, what the impact of the decision will be, how various funding envelopes work. He can tell trustees that they're not allowed to have any of those kinds of communications with parents and with communities, which means effectively that, as parents and communities, we no longer have a right to have information. We only get whatever information the Minister of Education thinks we should have access to, and everything else we're blocked from, if he feels like it.

1540

The minister now has the power to approve acquisition of new land by school boards. So any time that a school board needs to construct a new school, whether it's because of a new suburb that's being constructed or whether it's because of a growing number of students in an established neighbourhood, acquiring the land to build the new school now has to be personally approved by the Minister of Education. Talk about red tape. But let me talk about why that's problematic under this government.

A few years ago, a developer in Wasaga Beach held a \$1,000-a-plate dinner for the former Minister of Education, who's now the Minister of Energy and Mines, and a couple of months later, a new school was approved which required that land from that developer be purchased to build that new school. And the school was approved for the Catholic board, even though there were more students in the public board who were being bused out of town to get to high school. So, to people in Wasaga Beach, this decision did not make sense.

It raises the question: With the minister now having to personally approve every new acquisition of land by a

school board in Ontario, are we going to see more deals where friendly developers and donors get their land purchased by a school board?

The bill adds school improvements and repairs to the list of issues where a board needs the minister's approval—currently, it's for construction or for expansion. But now, if you're repairing a roof that is broken because of years of underfunding by the government, you need the Minister of Education's approval to do that, which is interesting, because we have a repair backlog of over \$16 billion in the province. We don't know how much it is, because the government stopped reporting on it about five years ago. And one thing you can be sure of is that if the number were going down rather than up, they would be reporting it. So I think that gives us a sense of where things are at.

What we do know is that the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario says that if the government doesn't increase funding for school repairs and construction, then by 2033 75% of schools in the province of Ontario will be below a state of good repair.

So they're not funding school repairs, but now you're going to have to ask the minister's permission to do a school repair, which has to beg the question: What's the plan here? Is it to drive our schools into such a state of disrepair that they can argue for closing them and selling off the land?

The minister is also giving himself new power to appoint someone to oversee a capital project, which includes building, expanding, renovating or repairing a school, and that person will oversee every component of the project, which includes contracts—who's going to get a contract; who can have their contract cancelled—which is a dangerous practice with a government that has already shown that in our education system, they love to appoint Conservatives with no qualifications. We see the same thing with the Skills Development Fund, where who gets funding seems to depend on who has donated to the government or who has worked for them in the past. If we're going to start naming people to oversee capital projects, who is going to get those appointments? Will they be \$400,000 a year? And who are they going to give contracts to in turn?

Then the minister also says that boards need approval from him to create or continue to operate a school-board-controlled entity. There are not a lot of them in the province beyond the Toronto Lands Corp., which controls lands owned by the Toronto District School Board, which kind of makes you wonder, Speaker, why would the minister need to grant permission to continue to operate the Toronto Lands Corp.? It kind of makes you think maybe they have their eye on it and that if it wasn't there, it would be a whole lot easier to grab that land and to sell it off to their buddies. And who loses? It's our kids, who no longer have a school in their neighbourhood.

So between the chief executive officer and the Minister of Education, there's a whole lot of power in their hands, with zero accountability. But we do still have elected trustees in all four school boards, and that is good news for parents, because that means we still have somebody to

take our phone calls—unlike the supervisors, who aren't answering phone calls. We still have somebody to help us navigate the system. It's not happening, under supervisors, right now. They will be very limited in their power to influence budgetary decisions, to save or create programs, or to communicate with us about what's happening. But they will still be there to advocate for us within the system.

It seems like all of the powers that are being taken away, all of the limits that are being placed on the ability of trustees to fight for public education, to fight for our kids—it seems like all of that is tailor-made to drive good people away from our school boards. If someone is really passionate about education, but they look at the role as it's being envisioned by this government—that they're going to spend hours answering phone calls, fighting for our kids, but when they bring those issues to a board meeting, they're shut down by a CEO with business qualifications and no experience, and they're being told they can't even talk about it, or "Never mind; it won't be in the budget anyway." I can see how that would frustrate good people, and that they wouldn't want to participate in this system.

But if good people don't step forward, if they don't run, the minister has already said he's ready to appoint people where we don't have trustees elected. So this seems like it was kind of a back door—that the Minister of Education lost an argument with the Premier over whether or not we were going to continue to have elected school board trustees, and he thought, "Well, here's a way for me to still appoint school board trustees after all."

And do you know who gets the most affected by the reduced power of trustees, Speaker? It is kids with disabilities, who disproportionately depend on the advocacy of trustees for the supports, resources and accommodations that they need to be successful at school. There is going to be less support and advocacy for these kids when they are already suffering under this government, when they are already being excluded in record numbers from this government.

It's going to be even worse in the Toronto District School Board, where the minister is cutting the number of trustees almost in half. Now those trustees are going to have to answer twice as many phone calls. They are going to have to oversee 50 or 60 schools. They're going to be in a position where they can't even answer every phone call, let alone visit every school.

This is the minister trying to set trustees up to fail, and it's our kids who are paying the cost of this minister's vendetta against elected trustees in the province.

The fact that the minister is attacking the TDSB trustees also seems like par for the course with this government's weird obsession with Toronto, where we have an affordability crisis in the province, but their priority seem to be micromanaging everything in the city of Toronto, which includes implementing a broke Austrian spa company, building a convention centre in the middle of Lake Ontario, tunnelling under the 401, and then cutting down representation and accountability. This is all about vanity projects and not actually listening to the concerns of the people living in Ontario.

Bill 101 also takes responsibility for collective bargaining away from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and hands it to the Council of Ontario Directors of Education, which now, of course, will represent CEOs, not people with education experience. One thing we can be sure of is that giving responsibility for bargaining to business-oriented people will be bad for bargaining on priorities that matter most to teachers and education workers, like class sizes.

Teachers have already said that class sizes is their number one bargaining issue for this round, because for them, it's about the academic outcomes for the kids they support, and it's about safe and healthy classrooms for kids and for workers. But for CEOs, we can already see from the supervisors who are in place that class sizes are an issue of dollar signs and nothing else, which is why the TDSB supervisor said he's removing caps on class sizes for grades 4 to 8.

So we're going to have people on the government side of the bargaining table who only see as their priority reducing costs for the government, not supporting our children and making sure they have all the resources that they need.

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These new CEOs are also going to have the power to oversee collective agreement negotiation and ratification and compliance within school boards, which means, again, we're going to have people who have no experience in education, no knowledge of local issues, who are responsible for telling kids, teachers and education workers in our local communities what resources and rights they will actually have access to.

The bill also gives the minister the power to regulate the timing and duration of teacher education programs, the areas of study that have to be included in those teacher education programs and the manner of delivery for those areas of study, and criteria for practical experience—or, as the bill says, "any other matter relating to the design, delivery or learning outcomes of professional teacher education programs." The minister says this is about reducing the length of teachers' college, which is a good first step towards addressing our shortage of qualified teachers, although it does nothing to address the teacher-retention problem, which is much, much greater. But the regulation isn't just written to allow the minister to address the timing; it's also allowing him to address the content and the format, which should be designed by professional faculties of education that have actual experience in education and what qualifications teachers need. We don't want to have the criteria for what our teachers need to learn being decided by a Minister of Education who has no education experience and a track record of showing that he does not care about what our kids actually need.

We also know that this minister, just like the four Ministers of Education who came before him in this government, has a very poor track record on consultation, particularly with teachers and education workers. So he's going to have the power to decide what should be in

teacher education, but he might not even talk to a single teacher or education worker in deciding that. That would be par for the course with this government.

Then there's the transition time. The bill says the government will address the transition time, but we've seen time and time again that, when this government announces new curriculum, they'll do it in June and expect the curriculum to be in place by September. It's like they've never heard of the fact that teachers need some prep time in order to be able to deliver a curriculum, let alone the fact that these schools are going to need to figure out how they're structuring their courses, how they're enrolling students, how they're dealing with graduations with the double cohorts. Nothing about this government's track record on transition gives any confidence that they will manage this one successfully.

Et pour les Franco-Ontariens, il n'y a rien dans ce projet de loi qui s'adresse aux difficultés auxquelles vous êtes confrontés. Il n'y a rien qui remplace le plus de 6 milliards de dollars qui ont été coupés de notre système d'éducation depuis les huit dernières années. Rien pour réduire la taille des classes. Rien pour vous aider avec la complexité accrue des besoins des élèves. Rien pour résoudre le problème de violence. Rien pour assurer l'équité dans le financement de l'éducation. Rien pour combler la pénurie de financement pour le transport scolaire. Rien pour garantir l'accès à des locaux sûrs, salubres et appropriés. Rien qui respecte le droit constitutionnel des francophones à une éducation équivalente à celle de la majorité.

Ce projet de loi est une prise de contrôle personnelle du ministre, pas une solution aux défis de notre système d'éducation. Ce dont nous avons besoin, c'est une augmentation du financement pour nos enfants et de respect pour ceux qui assurent notre éducation, ainsi que pour la voix des parents et de la communauté.

There's nothing in this bill that actually addresses what we need in this moment, nothing that is actually going to improve outcomes for our kids.

One thing I can tell you after having spoken with parents, students, teachers and education workers and community members across the province over the last year and several years is that they're not going to stop demanding better for our kids. We are going to continue fighting every single day until this government finally listens and provides the funding necessary to make sure that every one of our kids can be at school every day, safe and supported, with the teachers and the caring adults they need around them, with the mental health and special education supports that they need to succeed, in safe and healthy school buildings. We are not going to stop until that is the reality for every child across Ontario.

For those of you thinking of running for trustee and who are feeling a little bit discouraged by this government's legislation, I would say: Do not let them scare you off from fighting for our kids. Do not let them scare you off from standing up for our democracy. Your voice matters, whether this government listens to it or not. Take your chance and fight for what matters most: our kids.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Humber River—Black Creek.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: If there's one thing this government is great at, it's creating bill names that have nothing to do with the bills; in fact, some of these bill names achieve the opposite of what the bills are doing.

As an example, we're debating today Bill 101, Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026, but in this bill there's only one clause that has to do with student achievement and there are 57 clauses about lawsuit protection. I would suggest that they change the name, perhaps in committee, to "bill 101, lawsuit protection first act, 2026"—at least it would be transparent. When you really look at it, this bill actually mentions the word "liability" 43 times—they're professionals at being sued. But it only mentions students five times and classrooms—how many times do you think? Not even once—zero times.

What is the rationale for this bill? Well, imagine this government, of all of the governments in the history of Ontario, saying that school boards can't manage money and are essentially doing shady things. That's essentially what they're saying here. Imagine a government that, in 2027, is going to hit an absolutely incredible milestone: half-a-trillion-dollar debt. School boards, like municipalities, by law have to balance budgets. But this government, like the federal government, can just print money, and the way they treat money—they treat it like confetti. They throw it all over the place. They don't care. They have no respect for taxpayer money, and so they apply these principles to literally everything.

So here we are debating a bill that the education minister many times will say is about ideology—"What are teaching our kids?" But what is this bill going to do? It's a takeover. It's to silence democratically elected trustees and replace them with who? And I'm going to get to that. Supervisors—the first thing they did when they took the seat was to build a brick wall so no one can ever talk to them. They took the transparent decision-making processes that democratically elected trustees would do and put it behind closed doors, behind a brick wall. It's unbelievable what they do. They're even doing book bannings. Imagine that. They're talking about ideology—book bannings.

They're also going to be hiring and firing directors of education. Do you know what is absolutely ironic? They're going to change the names of the directors. What do you think a Conservative would want to call a director of education? Get this: chief educational officers, or CEOs for short. Of course, a government that has a religion of privatization is going to turn the directors of education—you can't make it up—into CEOs. This is what they're doing.

And of course, finally, they're going to control contracts—selling school land, buying school land; who's going to fix the schools, who's not going to fix schools.

This government is also good at one thing, and that is coincidences. We've seen in the last eight years that people come in with massive donations to the Progressive Conservatives and, of course, by complete coincidence,

they get rewarded—because of course it had nothing to do with that. Now they're going to introduce that into education. It just goes on and on.

Are they addressing ballooning class sizes? Absolutely not. What they're doing is bringing in these supervisors.

I really want to touch on an article that Global News' Isaac Callan and Colin D'Mello talked about—they actually went into who these supervisors are and what they do. I'm not going to name them. But do you know how much these supervisors are getting paid?

They bring people in with three stated objectives. Objective number 1: Drink coffee. Objective number 2: Fire educators. Objective number 3: Cut programming.

1600

In fact, they actually put on their job call a picture of Edward Scissorhands to try to show and encourage what they expect from these people, because these democratically elected trustees can't go in there and just fire everybody and reduce education—because who wants that? Certainly not the parents, certainly not the students. So what do you do? You go out, you get a friend and you say, "Here's your assignment. We want you to go in and just cut education. Make everybody angry."

All right, what are they getting paid to do this? Two thousand dollars a day. I've heard reports that Bill Gates is actually putting in a job call because he wants to make more money. And I mean, certainly, at that rate—and what are they allowed to do? These people who are coming in are going to basically bill up to three and a half days a week, and if they were to max it out, do you know how much money they would make?

They want to get rid of trustees, basically pay them nothing. These supervisors—their friends that are appointed by a government that loves control—are going to be making up to \$350,000 a year to essentially fire people and cut programming. Some of them are charging the taxpayers, through businesses they own, and so those might make up to \$400,000. I mean, what kind of management are these guys doing?

The final thing I want to talk about, because if you think that this is bad for education, the decisions these directors are making, these supervisors that have come in, their friends, don't take it from me. I'm going to read a short list—because many came in—in the time I have, from parents and students, what they think about that.

But I want to give a perfect example of an incredible program at the Toronto Catholic District School Board that they're cutting. It's called the international languages program. Imagine that for 50 years, 44 schools in the Toronto Catholic District School Board offered this incredible specialized program. Of course, all schools have something great to offer, but in these schools, students were learning other languages. Guess what? In other countries around the world, they're learning English as a second or a third language. Let's give students here a leg-up. Let's do something great.

What did the supervisor decide to do—a friend that they chose? Cut it. "Get the scissors out and cut that." Fire educators. I want to know from this government what it is

about the Italian, Spanish and Portuguese languages and the many others that are not worth learning during school hours, because I don't understand.

And you know what? The parents and the students are sick and tired of this, and they're so disappointed. In fact, these programs exist in many other boards, so all that we've seen so far is that the Toronto Catholic board has cut it, but what other boards are going to start cutting programs like this? There are so many programs that are on the cutting block.

So if this is a bad idea, don't take it from me. I want to let you hear from some great people that have reached out to say they're so disappointed.

I want you to hear from Ashley Ellis and her daughter, Leah, from St. Simon Catholic School. Ashley, the mother, says, "I love that my children get to experience learning another language. Our family is Irish and Serbian, so this is not about it being personal to us. It is about celebrating the diversity of the community we live in. It is a blessing that we would hate to see disappear because of this government."

Her daughter, age six, grade 1, at St. Simon Catholic School—her name is Leah. She said, "I love that Signora teaches us Italian. I like learning new languages and learning Italian." Thank you, Leah.

Joel, Larissa and Gabriel, from the St. Jude Catholic School community—here's what they have to say: "This situation has been really upsetting for my family. My son has been taking Italian at St. Jude Catholic School since JK and it's meant so much to him—not just learning a language but feeling connected to who he is and where he comes from. To have this program suddenly taken away without anyone asking parents or students how we feel just doesn't sit right.

"It's also hard to accept that teachers who have given so much to these kids could lose their jobs like this. These are people who care, who show up every day and who have made a real difference in our children's lives. This program matters to us and the way this decision was made feels unfair and rushed. Our voices should have been part of it." Well, it wasn't. This government loves making decisions behind closed doors.

Francesca B., who has two children attending St. Margherita of Città di Castello Catholic school, what did she say? "My son and daughter truly enjoy participating in the Italian-as-a-second-language program at their school. The work they receive is meaningful and clearly reflects the curriculum, helping them build strong language skills while also deepening their understanding of their culture and traditions. They look forward to their lessons and take pride in what they are learning. Research has consistently shown that children who learn a second language tend to be more successful academically and cognitively, regardless of the language they studied, making this program an incredibly valuable part of their education."

Alessandra Bicknell, whose son attends St. Roch Catholic School: "My son has always loved Italian class at St. Roch's, and I was looking forward to my younger son joining him. It's a great way to help educate our younger

generation with international languages that they may use in the future.”

Andrew, father to a student at St. Simon Catholic School: “Our son looked forward to these classes, regularly sharing his progress and proud of his achievements. His ability to speak a new language was growing and as we took him to the country, he was able to interact and better appreciate the experience. His mind was stretched learning a new language in a different way than the current curriculum does.”

Tavis Hopper, who has a daughter in SK at St. Roch Catholic School: “My daughter is now in SK at St. Roch Catholic School and she has been taking Italian for two years. She comes home radiating joy, excitedly recounting the songs she’s learned, the words she can now say, and the little moments from her lessons that clearly spark her curiosity. Learning another language at such a young age has not only supported her development, but has also given her confidence and a genuine love of learning, along with the shared enjoyment of learning about a different culture.”

And finally, let’s hear from Manuela B., who has a daughter in the Toronto Catholic District School Board. She said, “Our daughter enjoyed learning Italian at school. The benefits are clearly visible. Watching her make connections between English and Italian words, and figuring out meanings using what she has learned, is invaluable to her educational success.”

Speaker, the stories roll in and in. I met someone who said her son’s favourite time in school is the 30 minutes he was given to learn Italian. He’s not even Italian. Another one, to learn Spanish is their favourite course. In fact, learning Spanish, for this other student, turned around his entire feelings about school, and now, as a young adult, he speaks Spanish.

This is the face of education in this Conservative government. It’s about firing educators, it’s about cuts to programming and then packaging it as improving education, as if they are making things better. A government that can’t be trusted with taxpayer money is criticizing elected trustees who are balancing budgets every single year. All they are doing is making things worse in the province of Ontario. They need to do better.

We talk, all of us, about how important the students are for our future. We should be giving them an education that every Ontarian should be proud of. And the shameful decisions that some of these supervisors are making, the programming cuts that are disappointing parents and disappointing children across this province—it has got to stop. Do better.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleagues from the NDP for their remarks this afternoon on a very important piece of legislation, Bill 101—education 101.

My question is for the member from Ottawa West–Nepean. She mentioned in this place that the communication changes would affect trustees. Colleagues, the Minister of Education has been very clear: They do not affect trustees. This would affect local school boards and

their official communication; the school employees—I’ve seen it; snow days—and directors of education sending that information out.

So will the member from Ottawa West–Nepean admit she was wrong today when she was talking about the communications related to trustees?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It’s interesting that the member for Perth–Wellington would ask that question, because, of course, the member for Perth–Wellington could just read the bill for himself, where it clearly says that the Minister of Education can set communication policies that apply to the trustees, who are members of the board. I’m not sure what is unclear about that to the member for Perth–Wellington.

If I had more than a minute to answer the question, I could perhaps take the time to explain to him who a trustee is and why the trustee being included in that clause means that the Minister of Education has the power to regulate communications that the trustee has with their constituents.

I already spent time in my speech explaining what the impact of that is, but this is part of a pattern with this government where they say one thing and do another, or they say one thing and the text of their bill says another thing. You know what I’m going to go with, Speaker? Not the assurances that the Minister of Education gave—

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

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M^{me} France Gélinas: Je veux que tout le monde comprenne—tous les députés sachent que l’article 23 de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés garantit à tous les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes le droit de faire instruire nos enfants en français dans des écoles francophones. La Charte nécessite que la gestion de nos écoles soit gérée par la communauté francophone avec des conseils scolaires francophones.

Si on regarde le projet de loi 101, Loi de 2026 donnant la priorité à la réussite des élèves—un titre qui n’a rien à faire avec ce qu’il y a dans la loi—est-ce que vous trouvez que ce projet de loi-là répond aux besoins des francophones en ce moment qui ont des enfants dans le système scolaire?

M^{me} Chandra Pasma: Merci beaucoup à ma collègue de Nickel Belt pour l’excellente question. Les élèves franco-ontariens ont besoin de plus d’enseignants et enseignantes qualifiés. Ils ont besoin d’une réduction de la taille des classes. Ils ont besoin de soutiens pour les enfants ayant des besoins spéciaux, pour les enfants avec des besoins complexes. Il n’y a rien dans ce projet de loi qui s’adresse à ces défis-là; il y a juste la centralisation du pouvoir dans les mains du ministre.

Le ministre prend le pouvoir lui-même pour dire quelles ressources, quels livres les Franco-Ontariens peuvent utiliser dans leurs propres écoles. C’est complètement un pouvoir qui est contre le droit constitutionnel des Franco-Ontariens de gérer votre propre système par et pour les Franco-Ontariens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I have a question about schedule 2 in the bill. It gives the minister the power to set policies around approved educational materials. I am worried about whether standardization could conflict with the ability of an educator to offer equal opportunity to different students who learn differently. Could it stifle innovation? Could it stifle the creation of customized materials for students so each student can have an equal opportunity to learn as much as possible?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to the member from Kingston and the Islands for the question. There are very serious concerns about putting the power in the hands of this minister to determine what educational resources and books our children have access to.

I've already mentioned the dangers of the minister importing the Alberta model; he certainly seems to love what they're doing there. But given what he's doing in other areas of equity—the fact that supervisors are sidelining anti-racism policies and cancelling Indigenous programs—there's certainly a concern about whether or not we are going to see books and resources developed by diverse voices, by Indigenous, Black and racialized Canadians, whether those will be reflected and whether teachers will be penalized if they try to include those voices even when they're not on the minister's list of approved resources. It's counter to the idea that teachers have educational experience. They know what the needs of their children are. They should be able to use their qualifications, which they went to school for, to determine what the best resources are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: My question is to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean. I was listening to her and just want to talk about school attendance. I was looking at the report from EdCan Network, which says that the students absent 10% or more rose from 15% in 2018 to 33% in 2022, so there's an increase. As we all know, school attendance is directly related to better grades, higher graduation rates and improved social skills.

Even the Upper Grand District School Board talked about, with a table: Only one child missing one day every two weeks over K to 12 is equivalent to one and a half years of absenteeism.

Bill 101 is taking a look at that and making sure that we are providing 15% attendance and participation marks in grades 9 and 10 and 10% in grades 11 and 12 to make sure there is attendance. What's your take on that? Thank you.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: You know what, Speaker? This is another perfect example of this government setting kids up to fail and then punishing them for failing.

The reason that attendance challenges are going up is because so many supports are being taken away from our kids. Only one in 10 schools has regularly scheduled access to mental health support, so if a kid is struggling with their mental health and that's making it harder for

them to make it to school every day, there's no help for them under this government.

They've cut funding for student transportation, so now kids are having to pay out of pocket to get to school. I heard an example in Kawartha Pine Ridge: two alternative high schools, which are the school of last resort for kids who are struggling and may drop out. The student transportation to those schools was cut because of the funding cuts. So now a kid has to take the bus to another high school and then pay out of pocket for a bus pass to go from that high school to the alternative high school. So a vulnerable kid now has to take two buses and pay out of pocket to get to school? Well, no wonder they're dropping out.

If you want kids to go to school and you know that attendance affects outcomes, then support them so they can attend.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you for your speech. I was going to ask a very different question, but on the heels of that member's question about attendance, I want to know: If this minister is coming down so hard on attendance and is putting that in the window as the big important part of this bill, then there must be supports in here for the children with special needs whose schools right now are telling them that they aren't allowed to come to school and can't stay at school in the afternoons or when there isn't an EA, and for the students who are supposed to be attending school but they are not allowed because there aren't supports. Surely there's something in this bill to make sure that they can attend school with the supports that they need. Can you tell me where?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: That is such a great question from the member for Oshawa, and the answer is, it is not in here at all. There is nothing to address the fact that thousands of kids with disabilities and special needs are being told every single day in Ontario that they either have to stay home or that they may only come in for a few hours.

There are parents getting phone calls every morning saying, "Don't take your child to school today." And there is nothing in here to make sure that there are more EAs, more special education placements so that kids can actually go to school.

You know what we saw in Ottawa, Speaker? Two of the classes that the supervisor cut are behavioural intervention programs that actually help kids who have disruptive behaviours to stay at school. They are making it harder for kids to stay—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions, very quickly.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I was wondering, what would happen if we—you know, sometimes we try to have big changes and then you have to manage it all. It could get very complicated. Lots of moving parts could go wrong. Why couldn't we do something simpler, like starting with making sure—we could start by allowing the appointment of a teacher, a student and a financial person to every

school board. Wouldn't that be a simple way to start things off?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The member from Ottawa West–Nepean for a quick answer.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: To support student achievement, what I would do first is even simpler, Speaker: I would replace the \$6.3 billion that's been cut from our education system over the past eight years.

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

Interjections.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you for the enthusiasm over there. I'm going to start by saying that I'm sharing my time today with the member for Nepean and the member for Ottawa South.

Interjections.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Yes, you're getting a real treat today.

I do rise today to speak about Bill 101 with a deep sense of responsibility, not only as the member for Ottawa–Vanier, but also as a former school board trustee and as a Franco-Ontarian. Because what is at stake here is not simply governance. It's not simply administrative efficiency. It's about who makes decisions for our children and whether those decisions reflect the communities they are meant to serve.

For francophones in Ontario, it goes even further: It's about rights. This is not just about educational reform. This is not just about governance structures. This is about constitutional rights, and when we legislate in this space, we must do so with precision, with humility and with a full understanding of the legal framework that governs minority language education in this country, because the consequences of getting it wrong are not theoretical; they are constitutional.

Speaker, having served as a school trustee for many years, I can say this clearly: Local governance matters. It matters because trustees understand the realities on the ground: the pressures in classrooms, the needs of families and the cultural context of their communities. They are accountable not to a distant office, but to the parents and communities they serve.

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Centralization may look efficient on paper. It may promise consistency. It may even be presented as modernization. But in practice, it creates distance. And when you create distance, you lose responsiveness.

Education is not a one-size-fits-all system, like the minister seems to believe, and it should never be governed as though it is.

Let us be honest about what this bill represents. This is not modernization. This is not efficiency. This is centralization. It is a deliberate choice to take power away from locally elected school boards and concentrate it in the hands of the minister. And when a government centralizes power, it's not neutral. It changes who makes decisions, whose voice matters, and whose priorities prevail.

In this case, the government is saying, "We trust Queen's Park more than we trust communities. We trust

the minister more than we trust parents. We trust directives more than we trust lived experience." That is simply the wrong approach in any education system. But in a minority-language system, it is especially dangerous because francophone education is not simply about delivering curriculum in another language; it is about preserving a culture, sustaining a community, and protecting a constitutional right that exists precisely because those communities are in a minority situation.

That brings us to the constitutional framework that must guide everything we do in this space. I feel compelled to talk about that so that everybody understands the importance, and that we cannot discuss francophone education without grounding ourselves in section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 23 guarantees minority-language education rights, but more importantly, it guarantees something deeper, and that is the right of minority-language communities to manage and control their own education system. This is not a symbolic right. It is not a limited right. It is a substantive, enforceable constitutional guarantee.

The Supreme Court of Canada has been pretty clear on this point. In *Mahe v. Alberta*, the court confirmed that section 23 includes a right to management and control—not partial control, not advisory input, but real authority over key aspects of education. In *Arsenault-Cameron v. Prince Edward Island*, the court went further, warning governments against imposing administrative solutions that undermine that control, even when those solutions appear efficient from a centralized perspective. In another case, *Doucet-Boudreau v. Nova Scotia*, the court reaffirmed that these rights must be interpreted in a broad, purposive and remedial way—one that ensures they have real and practical effect in the lives of minority-language communities. More recently, in *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique v. British Columbia*, the court emphasized the need to remedy historical injustices and ensure that minority-language education systems are given the tools they need to thrive.

Taken together, this jurisprudence establishes a clear and consistent constitutional standard, which is, minority-language communities must have genuine, effective authority over their educational institutions. And we must ask ourselves a simple but critical question: Does this bill respect that standard? Because when we look at the powers it grants, the answer is deeply concerning. The minister is given the authority to impose binding policies on school boards. The minister can control how funds are allocated and spent. The minister can dictate communications. And the minister can intervene directly in decisions that were previously made at the local level. In many cases, the minister becomes the final decision-maker. That is not coordination; it is simply control. And when that level of authority is concentrated in one office, it fundamentally alters the balance of governance within our education system.

The government has suggested that francophone school boards are protected because certain structural elements of the bill do not apply to them, but that is not protection. It's

a narrow reading of the issue because the real question is not whether a specific governance model applies; the real question is whether francophone communities retain meaningful control over their education system.

Meaningful control is not defined by titles or structures; it is defined by who makes the final decisions, who controls the resources and who has the authority to intervene. On all these points, this bill shifts power to the minister. You cannot claim to protect governance while giving yourself the power to override it.

Madame la Présidente, les tribunaux ont été très clairs : les droits linguistiques doivent être interprétés de façon large, généreuse et réparatrice.

Dans l'arrêt *Mahé c. Alberta*, la Cour reconnaît un véritable pouvoir de gestion pour les communautés. Dans *Arsenault-Cameron c. Île-du-Prince-Édouard*, elle impose une obligation proactive du gouvernement. Et, dans le Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique *c. Colombie-Britannique*, elle insiste sur la réparation des injustices historiques.

Or, que fait ce projet de loi? Il retire des mécanismes indépendants, il concentre les pouvoirs entre les mains du ministre et il affaiblit la capacité des communautés de prendre leurs propres décisions. Ce n'est pas une simple réforme administrative; c'est un glissement dangereux vers une centralisation incompatible avec l'esprit de la Constitution.

Madam Speaker, I want to speak not only as a legislator but as someone who has lived this system from the inside. For 10 years, I served as a school trustee. I sat at the table where decisions were made—decisions about programs, about supports, about staffing and students' needs.

Those decisions were not abstract; they were grounded in the lived realities of families. They were shaped by conversations with parents, by the expertise of educators and by a deep understanding of the community. No centralized directive can replicate that.

When decisions move away from communities, they become less responsive, they become less effective and they become less legitimate. For francophone communities, that distance is not just administrative; it is existential. Because when you weaken local governance in a minority-language system, you weaken the very mechanism that protects language, culture and identity.

Madam Speaker, this bill does not exist in isolation; it comes at a time when francophone education in Ontario is already facing significant challenges. At the centre of those challenges is a persistent and worsening shortage of qualified francophone teachers. This shortage is not new, but it is becoming more acute, more widespread and more damaging with each passing year.

We know that the minister is aware of these issues. His ministry launched a four-year French-language-teacher recruitment and retention plan five years ago, and yet a year after their plan was supposed to have concluded, these issues remain as present as ever.

They think that creating new seats in French-language teachers' college is the silver bullet. To that I say, this already tiny investment is squandered when this govern-

ment does not create a workplace and teaching environment that our teachers can stay in past five years.

Now, I do appreciate that there is a measure in there to reduce a certification program for teachers. That's something I've been asking for for years. We finally got the government to act on it, but this is clearly insufficient still because the backlog in terms of the needed teachers is so huge that we need bold decisions.

We know that the shortfall is over 110,000 fewer spaces in this province compared to language rights holders. That means over 100,000 children who do not have access to a constitutionally guaranteed education in French, yet school boards are struggling to fill classrooms—well, not all. For French boards, I have to say that some of them are overcrowded, very much so.

Programs are being scaled back. Students are being redirected, delayed or, in some cases, discouraged altogether from enrolling in French-language schools. When access is limited, rights become theoretical; they exist on paper but not in practice. Families who have the legal right to send their children to French-language schools are being told there is no space, or no teacher, or no transportation. We see that a lot in the region—as we have many regions that are not served by a French school.

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In rural communities and growing suburban areas alike, French-language schools are too far away, under-resourced, or simply unable to meet demand. This is not just an inconvenience; it's a barrier to exercising a fundamental right.

We must also recognize the ripple effects of this shortage. When schools cannot recruit enough qualified francophone educators, they rely on occasional teachers or on individuals teaching outside their areas of expertise. This affects the quality of education, student outcomes, and the confidence that families place in the system. And once that confidence is eroded, it is very, very difficult to rebuild.

Madam Speaker, we also need to talk about infrastructure and access. French-language education must be available where families live—not hours away, not conditional on rigid enrolment thresholds that fail to reflect demographic realities, and not delayed until it is too late for a child to fully benefit. In many parts of this province, francophone families still face significant barriers in accessing nearby schools. School boards are forced to rely on temporary solutions, overcrowded facilities, or long transportation routes. That is not equitable. And it is not acceptable.

We need better planning, better data, and stronger collaboration between the province and francophone school boards to anticipate growth and respond proactively. We must also engage directly with francophone communities. They're not just stakeholders; they are partners. They understand the realities on the ground, the cultural context, and the barriers that families face. Their voices must shape the solutions.

What is particularly concerning is that instead of addressing these real, urgent challenges, the government is

choosing to focus on consolidating control. We see a pattern. The government identifies a problem, whether it's staffing, performance, or system coordination, and instead of investing in solutions, it centralizes authority. It assumes that if decisions are made at Queen's Park, the problems will somehow resolve themselves. But centralization is not a solution to systemic issues. It does not build schools. It does not train teachers. It does not improve classroom conditions. And it certainly does not strengthen communities.

Madam Speaker, we've heard the minister say that Bill 33 was a first step and that this bill is the next step. That framing should concern us all because, step by step, what we are seeing is a gradual shift away from community-based governance and toward centralized control. Today, it is framed as coordination. Tomorrow, it will be framed as efficiency. Eventually, it will be framed as consistency. But the outcome is the same: less power in the hands of communities—and particularly in the hands of francophone communities. And that is precisely what section 23 was designed to prevent.

We cannot say we respect democracy while removing meaningful decision-making power from those who are elected. We cannot say we support communities while ignoring their voice. We cannot say we respect the charter while introducing measures that may weaken the very rights it protects.

If the government truly wants to strengthen francophone education, then it should be focusing on the real issues.

In their disastrous budget, the government has already shown that they are not serious about fixing our issues in education. They believe that if they are the ones who can make every decision, everything will suddenly be fixed. What these decisions say is that every person in our education system currently is not smart enough, not dedicated enough, or not able to make the changes that the government will, and I can't abide that.

This government has been asking school boards and teachers to do the impossible, to make our system work on paltry amounts of money, and criticizes them when they can't. It should be investing in teacher recruitment and retention. It should be expanding access to French-language teacher education programs. It should be creating pathways for internationally trained francophone educators. And it should be improving working conditions to ensure that teachers stay in the system. It should also be accelerating school construction, improving access, and ensuring that funding models reflect the realities of dispersed francophone populations. Those are the actions of a government that is serious about strengthening education; centralizing power is not.

Madam Speaker, in Ottawa–Vanier, this issue is not theoretical; it is lived every day. Our francophone schools are more than institutions; they are the heart of our community. They are where our language is lived, where our culture is passed on, and where our identity is strengthened. I have seen first-hand, as a trustee and now as a

member, how important it is that decisions are made by those who understand that reality.

Parents in my riding are not asking for less control. They are asking for respect. They are asking for partnership. And they are asking for certainty that their rights will not be eroded, because we know what happens when those rights are weakened. We have lived that history, and we will not go back.

Madam Speaker, this is not just a policy debate; it's a test—a test of whether we understand minority language rights, a test of whether we respect the Constitution, a test of whether we trust communities.

Francophone school boards are not administrative units. They are constitutional institutions. They are the foundation of language, culture and identity.

We should not be asking how far we can go without violating section 23; we should be asking how we can fully respect it.

So I say this clearly to the government: Respect the Constitution, respect francophone governance, respect the communities you were elected to serve, because this is not just about schools; it's about who we are and who we choose to be as a province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member from Nepean.

MPP Tyler Watt: It's an honour to stand up here today and discuss Bill 101. This bill and these kind of looming changes to our education system have been causing a lot of anxiety and stress to families, to education workers and to students in my riding of Nepean. For a year now, or six months—however long this chatter has been going on from the minister—we've been wondering what is going to happen to trustees, what is going to happen to school boards.

This bill is talking about student achievement but, at a glance, it reduces the TDSB from 22 to 12 trustees, gutting local representation—again, an obsession with Toronto that this Premier seems to have. It gives the minister power to control approved education materials, which could pose a risk of province-wide book banning. It gives the minister power to regulate school board public communications, enforcing narrative control. It removes mandatory school climate surveys—this one, in particular, I do not understand, because why wouldn't this government want to know how students are doing, how their well-being is doing, from their very own mouths?

I will say that something positive that is in this education omnibus bill is shortening teachers' college to 12 months. This increased focus on practicum we've been long asking for; teachers and unions have been long asking for them. We have a teacher shortage now. I fully support that one.

However, this is where I want to talk about retention. We are seeing this in every sector. I talk ad nauseum in this room about nursing retention and this government's lack of focus with that. We're seeing that with education workers and teachers as well—sure, we're going to bring more into the system now, but what are we going to do to actually keep them there?

That bill doesn't do anything to actually address the many issues that are going on.

When I talk to teachers, to education workers, to parents and students about the reality of what's going on in classrooms, I hear about classroom violence—violence on teachers, violence on education support workers, violence on students. I have met with multiple parents who've told me about their child being choked out in class—multiple parents. This is not a unique situation anymore, and the school does not have the capability to do anything about it right now. It's deeply, deeply concerning.

We have growing classroom sizes. If we want to talk about student achievement, isn't the common-sense thing to do to lower class sizes, giving the teacher the ability to provide a more focused, quality education, which is what they're there to do and what they want to do for those students? But no, we have an average of class sizes—some are well into the 30s, some are less, but there's no standard. If we have a cap on class sizes, we know that the students are being given a greater opportunity to actually be in a safe and quality learning work environment.

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This bill does absolutely nothing to address the mental health crisis that we are facing. Teachers are not mental health workers; they are teachers. They are there to teach the next generation, but they have had to become mental health care workers. They've had to become mental health crisis workers, in many cases. They're not equipped; the resources are not there for them to be dealing with this. There is nothing in this bill that is actually addressing the mental health crisis going on for young people.

Finally, the near elimination of local representation: I don't understand what this government's obsession is with centralizing power to the minister, to the government. I thought that Conservatives were all about small government and keeping out of your personal lives, but every omnibus bill that we've seen come through this chamber—centralizing power to the minister, centralizing power to the minister; all the power goes to the minister. It's a good thing you like to take off many months in the summer, because these ministers are going to be busy with all these decisions and responsibilities they're taking on with this.

Here's a quote for you from ETFO: This is “an unprecedented rollback of local democracy—eroding trustee roles and autonomy.”

Here's a quote for you from OSSTF: “Corporate-style governance that does nothing to address class sizes, safety, or support needs.”

A quote from OECTA: “An anti-democratic plan to centralize control—student success requires investment and local engagement, not governance cuts.”

This minister didn't consult with Ontario's teaching community, teachers and educators in the formation of this bill. I don't understand why you wouldn't sit down with the key people and stakeholders, the people who are actually living this day in and day out. Why wouldn't you sit down with them and ask them, “What can we do to help you? What can we do to improve your lives, to address the

issues that you are facing?” This government has a majority. They could make it happen. But again, nothing in this bill is addressing those things.

How can we allow workplace violence to become the norm? I don't want to see what has happened in hospitals happen in schools. And that's exactly what's happening.

This bill will lead to the corporatization of our public education system.

Since 2018, this government has been underfunding our public education system, and students are now facing that. We've got larger class sizes, a mental health crisis, and classroom complexities that teachers are facing now.

I ran into an old teacher of mine when I was visiting my high school not too long ago, and she told me that she is hanging on because she wants to see it return back to what it used to be—when they actually felt hope, when they actually felt like they were doing something for the next generation of students and not just surviving. That, to me, speaks volumes.

With the rising classroom violence, the growing class sizes and the chronic underfunding, what does this bill actually do to address student achievement?

Let's look at schedule 2, ministerial control over education materials—granting the minister binding authority to set policies governing all learning materials in Ontario classrooms, including school libraries; and replaces localized, professional educator judgment with centralized political decisions. Talk about government overreach—my goodness. This disconnects learning from students' lived experience and flattens Ontario's diverse educational communities into a single government-approved template.

The minister issued a directive instructing schools to keep graduation ceremonies apolitical and free from divisive or contentious issues, warning that non-compliance could trigger a ministerial intervention under the Education Act. Come on. I attended high school graduations last summer—it was one of the best times of being an MPP. None of us make it political. I didn't see anything political happening. It is an opportunity to celebrate this huge milestone for them, and they don't need the minister waving his finger in their face and accusing them of something that's not really going on.

Students are told to keep politics out of school events in the name of neutrality. Meanwhile, the government asserts sweeping political control over which ideas, histories and perspectives students are permitted to learn. This is not neutrality; it's selective politicization.

Protecting students does not mean narrowing their world; it means equipping them with the tools, stories and resources needed to understand it and actually flourish in our public education system.

Let's talk about section 3, ministerial control over school board communications. This one is disturbing. It grants the minister the power to set mandatory policies governing all public communications by school boards. It covers directors, principals, board chairs, trustees and staff acting in official capacities. It applies to media statements, explanations of board decisions, responses to parent concerns and crisis communications. It's framed as keeping

communications focused on day-to-day operational matters.

So we're just giving the government all the power to control the narrative here, right? Are we going to start seeing Protect Ontario ads with how great Ontario schools are doing, while none of this stuff is being addressed?

This is centralizing government oversight of speech by publicly accountable local institutions. Trustees may hesitate to speak publicly about shortcomings in provincial policy—although power is apparently just being completely stripped away by them altogether in this.

Board officials may self-censor to avoid sanctions, educators silenced when professional assessments conflict with official narratives. This does not improve governance; it removes early warning signals from the system, and it truly hides the reality, something that we continuously see from this government. We no longer share data about how many people are getting care in hallway beds. We're going to start hiding data of what's actually going on in schools.

Negative trends, such as declining outcomes, staffing shortages and student protests can be downplayed or omitted. Boards are barred from publishing counter data, local impacts or dissenting interpretations. Parents and communities will only hear curated versions of reality, and communication will shift from a two-way engagement to one-way transmission, destroying transparency and informed public participation.

Section 4, the removal of mandatory climate surveys: I don't understand why we would get rid of this. Don't we want to know how students are doing? Don't we want to know about their sense of belonging and inclusion; their safety and well-being at schools; bullying; harassment; discrimination; quality of peer relationships; student engagement with learning; their stress, anxiety and disengagement factors? This is amazing data from the ground—from the students themselves—that you should be taking in when you are deciding what legislation you're putting through. This is how we know what's going on on the ground and how we can actually address it—because that's the job of this government at the end of the day. This data becomes incomplete and uneven without it being mandatory, and it depends on what boards will opt in, if they even have any control over that. Results will no longer be province-wide or comparable. Systemic issues may go undetected simply because they are no longer being measured—another trend that we see under this government. Boards facing difficult challenges can simply opt out rather than expose problems to public scrutiny. It shifts the system from problem-solving to problem avoidance.

The transparency of this government is just not there. We've seen countless examples over time, and I'm not going to hold my breath on finding out the truth about how this bill will be implemented.

So, without mandatory surveys, the ministry can now plausibly deny the existence of any problems. Criticism can be dismissed: "There's no evidence of that. Students have not reported those issues." Claims are no longer

independently verifiable once the data stream is shut off. Parents will lose access to information that once helped them understand conditions in schools. And I can tell you, most students are not going home and telling their parents how their day went. I remember I'd get home: "How was school?" "Good"—end of story. When you feel that you have a safe space, an anonymous space, to actually fill out a survey, let the school board know your thoughts, your feelings and the reality of what's going on, particularly when it comes to bullying—this an avenue to do it. It's an avenue for us to learn about it and address it.

This government claims to be all about transparency, but what is transparent about eliminating the one consistent public accountability tool for how students are doing in schools? These surveys could now expose that changes to educational materials—materials hand-picked by the minister—are hurting students, and that is precisely why this is being made optional; let's be real.

In closing, Bill 101 concentrates power at Queen's Park that has always belonged to local communities, parents, trustees, educators and students. I heard the education minister today saying, "We trust" the "parents" when it comes to students' education, so why are you taking the power away from them and centralizing it all to the Minister of Education?

Across four schedules, the same pattern repeats: Local accountability is weakened, democratic representation is reduced and the government insulates itself from scrutiny. This bill does not put students first; it puts the minister first and calls it reform.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand up and speak to the Putting Student Achievement First Act.

I just want to say that yesterday's announcement was just more of the same old story from this tired, out-of-touch Conservative government: break things, blame someone else and pretend to fix it by creating high-paying jobs for their cronies. It's something that has been repeated again and again and again.

The bill misses the point. It's not actually addressing the real problem in our schools, that our schools are not safe places to learn or to work, and that's hurting students. Bill 101 will not make one child's class size smaller. It won't get one child that extra help they need because they have exceptional needs. It's not going to address the mental health crisis in our schools, and we know these three things are happening. Our kids are hurting.

I've talked a number of times about what's happening in our schools: the behaviours, the language and, in some cases, in older grades, the violence. I told the story about my next-door neighbour down the street who's a principal. One day, I was talking to him about this issue and what was going on in schools, and he said, "Well, last week, a 12-year-old girl threw a chair at me in my office," and I was, like, wow. He said, "It's just another day." I talked about him again yesterday in the case of a 12-year-old boy

who was going after an eight-year-old girl. He got in the middle. He got hit more than 20 times, and then the teacher who came to help him—well, she got hit in the head and had to go to emerg. That's a 12-year-old.

I've been to many cities in this province, and I've heard the same stories from educators, EAs, teachers, principals and vice-principals. It's a big problem, and this bill does nothing to address that. Our kids are hurting. Children with exceptional needs aren't getting served. We know the government has dug an \$800-million hole that boards have to fill for special education. We know that, and these children are the most vulnerable kids in schools. Every child deserves an education. Every child deserves an opportunity to succeed.

I've been meeting parents for 27 years—many of you have probably met parents, so you know what I'm talking about. I've been doing it since 1999. I know that parents with a child with exceptional needs have a lifetime of advocacy. It's hard. They need a voice at the table, and when they don't have one, they're in trouble.

This bill is not going to help them; it's going to hurt them. It's going to take away their voice from the special education advisory committees—not because they won't happen anymore. That could happen in this bill because the minister can decide to do whatever he wants. What's clear from Bill 33 and Bill 101 is that this minister wants to do whatever he wants, whatever he thinks is best. As somebody said the other day about municipal government, "Daddy knows best."

Because those meetings aren't public anymore in those supervised boards, and when you hire these CEOs—well, they aren't. I know you're nodding over there, but they aren't happening.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Through the Speaker.

Mr. John Fraser: No. I just wanted to address your question there and get an early start—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Through the Speaker.

Mr. John Fraser: I knew the minister was asking.

Like I said, Bill 101 is not going to get one child with exceptional needs the help that they need, and it's not going to help their parents have the voice that they need to have at the table. That's what trustees do. It's not just being able to talk to a superintendent or a director. It's also to give guidance to the budget.

Guess what? Special education, the \$800-million hole—who has been filling it? Trustees. Why? Because the government's not giving enough resources and money to make it run. Are they doing this because it's frivolous? You know the minister likes to point out all the frivolous things that a small group of people have done. Is \$800 million frivolous? Did those trustees make a frivolous decision to do that? No, they did it to help kids. They used their voice. They were the voice of the parents of the children who are most vulnerable in this province.

This bill, Bill 101, isn't going to help them one bit because the voice that's filled that \$800-million hole is not going to be there. It's gone. It will be a CEO appointed by the minister. I know the minister's saying, "No, no, no,"

but take a look at it, and that's exactly what's going to happen. Everything is so vague in regulations.

This minister is also going to be the person who decides what happens in your kid's school. That's what he's saying: everything at the corner office here at Queen's Park. Well, maybe he hasn't got the corner office yet, but maybe that's what he's looking for. I'm not sure. I'm not sure that will work out.

I do understand that the Premier had clipped his wings on this bill. I'm not sure that it improved it. I think it made it worse—more bureaucratic and less responsive. To what? Making class sizes smaller, addressing special needs and addressing the mental health crisis.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, that's the trick. You'll learn that one day.

Appointing 72 CEOs is the same thing as supervision. It's supervision, and if parents want to look at what Bill 101 is going to do, just take a look at the boards that have supervisors across this province. What are they doing? They're changing bell times without consultation, and I know the minister is making a bit of a fuss about that being something to do with the unions. But bell times matter to parents. To anyone who's a parent in this room, you know when they change your bell times, you're not going to be a happy camper. You're not going to be happy because it affects your work. It affects your family life.

They're firing teachers. They're firing vice-principals. They're letting go of EAs.

Hon. Steve Clark: Never happy.

Mr. John Fraser: You guys are never happy. Anyway—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, look at these guys.

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

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Talk amongst yourselves. I've just got to get my notes here.

What are they doing? They're changing bell times. They're firing teachers. They're firing vice-principals. They're selling schools. They're cutting special education—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, they are. We just heard. There was Grant public school in Ottawa. The supervisor put it on the market and didn't tell anybody. What's public consultation? What does that matter to families in the neighbourhood?

Hon. Zee Hamid: Didn't you close 600 schools?

Mr. John Fraser: Actually, we built or rebuilt 800 schools, but you guys forget all that stuff. Your Premier was the guy who tried to shut down full-day kindergarten in 2020 until people said, "That ain't happening, folks."

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, my colleague from Ajax mentioned the school climate survey today, which is a survey that boards use to ensure that schools are safe. They collect all sorts of data; they're important. When our

schools aren't safe places to learn or to work, we need to know what's going on in our schools.

But the bill doesn't make it mandatory anymore. It's optional. Then the minister had said today, "Well, it doesn't matter what the gender of a grade 4 is," and I'm like, "What? What are you talking about?"

1700

Hon. Nina Tangri: Not what he said.

Mr. John Fraser: That's exactly what he said.

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Check Hansard. That's exactly what he said.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Address the Chair, please.

Mr. John Fraser: Out of touch, out of ideas, adrift: That's this government. In eight years, they have made a mess of education, and the minister is trying to make a bigger mess of it right now.

Now, Speaker, my colleague from Ottawa–Vanier was talking about the genuine concerns of Franco-Ontarians and their educational rights. More than 100 years ago, a government made a mistake with something called regulation 17, which some people may know here. What happened in the francophone community in Ontario surprised the government. It was a battle, it was a struggle, and the francophone community in Ontario won their rights, won their rights to education. They're not going to give it up, and they have protection under section 23.

I would take very seriously the comments that she made and the importance of the autonomy of francophone education. No matter how much the minister says, "Well it doesn't apply to the francophone boards," all the rules that give the minister power that apply through regulation, regulations that he's going to make, are going to apply to those boards. They have genuine serious concerns about those.

So I caution the minister. I know he's kind of flippant about it: "No, no, everything's okay." I mean, that's what we've heard before.

This is really important: Schedule 4 talks about shortening teachers' college. I'm going to say something good. That's a good thing. It is a good thing. Here's the problem: Recruitment, when you have got a retention problem that you're not addressing, is not very smart. Right? You're not hanging on to them, but you're going to produce more. Do you know why you're not retaining teachers? There are 40,000 teachers in this province not teaching. Why is that? Class sizes are too big, special education is being starved, and we have a mental health crisis in our schools. They're not safe places for them to work or for kids to learn.

So you do something good, but you don't do anything to address the retention. You don't fix the things that need to be fixed. You don't make sure class sizes are smaller. This bill's not going to make one class in this province smaller. There are a thousand classrooms, grades 4 to 8, of over 30 kids in this province right now, and the supervisor of the Toronto District School Board just lifted the class

cap of 32. How does that make any sense? More than 32 kids in, essentially, an elementary class. No wonder teachers aren't teaching.

What it really all comes down to is there's never been a Premier in my memory that's had less interest in our kids' schools than this Premier, because if he was interested, they'd be safe places. There'd be smaller class sizes, every child would get the help they need—those kids with exceptional needs—and we would actually be talking about the mental health crisis that exists in our schools.

I think it's hard for people, just regular folks, to understand what's happening in our schools. Because, when teachers and some parents and EAs told me about it, I thought, "No, no, that kind of stuff can't be happening in schools. Kids can't be acting out like that. We can't be having to shut down classrooms and evacuating them or locking down schools in elementary schools." Well, it's happening. It's happening across the province, and probably none of us ever experienced that. It's hard for us to grasp that happening, but it's happening. That's one of the reasons why 40,000 teachers in this province have chosen not to teach anymore.

So if you're not making it attractive for teachers to teach, making it safe—not even attractive, making it safe—how do you expect to have a successful recruitment campaign? You're just going to produce more to end up with the same results. You have to do both. There's nothing in this bill about retention. There's nothing talking about teacher retention—not a thing, not a word. You're fixing half the problem. You need to fix both halves of the problem, right?

How can you actually expect to succeed if schools are not safe places to work, to teach or to learn? How are you going to be successful?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: School resource officers.

Hon. Nina Tangri: Yes, what have you got against school resource officers?

Mr. John Fraser: I've got nothing against school resource officers, but what I would say to you—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Address the Chair, please.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Hey, guys. Guys, I know you think putting a six-year-old in cuffs is the right thing to do. I don't think so.

But, Speaker, you know I have no problem with school resource officers. That's on the record. But here's the thing, we have a mental health crisis in our school. We need mental health workers. That's what we need. We need youth workers. We need social workers. And any policeman who goes into a school will tell you that.

What are police doing right now?

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Just a second. What are police doing right now? They're having ride-alongs. Who are they having ride-alongs with? Maybe the members from London would know that. Cops are riding along with social workers and mental health workers. Why? Because

a lot of crime they see, a lot of violence that we see is related to mental health. It's related to mental health.

There's nothing in this bill that puts mental health workers in schools. There's nothing in here that puts youth workers in schools. There's nothing here that even talks about a mental health situation in our schools.

And I want to give credit to the member from—where did I put this? I've got it right here. It's buried in here—the member from Ottawa West—Nepean, who—oh, she's gone.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Right here.

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, she's right there.

I do listen, and she did some really great work. Her remarks were great. But she did a word search, and the student achievement act—and I just want to repeat this because it was so good. I was up there going “Yeah!” and writing it down. And I'm being open about it: She's got the copyright on it. She did the work. But I want to remind you, because this is an opportunity: Student achievement is mentioned how many times?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Three.

Mr. John Fraser: Three times.

Students? Five.

Liability? Forty-three. Right. Okay.

Classrooms?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Zero.

Mr. John Fraser: Zero, nada, zilch, nothing.

Class sizes? Nada, zero.

Mental health? Any guesses, guys? Anybody? Goose egg. Special education? Another goose egg.

Guys, the bill is a goose egg. It doesn't address what we need to do in our schools. We have to make class sizes smaller. That's how children will succeed. More kids in a class means less time for each student. And when you work on a policy of inclusion and you bring children whose needs are greater into the classroom and you don't provide supports, then that makes even less time for everybody else in the classroom, right?

I think you'll remember the story that my colleague from Orléans told about Juliet, a young girl who was thriving. She had exceptionalities. She had a great year two years ago, then the next year, no support. They were just giving her stuff to colour. That's all they had for her—no attention, no support, just another bum in a seat.

I talked about Marigold. Marigold, who's six years old, has exceptionalities, special needs. She lives in Ottawa, goes to school in my riding. Her two parents work. Two years ago, she went in with an assessment that they paid for—not the taxpayer; they paid for it. They can't afford it. Two years ago, they went in with an assessment—no supports. No supports, after two years.

Two years is a long time when you're six years old. It's a long time to wait. But there are thousands of children like Marigold and Juliet across this province. Their needs aren't being met.

1710

I'm going to go back to what I said about how important it is to have the voices of parents at the table. And they speak to trustees—and I know that there are people who

are trustees on the other side and on this side. If those trustees hadn't been there—and they can't do it now—that \$800-million hole that this government left in special education never would have gotten filled and there would have been thousands more of Juliets and Marigolds.

You know, governance is always something we can work on, right? It's an important thing. I don't think it's as important as the three things I've said here, but if we want to have a discussion about governance and about people losing touch with their mandate—not focusing on the right things—I mean, we could talk about the government trying to sell off the greenbelt, or selling MZO's or special deals for spa owners on Lake Ontario. Or we could talk about the sketchy Skills Development Fund: \$10 million for a strip club owner and \$2 million for the Ford family dentist. Speaker, maybe we should get a supervisor for the government, because I think they need one.

My point is that there is a lot of blame and finger-pointing and exaggeration to try to distract and deflect from the real problem in our schools, and that's that they're not safe places for our kids to learn or for our teachers to teach. Because class sizes are too big, special education has been starved and there's a mental health crisis that's not being addressed.

So, Speaker—

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Are you there?

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, I want to say this the right way so I don't insult all of you. Because I'm not like that. Because I do actually believe that you care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Address the Chair, please.

Mr. John Fraser: So I don't want to say it the way that it might come out.

But what I would like to see is, on this side, from you—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Through the Chair.

Mr. John Fraser: It's actually addressing those three things I've talked about. They are really, really serious problems. And the stuff that's happening here, it's not going to fix it. It can't fix it. It's not possible. It's not going to make a class size smaller, because what that's going to take is money. It's going to take resources. It's going to take imagination. It's going to take people working together locally to make things work in schools that are in communities.

We need more resources for special education. These aren't just stories I'm telling; these are real kids. These are real people—real, little people who should have an equal opportunity, and we have to give that to them. I know that you want that for them, but the challenge is, who is going to stand up and say, “This needs to happen”? Maybe not outside, but inside.

I've been on the other side; I know what it's like. And somehow, when we take a look at this bill, maybe people are saying we should be thankful because it's not as bad as it could have been, because maybe some people spoke up and clipped the minister's wings, which is kind of what it feels like. The thing is, we didn't really end up with something better. Something better, in my estimation, would be

the recognition that our class sizes are too big and that it's not working for kids.

And then, when you place children with exceptional needs, because you have a policy of inclusion in classrooms, and they don't have the support, that makes that classroom even more unmanageable and every student gets less.

We don't talk about the mental health crisis—and it's not like it's only in our schools; it's all around us. So why are kids behaving the way they do? Why did that 12-year-old go after the eight-year-old girl and the principal had to intervene? Why did that 12-year-old girl throw a chair? Why did a former colleague of mine's wife end up with arms that were scratched? People have been bitten. People have concussions. Why is that happening? It's because there's something else that's happening, and our kids are being affected by it.

It's actually scary, right? It's actually scary. I don't know what all the answers are. All I know is that we have a problem. It's a reflection of what's going on in our society. When I call my insurance company, they tell me that I can't be abusive or swear. If I go into a bank or into a doctor's office, people are telling me, "You can't harass people." How did that happen, and how do we think that that's not in our schools? How do we think that that's not going to go in there? Children just model behaviour. But we're pretending that it's not happening.

Again, this is a segue that's kind of off topic: We've got a problem with online gambling and sports betting. Our kids are being affected by it, and we're not doing anything about it. It's not only affecting their learning, but it's going to create hardship for them later in life.

So there are all these external factors that we're not addressing that are affecting our kids, that are affecting our kids' mental health, and we're not trying to help them in school because we're not applying the resources. It's like it's not happening. To say that it's a crisis—everybody says, "It's not a crisis, because if it's a crisis, I'd hear more about it." But it's very hard—unless you go in and talk to people, unless you have a sister who's an SSL, unless you know a high school principal or have friends who are teachers—to know that it's going on, to know what's happening.

I'm not going to support this bill. I think that's evident. But I would just encourage the members on the other side—because I know you care. I don't believe it when people say you don't care. The question is, are you going to do something about it? That's what the question is. Are you going to do something about class sizes? Are you going to do something in your neighbourhood schools about special education? And are you going to do something about the mental health crisis that's in our schools?

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

Mr. Billy Pang: The member keeps asking where all the money has gone. Let me tell him: The York Catholic District School Board has burned through more than \$340,000 in legal fees, fighting amongst themselves over the last four years. Barrie has spent at least \$300,000. Hastings and Prince Edward has spent \$175,000. That's

nearly \$1 million spent by trustees suing each other instead of supporting students. That's why there's no money, and here he wants more money to go to special ed. They spend the money. They just waste the money.

Bill 101 puts a stop to this dysfunction in professionalizing board leadership and ensures decisions are made by qualified CEOs.

So will the member opposite explain to the parents in York region why they should keep paying for those trustees' infighting instead of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. John Fraser: Never has a government spent so much, borrowed so much, had so much debt and accomplished so little. They're tired and adrift.

That's amazing. You're going to ask that question? You're half a trillion dollars in debt and look what you have to show for it: schools that don't work, schools that aren't safe. Another question—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Okay, guys. Guys, you're half a trillion dollars in debt. Come on. Half a trillion, the largest subnational debt—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Order.

Further questions?

1720

M. Guy Bourgouin: C'est tout le temps un plaisir d'entendre les débats en Chambre quand on se parle.

Ma question est pour ma collègue d'Ottawa-Vanier. Je vous ai entendue poser des questions au ministre, et on a entendu le ministre dire : « Oh non, les francophones sont protégés »—parce qu'on sait comment ça a été un combat pour nous d'avoir nos droits constitutionnels, mais aussi de protéger notre droit à l'éducation, puis protéger nos enfants.

Puis le ministre, il dit : « Bien non, bien non, il n'y a rien à voir ici. » Il n'y a rien à voir? « Vous êtes protégés. Vous êtes exclus. » C'est ça.

Puis si tu continues à lire le projet de loi, plus loin, on voit que le ministre, il a tous les pouvoirs. Il garde ses pouvoirs pareils, comme il veut faire.

J'aimerais vous entendre plus là-dessus parce que c'est très concernant, je le sais, pour les conseils francophones. Puis il reconnaît que les conseils font un très bon travail, les conseils francophones. Pourquoi est-ce qu'il nous implique encore dans des situations où on n'a pas besoin d'être, puis que c'est protégé, puis qu'on protège nos enfants, qu'on puisse avoir notre—

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Merci au membre de Mushkegowuk-James Bay pour sa question.

Évidemment, les droits des francophones, c'est très important. Je me demande, en lisant le projet de loi, si le ministre a reçu un avis juridique, si le ministre comprend ce que ça veut dire, une protection constitutionnelle qui a été réaffirmée tant de fois par la Cour suprême. Et ça, on parle d'une gouvernance pleine et entière, par et pour les francophones. Le fait que, dans ce projet de loi, le ministre

se donne le droit de renverser les décisions des conseils scolaires, ça va carrément à l'encontre de ce droit-là.

Je me demande si le ministre est vraiment sérieux à propos du fait que ce projet de loi-là n'affecte pas les droits des francophones. Bien, il doit le dire clairement dans la loi, puis dire que les francophones sont exemptés de l'application.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: When I talk to directors of education, they tell me that the government isn't paying the amount that it needs to for CPP. They don't pay for the adequate level of sick days, so if school boards are actually filling the sick days, they go into deficit, because they only cover four days and teachers are eligible up to 11.

From last I checked, school boards aren't businesses. Can you explain to the government how we can't sell kidneys or widgets to cover up these costs, and that they come from the classroom?

MPP Tyler Watt: Thank you to my colleague for that question. That's what I'm talking about. This bill doesn't actually address any of the retention issues, right? A teacher can only take up to three days of paid sick days before it's having to be paid for by the board, which doesn't make any sense.

If we want to help out student achievement, then we need to make sure that they have a supportive learning environment to be in. Handing a teacher a \$750 gift card to Staples or wherever, saying, "Here you go, here's your supplies," would be like handing me, a nurse—"here's \$750 to go get medical supplies for your patients." It's a slap in the face, and we need to be better supportive of our teachers so they can then support our students.

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

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: The member from Nepean commented on the reduction of elected trustees in Toronto. The Toronto District School Board is a \$3-billion organization, larger than most municipalities in this province. It currently has 22 elected trustees—a governance model that produced years of chaos, dysfunction and political infighting that has put the board on the brink of super-vision.

Bill 101 reduces the TDSB to 12 trustees, bringing it in line with every other school board in the province, including Toronto Catholic District School Board. Streamlined governments mean faster decisions, less politics and sharper focus on students.

My question: Why does the member opposite believe that Toronto students are better served by a bloated 22-trustee board that cannot agree—

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

MPP Tyler Watt: That's a lot of words to put in my mouth that I did not say. All I was commenting on was your obsession with Toronto. It's in every bill. It's like this Premier has a vendetta—I wonder what that's about—with Toronto. I never said any of that. Anyway, there's your answer.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleagues from the Liberal Party. Through the debate, they criticized this bill, which is filled with flaws—absolutely filled with flaws.

The thing, though, I was thinking about is when I was elected in 2018—and there were about 60 of us elected; it was a change election. Many of us signed a form to tackle the backlog of repairs that was left after 15 years of Liberal government. At the time, it was \$15.9 billion of repairs that were required.

My question is, although I agree with you on the criticism, how will the people of Ontario have faith that you're going to resolve the backlog of repairs when you left \$15.9 billion? They added a billion and a half, but the backlog started under your party.

Mr. John Fraser: We built or rebuilt 800 schools. We started full-day kindergarten. We made class sizes smaller.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Address the Chair, please.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: I will be happy, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will ask the member to remember to address the Chair.

Mr. John Fraser: I have got no problem. Full-day kindergarten; 800 schools. We made class sizes smaller. I'm happy. I'm satisfied with our record any day of the week—any day of the week.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I know it's getting heated—getting excited here at the end of the day.

I'd like to ask a question, I guess, to the member for Ottawa South. In this bill, the province is proposing to pretty much make school climate surveys optional. We can only wonder where that's going to go.

We know the minister, earlier today, didn't fully understand the concept of what happens with school climate surveys and that administrators and principals are able to do targeted interventions within schools, especially when they see that maybe there's more bullying in schools or certain other instances. These surveys talk about the importance of physical health and mental health. It gives students and parents the opportunity to provide that feedback anonymously.

My question to the member from Ottawa South is what would the impact of removing that from schools be?

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the member from Ajax. I'd like to thank him for his question. I'll just repeat what's obvious: Our schools are not safe places for kids to learn or for teachers to teach.

Interjection: Sure, they are.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, no, they're not.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: No, I'm sorry; they're not. Maybe that's the problem, because that isn't fundamentally understood.

Class sizes are too big. There are 1,000 classrooms in this province, grades 4 to 8, over 30. Special education: There's an \$800-million hole that boards have had to fill to make sure kids would get what they need, and they're still not meeting that need. And mental health? We're not talking about it in our schools. We're not doing anything about it. So how could they be safe places?

If the government is not willing to measure it, how are they going to manage it?

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I could not possibly speak to an education matter without first giving absolute praise to the wonderful, wonderful teachers in this province who, every day, take children under their wing and do their absolute best to make sure that those children are educated and guided in the right direction. From the bottom of my heart, I say thank you to every teacher in this province who is doing their best to educate our children.

And I could not possibly go any further without first giving praise to my fantastic teachers from Anderdon Public School, who raised me and educated me, together with the great parents who supported those teachers—because when you have parents and teachers working together toward a common goal, that is what is best for children.

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Furthermore, I went to an excellent high school called General Amherst High School where I had some fantastic teachers, and those teachers pointed us in the right direction. In particular, I want to praise Margaret Squire, who every year brought us on a class trip to go see Shakespearean plays at the Stratford Festival and inculcated in us a love of theatre and education, a love of the English language and a love of all of those things that you could do with language. Margaret Squire was a fantastic person, a fantastic teacher, dedicated to her students and dedicated to her profession. Thank you, Margaret Squire.

I want to take an opportunity to refer to something that was referred to by a previous member of this House. A previous member speaking to this bill had made a reference to George Orwell. Now, as it happens, George Orwell was one of my favourite authors when I was in high school. And while George Orwell is most famously known for his novel called *1984*—but only because it was turned into a film—he also wrote other novels as well.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Animal Farm.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: One of the excellent novels he wrote—I think it's the member from Oshawa who's referring to it—is *Animal Farm*. *Animal Farm* was written by George Orwell.

I don't know if anybody else in this chamber has read it, but I read *Animal Farm* when I was in high school. I read it in grade 10. I read *Animal Farm*—

Interjection.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: It looks like the member from Timmins also read *Animal Farm*—and I think it was a wonderful story.

Do you know why George Orwell wrote *Animal Farm*? It was an exposé. He wrote why he wrote *Animal Farm* in an exposé called *Why I Write* in 1946. This is what George Orwell said: “*Animal Farm* was the first book in which I tried, with full consciousness of what I was doing, to fuse political purpose with artistic purpose into one whole.” What an excellent quote, because what George Orwell is saying is that art—in this case, the art of writing—can serve a political purpose and, I would add, even an educational purpose.

The story of *Animal Farm*, as you would imagine, starts on a farm. The animals on that farm are abused by the farm owner. The animals collectively get together, and they revolt against the farm owner. They drive the farm owner off the property in your classic socialist revolution. Then they form a collectivity and the animals adopt a collective and start—what I would say—socializing the goods of the farm, taking from each what they can contribute and giving to each what they need. Over the course of time, things go wrong. The farm stops producing. Animals go hungry. People act in a fashion which is contrary to what they formally said they would do to their fellow animals.

George Orwell explained why he wrote this book. He wrote the book as a critique of socialism, and he wrote it as an allegory to explain what happens when the utopian idea is adopted and then devolves into what it necessarily and always devolves into. That was a specific critique that he wrote. He wrote it with political purpose, and he used that method of making that critique. That is the story of *Animal Farm* and that is George Orwell's exposé.

Now, I think that is quite instructional because frequently in this House those are lessons that could be applied.

Let's take a look at some of these situations here. Toronto public school board: I understand they have a budget of \$3.7 billion. I think that's a big budget. That budget actually exceeds the budget of some provinces.

I think that if you're in charge of \$3.7 billion, it probably serves you well to have some people in your administration who have some financial background, but none of that is presently required in the province of Ontario. In fact, there are some situations across the province of Ontario where there is a noted lack of financial skill and experience in the administration of these school boards. Where such financial skill and experience does exist, it is often overruled by elected trustees who put their school boards in financial jeopardy by making decisions contrary to the financial advice that they've received. In such instances, when the government of Ontario is providing funding to the school boards, and in instances where school boards are headed in a bad financial direction, certainly one would expect that the Minister of Education would take certain steps to re-guide those school boards into financial sustainability. This is a necessary thing and a good thing for the Minister of Education to do.

Let me give you another example. The Ottawa public school board has a budget of over \$1.2 billion, and \$1.2 billion is probably the equivalent of many of the holdings of some pension funds. It would, I suggest, be a very good idea for such budgets to be governed at least in part by

people with financial experience. From what I have heard so far from the opposition, they do not think that's necessary. They do not think that multi-billion dollar budgets require any financial oversight, but I say they do.

The provincial budget for education in the province of Ontario is approximately \$40 billion—in fact, it's over \$40 billion—which works out to approximately \$19,000 or \$20,000 per student in the province of Ontario. I say that when that money is being handed over to school boards, it does require some financial oversight. I am glad that the Minister of Education is taking the steps that he is taking. We do need to have some financial oversight for the money. It is a \$40-billion budget, and it is necessary and proper for the Minister of Education to require financial oversight of those funds.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It is always interesting to hear the member opposite speak. He did talk about Animal Farm, and he did talk about George Orwell, who I believe he said was one of his favourite—if not favourite—authors. I think he kind of missed the assignment here, because George Orwell lived and died a democratic socialist. He believed that socialism would end exploitation and poverty, two things which have been out of control under this government. Really, what Animal Farm and most of his writing was about was authoritarianism in any form. In that book, he was talking about Stalin, he was talking about Lenin and whatnot, but what he was against was authoritarianism.

This government, in this bill, like every bill, is consolidating power into fewer and fewer hands.

So will this member commit to rereading the book? Because he obviously didn't understand the point.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Listen to the member across the way, trying to compare the government of Ontario to Joseph Stalin. Joseph Stalin is the hero of that side of the House, not this side of the House.

Animal Farm had two protagonists in it: Napoleon and Snowball. Both of them betrayed their people, the animals, and both of them betrayed the ideas of the socialist revolution. That's why they were condemned by George Orwell in the book. And that's why Animal Farm is a very instructional story for everybody in this House. If you haven't read it, watch the movie.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Capital projects at school boards are some of the largest investments we make—tens of millions of taxpayer dollars at a time. When they go wrong, it's students who pay the price. Look no further than the Near North District School Board, where a school construction project in Parry Sound was so badly mismanaged that students had to attend a school that was half demolished.

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Can the member from Essex explain how Bill 101 will give the minister the tools needed to ensure that capital projects are delivered on time, on budget and, importantly, in the best interests of students?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: If these capital projects were going off without any problem, we wouldn't need this legislation. The whole point of the legislation is because these capital projects, which are in the millions of dollars, are not going off properly. They're not being completed properly. And this is part of the oversight that should be taken by the Minister of Education.

What the opposition wants is for the Minister of Education just to throw a blank cheque at the school boards and say, "Do whatever you want with it."

But what we're saying on this side of the House, the government side of the House, is that there is a role for the Minister of Education to oversee the money handed over to school boards. It is an oversight role.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Right now, CPP goes up and the funding for CPP does not go up. Right now, teachers could be eligible for 11 or 10 sick days, but they're only paid for four.

So if all of the teachers in the TDSB, the biggest employer in Ontario, take five sick days instead of four, where does the money come from to pay for CPP and sick days?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: On the topic of that: That's why we need a financial adviser on every board, to make sure that financial accountability exists within the system.

If you wanted to talk more about absenteeism, we could go on about absenteeism, because that's the number one issue brought up by the association of school boards, with regard to the costs associated with that and the very, very, very generous amount of sick days accorded to people in the education system. Teachers are eligible for 11 100%-paid sick days and an additional 120 sick days at 90%, which could be a considerable expenditure if there are a lot of people taking a lot of sick days, because you have to pay for that and then the replacement on top of that.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am very pleased to be able to stand and speak to an education bill. As someone who is a former teacher—you don't ever stop wanting to stand up and defend public education.

So here I am with Bill 101, which is called the Putting Student Achievement First Act—snazzy title. Unfortunately, it leaves a lot to be desired. What I imagine people think is in this bill is anything to support students, anything to encourage their achievement or to give them the resources or tools that are so desperately needed. Unfortunately—spoiler alert—they won't find that in this bill. Nothing in this bill will improve outcomes for students or ensure that they have the smaller class sizes that we know they need. Special education, mental health supports—absent from this bill. Even basic resources like consumables—pencils and things like that—are not in this bill.

Rather than putting student achievement first, this bill is about putting the Minister of Education and his opinions first.

This bill vastly expands the control and powers of this Minister of Education or the next Minister of Education. It

creates a new layer of bureaucracy, limits the advocacy and support that parents receive. In addition to giving the minister more power, it seems designed to discourage good people from running for trustee. And the minister has already said he'll appoint people where there are no trustees elected.

I want to say thank you, at the outset of this debate, to the trustees in Durham region who have put their names forward, who make themselves available to parents, who are waging an uphill battle.

Through the years, trustees have indeed lost a lot of their ability to fix problems, because we have such underfunded and under-resourced schools. Unfortunately, this bill further disrespects them. It doesn't eradicate them or get rid of them, which is what we were possibly anticipating. People were very nervous about that. There has been a bit of a walk-back, but there's some interesting language in here that still takes away a lot of their ability, certainly, to have free conversations with community. So I'll come back to that later.

The bill mentions "liability" or the word "liable" 43 times. It mentions the word "students" five times—and "classrooms" it does not.

So I'm interested in why the minister is so focused on his priorities, his opinions and giving himself and his supervisors immunity, and spends so little focus on actual student achievement and supporting them so that they can actually reach for better.

Speaker, this government is more focused on controlling classrooms than improving them. This Premier is doing nothing to address the staffing crisis that is hurting students every day. Families are already paying more out of pocket because of cuts, and this bill does not offer any relief. And centralizing control is not going to put more supports into the classrooms.

Bill 101 ignores the crisis in school infrastructure. We've heard about schools that have crumbling infrastructure, and there are some great and shiny new schools out there; we hear about the challenges of no air conditioning in the summer, of cold classrooms and portables—if you have, you have, and if you have not, you have not in the province of Ontario.

Education is supposed to be the great equalizer. Where is the money? Where is the investment in education that will ensure that every child has a clear path forward?

Speaker, I'm very proud to be standing here as a member of the Ontario New Democratic Party. We have always stood up for strong, well-funded public education and services. We would be investing in classrooms and putting students and their education at the centre of education. That means hiring more teachers and education workers. That would mean reducing class sizes, fixing crumbling infrastructure where we find it, making decisions in partnership with parents, educators and communities so that every student has the support that they need to succeed.

So where is this coming from? Anyone you talk to, whether they have a child in the education system, whether they love a kid, if it's a grandchild, whether it's a neigh-

bour—or maybe they don't have a young person or an educator connected to the system. You would have to be living under a rock in this province to not know how strapped the system is and just how challenged it is. So we would expect to see an education bill, especially one that talks about student achievement, to come forward and prioritize those kids and their learning. That is not what we have here. So where is this bill that mentions liability 43 times and students five times—where does this bill come from?

This seems to be a control wish list of this particular minister. This is a bill that has 57 clauses, and only one is about student achievement. That's the reality of this bill. The folks at home can look it up, flip through it, do the word search or whatever and see that this is not about students and learning. There's nothing to support struggling students in this bill.

This is a bill that gives the minister increased power over schools and boards—including books, grades, exams. It talks a lot about exams. It's going to bring the hammer down when it comes to exams. It reduces the power of trustees in school boards—in the English-language boards, public and Catholic—to represent their communities. It gives the power to a new business-oriented chief executive officer who can overrule democratically elected and accountable trustees. There has been a lot of that going around lately with the last few bills—the overruling of democratically elected folks—but more on that another time.

Speaker, the government plans to limit the number and scope of school board trustees in favour of creating CEO and chief of education roles. So this changes school board bargaining for English boards. It takes it away from trustee associations, hands it to the Council of Ontario Directors of Education, and that will now be made up by the new CEOs—total overhaul. And this wasn't asked for by the parents, by the educators who are clamouring for support, for a partner in this government.

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This government has talked about, and this minister, also—are focused on attendance.

I will say right now, we all want students to be able to go to school, and we want them to be successful. But I will say, as somebody who spent a lot of years in a classroom, there are a lot of exceptionalities, and we need kids to have the support that they need to be able to succeed. So when we have thousands of kids in the province of Ontario whose parents are told, "They've got to stay home today. They cannot come this afternoon. Can you keep them home until next week? We don't have an EA"—

Hon. Rob Flack: Really?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: And anybody who's saying that that isn't happening or whatever I just heard over there—yes, really. Parents are getting the calls in the morning from the school, saying, "You don't have an EA today. You can't send your kid to school."

If we're going to focus on attendance, let's focus on getting them to be able to attend. If it's a busing challenge or a barrier like that—a logistic barrier—let's solve it. For

goodness' sake, we can identify it—people tell us every day. Students who are not allowed to attend and are told to stay home because there aren't resources or supports in the schools deserve to be in schools—they deserve to attend; make sure that they can. And kids with barriers or busing issues, cuts to their classrooms that used to have behavioural intervention programs—fund the resources and the pathways so that all students can indeed attend. Measure that.

Speaker, by restricting trustees and their voices, this minister is restricting the voice of families of children with disabilities. Oftentimes, the parents who are so frustrated because their kids don't have what they need turn to the trustees, and it is an uphill battle. I think we all know that. All of us know that the trustees in our community who are trying to fix and solve cannot do it when the system is so underfunded.

The Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario—their comments on this: They are rejecting the provincial government's proposed education bill because it unnecessarily restructures school board governance and leadership roles, limits the core responsibilities of trustees, and unilaterally interferes with central and local bargaining. It's a big deal.

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation has raised concerns about this bill: “Instead of fixing the real issues, this government is replacing directors of education with CEOs who may have no background in education. This move signals a troubling corporatization of public education at a time when they would be expected to lead central bargaining. Collective bargaining in Ontario's education sector relies on long-established processes and a deep understanding of how schools operate. Removing that expertise risks undermining stability and trust at the table, rather than strengthening it.”

We've heard from several education unions and professional associations that are concerned about this bill and its impacts.

I would love to know what evidence the minister has—what did he collect to support the decisions to limit the power of those trustees and school boards?

Speaker, there's nothing in this bill about smaller class sizes or more resources.

I want to tell you something that's my experience. I can't speak for all teachers and all classrooms, but I taught in south Oshawa—I taught in a few places—right up until I was elected, at a school that had great kids but concentrated need in that area: low-income housing, a lot of different challenges that do tend to concentrate in some of these areas in our communities. There were kids who didn't have WiFi at home. Their family couldn't afford consistent WiFi—sometimes they did, sometimes they didn't. They'd go to Tim Hortons, but they could only stay so long because they didn't have money to buy stuff. They'd go to the public library—and they used to have the WiFi on after hours, but then they realized that the kids were gathering outside and it was a safety issue, so they'd shut off the WiFi.

I had a kid in my class who wanted to do the assignment, wrote his assignment on his phone, but they don't have data, didn't have money for a data plan, and couldn't send it to me—and whatever the security things were. I couldn't download it from his phone or upload it or whatever. I had to take pictures from my phone of his screen to be able to have something that I could mark. Otherwise, he could write it—but this was a kid who wanted to have it digital, wanted to participate with the other kids.

That was the reality in my school.

We had one laptop cart. This is years ago. I've been here 12 years—so, give or take about that time, and we had one laptop cart. I taught the 7/8 class in the morning—I did literacy with them—and then I taught a different 7/8 class and did all the literacy and social studies in the afternoon. In the afternoon class, we had access to the laptop cart; in the morning, only the primaries did. So my grade 7s and 8s, kids getting ready for high school, never once had access to laptops in that school. I had three or four computers in my classroom that we fought over. They learned a lot. I did really well. But that's the reality, right?

So you can give teachers a \$750 card—and everyone is going to say thank you. They want to be able to buy things for their kids. But the board needs the money to be able to invest in actual learning resources. This isn't about making teachers happy that they can finally buy pencils. I would have used it to buy art supplies. I used to buy the expensive art supplies, cut them in half and share them with the kids—because those are kids who were never going to have access to those supplies.

This isn't about pencils or art supplies. This is about fundamental fairness for every kid in the province of Ontario to have a clear path to achievement. And there isn't anything in this bill that is going to make sure that every kid has that clear path.

This government needs to invest in education. This minister wants to bring the hammer down, but he clearly does not understand that sometimes you have to lift people up. There are kids who are never going to get a fair shot, especially if we limit their access to education.

Education is supposed to be the great equalizer. We were talking earlier about Animal Farm. All animals are created equal, but some more equal than others, right? Poor kids in south Oshawa are not as equal as others.

Nothing in this bill will ensure that every kid can look forward to a bright future.

Speaker, if you never invest in education, this minister, nobody—they can't just boss their way into positive outcomes. You have to support students, educators and our public education system. That is how our province gets brighter. That is how our future gets better. That is how our students actually can achieve.

What I would like to see from this government is investment in our kids, investment in our educators, investment in small classes, in better outcomes and clear pathways.

When it comes to racism in our schools, where's that in this bill? If I only have a few minutes left, I want to say

that the Dreams Delayed report came out in March 2025. It has been over a year. It confirms systemic racism in our schools. It gave us a road map and ready-to-use recommendations. But nothing has been done. The minister said he'd review it, but we don't see that in this bill. We haven't heard that in this room.

I want to hold this government accountable to the people of this province who are asking them to do better,

who are asking them to invest in our kids, to invest in education and the future of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): It is so close to 6 o'clock that I'm not going to go to questions. I'm going to say that it is 6 o'clock and it is now time for private members' public business.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

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Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	