

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 68-I
INTERIM

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 68-I
PROVISOIRE

1st Session
44th Parliament

Monday
4 May 2026

1^{re} session
44^e législature

Lundi
4 mai 2026

Speaker: Honourable Donna Skelly
Clerk: Trevor Day

Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly
Greffier : Trevor Day

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<https://www.ola.org/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

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

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

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 4 May 2026 / Lundi 4 mai 2026

Royal assent / Sanction royale

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly)4125

Report, Financial Accountability Officer

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly)4125

Opposition day motion

MPP Jamie West4125

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Building Billy Bishop Airport Act, 2026, Bill 110, Mr. Sarkaria / Loi de 2026 sur la construction de l'aéroport Billy Bishop, projet de loi 110, M. Sarkaria

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria4125

Mr. Ric Bresee4127

Mr. Tyler Allsopp4130

Mr. Chris Glover4134

Ms. Stephanie Bowman4134

Hon. Graham McGregor4134

MPP Alexa Gilmour4135

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon4135

Second reading debate deemed adjourned4135

Correction of record

MPP Jamie West4135

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Brandon Malcolm / Tyler Harrison

Hon. Steve Clark4135

Worth Fighting For campaign

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong4136

Eric Roher

MPP Stephanie Smyth4136

Hospital funding

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault4136

Freedom of the press

Ms. Jessica Bell4136

Health care

Mr. Tyler Allsopp4137

Vision Health Month

Mr. Deepak Anand4137

Municipal elections

Mr. Ric Bresee4137

Pediatric palliative care

Ms. Sandy Shaw4137

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Ms. Stephanie Bowman4138

Mr. Sheref Sabawy4138

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy4138

Ms. Natalie Pierre4138

MPP Alexa Gilmour4138

Mr. Andrew Dowie4138

Hon. Michael Parsa4138

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon4138

Hon. Trevor Jones4138

Hon. Jill Dunlop4138

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly)4138

Brandon Malcolm

Hon. David Piccini4138

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

Government accountability

Ms. Marit Stiles4138

Hon. Doug Ford4138

Hon. Victor Fedeli4139

Government accountability

Ms. Marit Stiles4139

Hon. Stephen Crawford4139

Hon. Victor Fedeli4140

Government accountability

Mr. John Fraser4140

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy4140

Hon. Stephen Crawford4140

Government accountability

Mr. John Fraser4141

Hon. Nolan Quinn4141

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria4141

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy4142

Hospital services

MPP Robin Lennox4142

Hon. Sylvia Jones4142

Freedom of information

MPP Stephanie Smyth4142

Hon. Stephen Crawford4142

Government investments

Mr. Deepak Anand4143

Hon. Victor Fedeli4143

Justice system	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4144
Hon. Doug Downey	4144
Land use planning	
Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon	4144
Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria	4144
Hon. Doug Ford	4145
Northern Ontario development	
MPP Bill Rosenberg.....	4145
Hon. George Pirie	4145
Northern airports	
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	4146
Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria	4146
Government jet	
Mrs. Karen McCrimmon.....	4146
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	4146
Agri-food industry	
Hon. Ernie Hardeman.....	4147
Hon. Trevor Jones	4147
Government accountability	
MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam	4147
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	4147
House sittings	
Hon. Steve Clark	4148

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act, 2026, Bill 105, Ms. Khanjin / Loi de 2026 pour protéger les travailleurs et la résilience économique de l'Ontario, projet de loi 105, Mme Khanjin	
Second reading agreed to	4149
Fair and Free Elections Act, 2026, Bill 99, Mr. Fraser / Loi de 2026 pour des élections libres et honnêtes, projet de loi 99, M. Fraser	
Second reading negatived	4149
Opposition day motion	
Mme Lucille Collard.....	4149
Mr. John Fraser	4150
Birthday of member's mother	
Hon. Steve Clark	4150

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4150
MPP Alexa Gilmour.....	4150

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DE COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Justice Policy	
Mr. Lorne Coe	4150
Report adopted	4150
Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy	
Mr. Guy Bourgouin.....	4150
Report adopted	4150
Standing Committee on Social Policy	
Mr. Brian Riddell	4151
Report adopted	4151

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Lydia's Law (Accountability and Transparency in the Handling of Sexual Assault Cases), 2026, Bill 112, Ms. Fife; Mr. Kernaghan; Mr. Mamakwa; Mr. Vanthof / Loi Lydia de 2026 (responsabilité et transparence dans le traitement des cas d'agression sexuelle), projet de loi 112, Mme Fife; M. Kernaghan; M. Mamakwa; M. Vanthof	
First reading agreed to.....	4151
Ms. Catherine Fife	4151
Fair Prices and Tax-Free Groceries Act, 2026, Bill 113, Ms. Bell; Mr. Rakocevic; MPP Wong-Tam / Loi de 2026 sur les prix équitables et les produits alimentaires non taxés, projet de loi 113, Mme Bell; M. Rakocevic; MPP Wong-Tam	
First reading agreed to.....	4151
Mr. Tom Rakocevic.....	4151

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Traditional Tibetan medicine	
MPP Alexa Gilmour.....	4151
Health care workers	
Mme Lucille Collard	4152
Transportation infrastructure	
Hon. Steve Clark	4152
Sexual violence and harassment	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4152
Student assistance	
Mrs. Karen McCrimmon	4152
Ontario economy	
Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	4152
Health care workers	
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	4153
Education funding	
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	4153

Sexual violence and harassment

Mr. Terence Kernaghan4153

Health care workers

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam4153

Student assistance

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam4153

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION**Freedom of information**

MPP Stephanie Smyth4154

Mr. Brian Riddell4155

Ms. Catherine Fife.....4156

Mr. John Fraser4158

MPP Tyler Watt4159

Ms. Lee Fairclough4160

Mr. Adil Shamji4160

Mr. Ted Hsu4161

Mr. Rob Cerjanec.....4162

MPP Stephanie Smyth4162

Motion negatived4163

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR**Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026, Bill 101, Mr. Calandra / Loi de 2026 donnant la priorité à la réussite des élèves, projet de loi 101, M. Calandra**

Hon. Paul Calandra4163

Mr. Lorne Coe4164

Hon. Nolan Quinn4165

Mr. Billy Pang.....4166

Mr. Anthony Leardi.....4168

Ms. Chandra Pasma.....4170

Mme Lucille Collard4170

Mr. Ric Bresee4171

Ms. Chandra Pasma.....4171

Mr. Tyler Allsopp.....4171

Ms. Chandra Pasma.....4172

MPP Lisa Gretzky4179

MPP Stephanie Smyth.....4181

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner.....4181

MPP Catherine McKenney.....4181

MPP Stephanie Smyth.....4181

Mr. Joseph Racinsky4182

Mme Lucille Collard4182

Mr. John Fraser4185

Mr. Tyler Allsopp.....4187

MPP Wayne Gates4188

MPP Stephanie Smyth.....4188

MPP Paul Vickers4188

MPP Jamie West4188

MPP George Darouze.....4188

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner.....4189

Ms. Jess Dixon4189

Third reading debate deemed adjourned4190

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 May 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 mai 2026

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Let us pray.

Prières / Prayers.

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

ROYAL ASSENT
SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that in the name of His Majesty the King, the Administrator has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in Her Honour's office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Christopher Tyrell): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to implement Budget measures, to enact, amend or repeal various statutes and to revoke various regulations / Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires, à édicter, à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois et à abroger divers règlements.

REPORT, FINANCIAL
ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that, during the adjournment, the following document was tabled: a report entitled Ontario's Labour Market in 2025, from the Office of the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

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

MPP Jamie West: Under standing order 55, "no motion, or amendment, the subject matter of which has been decided upon, can be again proposed during the same session."

I'm asking the Speaker to rule on whether Ontario NDP opposition motion number 3 and Bill 105, standing in the name of the member for Ottawa South, engage the same question rule.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Does anyone wish to speak to the point of order?

I will reserve my ruling on this point of order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING BILLY BISHOP AIRPORT
ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 SUR LA CONSTRUCTION
DE L'AÉROPORT BILLY BISHOP

Mr. Sarkaria moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to enact the Building Billy Bishop Airport Act, 2026 / Projet de loi 110, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 sur la construction de l'aéroport Billy Bishop.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much, and good morning, Madam Speaker. Before I start, I'd like to note that I will be sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation.

Once again, thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity to speak before this House on a very critical piece of legislation.

At a time when President Trump's tariffs are taking aim at Ontario workers and businesses, our government has a clear plan to protect Ontario. We are building a province that is more competitive, more resilient and more self-reliant so that Ontario can stand up to economic uncertainty.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is investing nearly \$100 billion on the transportation infrastructure of tomorrow—from highways, bridges, transit across this province. These investments are creating good-paying jobs, strengthening supply chains, reducing gridlock and making it easier for workers, families, businesses and visitors to get where they need to go quicker and faster, which brings me to why we are here today.

We've tabled the Building Billy Bishop Airport Act to help unlock the full potential of one of Ontario's most important transportation assets. This proposed legislation marks an important step in the province's plan to support the long-term modernization and expansion of Billy Bishop airport, giving travellers more choice, more convenience and more affordable options.

Billy Bishop airport currently serves approximately two million passengers each year, connecting Toronto to more than 20 cities across Canada and the United States. It contributes nearly \$900 million to Ontario's GDP, and it generates \$1.8 billion in economic output annually. It

supports essential services such as Ornge air ambulance operations and helps people connect to the urgent care they need, when every minute matters.

But we know that Billy Bishop can do more, especially when it is fully utilized. As Ontario grows and as travel demand continues to increase across this province and across this country, we need more capacity, we need more competition, and we need better options for passengers. We need to reduce the pressure on Pearson airport. We need to support more routes and cheaper flights. And we need to make sure Toronto and Ontario have the transportation infrastructure to compete with the world's leading jurisdictions.

Under the Toronto Port Authority's modernization plan, Billy Bishop could serve millions more passengers each year, with runway enhancements to accommodate modern jet aircraft, improvements to the terminal building, and better access to Toronto's waterfront. An expanded Billy Bishop could attract 10 million passengers annually and contribute up to \$8.5 billion to Canada's GDP each year by 2050. It would also support close to 23,000 jobs in Ontario's construction sector alone.

For travellers, an expanded Billy Bishop would provide more routes, more convenience, cheaper flying options. For Toronto, it would strengthen a waterfront airport that can compete with world-class cities around the globe. And for Ontario, it would create more jobs, more investment, stronger tourism and a more competitive economy. This would be a game-changer for the millions of tourists who visit our province each year and the millions of business travellers who come to Ontario to invest and create jobs.

With Ontario's population expected to reach and exceed 20 million by 2051, it's critical that we build the transportation infrastructure needed to support that growth.

By supporting the modernization and expansion of Billy Bishop airport, our government is taking another bold step forward in our plan to protect Ontario and deliver the world-class infrastructure Ontario families and businesses depend on.

0910

The legislation we've tabled, if passed, would allow the province to take over the city of Toronto's role in the tripartite agreement that governs the airport and take ownership of the city-owned lands at the airport in exchange for fair compensation.

As part of the Building Billy Bishop Airport Act, 2026, city-owned parcels of land have been identified to support future airport expansion. The province is working with the Toronto Port Authority, Transport Canada, and the city of Toronto to complete the necessary due diligence, including carefully assessing each of those parcels and developing a fair compensation framework. Of course, any decisions on land requirements will be informed by the due diligence process, in collaboration with our partners.

There is way too much at stake for Ontario to move slowly. With our population expected to exceed over 20 million people in the coming years, we need to expand air travel options for Ontarians and visitors to our province. We need more competition in the air travel sector to

support more routes, cheaper flights. And we need to support thousands of good-paying jobs in Ontario's aviation, tourism and construction sectors. In the face of mounting economic uncertainty, we cannot afford to accept the status quo. We need to build faster, work smarter and get critical infrastructure built.

People have talked about expanding Billy Bishop for years. Our government is taking action. Now is the time to unlock Billy Bishop's full potential. And we are not alone in saying that. An open letter supporting Billy Bishop's long-term future has been signed by 77 leaders across more than 24 industries, sectors and communities. That includes voices from business, tourism, labour, health care, aviation—tourism and Toronto's competitiveness. And our government agrees. But while business leaders, tourism operators, labour leaders, health care partners and community organizations are calling for action, the NDP are writing letters to Ottawa to block it. That tells you everything you need to know.

If the NDP and the Liberals were in charge, Ontario would never build anything. They would rather stop progress than support more jobs, more routes, cheaper flights and a stronger economy.

Our government is choosing to chart a different path. Expanding Billy Bishop airport will strengthen Ontario's economy and strengthen Toronto's economy. People from around the world want to visit here, invest here, do business here. But a growing, global city needs world-class transportation infrastructure. That is why our government has made this historic decision to invest in Toronto's long-term success.

We have worked with our partners on various deals to benefit this city. We signed the \$1.2-billion new deal for the city of Toronto and Ontario to support the city's finances, build critical infrastructure and keep people and goods moving. As part of that agreement, ownership and maintenance of the Gardiner Expressway and DVP are being transferred to the province to ensure these vital highways remain safe, reliable, toll-free and in good repair. The Gardiner Expressway and DVP are nationally significant economic corridors tied to the provincial highway network, facilitating domestic and international trade, boosting GDP and supporting millions of visitors to Toronto annually.

Supporting the expansion of Billy Bishop airport is another example of our government taking action to drive growth across this city and province. It would help reduce pressure on Pearson airport, welcome more travellers directly into Toronto's downtown core, and strengthen Toronto's position as a global destination for jobs, investment and opportunity.

But airports do not operate in isolation. They are part of a broader transportation network. When someone lands in Toronto, they need reliable ways to get around the city for work, for meetings, and to get to hotels, restaurants, hospitals, attractions and communities across this province. They need roads and highways that move. They need public transit and regional rail that connect to each other.

That is why our government is investing nearly \$100 billion to enable that growth in transportation infrastructure across Ontario, including more than \$30 billion to build, repair and expand highways, roads and bridges, to fight gridlock and to keep people and goods moving.

Madam Speaker, two summers ago, we provided \$73 million in provincial funding to speed up construction on the Gardiner Expressway. Thanks to our investment, construction on the Gardiner was completed more than a year and a half ahead of schedule. That saved Ontario's economy over \$270 million by getting drivers and goods out of gridlock more than a year sooner than originally planned. And the 140,000 drivers who use the Gardiner Expressway every single day are now saving up to 22 minutes per trip each way.

We're building priority highway infrastructure like the 413 and the Bradford Bypass, which will save drivers across the GTA up to a half hour per trip—that's five hours per week back into the time of those who want to spend it with family, friends, or doing the things that they desire.

We are twinning the Garden City Skyway on the QEW—a vital link to Niagara Falls and two international borders—and assessing the feasibility of a new driver-and-transit tunnel expressway under Highway 401 to fight gridlock on one of the most congested highway corridors in North America.

In addition, we're laying the groundwork to widen sections of Highway 401 between Kitchener and Milton, Durham region and Port Hope.

We're setting the stage to widen a section of Highway 400 in Barrie, as well.

We're also building better public transit for people travelling across the province. We're investing \$70 billion—which is the largest expansion in public transit, not just in Ontario's history, not just in Canada's history, but in North America. It includes one of the largest subway expansions in Canadian history. We are building new subways, new LRTs and rail networks that will transform the way people travel across this province for generations to come.

Most importantly, we are delivering results for Ontarians.

Earlier this year, the Eglinton Crosstown LRT opened to the public, slashing travel times from Kennedy station to Mount Dennis station by almost one hour.

The Finch West LRT is up and running, bringing 230,000 people within walking distance of reliable transit and moving more than 50,000 riders each weekday.

We're also building historic generational projects like the Ontario Line, a project that will move 400,000 people every single day when it is operational and running; the Scarborough subway extension, giving the people of Scarborough access to rapid transit that they were denied under previous governments; the Yonge North subway extension; and the Eglinton Crosstown West extension. These projects will reduce gridlock, cut travel times, and connect more people to jobs, housing, education and, most importantly, opportunity.

0920

Madam Speaker, we are also expanding regional rail. Through our GO expansion, we are working to deliver two-way, all-day service on GO Transit's busiest rail routes. GO extensions will bring new and improved service to communities in Durham region, Kitchener-Waterloo, Hamilton and Niagara.

Earlier this year, our government broke ground on a historic project, the Bowmanville extension. We launched the first-ever weekend service between Kitchener and Toronto. We started construction at the Caledonia GO station, which will connect riders on the Barrie line to TTC bus services and the Eglinton Crosstown. And we finished construction at the Confederation GO station in Hamilton, connecting thousands of daily riders to rail and bus services that they can count on. We are building an integrated transit network that makes it faster, easier and more affordable to get you where you're going.

Madam Speaker, Billy Bishop airport fits directly into that work. More visitors and business travellers will mean more demand on Toronto's roads, highways and transit systems. People expect to have those transportation options when they arrive in Ontario, whether they are travelling by transit, by rail or by car.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is building the connected transportation network our growing province needs—transportation infrastructure that was neglected by previous governments for far too long, who built absolutely nothing.

That is why the legislation before this House is so important. Through this legislation, our government is helping to unlock Billy Bishop's full potential so we can bring options to air travellers across this province—cheaper flight options, more routes, more convenience to the millions of people from across Ontario who will use this airport every single year.

An upgraded airport on the waterfront would help the city and province compete with world-class cities across the globe—take, for example, Chicago, O'Hare and Midway; New York, JFK and LaGuardia; London, Heathrow and London City. World-class cities have built the transportation infrastructure to position them to be competitive.

We have to support tourism and business travel across Ontario and, most importantly, support the creation of thousands of jobs that will come through this expansion, from a construction perspective, but also from airport operations.

This is another practical step in our plan to protect Ontario, strengthen our economy and keep our province moving forward.

Madam Speaker, with that, I will turn it over to my colleague and friend Parliamentary Assistant Bresee.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member from Hastings-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I want to start by expressing my appreciation to Minister Sarkaria for outlining our government's plan to unlock the full potential of Billy Bishop airport.

Speaker, our government understands the important role that Billy Bishop airport already plays here in Toronto and for Ontario and for all of Canada. It connects passengers to more than 20 cities across Canada and the United States, and in doing so, it supports thousands and thousands of jobs. It helps to bring business travellers, tourists, and, most specifically, it brings investment into the heart of Toronto. It gives passengers another option in a region where travel demand continues to grow and grow. We believe that there is a clear opportunity to build on that success. Billy Bishop can help bring more travel options to Toronto, support more good-paying jobs and, ultimately, strengthen Ontario's economy.

That's why we've tabled this legislation. If passed, the Building Billy Bishop Airport Act would allow the province to take over the city of Toronto's role in the tripartite agreement that governs that airport and, in doing so, take ownership of the city-owned lands at the airport in exchange for fair compensation, marking an important step in our government's plan to support the long-term modernization and expansion of Billy Bishop Airport.

Madam Speaker, the goal here is very clear: We want to support more travel options for passengers. We want to reduce the pressure on Pearson airport. We want to increase competition in the air travel sector. And that, in turn, will do something else we want. We want to help bring down costs for consumers and support good-paying jobs in aviation, tourism and in construction.

Toronto is a world-class city. It deserves a world-class airport in the downtown core—an airport that welcomes travellers from around the globe to experience all that Toronto and this great province has to offer, whether they are here for business or for pleasure. For far too long, people have simply settled for less.

They said we couldn't fly jets out of Billy Bishop airport. This government, under the leadership of the Premier and our fantastic minister, says, why not? Why not throw our support behind an expansion project that will generate billions and billions of dollars in economic output for our province and for our country? Why not support thousands of good-paying jobs in Ontario's aviation, tourism and construction industries?

By tabling the Building Billy Bishop Airport Act, we are taking the next step in our government's work to unlock Billy Bishop airport's full potential.

Interjections.

Mr. Ric Bresee: And yes, contrary to what the members opposite are saying, it needs that full potential expansion to support modernization and that expansion.

Currently, Billy Bishop serves approximately two million passengers annually. The airport connects Toronto to more than 20 cities across Canada and the United States and currently generates \$1.8 billion in economic output per year, contributing \$900 million to our gross domestic product right here in Ontario. Despite the opposition, Billy Bishop airport supported 9,000 good-paying jobs. These are numbers that show Billy Bishop is not only a vital transportation hub for us, but an actual economic driver in our province.

But those numbers are just a glimpse of what we can expect after Billy Bishop's expansion. Under the Toronto Port Authority's modernization plan, the Billy Bishop airport would serve up to 10 million passengers annually by 2050. Expanding and modernizing that airport would generate up to \$140 billion in economic output over the next 25 years. This is awesome.

The expansion would generate more jobs, attract more investment to our province and enhance regional and international connectivity to Toronto.

Once Billy Bishop airport is fully expanded, the Toronto Port Authority estimates the airport's activities would contribute up to \$8.5 billion—billion—to Canada's economy by the year 2050. Expanding the airport is expected to support 23,000 jobs in Ontario's construction sector alone; that's in addition to the job growth that we'd see in the aviation and tourism sectors. Given these numbers, how can we say no to an opportunity like this?

0930

Our government was elected on a promise to protect Ontario, a promise to build Ontario into the most competitive jurisdiction in the G7. And we're taking the steps to do just that, by tabling the Building Billy Bishop Airport Act.

Speaker, it is our duty as a government to ensure that we have the transportation infrastructure to support our growing population. It's predicted that Ontario's population will exceed 20 million people by the year 2051.

We need to invest in Billy Bishop airport to keep pace with growing travel demand all across the sectors. Billy Bishop airport is an important and currently underused part of Ontario's transportation network.

With an upgraded airport on the waterfront, Toronto and Ontario will be able to compete with world-class cities all across the globe, supporting tourism and business travel for all of Ontario, and creating thousands of new jobs for Ontario workers. This is incredibly important.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government has been making historic investments in transportation infrastructure to keep our people and our goods moving.

Since day one, we've worked to tackle the gridlock in Toronto, which currently costs our province billions of dollars every year—I think the last estimate was \$56 billion a year that that gridlock costs us. We recently provided \$73 million in funding to the city to accelerate construction on the Gardiner Expressway. The result was that that work was completed more than one year ahead of time—a government program more than one year ahead of time—and in doing so, saved Ontario's economy more than \$273 million, saving 140,000 daily drivers up to 22 minutes per trip. That's significant productivity improvement. We're restoring vehicle lanes on some of the city's busiest streets so that drivers spend less time in gridlock and more time at home with their families.

We're studying the feasibility of building a driver-and-transit tunnel underneath a section of the 401, running from Scarborough to Mississauga, on one of the most congested highway corridors in all of North America.

We're moving forward to harmonize municipal road-building standards so Toronto and other cities across the GTA can build roads faster, more efficiently.

Speaker, these are bold and forward-thinking measures that our government is eager to embrace as we continue to work to keep people moving.

We're investing \$30 billion to build, repair and expand highways, roads and bridges all across this province.

Construction is already under way to build Highway 413, which will save drivers in York, Peel and Halton regions up to 30 minutes per trip—I'd like to save that in my driving.

The Bradford Bypass will save drivers in York region and Simcoe county up to 35 minutes per trip.

We're twinning the Garden City Skyway—twin that bridge on the QEW, improving traffic flow along that very vital route to Niagara Falls.

And Madam Speaker, our work doesn't stop there. We're widening Highways 11 and 17 in northern Ontario, including more than 100 kilometres between Thunder Bay and Nipigon.

We're continuing our work on Highway 69 between Parry Sound and Sudbury, where 84 kilometres have already been expanded to four lanes.

We're adding passing lanes, truck climbing lanes and safety improvements on key northern routes.

And we're moving forward with our 2+1 highway pilot in the northeast to improve passing opportunities and to help reduce the risk of serious collisions.

Speaker, one of the things I'm very excited about: We're also restoring the Northlander, giving northern communities another way to connect to jobs, health care, education, and, ultimately, to opportunity.

Whether it's by road, by rail or by air, our government is giving people across Ontario more options to get where they need to go safely and reliably.

Billy Bishop airport has an important role to play in connecting communities all across Ontario to downtown Toronto and beyond.

Our government has also invested close to \$15 billion in GO Transit to make it easier for people to get to where they're going all across the GTA region—larger region, even. Thanks to these investments, it's easier than ever for people travelling through downtown Toronto to get to Niagara, to Hamilton, to Kitchener-Waterloo, to Durham, and even beyond that.

This summer, we're launching GO train service from Toronto to Stratford—

Interjections.

Mr. Ric Bresee: —I knew some would love that—improving access to the Stratford Festival, supporting tourism, local businesses and, once again, creating jobs.

We're expanding service to new communities and making it easier to travel across the GO network.

Our GO Expansion Program will deliver two-way, all-day service on GO Transit's busiest rail routes, while our GO extensions will expand service in Hamilton and Niagara, Durham region, and Kitchener-Waterloo.

Our government has completed upgrades to the West Harbour GO station that are now saving commuters in Niagara Falls and St. Catharines 15 minutes per round trip—again, significant savings, getting people home, getting people to work faster.

We've finished construction at Confederation GO station in Hamilton, opening up a new transit hub connecting riders to bus and rail services.

And we introduced the first-ever weekend service between Kitchener and Toronto. I know I want to take advantage of that.

We recently broke ground on the Bowmanville extension, another major project that will extend GO rail service deeper into Durham region, continuing that expansion program.

Each of these milestones is part of our plan to give people more ways to move across Ontario, better ways to move across Ontario.

We're investing \$70 billion in the largest transit expansion in North America, the largest subway expansion in Canadian history. We've got shovels in the ground across the entire Ontario Line subway, which will give Toronto 15 new subway stations and reduce crowding on the busiest stretch of the TTC's Line 1 subway. Wait times for the next set of trains will be as short as 90 seconds.

We've talked before about this being a world-class city. Having a world-class subway system is an integral part of that.

We've awarded a contract to design and build the twin tunnels for the Yonge North subway extension, which will extend the TTC's Line 1 subway into Vaughan, Markham and Richmond Hill for the first time, transforming travel across the GTA.

We've broken ground on the first of three stations for the Scarborough subway extension, which will extend the TTC's Line 2 subway for almost eight kilometres.

Construction is under way at Toronto's East Harbour transit hub, which will connect commuters to the Ontario Line subway and the Lakeshore East and Stouffville GO lines.

Speaker, we're continuing to build.

We've done all of this while making transit more affordable as well. We extended Ontario's One Fare program, which is saving transit drivers in Toronto and beyond up to \$1,600 per year—money back in people's pockets. Again, that improves productivity and improves the commuter service by allowing commuters to transfer between the TTC, GO Transit and participating transit agencies with a single fare.

Additionally, we've recently tabled legislation that would lay the groundwork for One Fare 2.0, which would unlock even more savings for transit riders, even better service.

0940

We're investing close to \$1 billion to maximize the Canadian content in new TTC subway trains being manufactured by Alstom in Thunder Bay—it's got a personal connection to my own riding, because Alstom also has the

test tracks in Loyalist township, which continue to be part of Alstom's great work here in Ontario.

Through each of these investments, we are building a robust, reliable transit network. We are building a world-class transit network.

And by tabling the Building Billy Bishop Airport Act, we're setting the stage to build a world-class airport right on Toronto's waterfront.

Speaker, I know where I stand on this, and I'm sure I speak for my colleagues in government when I say we are willing to do whatever it takes to make Ontario the most competitive jurisdiction in the entire G7. We have a great economy. We have strong people. We have smart people here in Ontario. Our economy is going to continue to grow. So by attracting investment, encouraging economic growth and supporting job creation, we will keep moving that bar.

As Ontarians across the province continue to stare down the barrel of the economic uncertainty that is brought to us by everything that's going on south of the border, by everything that's going on around the world—these challenges make our lives a little bit uncertain. But building Ontario, creating a sustainable, strong economy—the way we do that is by investing in our own future prosperity. This government will continue to do that. That need has never been greater. We will not let down the people of this province. We will stop at nothing to build, to protect Ontario.

And expanding the Billy Bishop airport will drive economic growth across Toronto and beyond for generations to come.

I want to come back to a point about the integration of our transportation systems, overall—our roads, our bridges, our subways, our trains, our rail and our airport systems. We need all of these to interconnect.

Being from eastern Ontario, I would be remiss if I didn't brag a little bit about the eastern Ontario transportation master plan, which calls for the expansion of the 401 going east of Toronto all the way to the Quebec border. That highway, that major artery, part of the lifeblood of this province, is going to be expanded first to three lanes on each side and eventually to four lanes on each side—or six and eight, depending on how you look at it. That expansion is vital for eastern Ontario for that connectivity.

Speaker, we have a plan to make sure that we have that intermodal transportation system built, connecting our ports, our roads, our rail, and, yes, our airways, to make sure that all of the available transportation tools that the people of Ontario need are available and connected to each other. This is a vital part of our long-term plan.

That's why we're spending these historic amounts of money, investing in our systems all across the province.

Billy Bishop is in downtown Toronto, yes, but it will serve airports and serve the people all across Ontario. This is a vital piece, a vital step to continue to move us forward, to have the transportation networks that we require here in this province.

I know that I'll be supporting this bill, and I hope all of my colleagues here in the House will support this bill.

With that, I'll turn it over to my colleague the MPP from the Bay of Quinte.

Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate your time today.

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

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to talk about the Building Billy Bishop Airport Act, 2026.

I want to start by thanking the Minister of Transportation as well as the incredible parliamentary assistant to the MTO, who is from my neighbouring riding of Hastings—Lennox and Addington and who actually had a wonderful event just on the weekend at FNTI—speaking of airports—where we invested almost \$4.5 million to help support an Indigenous flight program about 20 kilometres away from my community. It is going to help dozens and dozens of students every year learn how to fly and learn how to become pilots, and to take what they learn across Ontario. This is something that was really, deeply felt by that community because, as we know, so many of our First Nations communities across Ontario are fly-in only. So these Indigenous pilots trained at FNTI on Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory will now be able to use their skills to access communities across Ontario. I just want to say, it was a pleasure to be there with you, sir, as well as with the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

As we look at Billy Bishop airport, I want to first tell a little bit of a personal story, because I think that the minister and the parliamentary assistant have already done an exceptional job of going over a lot of the details that are embodied in the bill and the economic benefits, and we'll touch on some of those later.

This weekend, it was my daughters' fifth birthday—both Everly and Riley. I have three daughters. The twins turned five, which was incredible. We had a big party at the AIM Gymnastics centre in Belleville. We had McDonald's for lunch. It was just wonderful.

As a lot of parents know, when you see the world through the eyes of your children, it makes you reflect on your own life. I thought back to a birthday that really had a big impact on me, and it was the first time I actually saw Billy Bishop airport. I was 16 years old, October 13, 2008—sorry for how that makes some of the people in the audience feel. I was 16 years old, and my father picked me up from school and said we were going to a special lunch in Toronto.

Toronto always held a very special place in our hearts. My family is from Mississauga—I was born there—and at two years old, we moved out to the Bay of Quinte because my family wanted a little bit of a quieter life, and they felt that in a smaller, tighter-knit community we might have better opportunities to progress and to build those inter-personal relationships. But we always enjoyed our trips into Toronto. You see, my mother was a dressmaker and designer, so we would often go into the textiles district,

into the fashion district, to pick up all the fabrics that she needed for her customers—the different laces, the different materials, the patterns that weren't available in our local market. So we would go into Toronto, and I was always sort of struck by this sense of wonder and awe. It always seemed like a place of possibility. And we knew, even in our community, that things that happened in Toronto had a big impact on us. I remember, as a kid, watching Vince Carter in the slam dunk competition, and they were calling him “Air Canada.” And I thought, it's Toronto's team, but it's all of our team—in the same way that this is a Toronto airport, but it's all of our airport, and the impact that will be felt will be felt all across Ontario.

So we were driving into Toronto, and I still didn't know where we were going for lunch. I was looking at restaurants that were passing us by, and my dad said, “Today, we're going somewhere special. We're going to the CN Tower.” So for my 16th birthday, we went up to the top and had lunch in the 360-degree revolving restaurant in the CN Tower. If you haven't been before, it's an incredible experience because you really do feel like you're sitting on top of the world. And every hour, that restaurant revolves 360 degrees, giving you an unparalleled view of the entire city of Toronto. Skyscrapers look like Lego buildings, and cars look like ants. It was really something that was very impactful to me.

And as we were rotating to face Lake Ontario, I saw something that I hadn't seen before. I saw a little island, not far offshore, and I watched as planes were coming in from the horizon and landing at that airport. So I asked my dad, “What is that?” I had heard about the Toronto airport and Pearson, and I thought, “Surely that can't be Pearson. What is that?” He said to me, “Well, that's Billy Bishop airport.” And that prompted a whole discussion about who Billy Bishop was and the fact that he was the greatest flying ace in Canadian history as well as in the British colonies throughout the British empire—72 victories, a complete hero. He talked about how there was a smaller airport and that they had about 240 flights land a day. It served about two million people. And as I was sitting up there and watching these planes come in—I've always been a person who tends to wonder. So I was sitting there and wondering, “What kind of people are on that plane? I wonder why they've come to Ontario. Are these business people? Are they travellers? Are they returning home from abroad? Maybe they're doctors who want to work in our world-class hospitals or professors who want to come learn and teach at our world-class universities.”

So I was watching these people come in, and I was wondering, “Maybe they're looking up at the CN Tower and they don't even know that they're watching me watching them”—wondering what it is that they're doing, why did they come to Ontario? And as I was reflecting on that, it really filled me with a sense of what is possible, what could be. This tiny little airport on this tiny island at the foot of the greatest city in all of Canada, an economic driver for the entire country—these people were landing, and they were maybe going to stay in Toronto. Maybe they

were returning home, but maybe they would travel a little bit further abroad in our province.

0950

They say that on a really clear day, when you're sitting at the top of that restaurant, you can see 160 kilometres in any direction. So as I looked to the north—

Interjection.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: The MPP from Perth–Wellington might be able to see his house from there—more on that later.

As I looked to the north, I saw the Muskokas and the beautiful, expansive green landscape. And as I looked to the west, I could see Niagara Falls. I'm not actually sure if I could see Niagara Falls—but for the story, I'm pretty sure I could see it. The member from Niagara West agrees that it's a beautiful sight, even from that high up.

I looked out across the water, at beautiful Lake Ontario. Then, as the restaurant revolved over the course of that hour, I found myself looking back east, in the direction that we had just come from, looking back at the Bay of Quinte, only 160 kilometres away, and thinking about the importance of that connectivity, of that proximity, of the closeness that we share with such an economic powerhouse, and the ability to get goods and services, to attract investment, to attract talent, to draw for not only the GTA, but for the entire region, for all of Ontario and for all of Canada.

So I think about an act like this and what it might mean for our province, looking towards the future.

We've already heard today that an investment that we could make in Billy Bishop airport over the next 25 years could bring over \$120 billion in GDP into Ontario, and that by 2051, \$8.5 billion worth of GDP could be generated just by Billy Bishop airport alone—and what that might mean for all of us.

Mr. Chris Glover: Let's see the business case for that.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Is it Spadina–Fort York? I just want to make sure that everything you say is captured on the Hansard, as well, so we can have a bit more of a dialogue.

I have always enjoyed these conversations that we get to have, because that's really what this place is—a place to share ideas, to have conversations, and to let the best ideas rise to the top.

Interjection.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate that, sir.

So why is it important that we expand this airport? Why not some other airport? Why not somewhere else? What does it matter? Well, think about those passengers who are landing that day, right in front of the greatest city in all of Canada, one of the greatest cities in all of the world, and where they might go from there. If we can increase that capacity, the economic output that it will generate is significant.

We know, ladies and gentlemen, that we are the number one export destination to 15 states. We're the number two export destination to 12 other states. Our two-way auto trade in 2024 was over \$127 billion. It is critically import-

ant that we're able to connect with our partners stateside so that we can make sure that even though their federal government is putting unjustified tariffs on us—just like the section 232 tariffs that applied to steel, aluminum, forestry products, automotives—we can make sure that those businesses stateside, those states that want to work with us have the ability to continue to do that.

Most people probably don't realize that in the Great Lakes region alone, we have an economy of about \$7.5 trillion, which, if it was its own country, would be the third largest on Earth. So when we talk about regional connectivity, that's what we're trying to tap into. We're trying to tap into that investment. We're trying to tap into that growth. We want to make sure that good-paying jobs are created right here in Ontario, and we do that through investment.

Recently, there was a story about the Premier having gone down to Texas and having multiple meetings in the same day in, I believe, three different cities. He was able to secure \$6 billion of investment and bring that back into Ontario. Think about what that means for our economy. In economic development, we get to see a lot of numbers go by all day long. You look at the investments and you look at the job creation—and often, it costs nearly a million dollars to create a single job. A \$6-billion investment could create upwards of 6,000 jobs in our province at a time when we need them most, at a time when we are most challenged by global uncertainty, at a time when we are facing threats from our nearest trading partner, the likes of which we have never seen before.

Not only does it facilitate our investment attraction from the United States, but we must also remember that we are the largest internal trader in Canada. We represent 30% of internal trade in Canada. It's important that we're able to connect with our partners across Canada, in BC, in Manitoba, in Saskatchewan, in Alberta, in Quebec, in Nova Scotia, in Newfoundland, all the way up into the north as well. We're talking about unlocking the Ring of Fire. We need to make sure that that connectivity is there.

We know that Pearson is already strained. Yes, there are plans to expand it, but we need to do more, and we need to dream bigger. We need to think further down the line and about what this will mean for generations to come.

As we look out to that 2050 horizon, we know that the population of Ontario is projected to expand to over 20 million people. The servicing capacity that's needed to make sure that they can get to where they're going, to make sure that they can bring in investment or travel for work, or whatever their needs may be, is so important. Because that connectivity—it's not just for our commerce, but for our communities. It's for connecting care across our province. And this expansion at the Billy Bishop airport gives us the opportunity to do that in a very meaningful way.

Madam Speaker, when we take a look at some of the investments that we've brought in internationally, I think it's important to highlight that we have landed almost \$222 billion since this government took office, creating about 350,000 jobs in Ontario just through foreign direct

investment alone. That includes \$35 billion of investment in 2025 from 750 international companies, creating 64,000 good-paying jobs for the people of Ontario. That builds on another banner year that we had in 2024, when 409 international companies invested \$40 billion to create 24,711 jobs.

This is what we're talking about when we say how important it is to make sure that we have that connectivity, that we build that capacity, that we're ready for our economy to grow to meet those demands of the future.

We see this in every other area of our government. We're increasing transit capacity—the largest expansion of public transit anywhere in North America. We're putting forward over \$200 billion to build infrastructure across our province, to keep goods, services and people flowing throughout the province of Ontario—and further afield as well, throughout all of Canada, making sure that our goods can access those other markets as well.

Some of the recent wins that we can talk about—some of the members who are here today: Massilly, \$85 million, 50 new jobs in Brantford, fantastic; 60 jobs in Sudbury from Sandvik, an \$85-million investment; Adamsville—\$138 million to create 70 jobs in Hamilton. It is so important that we're able to continue this momentum, that we're able to connect with companies.

As we talked about two weeks ago in question period, I found myself answering a question also about planes—a little different. But the focus was that it's so important to be able to meet face to face. I don't know about everyone else here, but I found that in this world, where, yes, we're more connected than ever by the Internet—but it tends to mean a lot less. How many Zoom meetings do you have—which is just a meeting about meetings, “And we're going to talk about talking, and we're going to do this four more times over the next three months, and nothing is going to happen?”

Interjection.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Well, my friend from Essex says that that's a typical NDP move. I would tend to not disagree.

It seems productive, but then you look at the end result, and there's just nothing there.

When decision-makers can sit in the room together, that is when business gets done, that is when dollars move, and that is when investment is secured that bolsters our province, strengthens our job market, and ensures that people can go to work, make a great living, and be able to support their kids and put food on the table—and to pursue those things that they are passionate about as well in their spare time. I think that that truly is the dream of Ontario, one of the most beautiful places anywhere in the world.

We know that when you come to Ontario, no matter where you came from or who you are, you can be anything that you want to be in Ontario. This is a government that absolutely believes in that dream.

That's why it's so important that we continue to facilitate expansion across government services, whether it's Billy Bishop airport; whether it's the transit expansion, the infrastructure plan; whether it's the \$60 billion we're

putting towards hospitals—over 50 projects across Ontario.

Look at the expansion that we're doing in long-term care to make sure that people have the compassionate care that they need when they need it most. That really has been the ethos of our government. I'm very proud to stand behind it.

We talked about investment attraction. One of these sectors that we're really focused on is life sciences, because we know it's a huge driver. We've brought in over \$6 billion in the life sciences sector since we took office. It's the largest life sciences sector in Canada. About 60% of all Canadian life sciences revenue comes from Ontario, and 53% of all the life sciences workers are right here in Ontario. We now employ more than 74,000 people across 6,700 firms. We're looking to increase that by 2030—to bring over 85,000 people employed in our life sciences sector. Why is it an important sector for us? Well, it generates about \$80 billion a year in GDP and \$12 billion a year in exports. But we need to be able to connect with those companies, with those partners. Whether they're in the United States—in Boston, in San Diego, in San Francisco—whether they're further afield, in Germany, in France, in Asia, we need to make sure that we can get around the table and we can sell the vision of Ontario: the fact that we have one of the best health care systems anywhere in the world, one of the best education systems anywhere in the world, one of the most skilled workforces anywhere in the world.

1000

Interjections.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: I know the NDP doesn't like to focus on any of those things, because they're pretty positive. It's a pretty negative crowd over there.

Interjection.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: I can't tell what the member from Spadina–Fort York is saying, but I'll mention his name so I can read it in the Hansard later.

It's so easy to take a negative perspective. It doesn't require anything. It doesn't require any thought. It doesn't require any planning. All it takes is one word, and that word is “no.”

But what about dreaming bigger? What about taking a positive action for a positive future, to facilitate growth in our province? Well, that's a little harder, ladies and gentlemen, but that is the tack that we have taken on this side of the House.

So as they continue to say no, we continue to say, “Let's go. Let's build Ontario. Let's grow our businesses. Let's bring in investment. And let's not be put off by the naysayers who would be happy to see nothing happen.” We know that nothing happening is not a path to the future; it's a path to stagnation, and stagnation is decay.

We need to keep this province moving forward, and by facilitating that air connectivity, by bringing people in from the United States, bringing people in internationally, and allowing our business to access foreign markets, it can have tremendous impact.

I want to highlight some of the growth in trade that we've experienced. We know that we now need to turn away from the United States because of the unjustified actions that they've undertaken.

Let's take a look at some of the expansions that we've had. Two-way trade investment since 2018: Vietnam, up 288%; Brazil, 241%; Switzerland, 132%—who doesn't love their chocolates? United Kingdom, 194%—nearly doubling our trade with a partner that we've had since the inception of our nation; we have doubled it in the last eight years.

Those things matter, because one in five jobs in Ontario depends on trade. Ontario has established free market access to over 50 countries around the world, and those partnerships—you have to facilitate that. It's like any relationship: You have to get there; you have to meet with them; you have to spend the time. You have to build those relationships, and you can't do that without getting in the room together. It's so important. You think about the fact that Ontario operates a network of 15 trade and investment offices in the UK, France, India, Singapore, Japan, and many other countries around the world. At a time when we are facing pressures like we've never faced before, it is absolutely critical that we are able to strengthen those relationships, that we are able to work with our partners abroad and make sure that we are building a stronger economy, a more diversified economy—an economy that is less dependent on governments that no longer seem to be dependable. It is absolutely critical.

We started off with a bit of a story, and I'd like to tell another short one. A few months ago, when we were doing our SCOFEA meetings across the province to talk about the budget, we spoke to a few folks who were from the airport industry. They talked about the need for investment, and they talked about what it can mean when you invest in airports, you invest in that capacity, the economic growth. We were up in Pembroke—and I see the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is here today; a fantastic member, a great champion for that region. They call him “The Kid.” He's their gunslinger in Queen's Park. There was a gentleman there who worked in the airport sector, and he said, “A mile of tarmac and a mile of aggregate isn't the same everywhere.” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “If I build you a mile of highway, how far can you go?” I said, “Well, you can go a mile.” And he said, “If I build you a mile of runway, you can go anywhere in the world.”

That really is the message that we're sending here today. By expanding that runway, by expanding that airport, by facilitating that growth—it currently employs over 9,000 people, generates about \$900 million in GDP. We're talking about 2050, creating \$8.5 billion of GDP every single year. It is an incredible transformation that we are looking at. I think it's a great investment in Ontario. It is something that will bring about incredible returns, not only in productivity, but in capacity, in building community, in facilitating care and connecting with First Nations communities across Ontario. Ladies and gentlemen, the business case could not be stronger.

I am so excited to be speaking to this act today. I look forward to supporting it, and I hope members of the opposition will support it as well.

Just remember: It's easy to say no, but that doesn't make it the right thing to do. We can do better. We can do more. We can say yes, and we can continue to build Ontario.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: My question will be for the Minister of Transportation.

I want to thank you for your remarks this morning.

The government is expanding Pearson airport, to go from 47 million to 70 million passengers a year. And yet, the government wants to expand Billy Bishop, which is Canada's smallest airport—210 acres in the most congested part of the busiest city in Canada—that is already in violation of Transport Canada's safety standards, because it's too close to the high-rises on the waterfront and it's too close to the birds that are on the Toronto Islands, that put us at risk of bird strikes.

So my question is, why not just invest in Pearson? Why would you destroy the downtown waterfront and put the people on the waterfront, the 28 million visitors to the waterfront, and all of the passengers in those planes at risk by expanding Billy Bishop?

Mr. Ric Bresee: I thank the member opposite for the question.

As we look to the Billy Bishop airport, we know that, as has been spoken of today, world-class cities have major airports and have the smaller airports located very close to the downtown. This is an important economic driver for the entire province, for all of the economic activity that happens here in the GTHA. We need to continue to expand all of the transportation network options, including the ability to fly out of Billy Bishop.

We recognize that there are challenges. We recognize that there are things to consider. So we will work with the Toronto airport authority and we will work with the federal government to ensure that all of these considerations are taken into account and are managed as well as possible, as we move to improve the airport for all of this province.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I want to talk about the Minister of Transportation's comments about the great record of the Liberal government.

We built the Humber River regional hospital. We built the Niagara tunnel project. We expanded Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. We built the Toronto-York subway expansion. And of course, we actually built the UP Express that goes from Pearson to downtown Toronto.

Speaker, there are so many things wrong with this bill. Why does this government want to wreck the beautiful Toronto waterfront? I've had constituents email me about it. They don't want to ruin Little Norway Park, where

people like me played baseball when they were young and continue to play baseball.

And the minister didn't talk about the Premier's jet. It doesn't seem like a coincidence that this government wants to expand Billy Bishop airport, and then we find out that the Premier wants to land a jet there. So my question to the Minister of Transportation: Which came first, the jet or the airport?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: I appreciate the member's comments. She referenced the fact that there had been so much commentary about the Liberal record, and I was really impressed that she could name five things that they did over 15 years—an incredible amount of productivity. Can you imagine doing five things in 15 years?

We're building 50 hospital projects right now. We're building roads and highways and bridges right now. We're bringing jobs into Ontario right now—bringing over \$222 billion in investment since we first took office. I'm pretty sure they threw out \$220 billion-plus of investment when they were in office. That's the difference, when you focus on attracting things, when you focus on building Ontario, when you focus on strengthening our systems—as opposed to a Liberal government that is very proud of all five of the things that they did with their 15 years in power.

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

Hon. Graham McGregor: While we're talking about the Liberal record, we could also talk about the Peel Memorial Hospital, which they closed in 2007. I know it's something the members opposite are very proud of.

1010

My question is for the member for Bay of Quinte.

We're in an important moment in Ontario. We realize that we've got to diversify our trade. You listed off some of the statistics about UK, Switzerland, trading partners around the world, global allies that we are furthering our economic connection with. We know this is important. It's an important moment for Ontario, when hard-working folks need to know their job is going to be there, that they're going to be able to put food on the table and take care of their family.

How does tying in a world-class airport in downtown Toronto, the economic hub of the province, fit into that vision of diversifying our trade and building a future economy for not only today, but looking ahead 10, 20, 30, 50 years in the future, to make sure that our province continues to be economically strong?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the minister for the question. It's an incredibly important one, because we know that during this uncertain time, it is critical that we branch out, that we diversify, that we bring in new partners, that we bring in new investment, and that we set up new manufacturing facilities and new services throughout our province.

In my riding of Bay of Quinte, I had the pleasure of being with the Prince Edward County Chamber of Commerce the other day, and I got to talk to the small business owners about what it means to have more opportunities to send their products to different markets,

what it means to have more access to the inputs that they need from different sources so they have more price competitiveness, so that they can get lower prices so that they can make more money, which ultimately is great for our communities. In Bay of Quinte, over 50% of our economic output comes from manufacturing and logistics management. The more that we can bring in these new companies, bring in more opportunities, keep goods and services moving, and employ people in our region, it's only going to benefit all of us back in Bay of Quinte.

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: We all know that there's nothing so short-sighted as paving over Little Norway Park paradise to put up a parking lot for the expansion of Billy Bishop airport. This government knows that it makes no sense to have thunderous jets land and take off every two minutes, with carcinogenic fumes falling on 28 million tourists and 100,000 waterfront residents. It makes no sense to funnel 10 million passengers down a dead-end street in Toronto when Pearson is set to expand.

My question to the Minister of Transportation is this: Did this government take away the city of Toronto's negotiating role and island lands in order to sell out Torontonians and make the airport owners, J.P. Morgan, rich?

Mr. Ric Bresee: I really appreciate the question.

I will note, quite specifically, the proposed legislation does not authorize the immediate taking or use of city lands, including the parkland that you're referring to. Its intent is to enable the province to consider potential future ownership, informed by due diligence that will take place over the next nine to 12 months. At this stage, no decisions have been made regarding the use of city parkland. As part of this work, the Toronto Port Authority is exploring ways to protect or enhance public access to waterfront spaces, just like we've done along the waterfront in Toronto all along—also improving connectivity through that multi-modal terminal. It's incredibly important.

The member for the Bay of Quinte was talking about—we have a long list of projects that outstrips anything that the Liberals did in the previous government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): There's time for one more quick question and response.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: My question is to the Minister of Transportation.

Does your government actually believe in preserving and respecting our history? If so, why would the government propose paving over an important war memorial commemorating the Norwegians' efforts in World War II, in Little Norway Park?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the member from beautiful Beaches—East York for the question.

This is all about history. We talked, at the beginning of my presentation, about learning about the Billy Bishop airport and about having that history lesson about who Billy Bishop was: one of our greatest Canadians, and the top fighting ace not only for Canada, but throughout the entire British Empire, throughout the entire Common-

wealth. This airport that bears his name is set to expand, which is a fantastic thing, which will facilitate more storytelling about the great person that Billy Bishop was, what he meant to Canadian history, how he fought for our country, and the 72 victories that allowed us to not only win the First World War but also set up the training for all of those pilots in the Second World War, for which he was instrumental.

So if we want to do a history lesson, I would be happy to do that. We can all learn more about Billy Bishop together.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member for Sudbury on a point of order.

MPP Jamie West: I just want to correct my record. This morning, when I asked for a ruling on standing order number 55, I misspoke and said Bill 105—I actually misread; I meant to say Bill 104.

I'll provide a written copy for the table and for Hansard as well, to make sure I'm correct.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BRANDON MALCOLM

TYLER HARRISON

Hon. Steve Clark: I rise to recognize the heroic efforts of a Brockville Police Service officer.

But today, I also extend my deepest condolences to the family of Northumberland OPP sergeant Brandon Malcolm, who lost his life in the line of duty just one week ago. Sergeant Malcolm's death reminds all of us of the risks the brave men and women of Ontario's police forces—and all first responders—take every day they put on a uniform.

On April 23, Brockville police constable Tyler Harrison was on patrol when a member of the public alerted him to a structure fire involving two houses. Without hesitation, he bravely entered both burning residences to check if there was anyone inside. Upon entering the second residence, he found an occupant who had been sleeping and immediately got them out to safety. Both Constable Harrison and the resident were treated for smoke inhalation. Our outstanding Brockville Fire Department contained the blaze and, thankfully, there were no other injuries. But if not for Constable Harrison's heroic action, the blaze could have resulted in a tragedy. His bravery is a very powerful example of what our first responders do every single day: They run toward danger to keep us safe.

On behalf of our community and the riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, I thank Constable Harrison for his courage and for his service.

WORTH FIGHTING FOR CAMPAIGN

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today, I rise in solidarity with community support workers across Ontario and in support of the Worth Fighting For campaign. These workers are the backbone of vital services in developmental services, child welfare, mental health, addictions, community health care, and more. They support our children, families and the most vulnerable in our communities. Yet, for decades, these essential services have been chronically underfunded.

In 2024, the Financial Accountability Office estimated a \$3.7-billion shortfall in funding for programs under the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. Since 2018, funding has been cut by \$200 million, pushing many programs to the brink. We are now seeing layoffs, service reductions and growing wait-lists.

At the same time, these workers are amongst the lowest-paid in the public service and have been asked to do more with less. Many are working multiple jobs just to make ends meet. After the repeal of Bill 124, others in the public sector received retroactive compensation; these workers did not.

More than 70 workplaces are now bargaining, but the reality is clear: The province is the funder, and the province must act.

Workers are calling for a fair, retroactive wage increase of at least 6.5% and urgent funding to stabilize services.

Without immediate action, we risk program closures and reduced quality of care.

These workers, these services and the people of Ontario are worth fighting for, and we must act now.

ERIC ROHER

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I rise today to honour the life of Eric Roher, president of Holy Blossom Temple, a dedicated community leader and a dear friend.

Eric was a person who led with kindness, generosity and genuine care for others. He believed deeply in community and in the importance of showing up for people.

Through his leadership at Holy Blossom Temple, his involvement with our provincial Liberal association, and in the way he lived his life every day, Eric brought people together. He made people feel welcome, valued and supported.

Eric, along with his beautiful wife, Beth, opened his home and his heart to so many. He had a way of making everyone around him feel like they belonged. He believed in the good in people and carried that belief with him in absolutely everything that he did.

To me, Eric was not only a leader but a true friend. He was someone I could count on, someone who offered steady support and thoughtful advice, and someone who made a lasting impact on my life. I will miss him deeply.

1020

Eric leaves behind a family who loved him so much, and he was so devoted to his children and grandchildren.

Our thoughts are with them as they navigate this loss and carry forward his warmth, his values and his spirit.

He will be missed by me, by his loved ones, and by an entire community that is stronger because of him.

May his memory be a blessing.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: I rise today to highlight an important investment in the health and future of our communities here in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. Recently, alongside the Chatham–Kent Health Alliance Foundation, we announced a \$2.5-million capital planning grant for the Wallaceburg hospital redevelopment project. This investment represents an important step forward. It will support detailed planning and design work needed to bring this project closer to construction. Once complete, the redevelopment will deliver better, faster and more accessible health care right here at home.

I would like to thank the hospital team, the foundation, the SOS group, and all the local donors for their continued advocacy and dedication. Their commitment has been instrumental in reaching this milestone.

This is a meaningful step forward for Wallaceburg and the surrounding communities, and I am proud to support it.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Ms. Jessica Bell: On Friday, I attended an event hosted by the National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada to recognize journalists and their reporting around the world.

Rigorous, independent reporting by journalists dedicated to the truth is a cornerstone of a free and independent media, and a free and independent media is a cornerstone of good democracy.

I got insight into the state of reporting and journalism that night, and that snapshot was alarming. Last year, a record number of reporters and media workers were killed. Most of them were reporting in conflict zones: Gaza, Ukraine, Turkey, Iran, Sudan, Yemen.

The UN releases a world press freedom index every year. This index evaluates the freedom of 180 countries based on media independence, legislative protections, transparency, and the safety of journalists. You would expect Canada to rank very highly on this list, but in fact, Canada ranks as number 20. Quite frankly, I'm not surprised.

What we are seeing right now with this government's move to weaken freedom-of-information rules, what we're seeing with this government's move to consolidate power in the Premier's office, and what we're seeing with a government that's embroiled in scandal and under criminal investigation with the RCMP tells me that the need for a free and independent media has never been more important.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: I rise today to share positive news for families in Prince Edward county, Hastings county, and across the entire Bay of Quinte area.

When I speak with local leaders, mayors, council members and community partners, continued and expanded access to primary care providers is one of the issues raised most often. That is why our government is taking action.

Through a \$2.6-billion investment, nearly 6,000 more people in the Bay of Quinte region will be connected to a family doctor or primary care team. This builds on the outstanding work of the Prince Edward Family Health Team and the Hastings Prince Edward Ontario Health Team, who continue to provide exceptional community-based care.

By expanding team-based care—bringing together physicians, nurses, and allied health professionals—we are making it easier for patients and families to connect to care closer to home. This is part of our broader primary care action plan, which is already exceeding targets and is on track to connect every Ontarian to primary care by 2029.

Speaker, expanding access to primary care is one more way we are building a stronger, more connected health system for generations to come.

VISION HEALTH MONTH

Mr. Deepak Anand: About 80% of classroom learning is visual, making eye health essential to a child's development and academic success. Yet, in Ontario, early detection of vision problems remains low, with 7% of four- and five-year-olds receiving a comprehensive eye examination. When vision issues go undetected, children are more likely to struggle in school, affecting their learning, confidence and overall development.

In Ontario, eye exams, under the age of 19, are publicly funded through OHIP, meaning families do not have to pay out-of-pocket.

Organizations like the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, CNIB, along with Dr. Asha Seth, are supporting Ontarians by delivering technology training, advocacy, and programs that help people of all ages with vision loss live well and participate in their communities.

May is Vision Health Month. A reception will be held tomorrow morning, May 5, from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m., bringing partners together to improve awareness and access to eye care.

To all parents and caregivers: Let's take advantage of publicly funded eye exams and ensure every child receives regular check-ups.

Let's continue working together to ensure every child in Ontario has the support they need.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr. Ric Bresee: I'm proud to rise today, representing the people of Hastings-Lennox and Addington.

Speaker, as we know, on May 1, nominations opened for this fall's municipal elections. This milestone gives us a chance to reflect on the people who have stepped forward to serve their communities.

In my riding, I have the privilege of working with 18 lower-tier municipalities and one separated city. Across all of them, I have seen first-hand the dedication of local councillors. For most of them, this is not a full-time role; it's a commitment they take on because they care about their communities. They give their time and their energy to public service, and they work together to get things done. I want to sincerely thank each and every one of them, whether they choose to run again or not.

I also want to encourage more people to step forward to run for municipal office. When I first ran for council in the year 2000, I wanted to bring a different perspective—to represent young families like mine at the time. Over the years, I've seen how much stronger councils are when they include people from diverse backgrounds, experiences and walks of life. Better decisions are made when there are diverse voices at the table.

I especially want to encourage women to consider running. Women are at the heart of our communities yet too often feel that politics isn't for them; it is. Your leadership, your insight, and your perspectives are essential.

So to those who may not see themselves in local government, I say, your voice matters. This is your opportunity to step forward, to serve, and to help shape your community.

PEDIATRIC PALLIATIVE CARE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My sister Nancy Rose was born on May 4, a beautiful spring day just like today. She was a beautiful ray of sunshine, happy with everyone she met. But, sadly, we lost her at a very young age, from leukemia.

I introduced the Nancy Rose Act in this House—a bill with a simple but powerful goal: Every child, no matter where they live, should be able to access high-quality care close to home, and every family should be supported during such an emotionally difficult time. This House supported that unanimously at second reading, and my family was very, very grateful. Since that time, we have lost both our parents. They have left us, but the Shaw family continues to support and fight—that every family in Ontario should have access to this kind of support when they're going through the unthinkable.

I'm happy to say that in Hamilton we announced the building of Keaton's House, the Paul Paletta hospice, and that is in partnership with McMaster Children's Hospital. The goal is to make sure that in our community of Hamilton, any family that is going through this will be supported. As part of Keaton's House, we are planning to build and dedicate the Nancy Rose garden in memory of Nancy Rose. The idea is that this will be a peaceful place where families can share and build memories together and provide them the kind of respite and the kind of support that every family facing life-limiting and life-ending disease needs from our community.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I want to welcome a very special constituent today, born and raised in Don Valley West. He is here today on his 30th wedding anniversary. He's married to me.

1030

My wonderful husband, Dave, welcome to Queen's Park. Happy anniversary, and here's to 30 more wonderful years together.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to welcome, soon to be in the west gallery, Egyptian star actors Ehab Sobhy, Mina Samir, Farid Elnokrashy. They are here participating in a St. Mary's play next Saturday at the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga. Welcome to Canada.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to welcome Young Politicians of Canada, Newmarket division: Tima Karimi, Bavly Labib, Alex Kuchyna, Xavier Davis, and Samil Karaduman. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I'd like to introduce two people joining us from my riding of Burlington this morning: Bonnie Johnstone and Mary Chadder.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I'm pleased to welcome the 2026 cohort of the Ontario Parliamentary Friends of Tibet summer youth program. We have Kunsang Jampa, who is placed with the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, and we have Tenzin Kunsang Michele, placed in my office.

I want to also thank the members who are participating in this meaningful opportunity.

Welcome.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to wish a warm welcome to Ciara Holmes from Family Services Windsor-Essex as well as Windsor-Tecumseh residents Nora Rehner and Tom Boltik. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Parsa: On behalf of my amazing colleague from Richmond Hill, I'd like to introduce Farnaz Goortani, Lillia Kamran, Audrey Shum, Jeslyn Tan, Kathlyn Tan, Natania Hui, Steven Tan, and Janice Woo.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'd like to welcome innovative Iain McMullan, who used to be at Waterfront Toronto and is now innovating Science North. Welcome to your House.

Hon. Trevor Jones: I'd like to welcome the mayor of Leamington and warden of Essex county, Hilda MacDonald.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I would like to welcome 10 of our 13 Ontario Corps NGO partners who are visiting Queen's Park today, including Lori Gill from ATTCH Niagara.

Thank you for answering the call to protect Ontario, and welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): This morning, in the members' gallery, we are joined by Alexandra Delle Donne. She is a soprano vocalist and performer from the riding of Don Valley West, who will perform O Canada and God Save the King. Please stand and join her in the singing of our national and royal anthems.

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

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

BRANDON MALCOLM

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Labour on a point of order.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence for OPP Sergeant Brandon Malcolm, who tragically lost his life last week. He was a member of the Northumberland OPP detachment in my community, well-respected across our community and policing, and lived a life of public service. It was core to his very being.

A friend sent me a picture of Sergeant Malcolm and their son sitting on a motorcycle beside him. He was in the background speaking with families. That's the type of officer he was—dedicated to his community, a role model for so many young people across my community.

I think I speak on behalf of the Legislature in offering our profound condolences to Detachment Commander Mike Cavanagh and the entire OPP detachment team in Northumberland, along with Sergeant Brandon Malcolm's family. He will be so deeply missed.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Labour is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): It is now time for question period.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier.

Last week, the Premier didn't face the public or the media. But here's one of the things he did have time for: a pay-to-play event at a private, exclusive, members-only club.

Speaker, the future of our province should not be decided in the smoky backrooms of exclusive clubs. But that is the only thing that this government seems to know how to do.

Do the people of Ontario have to buy an Albany Club membership to hear from their Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Madam Speaker: We spend every single day, around the clock, promoting Ontario, promoting the economy that saw over \$222 billion of investment since we have been in office—over a million new jobs.

I always say the foundation of our health care sector, education, the infrastructure that we're spending \$236 billion on—building transit and roads and highways and schools and hospitals—is one thing: It's our economy.

As we continue to lower taxes by over \$12 billion each and every single year, the opposition continuously votes against giving the people of this province a tax break,

giving people and business tax breaks—which we did by 30% in our last piece of legislation.

I look forward to the opposition voting with us when it comes to reducing taxes and the burden off the backs of—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I want to tell you what I'm hearing from people out there. They are paying more every single day for everything. Life is just so much more expensive under this government.

While thousands of people are stuck getting health care in hallways and broom closets, while youth employment hit an all-time low this week and families have continued to struggle every single day, what did this Premier do? He jetted off again to another vanity project—this time, one that is all about him only.

I want to know from the Premier, do the people of Ontario and the media need to give the Premier an honorary degree for him to actually face them?

Hon. Doug Ford: I just want to inform the Leader of the Opposition that that's our number one trading partner jurisdiction anywhere in the world, with over \$51 billion of two-way trade, US dollars, with our greatest trading partner, and that's Michigan.

1040

Madam Speaker, what they may not know, because they've never been in business in their lives—you have to build relationships. You have to build relationships with your largest trading partner, as well as diversifying around the world. Myself and the Minister of Economic Development sat down with 15 countries that had a total of \$38 trillion of their GDP, compared to the US's \$32 trillion. Our message was, when we diversify our trade, every single country around that table is better off. And we've seen these trade numbers jump up, over and over, to the point of over 200% in some countries, 150% in others—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, the people of Ontario cannot afford their groceries, let alone gas, and yet this Premier is jetting off to private clubs to pick up honorary degrees.

Speaker, you would have thought that this Premier would have learned his lesson when he got caught with his hand so deep in the taxpayers' pockets, buying himself a private luxury jet, but instead, he went into hiding. He went into hiding, and then he showed up in the backrooms of a private, exclusive, members-only club.

What is it going to take for the Premier to stop with the distractions and start doing his job?

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

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Last year, 750 companies invested \$35 billion here into Ontario. Those companies alone hired 64,000 people. That includes:

—\$1 billion in the agri-food sector—from Lee Li, \$548 million in Mississauga, 275 new jobs;

—\$6 billion in the tech sector;

—at Siemens in Oakville, 90 new jobs;

—\$2 billion in manufacturing;

—Empack Spraytech, an aerosol manufacturer, \$50 million, 150 new jobs.

Speaker, this is what's happening. This is our Premier's response to President Trump and the disruption that he has caused all around the world. We're standing tall for the province of Ontario, standing up for the people of Ontario, creating jobs, bringing revenue in. That's what's happening—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, the last time we were in this chamber, the government passed legislation to gut Ontario's transparency laws. They overhauled FOI laws to protect the Premier's texts, but it turns out it was about way more than that. They have also cut off access to hundreds of existing FOI applications, and they have closed the vault on decades of government records.

So my question to the Premier is: Is he committed today to honouring all outstanding FOI applications?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: It's great to be back here after a constituency week.

Speaker, we were very clear. In fact, we've been very open. On March 13, almost two months ago, we had a very public press release that I actually did right here in Queen's Park, highlighting what we were going to be doing in the upcoming budget, which was focusing legislation on privacy, on the freedom of information, aligning it with almost every other province in Canada—including your NDP friends in Manitoba, your NDP friends in British Columbia, and other political parties, including the federal government, the cousins of the third party over here—aligning the legislation, very, very similar legislation, to ensure that candid discussions are still held in private but all government decisions are fully transparent. Nothing changes.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, that is not what the freedom-of-information commissioner said. She said that they are undermining our fundamental rights, actually.

Last week, the Trillium was set to receive over 200 records from FOI. It was an FOI request. It included records of meetings that were surrounding the government's handling of the greenbelt scandals. They cleared all the barriers, they paid their fees, and the records were approved to be released. But guess what happened? This government rushed to pass that FOI law in the middle of the night, and voila, those records are never going to see the light of day.

Did this government pass those FOI changes to stop certain records, certain pieces of evidence, from seeing the light of day?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Again, the legislation that we were actually modifying was almost 40 years old. It

was written in 1988. At that time, as I'm sure everybody knows here, there was no cloud computing. There was no AI. There were no cellphones, like we have today.

The world has changed and evolved. And with that, we needed to update our privacy legislation here in the province of Ontario, which we did. We did it with a full public press conference on March 13. It was in the budget. It was debated for hours here in the House. Everybody had the opportunity to discuss it. It was voted on, and we supported it.

And, Speaker, what I might also add to that: With this budget that they voted against, they voted against capping ticket resale values for consumers in the province of Ontario. They voted against small business taxes. That's what the opposition voted against in this budget.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: One thing about that was true, and that is that, for many, many years, every government of every political stripe was quite happy to be transparent, to share government records, but not this government. And I will say, I think it all began with the Premier wanting to keep his records away from the court—and that was bad enough. Two court cases were under way about this government's activities: one about the greenbelt, concerning Ryan Amato, and one about the Premier's phone records. Now that this bill has passed, both of those court cases have collapsed. Coincidence?

Speaker, no government should be passing laws to facilitate cover-ups, and yet here we are.

To the Premier: Did the Premier direct his government to make these FOI changes to collapse the court cases and cover his behind?

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

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, what we can say is that Donald Trump's tariffs have put a real chill on our business. In reaction, we are seeing companies that are pivoting and reshoring.

In our Ontario Together Trade Fund, we've seen \$150 million put out for these companies; 73 Ontario companies have invested \$500 million and created over 7,500 jobs, just in reaction to President Trump's tariffs. When you think about the investments that these companies are making through the Ontario Together Trade Fund—it's a program that the NDP voted against. They are absolutely no part of the solution. They are part of the problem.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier.

It's good to be back, so let's pick up where we left off. The Premier bought himself a luxury private jet, even though he already had access to a jet. In the same week, the Premier gutted freedom-of-information laws in this province just because he doesn't want anyone to have access to his cellphone records, especially for that week when he cracked open the greenbelt.

So, after eight long years, what is so bad in the Premier's cellphone that he has to break, gut freedom-of-information laws?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: If I may, Madam Speaker, referring back to a question from the Leader of the Opposition, who mentioned that the Premier is in hiding—I don't know, Premier, maybe you are not very good at hide-and-seek, because you are right here, answering questions in front of everybody.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I remind the minister that we do not mention whether members are in the chamber or not.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Do you know what this Premier is doing? This Premier continues to criss-cross Ontario and parts beyond to boost the economy here in Ontario. That's what this Premier is doing.

This Premier is fighting for every single job in all of Ontario. And that's what everyone in this House should be doing—not spending time talking about this, that or the other thing—putting their shoulder back to getting good jobs in this province.

Madam Speaker, do you know what they could do? The defence bank has been awarded to Canada. Will they join us in supporting Toronto as the host of the—

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

1050

Mr. John Fraser: The finance minister and I agree; it's a real treat to see the Premier.

Speaker, now that freedom-of-information laws have been gutted, we may never know the details of the Premier's luxury jet purchase, like how it was procured, how it was modified to the Premier's specifications or preferences, where the idea even came from. Actually, we know why that happened. Senior Tories told us that all of it came straight from the Premier—the luxury private jet and the gutting of freedom-of-information laws.

Premier, the people of Ontario deserve to know why you bought a luxury private jet when you already had access to one.

This afternoon, Premier, you will have the opportunity to reverse the gutting of freedom-of-information laws. Will you take it?

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

I call upon the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: The member opposite knows full well that the legislation that we brought here and happily passed a little under two weeks ago—the budget—brings our policy of freedom-of-information and privacy legislation in line with his federal cousins, the Liberal Party. So I urge him to go and try to get FOI requests from Prime Minister Carney or other federal ministers, your federal Liberal cousins in Ottawa.

Having said that, what I can tell the House is that when we took office in 2018, the first thing we saw were that the books were cooked.

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Withdraw.

The books had a much larger deficit than was originally anticipated, shall I say.

Having said that, we brought in, under the Minister of Finance, the fiscal transparency law, which ensures that our ministers deliver budgets on time or are penalized. So we have full transparency, full support of the FAO and the Auditor General, and a clean showing of the books every single year.

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

Mr. John Fraser: After eight long years, this Premier and this Conservative government are tired, out of touch and losing it, so they're gutting our freedom-of-information laws to hide the \$8.3-billion greenbelt scandal—they're hiding the Skills Development Fund and money for strip club owners, dentists and wealthy, well-connected insiders.

The Premier is running this province like he's Nucky Thompson from Boardwalk Empire. Should we call it "Ford-walk Empire"?

Speaker, one more time: The Premier will have the opportunity to reverse the freedom-of-information changes that he made. Will he take it this afternoon?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, let me set the context. This Premier, this government are fighting for every single job at a time when our economy is being challenged with tariffs and the global conflict in the world.

Just last week, this Minister of Economic Development, this Premier and the team landed a General Motors announcement—\$690 million for the hard-working people in St. Catharines.

That is what leadership is about. That is what the people of Ontario care about. They care about putting food on the table. They care about paying the rent or the mortgage. They care about having a good job. And that is what this government is focused on.

We're going to continue to work to support companies like GM and great jobs—like St. Catharines.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: This is the same government that bought a luxury private jet while 700,000 people are out of work and people can't afford groceries and gas. I'm not going to forget that.

I do want to congratulate the Premier for getting an honorary degree from Saginaw Valley State University in Michigan.

It's ironic that the Premier is the one who gutted student assistance and OSAP in this province. It's ironic that he drove families further and students further into debt and at

the same time bought himself a luxury private jet on the taxpayer dime. It's ironic that this Premier gets a degree for free.

Speaker, my question is simple: Did the Premier use the OPP jet to pick up his degree?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: The other party, the third party, ignored the Auditor General when they changed the grant-to-loan ratio. The Auditor General made it very clear that it was unsustainable, but a desperate Liberal government trying to cling to power changed it without regard to what the Auditor General recommended.

Speaker, we have now aligned our grant-to-loan ratio in line with the rest of the jurisdictions across Canada—including the NDP in Manitoba, the NDP in BC, as well as the federal Liberal government. We're continually in line with the rest of the jurisdictions.

We're ensuring that there's sustainability for OSAP, not just for today's students, but for the next generation of students behind them, as well.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It must have been difficult for the Premier to be roughing it on the OPP jet.

Here's the thing: The Premier didn't need to buy another luxury jet. He has a jet at his disposal in the province—he used it on the weekend—but despite this, he bought himself a luxury private jet. Now he wants his own airport: Billy Bishop. Wow, big spender.

After eight long years, this Premier is out of touch, and he's losing it.

Why did the Premier buy a second luxury private jet when he already had one and families are struggling?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We're at a point where political leaders, irrespective of stripes, across this nation are talking about nation-building projects. They're talking about making Canada—led by Premier Ford in Ontario—more self-reliant, more resilient against the threat of tariffs south of the border, to make our economy more competitive.

It is no surprise that the opposition is pushing back against a generational investment into Billy Bishop—one that will contribute over \$100 billion of an economic output for the city of Toronto. This project is too important for not only Toronto, but for Ontario and for Canada.

We need to build these infrastructure projects to remain competitive globally. We need to continue attracting business leaders. We need to continue attracting even more tourism. And we do that by building world-class infrastructure, like we have been doing since 2018.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Just to recap this morning: We have luxury private jets; we actually have private events at exclusive clubs; seizing an airport; carving up the waterfront; luxury spas; money to strip club owners; booze and

cannabis in every corner of this province; and gambling out of control.

The Premier is building himself quite the legacy in this province. Like I said earlier, it's Ford-walk Empire.

Did the Premier lose his way before or after he bought the luxury private jet?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, do you know who lost their way? Fifteen years of mismanagement of the economy—that's when they lost their way.

And let me tell you, since we came into power—over a million jobs created in this province, an economy closing in on \$1.3 trillion.

I was just down in New York talking to investors in two-way trade. And do you know what one investor told me in midtown? That their building was powered with Ontario electricity.

We are becoming an energy superpower. Why don't you join us, the member from the independent party?

Some 150,000 new construction jobs, \$800 billion of GDP—that's what this government is bringing to the table for the people of Ontario.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

MPP Robin Lennox: "Fire people, close beds." That's all this Conservative government has to say to our struggling hospitals. And yet, at last week's Ontario Hospital Association conference, the Minister of Health had the audacity to say that she was frustrated with hospital leaders for their lack of gratitude.

The Ontario NDP has a plan to work with health workers to fix our hospitals and to ensure that every patient gets care when and where they need it.

My question is for the Premier. Will you commit to working with us and hospital workers to fix our hospitals without firing people or closing beds?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we've seen a 50% increase in hospital base budget operating dollars.

What I was talking about with the OHA leadership was that when we make investments in primary care, when we make investments in home and community care, when we make investments in home care, in hospice care, in community paramedicine, in mobile crisis intervention teams—all money that is invested outside of our hospital system—we are absolutely seeing the pressure taken off that hospital system.

1100

My point continues to be: We are looking at health care holistically, whether it is training new nurses and physicians, whether it is investing in capital and, yes, whether it is investing in outside-of-hospital care, as well as, of course, a 50% increase to their hospital operating budgets.

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

MPP Robin Lennox: Speaker, that answer just shows how out of touch this government is with the reality of Ontario health care.

Just today, it was announced that emergency departments in Thessalon and Richards Landing will again be closing. God forbid any of the residents in those communities have a heart attack in the next day or two, because they're going to be told to keep on driving. Yet the Minister of Health feels that this government isn't getting enough thanks?

The Ontario NDP has a strategy for our northern hospitals, including a northern command centre to ensure that our rural emergency departments stay open.

My question is for the Premier. Will you work with us and hospital workers on a real strategy to keep our hospitals running and our rural emergency departments open?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I noticed that the member opposite conveniently forgets that there are some important data points that we shared last week and will continue to talk about—a lowest in 10 years of alternative-level-of-care beds in the province of Ontario. Why does that matter to hospitals and hospital CEOs? Because when they are able to free up alternative-level-of-care beds, it means that people who are waiting for that acute service are getting it in our hospitals. So I thank the hospital CEOs who are part of the solution of bringing us our lowest ALCs in 10 years.

Across Ontario, 2.4 million people have now used primary care and our pharmacies for our scope-of-practice increase. Again, why does that matter to hospitals? Because instead of having to go into an emergency department, there are 19 minor ailments that 2.4 million people—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Toronto–St. Paul's.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Ontarians are seeing a clear pattern from this government: When scandals surface, the response isn't transparency; it is to change the rules. We saw it in the greenbelt scandal, where freedom of information helped expose what was really going on behind closed doors. Now, instead of fixing a broken system or improving access, this government has weakened freedom-of-information laws. That is the very tool that holds them accountable. Nobody asked for this, except for the Premier and his cabinet.

Speaker, to the Premier: Is this about making sure scandals—future, present and past—never come to light?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: The member, I believe, was a member of the media before, if I'm not mistaken. She should know full well that right across Canada the FOI and privacy laws are in line with what Ontario is now doing. It is not different. That includes Liberal New Brunswick and the Liberal federal government. There are no changes. There is very little differentiation. We are now in line with those jurisdictions.

What I do want to highlight is that the member opposite voted against the budget. I want that on the record. It needs to be said. In this budget that we just passed, we are supporting families being able to go to cultural events and sporting events for the first time in Ontario's history with no increases above face value; we are supporting small businesses with a 30% tax reduction—and more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Toronto–St. Paul's.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: He should understand that burying FOI legislation or regulation within the budget was something that was absolutely unacceptable. That's why we have a motion today to vote on that again and see how you vote on FOI.

I'm going to say this plainly: This legislation, the FOI legislation, was written in response to political damage, not in the public interest.

The Premier's approach is becoming clear: When the facts become inconvenient, you make them harder to find.

If the Premier has nothing to hide, why is he making it easier for his government to say no to the public? And will he commit, this afternoon, to pulling back these changes and strengthening, not weakening, Ontarians' right to know?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: What I can say with absolute confidence is that we have a Premier who is the most accessible Premier of any province—in fact, any political leader in Canada. I encourage the members opposite to learn from him and maybe communicate and talk to people, because what people want in this province right now—they want jobs.

They want health care. We have a \$100-billion investment, the largest ever in health care in our history.

We're investing in colleges and universities. That is a major part of the budget.

We're supporting small businesses.

And we know we have a housing issue in this province. A 13% HST cut on new builds for new houses is going to spur new homes for the longest time in the province's history.

That's what the people of Ontario care about.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

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

Across our province, communities are facing the impacts of President Trump's tariffs. From disruptions to supply chains to uncertainty around production, job creators and workers are doing everything they can to adapt.

From day one, our Premier has led the charge to ensure Ontario workers and job creators have the support they need. Thankfully, our government has a plan. Whether it is working to reshore supply chains or advancing our Buy Ontario Act, we are taking action to strengthen resilience to protect Ontario.

Can the minister tell us more about our government's plan to protect Ontario workers and job creators amid these challenging times?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Our government is helping communities all across Ontario find new opportunities and ways to diversify their own communities' trade.

Just last week, we were in Sault Ste. Marie, where we announced \$500,000 through the Trade-Impacted Communities Program to support Sault Ste. Marie in developing a foreign direct investment strategy. This investment will help the community diversify away from the US and position them to compete and to win in global markets.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we're also working with companies like Algoma as they look to make structural beams for bridges and plate steel for the defence sector.

This is all new for Ontario.

Through investments like these, we're making sure that this community of Sault Ste. Marie and communities all around the province have the tools they need to attract investment and create good-paying jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the minister for that response.

When President Trump decided to impose tariffs, it disrupted decades of economic co-operation and shared prosperity for communities on both sides of the border.

Whether it is auto workers in Windsor, steelworkers in the Soo, or other trade-impacted workers in communities across Ontario, our government is taking transformative action to protect Ontario jobs and support communities. With our historic third mandate, the people of Ontario trusted us to deliver a plan, and that is exactly what we're doing.

Tough times are a test time.

So can the minister tell the House about more actions this government is taking to protect Ontario workers, job creators and communities from the impact of these tariffs?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Our \$150-million Ontario Together Trade Fund is helping businesses reshore and move their supply chains home and diversify their markets. Through the OTTF, 73 companies have committed \$500 million in investment, and they themselves have created 7,500 jobs in just the last few months.

That includes a \$7.8-million investment from Central Stampings to increase auto parts production, creating 118 jobs.

Stratus Plastics in Windsor is investing \$8.3 million to build a new facility that reshores production from the US, China and Europe—47 jobs.

Dimachem: an \$11.6-million investment to build a new blending and packaging facility, and expanding their exports to Europe—70 jobs.

1110

This is how you protect Ontario—through our Ontario Together Trade Fund program.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Attorney General.

In 2019, former Kitchener neurologist Jeffrey Sloka was stripped of his medical licence after facing 76 sexual assault allegations. Forty-eight charges went to court. All victims were former patients, ages 17 to 51.

Last Friday, he was acquitted on all charges. Justice Parry claimed all 48 female complainants were “unreliable.” Some testimony he called “deliberately dishonest.”

This marks yet another sexual assault case where survivors were vilified, humiliated and discredited. This case took five years to get through the court system, and no justice was found.

Minister, as Sexual Violence Prevention Month begins, can you tell survivors why they should have any confidence in Ontario’s justice system?

Hon. Doug Downey: Let me be clear: Our government and the people of Ontario have zero tolerance for sexual violence. No one should endure the lasting effects of these horrific crimes.

We are standing with victims. We are standing with victims by providing services. We are ensuring they have access to independent legal advice, so they understand their rights, they can make informed decisions and they can navigate the system. At the same time, we’re offering trauma-informed programs to make sure that individuals who need access to justice and need supports will have them. Victims and their families and their communities are not expected to navigate the system alone. Any suggestion that the legal support and health services are unavailable is simply not true—and telling them they are is dangerous.

We will always work to ensure that survivors are heard and supported, and that cases are taken seriously and prosecuted vigorously.

While the opposition is trolling victims, we are taking action. I will speak to that in the supplementary.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I cannot believe that the Attorney General just said that.

A survivor disclosed, “The way he was looking at me—it wasn’t right. But I pushed that down as much as I could ... I’m 18 years old. What do I know? There’s this big, important doctor who’s telling me that this is necessary.” She was called “unreliable.”

Survivors who have the courage to come forward are met with a so-called criminal justice system that is painfully slow, hostile, retraumatizing and dehumanizing.

To the survivors who are watching—I want them to know that we believe you.

On behalf of them, I ask the Attorney General for the province of Ontario: Do you acknowledge that this case highlights broader systemic barriers, and will you pass Lydia’s Law to ensure that Ontario’s justice system actually delivers justice?

Hon. Doug Downey: While we are standing up and supporting victims in several ways, the opposition has

supported none of them. When we added 52 new judges to a system of 300, they voted against it. When we added 700 full-time staff—prosecutors, victim service workers, and otherwise—they voted against it. When we invested \$2.3 million in independent legal advice, they voted against it. Madam Speaker, \$5.6 million for children victim witness programs—they voted against it. They are resisting at every single turn—including \$98 million to deliver 85 new gender-based violence prevention courses. Not only that, when it comes to even just talking, which is what they are doing—they rejected the tabled report from the great member from Kitchener South–Hespeler. There were 1,000 pages on intimate partner violence. They turned their backs on that.

We will get the job done.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Bill 110 announced that the province will confiscate city land—no consultation with municipal leaders or residents, no rational reason for this draconian decision, and no real understanding of the complexities of this proposal. A parcel of this land the Premier wants to seize is Little Norway Park. The park commemorates the Norwegian Air Force training base which trained thousands of pilots to fight with Allied forces against Nazi Germany, as well as the tens of thousands of heroic people who lost their lives fighting for our freedom. It boasts a memorial stone as a permanent monument to the sacrifice. And the site has hosted both Crown Prince Harald and King Olav V of Norway. Yet, this government flippantly proposes to bulldoze over this important piece of World War II history.

My question to the Premier: Will you explain to Ontarians why you want to desecrate a significant war memorial?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Speaker, Little Norway Park will continue to remain a park, as I have said since last week.

What we know is that the status quo just won’t work. The opposition doesn’t want to build anything in this province. When we look at this country and the leaders in this country and what Premier Ford has brought to Ontario—it is building generational assets that, from a transportation perspective, those living in this province can rely on for generations to come.

That is exactly what we are doing with Billy Bishop. This airport currently supports over 4,900 people—4,900 people go home with a paycheque, relying on this airport. We want to continue to expand on that because Toronto is a world-class city.

If you look at other jurisdictions, like New York, they’ve got multiple airports, from LaGuardia to JFK; if you look at Chicago—Midway or O’Hare.

We need to continue to position Ontario and Toronto as a global leader for businesses and attracting jobs. That’s exactly what we’re doing with this investment.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: This government usually respects memorials. In fact, the Premier issued a stern warning against vandalizing statues at Queen's Park, cautioning, "Whatever you want to do ... do not vandalize those statues. They're historic ... you're going to get charged."

So you can imagine the shock to everyone, especially the Norwegian community in Ontario, when this government had the utter audacity of introducing Bill 110, with its land grab of Little Norway Park.

Maybe my colleagues on the other side of the chamber need to brush up on their history, to comprehend that Little Norway Park is an important tribute to the courageous men and women who put their lives at risk in World War II—most especially the Norwegian pilots who trained there.

My question to the Premier: Will you be eating your own words about vandalizing historical monuments, with your outrageous plan to destroy Little Norway Park?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Premier of Ontario.

Hon. Doug Ford: Oh, Madam Speaker. If it was up to that member, she would close the airport. That's the rationale down at city hall. They wanted to close the airport and turn it into a park.

We aren't touching that other park anyway—just to go on record.

What we are doing is creating an economic driver for not just our city, our province, but anyone who wants to fly here to Toronto—maybe for a convention or maybe even investment. Investing in our province is going to create 27,000 jobs. It's going to be more convenient for everyone downtown, including the member's riding. I guarantee you that people from her riding will go there to hop on a flight to go somewhere, maybe on vacation or maybe on business. It's an economic driver. That's what our focus is.

As they want to kill everything and turn everything into a cow pasture and build absolutely nothing—I'm used to the member from down at city hall. Build nothing, build nowhere—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

MPP Bill Rosenberg: My question is to the Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth.

At a time when our economy faces real threats from US tariffs, it has never been more important for Ontario to take decisive action to protect jobs, communities and our economic future.

Northern Ontario is not only home to some of the most remarkable landscapes in our province, but it's also rich in the natural resources that are essential to securing Ontario's long-term success.

We know that developing and investing in our resource sectors is vital to the prosperity of the north and a key driver of Ontario's economic strength and resilience.

1120

Can the minister tell the House what our government is doing to support northern communities and ensure they benefit from responsible resource development?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you for the question from our member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Northern Ontario's economy is booming, and it's booming because of our policies—whether it be tile drainage, critical minerals or, in fact, the junior exploration program. But for our communities to thrive and to participate in this boom, they need infrastructure.

That's why I was very proud, at the recent NOMA conference, to announce that the NORDS Fund had been renewed and, more than that, had been made an ongoing program for the government. The \$15-million annual fund is available to 144 municipalities.

Since its establishment in 2021, the NORDS Fund has invested \$75 million in local infrastructure. And the president of NOMA has said NORDS is "helping to unlock local economic opportunities, strengthen infrastructure, and support sustainable growth across the north."

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

MPP Bill Rosenberg: Thank you to the minister for that response.

It's encouraging to see meaningful investments that recognize the unique challenges facing northern communities and support their long-term prosperity.

For far too long, under the previous Liberal government, northern communities were left without the tools they needed to fully participate in economic opportunity.

Our government is taking a different approach. We are continuing to invest and strengthen the resource sectors that drive the north and help protect our province against global economic uncertainty.

At the same time, we know that municipalities must have the infrastructure capacity to support development responsibly and sustainably.

Through you, Speaker: Can the minister further explain how the NORDS Fund is helping municipalities address local infrastructure challenges and manage economic growth responsibly now and in the future?

Hon. George Pirie: Speaker, the member is right that unlike previous governments, our government understands the unique needs of northern Ontario communities.

As the mayor of Iroquois Falls has noted, programs like NORDS recognize the unique challenges faced by northern communities and provide the flexibility needed to respond to local priorities. That flexibility is reflected in the wide range of projects the fund supports, from more than \$150,000 to help Greenstone rehabilitate its main road, to over \$200,000 supporting critical water treatment upgrades in Kirkland Lake. Reflecting the unique needs of the north, funding can be stacked across multiple years, which the president of FONOM has said "allows municipalities to move forward with larger infrastructure projects that would otherwise be out of reach."

We are proud to invest in these communities because, for our government, northern Ontario isn't an afterthought; it's a priority.

NORTHERN AIRPORTS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: ᑦᑦᑦ, Speaker. ᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ

Airport conditions in northern First Nations are unacceptable. Actually, they're just gravel runways, 3,500 feet long each. Runways and terminals need upgrades. There are staff shortages. Safety is a big concern at these airports. But here in Toronto, the Premier's priority is buying a jet that can't land at any of them.

To the Premier: When will this government start treating northern remote airports as critical infrastructure?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We will continue to work with that member as well as other members across the north to ensure that we improve upon access to those airports and continue to develop more of that infrastructure.

As that member knows, we have a significant amount of investment into the Ring of Fire and the communities surrounding. We're going to work with each and every single one of those to ensure we build out that infrastructure.

We'll also work with our federal partners on any remote airports, or airports in general, as they are partners in all of those projects with this province.

We are going to continue to build a transportation network across this province that supports growth, that supports opportunities for those in the north and rural communities, and we'll continue to work with the member to do so.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I invite this Minister of Transportation to come and land in one of the remote airports. I say that because airports are lifelines for fly-in First Nations in the north. Most of the year, the only way to travel for medical appointments, work, to visit family is by air. We know that.

And the flights are too expensive. Today, I checked on a flight from Big Trout Lake: A one-way ticket from Kitchenuhmaykoosib to Thunder Bay today costs \$1,800—one-way.

So instead of focusing on Billy Bishop airport, will the Premier and this transportation minister invest in making northern Ontario's air transportation affordable?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: In fact, that member will know that access to northern Ontario and northern communities is going to be enabled under the modernization of Billy Bishop, even today.

In fact, last week, when I was in Thunder Bay for NOMA, I met with many of the municipal leaders, who were very excited about the expansion of Billy Bishop because of the access it provides to the northern commu-

ities that are often not serviced directly or indirectly through our larger airports in this province.

As we build out this plan to support communities in the north, to provide air passengers with more options or cheaper options because of more competition in the market, the north will be a key part of that. We will work with that member and others to ensure that we provide that access for air transport across this province and across northern Ontario.

GOVERNMENT JET

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: This government's entire cabinet decided that it was a good idea to buy the Premier a private luxury jet when there are many, many people in Ontario struggling just to put food on the table.

A \$29-million luxury jet, presumably to go along with the Premier's plan to confiscate Toronto's waterfront—at what cost? Extend the runway at Billy Bishop—at what cost? Build the luxury mega spa at Ontario Place, which we already know is going to cost taxpayers at least a billion dollars—it just proves how out of touch they all are. What's next? A casino?

In the same vein, I know that aviation is expensive. So how much are taxpayers on the hook for the purchase, temporary storage and sale of this \$29-million luxury jet?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: We've been clear about that and answered that question many times.

But do you know what, Madam Speaker? The member opposite has raised the issue of affordability.

Can we go back in time? When we cut the gas tax in 2022, did we get support from the member opposite?

Interjections: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: And when we renewed that and made it permanent, did we get support from the member opposite?

Interjections: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, \$12 billion of measures in the recent budget that was passed—did they support that budget?

Interjections: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: No, they did not.

Madam Speaker, we are putting forward plans and a vision for Ontario to create the conditions for economic growth, economic prosperity, good-paying jobs—whether it's in energy, defence, critical minerals, infrastructure, interprovincial free trade, faster permitting, cutting red tape. That's what a government does for the people of Ontario.

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

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I don't know what you're doing, but whatever you're doing, it's not working.

1130

The Premier gathered his cabinet around the table, and they said, "Hey, I know what this province needs. It needs a private luxury jet for the Premier." And guess what? They all agreed. Every minister said yes. Not one minister

stood up and said, “I’m not sure this is the most important thing the Ontarians need right now”—not the finance minister, not the President of the Treasury Board, not the minister who failed to answer this question. Nobody said, “Hey, wait. Maybe we should help the people who are struggling with an extreme affordability crisis here in Ontario right now.”

So the question is, if the luxury jet was so important and unanimously agreed to by the cabinet, why wasn’t there a \$29-million line item in the budget? And where will all the costs related to this luxury jet purchase be—

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: When that member opposite had the opportunity to vote for tax cuts in the budget, to help the people of Ontario, she and her party and the independent party did not support tax cuts—more money back in the pockets of families and individuals, to businesses.

As we mentioned earlier, the small business tax cut, a 30% tax cut—did they vote for it? Yes or no?

Interjections: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: How about an HST tax cut to make housing more affordable for people who dream of home ownership? Yes or no?

Interjections: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: And \$12 billion of measures for affordability—did she vote for it? Yes or no?

Interjections: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, I rest my case.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.

This is an uncertain time for our food producers. Trade disruptions have created significant risks to the long-term stability of our agri-food sector. Farmers are heading into planting season with serious concerns about what lies ahead, before they can even get the crops in the ground.

Our government was elected to protect our farmers during these uncertain times. I know the minister has taken steps, through the introduction of recent legislation, to address these challenges.

Speaker, can the minister please tell this House what specific measures this legislation includes to protect our farmers?

Hon. Trevor Jones: Thank you to our farmers. We listened to our farmers, and we’re taking action. We listened to that honourable member there—our former Minister of Agriculture—as well.

We’re protecting farmland by restricting foreign ownership and strengthening food independence to the north by unlocking the Clay Belt and beyond to our farmers. These changes ensure farmland is not treated like some line item on a foreign company’s balance sheet, but producing food for Ontario by Ontario. We were elected to protect our food supply and to protect our farmers.

Protecting Ontario’s Food Independence Act takes us a step further—because food security is deemed national security. We hope the opposition will support this very important bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Member for Oxford.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you to the minister for the encouraging update. It’s great to hear that we are taking the necessary steps to ensure Ontario’s food supply remains independent and strong.

People in my community have welcomed the proposed changes to foreign farmland ownership and the development of the Clay Belt. However, farmers still have questions regarding other changes proposed in the legislation. With the agriculture sector encompassing over 200 commodities, producers across the industry are wondering how this bill will affect them.

Can the minister elaborate how Protecting Ontario’s Food Independence Act will protect and support these diverse sectors of agriculture?

Hon. Trevor Jones: I’ve spent the last year working closely with farmers and food producers, and now we’re taking action. We’re taking action in one of the most comprehensive agricultural bills in the history of our province. It acts on the needs of diverse stakeholders—the people who put food on our tables, the trusted food that’s relied upon around the world. We’re modernizing food safety for milk products. In the face of Trump’s attacks on supply management, we’re strengthening it by closing an important loophole used to circumvent that very system. We’re ensuring the long-term success of our food terminal by strengthening governance and supporting infrastructure investments.

The men and women who work every day to feed our province and feed the world—we’re supporting them, listening to them, and taking action.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Recently, I attended a town hall hosted by the Ontario NDP in Scarborough. There, I met struggling families left behind by this government, and one story in particular stood out for me.

Ingrid is a hard-working single mom relying on food banks to get by. Her son, David, recently graduated from university almost a year ago. Since then, he has been applying for job after job, hundreds of them, without a single interview calling him back. Her son desperately needs a job, but with each day passing without any employment prospects, he is slipping into a depression.

Will the Premier stand up today and promise David a plan that will get him working by this summer?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I think, as the member opposite knows, that this government is very focused on creating the conditions for job growth in this province. We are not immune to global forces at play here, whether it’s tariff challenges or a global conflict in the Middle East, and that’s why we moved early.

That's why we moved early on a host of measures—not only on the gas tax, which is putting more money back in the pockets of people who have to travel, but also on the transit system, where we put the integrated One Fare, saving \$1,600 for people who use the transit system. And why do we stop there?

The 407 East in the great region of Durham—as the great member of Durham over there is very focused on this issue, driving affordability for his constituents and taking off the tolls on the 407 East, the 412 and the 418, putting money back in people's pockets.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: The minister's answer shows us that this government has no credible jobs plan.

David, unlike the Premier, was not born with a silver spoon. Born and raised in Scarborough, a TMU graduate, David is made of grit, just like his mom. She has been working two jobs since her son was born. After paying for rent for their overpriced one-bedroom apartment, there isn't much left for groceries or anything else. In January, through no fault of her own, Ingrid suffered a serious accident, leaving her in a wheelchair. Now their bills are past due, and the landlord and creditors are calling.

Instead of hiring, employers are losing faith in Ontario, and we are now seeing the shedding of thousands of jobs.

What will the Premier do to ensure that David and Ingrid do not lose their home?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member opposite for raising that important question.

That is why our government acted early, four years ago, to increase ODSP payments by 5% one time, and then to index it to inflation, so that those payments have gone up 22%. There's always more to do, but no other government tied those payments to inflation. We're the first government to tie ODSP payments to inflation and index them.

Madam Speaker, we didn't stop there. The Guaranteed Annual Income System for low-income seniors—we indexed that to inflation to help them out as well, and we addressed more people who could benefit from those measures.

HOUSE SITTINGS

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

Hon. Steve Clark: I just want to advise the House that the night sitting scheduled for this evening has been cancelled.

DEFERRED VOTES

PROTECTING ONTARIO'S WORKERS AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 POUR PROTÉGER LES TRAVAILLEURS ET LA RÉSILIENCE ÉCONOMIQUE DE L'ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to enact the Strengthening Talent Agency Regulation Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts /
Projet de loi 105, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 visant à renforcer la réglementation des agences artistiques et modifiant diverses lois.

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

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1143.

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

On April 21, 2026, Ms. Khanjin moved second reading of Bill 105, An Act to enact the Strengthening Talent Agency Regulation 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	Gates, Wayne	Quinn, Nolan
Anand, Deepak	Gélinas, France	Racinsky, Joseph
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gilmour, Alexa	Rae, Matthew
Babikian, Aris	Glover, Chris	Rakocevic, Tom
Bell, Jessica	Gretzky, Lisa	Rickford, Greg
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Gualtieri, Silvia	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Hardeman, Ernie	Rosenberg, Bill
Bourgouin, Guy	Harris, Mike	Sabawy, Sheref
Bresee, Ric	Holland, Kevin	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Burch, Jeff	Jones, Trevor	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Calandra, Paul	Jordan, John	Sattler, Peggy
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian
Ciriello, Monica	Kernaghan, Terence	Shaw, Sandy
Clark, Steve	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Cooper, Michelle	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Graydon
Crawford, Stephen	Lennox, Robin	Smith, Laura
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mamakwa, Sol	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Darouze, George	McCarthy, Todd J.	Stiles, Marit
Denault, Billy	McGregor, Graham	Tabuns, Peter
Dixon, Jess	McKenney, Catherine	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	Mulroney, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Downey, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fedeli, Victor	Parsa, Michael	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Vaugeois, Lise
Firin, Mohamed	Piccini, David	Vickers, Paul
Flack, Rob	Pierre, Natalie	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Pinsonneault, Steve	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pirie, George	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

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

Brady, Bobbi Ann	Hsu, Ted	Smyth, Stephanie
Cerjanec, Rob	McCrimmon, Karen	Tsao, Jonathan
Clancy, Aislinn	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Watt, Tyler
Fairclough, Lee	Schreiner, Mike	
Hazell, Andrea	Shamji, Adil	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 90; the nays are 13.

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?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: I refer it to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): It is therefore ordered to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

FAIR AND FREE ELECTIONS ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 POUR DES ÉLECTIONS
LIBRES ET HONNÊTES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act with respect to electoral matters / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections à l'égard de questions électorales.

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

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1149.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On April 23, 2026, Mr. Fraser moved second reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act with respect to electoral matters.

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

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler	Flack, Rob	Quinn, Nolan
Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Racinsky, Joseph
Babikian, Aris	Gualtieri, Silvia	Rae, Matthew
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hardeman, Ernie	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Harris, Mike	Riddell, Brian
Bresee, Ric	Holland, Kevin	Rosenberg, Bill
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Trevor	Sabawy, Sheref
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jordan, John	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Ciriello, Monica	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Clark, Steve	Khanjin, Andrea	Saunderson, Brian
Coe, Lorne	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Cooper, Michelle	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Crawford, Stephen	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Graydon
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McGregor, Graham	Smith, Laura
Darouze, George	Mulroney, Caroline	Tangri, Nina
Denault, Billy	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dixon, Jess	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dowie, Andrew	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Downey, Doug	Piccini, David	Vickers, Paul
Dunlop, Jill	Pierre, Natalie	Williams, Charmaine A.
Fedeli, Victor	Pinsonneault, Steve	
Firin, Mohamed	Pirie, George	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 41; the nays are 64.

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

Second reading negated.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I do rise on a point of order to speak to the point of order that was raised by the member from Sudbury this morning: that Bill 104, in the name of the member for Ottawa South, be declared out of order on the basis that it's the same as the topic of opposition day motion number 3.

I would like you to hear the following argument.

Standing order 55 states: "No motion, or amendment, the subject matter of which has been decided upon, can be again proposed during the same session."

Opposition day motion number 3, standing in the name of the leader of the official opposition, calls on the Ford government to ban surveillance practices that misuse personal data to unfairly inflate prices. However, it does not specify any specific legislative changes to implement such a policy, and the members of this assembly have not had the chance to consider such specific legislative options.

While Bill 104, the Fair Grocery Prices Act, standing in the name of the member for Ottawa South, touches on the same issue as opposition day motion number 3, it is contradictory to the very spirit of opposition day motion number 3 to argue that Bill 104 should be removed from the order paper under standing order 55.

Bill 104 is a specific proposal to actually implement what motion number 3 asked the government to implement. If Bill 104 were to be ruled out of order under standing order 55, by the same logic, the government itself would not be able to table a bill to implement the exact changes advocated for in opposition day number 3.

Therefore, a motion calling on the government to implement a specific policy cannot be considered the same subject matter as a bill that includes the specific legislative changes required to implement that same policy.

If you'll allow it, Madam Speaker, I know that the member for Ottawa South would like to say a few words as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Ottawa South. And anyone who chooses to speak to it can speak to it.

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order, Speaker: I was surprised to hear this morning—for the Speaker's information, this bill was first sent to the drafters on March 23. It went through eight drafts and translation, and was introduced on April 15—which is less than a month to do all that work.

I've said repeatedly in this House that my legislation is open to anyone who wants to put their name on it. It doesn't matter whose name goes on it.

That's why I'm shocked that the people who agree with me—the members who agree that we should do something about this—would withdraw a piece of legislation that has teeth in it, that will do the things that they're asking for. As my colleague said, it's counter to what they did when they put forward the motion that they put forward.

So I just wanted to put that context into your decision or your deliberations, Speaker, respectfully. I am just shocked that it even happened.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Does anyone wish to speak to it?

I will take this matter into consideration and report later.

At this time, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.
The House recessed from 1156 to 1300.

BIRTHDAY OF MEMBER'S MOTHER

Hon. Steve Clark: A point of order just because she's watching today: Yesterday was my mother's 87th birthday and, although it's not a milestone birthday, she has admitted that I rarely talk about her. She was very persistent, actually. Mom, happy birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Happy birthday, government House leader's mom.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Catherine Fife: They're just coming through security, but I wanted to thank a number of survivors of sexual assault who are here with me today. Sarah Casselman is the executive director of the sexual assault centre in Waterloo region. Britney Wellington is here,

speaking on behalf of her sister. There are many others who were quite astounded by the minister's response this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): We do not make political statements during introduction of visitors.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I'm pleased to welcome eight members that have taken the time today from the Organization of Traditional Tibetan Medicines and Sciences of Canada.

We have Tenzin Dakpa, Tsering Tsomo, Khenrab Gyamtso, Sonam Dolma, Tsultrim Kalsang, Tenzin Nyima, Tenzin Gompo, Tenzin Tsomo, Dhakpa Gyatso, Ngawang Tsering and Tenzin Tsering.

Thank you for your hard work collecting over 3,000 signatures in support of the petition to regulate traditional Tibetan medicine.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorne Coe: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

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

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL POLICY

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy and move its adoption.

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

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités et la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Brian Riddell: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

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

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

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 21, 2026, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LYDIA'S LAW (ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN THE HANDLING OF SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES), 2026 LOI LYDIA DE 2026 (RESPONSABILITÉ ET TRANSPARENCE DANS LE TRAITEMENT DES CAS D'AGRESSION SEXUELLE)

Ms. Fife moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to enact Lydia's Law (Accountability and Transparency in the Handling of Sexual Assault Cases), 2026 / Projet de loi 112, Loi édictant la Loi Lydia de 2026 (responsabilité et transparence dans le traitement des cas d'agression sexuelle).

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, I would. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Lydia's Law is inspired by a young woman in my riding who told me five years ago about her harrowing experience with the court system after she disclosed sexual assault. She felt the entire process was dehumanizing and belittling.

Lydia's Law looks to focus on accountability, transparency and survivor safety as women disclose through the court system. The key objective is to prevent delays in justice, to close the gaps between courts, police and social services and to ensure survivors are identified, protected and supported.

These recommendations stem from the 2019 Auditor General's report, which recommended the Attorney General report on these issues in our court system, report back to this House so that we can take action, so that when women do disclose sexual assault in Ontario, they actually receive justice.

Thank you very much for your time.

FAIR PRICES AND TAX-FREE GROCERIES ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 SUR LES PRIX ÉQUITABLES ET LES PRODUITS ALIMENTAIRES NON TAXÉS

Mr. Rakocevic moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act to address food affordability and price competitiveness / Projet de loi 113, Loi traitant de l'abordabilité des produits alimentaires et de la compétitivité des prix.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I would. Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'm proud to introduce a bill to make groceries more affordable in two simple ways:

(1) My bill would require the government to remove the sales tax from all groceries, giving people an immediate break at the checkout; and

(2) My bill would stop big grocery stores from using contracts and secret leasing agreements to block competitors from opening up nearby and offering lower prices than they are.

These two simple measures would lower grocery prices and increase competition to ensure families have access to fair and affordable food prices.

PETITIONS

TRADITIONAL TIBETAN MEDICINE

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Speaker, it is my honour to stand with the 3,130 people who have signed this petition. This petition is called "Establish the College of Traditional Tibetan Medicine of Ontario."

Traditional Tibetan medicine, also known as Sowa Rigpa, is a comprehensive system of healing that has been practised for over 3,000 years. It is practised globally, and yet here in Ontario, those wishing to receive this care are not able to access it and the holistic services that it offers.

1310

This petition asks that legislation be passed to establish a college of traditional Tibetan medicine so that all Ontarians can access all of the benefits of traditional Tibetan

medicine safely, confidently and under a regulated professional framework.

It is my great pleasure to sign this petition to bring it down to the table with Alyson.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I do have a petition here from the Ontario Nurses' Association calling the attention of this assembly to privatization: to stop privatization and support staffing ratios.

They're bringing the attention of the assembly to the fact that understaffing is having negative impacts on the quality of our public health care system. It also causes burnout for nurses and health care professionals, which is actually driving them out of the profession. Health care professional staffing ratios would have the benefit of restoring our public health care and ensuring quality of care.

They point out the fact that the Ford government has been investing money into private, for-profit corporations instead of investing in staffing ratios, and the impact is negative. There are nurse vacancies and burnout that can be addressed. In other jurisdictions where they have done that, it's actually increased the situation tremendously, so they are mandating staffing ratios for nurses and health care professionals in consultation with them so that we can have a positive impact on our health care system.

I agree with this petition, will appose my signature and send it to the table with Tej.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Steve Clark: Over the constituency week, I received a number of petitions, again calling on the federal government to restore full navigation to the Rideau Canal. As I've told members in the House previously, the federal government has installed a temporary fixed bridge that restricts traffic through the LaSalle Causeway in Kingston for an indefinite period. Public Services and Procurement Canada still has not established a clear timeline, a plan. They haven't demonstrated any urgency in fixing this challenge.

Minister Cho was in my riding a little while ago and heard from many tourism operators about the challenges this is creating, the economic loss that's taking place. The Rideau Canal contributes about \$309 million annually to the economy in eastern Ontario. It supports marinas, shops, restaurants and seasonal employment. This is the 200th anniversary of the start of construction of the canal. I'm glad that my constituents continue to call on the federal government to have a plan.

I'll affix my signature and I'll send it to the table with page Michaela.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to once again submit petitions in support of Lydia's Law. I would like to thank friends and colleagues and advocates who are here today in support of this.

Madam Speaker, in 2025, 1,629 sexual assault cases got dispensed or stayed. They did not see their day in court. This is a growing pattern of the justice system in Ontario. Lydia's Law looks to ask the Attorney General, essentially, just to do his job and to follow through on the 2019 Auditor General report, which would have him come back to this place, examine why these cases are not getting justice, examine why survivors of sexual assault are not getting counselling and mental health supports and legal support. That is the reality of women who have the courage to step forward, speak up and disclose these heinous crimes.

I just want to also say, Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues MPPs Vanthof, Mamakwa and Kernaghan as male allies on this piece of legislation. We have to recognize that violence against women is not a women's issue. It is a societal issue, and the justice system must deliver justice for those women.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'd like to present this petition on behalf of students in my riding, stating how devastating the cuts to OSAP will be and will have on post-secondary students who rely on OSAP who may need it.

It calls on the Ford government to immediately reverse the announced changes to OSAP; conduct comprehensive consultations with students, institutions, financial aid offices and advocacy groups before implementing any further changes to student financial assistance; and uphold Ontario's commitment to accessible, affordable and quality post-secondary education for all.

I'm happy to support this petition, sign my name and give it to page Alyson to take to the table.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I would like to thank Isabel Radu from Kingsville, Ontario, for sending this petition in. It's a similar petition to previous petitions that this House has heard. It is a petition regarding our relationship with the United States and the improper tariffs that Donald Trump has imposed on our country.

It talks about the fact that Ontario is the number one customer for 15 states, that both the House of Representatives and the Senate have voted against the tariffs that Donald Trump has imposed and, finally, that the Supreme Court of the United States has declared those tariffs to be, in fact, contrary to American law.

This petition goes on to ask this Legislature to take the following steps with regard to public procurement using

public tax dollars: It asks us to adopt regulations which would require those organizations—for example, municipalities, provincial government—to use regulations which would, in the system of procurement, prioritize Ontario-manufactured goods and Ontario suppliers before seeking those services or goods elsewhere. This is for the purpose of protecting the Ontario economy, Ontario business and protecting Ontario workers.

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

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It's always an honour and a privilege to be able to present petitions to this House.

I am tabling the following petition to stop privatization and support ratios from ONA, our Ontario Nurses' Association. This petition calls on the Ontario government to mandate safe staffing ratios for nurses and health care professionals across the health care system.

Currently, understaffing leads to burnout. It leads to unsafe working conditions and forces nurses and health care professionals to leave and also pursue other jobs or retire permanently. Understaffing has a devastating impact on patients' care and forces emergency department services for closure. Safe staffing ratios are a proven solution to reduce burnout for nurses and health care professionals. It reduces instances of violence, and it improves quality of care.

I am proud to support this petition. It's about time that Ontario joins other provinces and mandates safe staffing ratios for nurses and health care professionals.

I'm going to affix my name to this petition and bring it down to the table with this lovely page, Sienna.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Anishiniimowin. This report will be republished to add the transcribed remarks once available.*

I have a petition to reduce class sizes in elementary schools, including the Rainy River and the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board in northwestern Ontario.

The petition explains how larger classes lead to lower-quality education for our children. With the support of 250 parents, students, teachers in Kiiwetinoong and also the Kenora riding, it calls for more investment in lower class sizes and improved student supports.

Meegwetch, and I will pass this on to Alyson for me to support this.

1320

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to present the following petition in support of passing Lydia's Law.

In 2025, 1,639 women saw their cases thrown out of court because of procedural delays. That's 1,639 women who did not receive justice when they sought it. They had the bravery, the courage and the strength to go and make their case in court, and they never had the chance to see what was right. We have a government that claims it's tough on crime, yet has let criminals walk, time and time again.

As this petition points out, this government has long known about the issue facing women in Ontario's justice system. In fact, in 2019, the Auditor General reported that the government should have the Attorney General report back to the Legislature on how many cases were being thrown out. You see, the Attorney General in the response this morning called survivors "victims," and accused the NDP of chasing after these people who have made these claims.

Quite frankly, Speaker, it's very clear that women would not want to approach this government with the tremendous loss they've faced in the face of the justice system, because this government has not acted upon this.

We in the official opposition have brought forward this legislation. I look forward to its smooth passage, and I'm honoured to co-sponsor it. I'm also proud to apply my signature and deliver this to the Clerks.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm very proud to rise in this House to present this petition on behalf of the Ontario Nurses' Association. The title of this petition is "Stop Privatization and Support Staffing Ratios." It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Understaffing is negatively impacting the quality of our public health care system, causing longer wait times, unreliable access to care, unmanageable workloads, the deskilling of health care work and many other issues, including burnout for nurses and health care professionals, which are literally driving them out of the profession.

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

I'm very proud to sign this petition and to return it to the centre table with page Sienna.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I am very proud to present this petition. The petition is one that we have been presenting for some time, and this is from the official opposition. The petition is entitled "Save OSAP—Fund Education Now."

We understand, Speaker, that through the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the people of Ontario want this government to stop the expensive, vicious cycle that they've created for Ontario youth. They are facing sky-high rents, fewer opportunities and higher costs at every single turn. Ontario now has the highest youth unemployment in Canada, yet the government is making life even harder by hiking tuition and gutting the OSAP grants.

We know that OSAP grants mean that students will be able to go to school. By eliminating those grants, students are now buried in thousands of dollars of debt before they can even find their first job, forcing many young people to choose between education and a lifetime of debt.

The undersigned are calling on this petition to direct the Minister of Colleges and Universities to immediately reverse the cuts to the OSAP grants, stop Doug Ford's tuition hike, and provide colleges and universities with the funding they need so that Ontario's young people can get ahead.

I'm proud to sign this petition and return it to the centre table with page Tej.

OPPOSITION DAY

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Whereas the government has taken steps to diminish the power of freedom-of-information requests, hiding information from the public, reducing scrutiny and the public accountability of the Ontario government; and

Whereas freedom-of-information requests are fundamental to the accountability and democratic governance of Ontario, and the legal right to obtain information about state operations is a studied and recorded tenet in international freedom rankings; and

Whereas freedom-of-information requests were used to reveal this government's backroom deals with developers to sell off the greenbelt, a matter under RCMP investigation; and

Whereas freedom-of-information requests have revealed how this government has used the Skills Development Fund to improperly enrich friends and donors, including sending \$10 million to a strip club owner; and

Whereas the Premier is fighting in court to hide his phone records, on which he conducts government business, keeping the public in the dark about who is influencing his decision-making; and

Whereas freedom-of-information requests were the only way that Ontarians became aware that the government has mistakenly released 150 prisoners, some of whom remained at large for over six months; and

Whereas the Premier and ministers will be exempt retroactively to 1988, shrouding decades of government information from accountability and public scrutiny; and

Whereas the government has passed a motion which exempts Bill 97 from committee, meaning that the public

will have no opportunity to give input on changes which reduce their right to vital government information;

Therefore, in the opinion of this House, the government should preserve the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, giving it jurisdiction over ministerial records and private devices, to ensure that the Ontario public can prevent backroom dealing with connected businesses and insiders.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): MPP Smyth has moved opposition day number 4.

I return to the member to start debate.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Speaker, the government thought passing Bill 97 meant the fight was over. Well, it is not. I rise today in support of this motion, and I want to be very clear about what this debate is actually about: We are here because the government of Ontario is not strengthening accountability; it is deliberately weakening it, and when you look at the facts, that answer becomes very difficult to avoid.

Freedom of information is not a technical process. It's not an administrative burden. It is the mechanism that forces transparency when the government would prefer silence. It is one of the few tools that citizens have to hold power accountable. Anyone can file a request. It's not a partisan tool; it is a democratic right.

We know how important this tool is because we've seen what it has uncovered. Freedom of information exposed the greenbelt scandal. It exposed the Skills Development Fund, including \$10 million sent to a strip club owner. It revealed the mistaken release of over 150 prisoners, some of whom remained at large for over six months, some of whom might still be at large. It exposed the spa at Ontario Place, the science centre closure and over \$100 million in government advertising.

These aren't minor issues, Madam Speaker; they involve public land, public money and public safety, and in every single case, the information became public because it had to, not because it was offered. In every one of those cases, accountability didn't come from this government; it came in spite of it. That is what accountability looks like, and that is exactly why this system matters. Without FOI, none of these stories get told. Without FOI, no one is held responsible.

Speaker, now we're being asked to reckon with what happened through Bill 97, and let's be specific, because the details matter. The government passed the most sweeping changes to freedom-of-information law in Ontario's history under the cover of darkness. They removed the Premier, cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants and all political staff from FOI reach permanently, and they made the changes retroactive to 1988, killing active FOI requests, ongoing appeals and court cases already before the judges.

1330

And then, at the last possible second, they yanked the bill from committee to avoid public hearings and pushed it through under night sittings. Speaker, when you debate a bill in the middle of the night, you know you're doing something you're not proud of.

The government will tell you, though, that this is routine modernization. In fact, we just heard it this morning during question period—a modernization of a 40-year-old legislation. Well, let me be clear about routine modernization and what it looks like: It does not get debated in the middle of the night. It does not get yanked from committee at the last second to avoid public hearings, and it is never, ever made retroactive to kill court cases already before judges.

They will tell you cabinet confidentiality needs protecting. Exemptions for cabinet deliberations already exist in law. This is not about protecting advice given to ministers. This is about hiding decisions already made, starting with the greenbelt.

They will tell you the Auditor General and privacy commissioner can still compel records—cold comfort. Journalists, citizens, opposition members—the people who actually surfaced the greenbelt, the Skills Development Fund—are locked out entirely.

They will tell you that they are aligning with other provinces. The IPC said that is not accurate. And even if it were, Ontario led on transparency. After eight years of government steamrolling democratic norms, we need to raise our integrity standards; we don't need to race to the bottom.

And finally, Speaker, they will tell you that this is about protecting your personal information. That is fearmongering, plain and simple. Ontarians are already protected under FIPPA. This has nothing to do with your personal records. This is about making sure the Premier, his cabinet and their staff never have to answer for what they did or what they plan to do next.

Speaker, here is what we know: A journalist requested Doug Ford's phone records from the specific week in November 2022—the week that the greenbelt was opened to developers. That case will now collapse, killed by the retroactive changes in this bill. The 219 greenbelt records cleared for release were suddenly—whoop, not so much—declared exempt and withheld the same day that this bill received royal assent on April 25.

One of those records, obtained by the Trillium through other means, reveals a 2021 meeting between a lobbyist who later received the harshest available lobbying ban and then-Minister David Piccini about land later removed from the greenbelt.

Hon. Trevor Jones: Don't use their names.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I withdraw. I apologize.

Interjection: You can let the Speaker take care of that.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Oh, sorry, Speaker. I will. Okay.

And the RCMP investigation into the greenbelt affair is still active.

You know what? I'll just repeat that sentence, just to be clear on the record: One of those records obtained by the Trillium through other means reveals a 2021 meeting between a lobbyist who later received the harshest available lobbying ban with the then minister about land later removed from the greenbelt. And the RCMP investigation

into the greenbelt affair is still active. It has been active for nearly three years.

The pattern is clear: restrict access, shield records, limit oversight—and at every turn, the Premier fighting in court to keep his own phone records out of public view, records that include government business. This is all about what was on the Premier's phone one week in November 2022, the week that he opened the greenbelt.

Speaker, the IPC commissioner, Patricia Kosseim, warned explicitly that this bill would severely restrict Ontarians' right to know how and why decisions are made at the highest levels of government. The government ignored her.

We have to be clear about what happens when you let this stand. If records can be excluded, decisions become harder to trace. If decisions become harder to trace, accountability weakens. And when accountability weakens, public trust follows. This is not theoretical; we're already seeing it, and people are asking: Why are we finding out after the fact? Why does it take so long to get answers? Why does it feel like information is being withheld?

Increasingly, those concerns are justified, because once you carve out exceptions, even small ones, the system changes, not all at once, but incrementally: a category excluded here, a record protected there, a process removed from scrutiny, until eventually the framework still exists, but it no longer delivers what it was designed to provide. And those are often the most difficult shifts to reverse.

Speaker, this motion doesn't ask for anything unreasonable. It does not ask for delay. It doesn't ask for obstruction. It asks that FIPPA continue to apply where decisions are actually made, and that includes ministerial records, communications and private devices used for public business. Because the principle is simple: If public decisions are being made, the public has a right to see how. Government does not stop being government because it moves to a personal phone. This motion reinforces a basic democratic standard: Those who exercise public power must remain accountable to the public, and that accountability requires transparency, not in theory but in practice.

Speaker, Ontario Liberals would repeal this legislation at the first opportunity. Good governments welcome transparency. This government is running from it. We are forcing this vote today for every Ontarian who filed a request and deserves an answer, for every journalist who pursued the truth in the public interest and for every person who asked, "Why won't they just tell us?" It is "freedom of information," not "freedom from information." So I urge every member of the House to please support this motion, protect the integrity of Ontario's access-to-information laws, and ensure that transparency in this province is not diminished but upheld.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Brian Riddell: Speaker, this motion asks Ontarians to believe that the Liberals are the defenders of transparency. That's a pretty tough sell, because when we look at their record, the facts tell a very different story. This is the same party that oversaw the deletion of govern-

ment emails during the gas plant scandal—emails that should have been preserved, emails that were wiped out, information that Ontarians had every right to see, gone. That's not transparency; that's the opposite.

This is the same party that hid the truth of the state of Ontario's finances from the public. Just weeks before the 2018 election, Ontarians were told the deficit was \$6.7 billion. The Auditor General later confirmed the real number was \$11.7 billion—billions of dollars hidden from the people of the province. This is not a technical error; this is a failure of accountability at the highest level. And now, Speaker, the same party stands in the House and claims to be the champion of openness? We'll take no lessons from them.

Let's be clear about what this motion is trying to do: It's trying to create fear. It's trying to suggest that, somehow, information is being hidden from the public. But the facts do not support the claim. Records held by public servants remain fully accessible. Decisions, spending and operations are still subject to the freedom of information act through ministries and institutions. Independent oversight remains intact. The Auditor General still audits government spending. The Integrity Commissioner still investigates everyone's comments and conduct. Nothing has changed where it matters. And more than 95% of freedom-of-information requests are unaffected.

Speaker, this is not a system being weakened. It's a system being modernized, because the reality is, the law we inherited was written nearly 40 years ago—before smartphones, before cloud computing, before the volume of digital information government now manages every single day. We have updated the system to reflect the world we actually live in.

1340

Let's talk about alignment, because the opposition conveniently ignores this. The approach we have taken is consistent with how access to information works at the federal level. It is consistent with how the government across the country protects cabinet confidentiality while maintaining access to public service records. So when the Liberals stand here and criticize this model, they are criticizing the very system their federal counterparts operate under. Again, Speaker, this is hypocrisy. They support it in Ottawa; they've accepted it for years. And now they pretend it's somehow unacceptable in Ontario? They want one set of rules when they are in government and another set of rules when they're in opposition. That is not a principle; it's politics.

Speaker, cabinet confidentiality is not a loophole. It's a core principle of responsible government. It allows ministers to have candid discussions, to debate ideas and to make better decisions before those decisions are brought forward publicly. That principle has been recognized time and time again, including in statements from the Supreme Court of Canada.

Let's strip away the rhetoric. This motion is not about protecting transparency; it's about rewriting history. It's about distracting from records that include deleted emails,

hidden deficits, a failure to be honest with the people of Ontario.

Our approach is clear: Protect access where it matters, maintain strong, independent oversight and bring Ontario laws into the modern age.

Speaker, Ontarians deserve transparency, but they really also deserve honesty. And based on their record, the party opposite is in no position to lecture anyone on either.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's such an interesting day here in the Legislature. There's a bit of a competition here. I do think that it is good for us to note that we would not have known about the gas plant scandal if we did not have freedom-of-information requests. That's how we found out the cost. That's how we found out that records had been manipulated. That's how we discovered that records had been deleted. That's why the privacy commissioner at that time brought forward a report to this Legislature. The report was called *Deleting Accountability: Records Management Practices of Political Staff*.

It seems that that report has been completely lost by this Ford government, as they make up the rules day by day. It is based on what we learned from the transactions that happened around the gas plant scandal.

I just want to say, just for historical context, this completely impacted my trajectory into this House, actually. The Liberals at the time were entrenched in a scandal. In fact, eventually one of their staffers actually had to go to jail and serve time. At the time, there was a huge movement to distract away from that scandal. It's very similar to what you're doing in flooding the zone with all of your scandals and your announcements. It's kind of like a *déjà vu* sort of thing that I'm having here.

At the time, there was a one-seat difference between a majority and a minority government. The Premier of the day was quite desperate to get that majority, so my predecessor, Elizabeth Witmer, was courted over to WSIB. This created an opportunity for the Liberals at the time to create a majority. Then they likely would have been able to prevent the public from finding out what happened with the gas plant scandal.

Fortunately, at the time, the community of Waterloo decided that they were not going to let the Premier of Ontario at that time buy his majority. There were no floor crossings involved whatsoever, but at that time, that one-seat difference happened and we were able to maintain a minority government setting here at Queen's Park.

And you know what? It wasn't so bad. My colleagues that I served with in the opposition, which was the PCs at the time—we really enjoyed a minority government because we had to work harder, we had to work together, and we could actually access information. Access to information is so key to maintaining a strong democracy, which is one of the reasons why we'll be supporting the motion that has been brought forward by the third party here today.

I will also note, though, that I had a very personal exchange with the FOI process because, at the time, the

Liberals really didn't want me to run in Waterloo. And so they did what some political parties do—they use political intimidation through the FOI process—and they spent \$43,000 going through my 10-year record as a school board trustee to find that gotcha moment, which they didn't get, obviously—maybe not the best use of \$43,000 of donations at the time. But they didn't find anything.

I wish the government members would really take this to heart. If you've got nothing to hide, open up the books. If you've got nothing to hide, don't pass legislation like Bill 97, which removes our fundamental rights to information in this Legislature, under the cover of darkness. In fact, this is a bill, Bill 97, that was actually passed and made law on a Friday when we, as lawmakers, are not even sitting in this House.

So you can spin it all you want—and my friend from Cambridge was doing a nice little dance over there, a little tap dance.

Mr. Brian Riddell: Thank you.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You're trying hard, my friend. You're trying hard, but at the end of the day, you're trying to sell something which nobody is buying, right? In fact, there will be a constitutional challenge to this law.

Thus far, flooding the zone has not worked—I will say this—because people are still following the information. As long as they're paying attention, and I know your polling—I know the Premier doesn't care about polling except when it's really good for him—shows that trust in your government is being compromised and whittled away. And when a government loses credibility and you lose the message, then you lose the confidence of the people of Ontario.

So we may be in for another long three years—listen, every day here can be a very long day. But the FOI process seems to have been a breach. You've crossed that line. And I know that you feel it. I know that there are government members over there, Madam Speaker, who really do fundamentally believe in this institution, in the integrity of this parliamentary process. I know that if the Liberals or us ever tried to bring in a piece of legislation which would essentially exempt the Premier of the province of Ontario from the law—I mean, this is Donald Trump-level kind of business going on right now.

The courts have ruled that the Premier of the province of Ontario must put forward his cellphone records because he has been doing government business on his cellphone. He has been making deals on his cellphone. He has been giving access to special insiders who are very much willing to put out some cash for access on his cellphone. We know that. We know that it goes all the way back to the greenbelt. And we hope that one day those cellphone records will see the light of day. But in the meantime, the trust has been compromised because the trust is dependent on a level of honesty and a level of transparency that governments of all stripes, for the history of this province, have adhered to. But this government is making up new rules.

The core business that we have in this place, as lawmakers, means that we are compelled to serve the public.

The moves that the Premier has been making, particularly with the greenbelt—which someone is going to do a documentary on one day; it's complete with code names and brown envelopes and invitations to people's weddings and showers and cash for access and meetings in the night. I mean, it is cloak-and-dagger stuff. So I can see why the Premier of Ontario would not want those cellphone records to be exposed, because they will tell a very different story than what we've heard.

1350

Listen, if the Liberals, when they were in government, had tried to make a law like this retroactive—you might be able to sell limiting access to information, but when you made it retroactive, you really showed us all your hands. There's no poker game happening here right now because you've already lost the poker game. More importantly, the people of Ontario have already lost the poker game.

When you look at the RCMP and the criminal investigation that this government is currently under—which, obviously, one would think, now that it's almost three years—I don't know what's going on there. I really don't. Of course, we're going to reach out to the RCMP, and have done so, but obviously you can't interfere in a police investigation. The problem is that there doesn't seem to be any investigating happening because those cellphone records now will not be available to the public. The cellphone was paid for by the public; the cellphone plan was paid for by the public. The public should have access to that information, Madam Speaker.

Looking back on the relationship that this Premier has established, or not established, with the people—his friends, his folks—we clearly see that Bill 97 is really meant to protect the king, right? And the king has a lot of loyal subjects sitting over there in the government benches, but I can tell you, this is not resonating well in any of your ridings. There's nothing that you can say to people that would justify blocking the records of government, blocking the conversations of cabinet. This is why, in 2013, when the privacy commissioner wrote her report—it was Ann Cavoukian—Deleting Accountability: Records Management Practices of Political Staff, she set the line in the sand of what is acceptable and what is not. At the end of the day, we did learn that senior Liberal officials broke the law by deleting emails. We learned that because we had access to the FOI reports, and this was done by media, by opposition members, by civil organizations in our society. And David Livingston did some time.

I think that it's important for government members to know that Bill 97 is a true breach of our fundamental rights, not only as lawmakers—because when you breach our rights as lawmakers, you are undermining the people that we are elected to serve. When you are turning your back on the people of this great province, you truly are showing who you really are, and the erosion of FOI is definitely a place where accountability dies.

It has been a very steady decline here. When you interfered in municipal elections, when you're appointing chairs, when you are preventing the public from partici-

pating in the democratic process by not having committee meetings, you are shutting the people of the province out of this Legislature. It's painful to see, Madam Speaker, and people are starting to pay attention to what's happening in Ontario. The private jet is just the shiny bauble over here which really exposed the Premier for who he was, and then following forward on the temper tantrum and the way that his discourse happened with some of the female members here in this House—I mean, this is not somebody who is qualified to be Premier of the province of Ontario. This is not someone who understands the weight of the responsibility of being Premier of the province of Ontario. And this is someone who has brought in a retroactive law to protect himself from the court system—the court system which has said, “You must show these records.” He is interfering in the judicial system right out there in the open. It's just like the cash-for-access private event that he hosted. If you can pay and you've got some cash, you can have access to this Premier, right?

Personally, there are some pretty good people over there—sometimes, there are some pretty good people over there. It can't sit well that you are actively going against, perhaps, your principles, your values, your morals.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Through the Speaker. Undemocratic—through the Speaker.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is definitely undemocratic. You're absolutely right. I totally agree with you. Changing the FOI laws is absolutely undemocratic, Madam Speaker.

So of course we're going to support this motion. I think not all the Liberal members were part of that 2013-14 turmoil. Some of them were, and we're friends still to this day. However, important lessons were learned from that. Important lessons were learned from that, and when a government forgets who they're working for, that's when democracy dies.

Bill 97 and changing the FOI laws retroactively is a true breach of our constitution and our charter rights. All of you know it. It will get thrown out of court. But right now, we're just trying to minimize the damn damage that you're doing to this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: There's nothing like a Monday mid-afternoon drive-by. I really enjoy it.

Speaker, I first want to start by congratulating not just my colleague from Toronto—St. Paul's for bringing this forward and for her fierce advocacy, but for the government making sure that everyday Ontarians understand what FOI means.

When Sharif, who works for us, goes to the barber and his barber starts talking about FOIs, it means people are concerned and they're worried. You know barbers and taxi drivers, right? They know what's going on. They've got their finger on the pulse. You guys have done a great job lifting that up. While you're trying to hide things, you've exposed yourselves.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Through the Speaker.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I know that the minister of tourism and culture or whatever ministry—culture or whatever he is—I can hear him chirping to me over there. I know he was one of the cabinet members who lined up, like the good penguin that he is, and said, “I think it's okay for the Premier to get a luxury jet.”

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: I withdraw.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: No, I don't have—I withdraw. So I—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member of Essex, who has a point of order.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: That was unparliamentary language. I believe the member from Ottawa South already withdrew it, but just to be clear.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member for Ottawa South, and I did hear you withdraw.

Mr. John Fraser: I apologize. I'll get it right: It's actually that he got in the conga line and said, “Yes, Premier, you can get a luxury private jet while 700,000 people are out of work. Yes, Premier, you get a luxury private jet when you're cutting OSAP and forcing students and their families further into debt. You can buy a luxury jet when two million people don't have a family doctor. And yes, Premier, you can buy a luxury jet when our class sizes are too big, children who need special help in school aren't getting it and there's a mental health crisis in our schools that's not being addressed.”

He did those two things, the FOI and the luxury jet, and now Ontarians know. Now Ontarians know what the Premier and this government are up to. After eight long years, they're tired, out of touch, losing it, and they're trying to hide it. They're trying to hide behind cutting, gutting freedom of information in this province and making it retroactive.

This is all about the Premier's cellphone and what's on it. Here's the thing: I know the member across said “cabinet confidentiality.” None of that changed; it's always been there. It's not about cabinet confidentiality when you use your personal phone.

The woman who works at Tim Hortons who serves you coffee, the guy who bags groceries at the grocery store, the senior who's on a fixed income: They pay taxes. They deserve to know. That's what FOI is there for. The people you represent deserve to know because they send you—us—their hard-earned money, and you're out buying the Premier a luxury private jet, when he already has access to a jet.

1400

I know there's a certain level of smugness that's over there right now. But you shouldn't be smug, because Ontarians are catching on. They're catching on to the fact that you're trying to hide—that you're trying to hide the greenbelt scandal, that \$8.3-billion giveaway, that you're trying to hide the Skills Development Fund and money to strip club owners. It's unbelievable, the level of smugness that I see over there about FOIs and about what you're

doing to freedom of information in this province. You should be ashamed of what you're doing.

Hon. Graham McGregor: You're a penguin.

Mr. John Fraser: You should be.

Hon. Graham McGregor: How dare you.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I would like to ask the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism to keep his remarks to himself.

Over to the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you. I did apologize, Speaker; I want to make that clear.

And I did describe it as a conga line. When the member from Waterloo said it was a tap dance, I first thought, it's more like a conga line. They're all lining up, hands on the hips, wailing their way down, saying, "Hey, let's get the Premier a luxury private jet. And you know what? Let's make sure he will never get in trouble. Let's make sure we can pass a law retroactively to circumvent the law, to circumvent the courts. Let's help the Premier hide."

Well, guys, you can run, but you can't hide.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

MPP Tyler Watt: Let's think about how we got here. If there's nothing to hide, why is this government rewriting the rules? And I will get to their comparisons to the feds and the amount of misinformation that they are spreading about this.

The Premier was told by the courts, "You need to release your cellphone records." He openly boasts about conducting government business on his personal cellphone. Instead of complying with the courts that he pretends to respect, he said, "You know what? I'm just going to go ahead and change the law myself, slip it into an omnibus budget." It has no business being in a budget, and they did it anyway—no public consultation.

I have to echo my colleague from Ottawa South that this has absolutely gone to the general public. People are bringing up the jet and the FOIs to me like nobody's business. When I am knocking on doors or I am talking to people at the grocery store and they're bringing up the jet and this FOI stuff, it goes to show you that people are finally paying attention and getting sick of what you're doing.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is their business.

MPP Tyler Watt: It is their business, exactly.

I want to talk quickly about what is the purpose of FOIs. It's to ensure that governments are held accountable, that taxpayer dollars are used responsibly and that decision-making remains transparent and within the confines of the law. This government loves to tout that they are the most transparent government in the history of this province. Yet if that's the case, then why are they making these changes in the first place? It makes no sense. There must be something really damning on the Premier's cellphone for them to go to this extent, to not listen to the intense public backlash about these changes to the FOI and proceed with making these changes. I don't know what they're hiding. I hope that we find out someday. Unfortunately, we can't FOI that any longer.

I have some examples here for you about what the FOI has done for us. The greenbelt scandal: The Premier says we've moved on. Well, I'll tell you something, Premier: I haven't moved on, this party hasn't moved on and the public has not moved on. Through the FOI disclosures, we found out that a special report from the Auditor General revealed that 12 of 15 parcels removed from the greenbelt were proposed by developers themselves, with the bulk of the work directed by the housing minister's chief of staff over a rushed three-week process. An \$8.3-billion dollar windfall, 12 of 15 sites suggested by developers—that RCMP investigation is still ongoing. It seems to be taking a really long time. But now all these FOIs that were already in process have been cancelled because of this law that this government did for themselves.

The Skills Development Fund: We've learned through many FOIs about how that money is just being wasted away and given to friends and families of the government and the Premier.

Public safety failures: Through the Global News FOI request, we learned about the inmates that were mistakenly released, through an FOI report.

This government's transparency claims and public concern: Their actions are not matching their words. FOI laws have served as a critical tool for MPPs, for journalists, for people of the public to find out what this government is up to, what they're spending money on and, essentially, what they're trying to keep hidden from us. You won't tell us how much you're spending on the Protect Ontario ads or the incessant Ontario Place ads, but we do know that they are spending half a billion dollars for a parking lot next to a private spa.

Bill 97: This government has rolled back this law that was created in 1987. The worst part about this is that it's retroactive.

I appreciate my colleague from Waterloo bringing up the fact that if roles were reversed, I bet you all would be so outraged. You'd be calling for our resignation, saying this is anti-democratic—which it is, by the way—but you stand here and defend the indefensible.

I want to talk about their talking point, that we're "just modernizing it" and we're "matching it with the feds." Let me tell you what the feds are doing right now: a mandatory, five-year statutory review of their FOI process; public consultations open until June 15, 2026; forward-looking and aimed at improving the process.

Here's Ontario's approach—the Ford government's approach: no public explanation; slipped into an omnibus budget, the biggest budget of the year; exempt from committee review; and retroactive to 1988, so they can shut down active requests. We've already seen over 100 FOI requests from the greenbelt that have already been cancelled. It's outrageous what this government is doing. The public is outraged.

You have an opportunity today to do the right thing. Stop protecting the king, tell the emperor that he doesn't have his clothes on, and let's get this done.

I urge this government to reconsider its decision and restore the integrity of the freedom-of-information system

in Ontario and remain accountable to Ontarians by voting in favour of this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Speaker, this government's changes to the freedom-of-information law is one of the most devastating blows to people's democratic rights in Ontario. The public's right to know how decisions are made by the Premier or a minister is a cornerstone of our province's democracy. But the Premier is shielding himself, his ministers and their staff from answering to anyone under our freedom-of-information laws.

It's because of freedom-of-information requests that we uncovered wasted taxpayer dollars on the Premier's Ontario Place mess, exposed what was really happening on the greenbelt that is now under active RCMP investigation and uncovered hundreds of millions of dollars given to friends and well-connected insiders in the Skills Development Fund. What are they hiding? A government that has nothing to hide would not work this hard to rewrite a 39-year-old law that no other government has touched.

That is why today, through this motion, Liberals are calling on the government to reverse this law and preserve freedom of information because that is how a healthy democracy operates.

After eight years of deleted emails, code words and decisions scattered across personal phones, 219 records of greenbelt files were identified, reviewed and finally about to be released. And then this Premier changed the law retroactively to stop these records from ever seeing the light of day, reaching back to block records that were already cleared for release and cutting off journalists' ability to scrutinize one of the most consequential land decisions in this province's history. It makes it clear this government is hiding something.

The people of Ontario see right through it. It is the last straw for them. The majority do not support this change, and the number of emails coming into my inbox says exactly the same. A cynic might say that this is exhibit A of a dishonest and self-interested career politician who feels entitled to do anything he wants, including rewriting one of the province's most critical laws to just protect themselves and cover up the truth. It's wrong, and where there's smoke, there's fire.

We are asking this government to be on the side of truth and preserve this law right now.

Let's not forget the timing of when he is choosing to hide from disclosing the truth to the public. It's when people have questions about why groceries are still unaffordable while the Premier is spending \$30 million on his own private jet. It's when patients are waiting 18 hours in emergency rooms in Ontario, but the Premier is focused on wasting billions on Ontario Place.

1410

These are the moments that he's shutting the door on transparency. The long-term consequence is that the public will slowly not just lose trust in this government but in our institutions as a whole. This is how transparency is dismantled—not all at once, but piece by piece, law by

law. This government is setting a dangerous precedent, that access to information can only be rewritten when it becomes difficult to face the truth, to be accountable.

This is a dangerous reality that we are heading towards that should concern every single member of this House. I am asking members opposite to consider what this means beyond today, to set aside politics and stand on the side of being transparent and accountable. Let this motion pass and restore the public's right to know.

Speaker, the rollback of FOI laws is inherently undemocratic. The way this law was pushed through without the public having any say; without debate in the Legislature; without even consulting the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the independent body that oversees information laws, is all undemocratic. People know this. Ontarians are angry and against this. The IPC actually said, "Good for you," to the public for speaking out about this. They understand that their right to know why decisions were made and who influenced them is at the core of our democracy.

People's requests for information are being rejected, and it is now against the law to receive this in Ontario. Many across this province have sent thousands of emails asking what this means for their right to get information from this government and what they can do.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Adil Shamji: I rise to speak on a matter that is fundamental to the democracy in which we live: the ultimate rights that the citizens of Ontario have to hold their government accountable and to understand how decisions get made. Under this government, we have seen the number of sitting days in this Legislature, and therefore the number of sitting days to understand how decisions get made, get reduced more than ever before. And now we're seeing an unprecedented measure to limit access to freedom of information.

I want to be really clear on this: This truly is not a partisan issue. This is about transparency, accountability and, fundamentally, democracy.

To ground my remarks, I am going to quote directly from the Information and Privacy Commissioner, an independent officer of this Legislature, chosen by all parties, who does not report to a partisan organization or to a party. In her letter, she wrote, "Government records must be accessible to the people of Ontario, subject only to limited and carefully defined exceptions."

She goes on to say that this proposal "would prevent Ontarians from accessing any government information held by the Premier, cabinet ministers, elected officials, and political staff.

"To be crystal clear, FIPPA ... already protects personal, confidential, and constituency records from disclosure. This amendment is about hiding government-related business to evade public accountability."

The most commonly cited argument to force this legislation through under a cloak of darkness has been that this legislation puts us into alignment with other jurisdictions across Canada, including the federal government.

But to be clear, Ontario is not catching up with this legislation; it is merely covering up. For example, if we genuinely wanted to be in alignment with transparency and accountability measures with the federal government, this Premier would publish mandate letters. This cabinet, on a daily basis, would issue their daily agendas. This is a standard federal practice that the current government chooses not to pursue. And, until recently, because these agendas were not made publicly available, the only way to find out who a minister or the Premier was meeting with—which, I think, is a perfectly reasonable thing to do; it certainly does not compromise constituency privacy—the only way to find out that kind of information was to go through an FOI request. That is no longer possible.

To further underscore the fact that this does not bring us into alignment with other jurisdictions, including the federal government, this legislation now allows the government to respond to FOI requests within 45 days—50% longer than the federal government, which responds within 30 days.

How are any of these examples coming into alignment with another jurisdiction? It only is increasing the cover of darkness under which this government operates.

I'm going to reference frequently from the Information and Privacy Commissioner because she is the expert and, again, independent, without any political affiliation. She has highlighted a number of things that I think really need to be underscored here.

First of all, under this legislation, there will be no requirement for government members—members of the cabinet, parliamentary assistants—to conduct business on government devices. For a government that says they want to protect Ontario—the Premier says he wants to protect the information that his constituents share with him. Conducting business on his personal phone, using personal email accounts and Google drives—all that does is allow personal and potentially confidential information to be accessible on servers that are outside of this country, that don't necessarily have the same privacy and security protections that are assured through our information and technology branch here in the Legislature. This is not a measure that increases the safety or security of constituents' personal information. All it does, instead of protecting Ontario, is protect the Premier. The Premier is open for business, but he's closed for any form of scrutiny whatsoever.

Forcing this legislation through will increase the risk of cyber security incidents under this government. And we know those have already happened. With Ontario Health atHome, the personal health information of at least 200,000 people, up to potentially a million people, was compromised in a cyber security incident because there were inadequate protections and this government has no control over any of its vendors. And taxpayer dollars were used to pay a ransom.

Now this government is taking an additional step and saying, "Instead of strengthening those protections, we're going to allow our cabinet ministers, we're going to allow

our Premier to conduct business on personal devices." That's unacceptable.

Let's be clear about what this is about. This is about a government that wants to control the narrative, that shuns transparency and simply wants to have control, simply wants to shield decision-making processes and scrutiny. For a government that once said they would be the most transparent of any other government, they are doing anything but that and undoing years of freedom-of-information protections.

With that, I yield to the rest of my colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Hsu: Speaker, today's vote forces Conservative MPPs to vote yes or no on whether Premier Ford and his ministers should be shielded from freedom of information. The changes were buried in the budget bill, so their only vote was on the budget bill—so far.

Today, with this straight-up vote, Ontario Liberals are forcing Conservative MPPs to tell their constituents where they stand on freedom of information and your right to know.

CTV asked why Ontarians should not have access to these documents. The Premier said, "As far as I'm concerned, it was ... a long time ago. We're moving forward." Premier Ford is saying, let's help voters forget about the shady stuff his government did in the past.

The government never wants to reveal anything they don't have to. That's why we need freedom of information: to know how they spent your money and who tried to influence Premier Ford and his ministers.

Do you want to live in an Ontario where hard work matters, or do you want to live in an Ontario where having lots of money and having lots of connections matters? Gutting FOI laws lets money and connections beat hard work, and that's wrong.

1420

Freedom of information has been trampled under the boot of this Conservative government. We are launching today's debate and forcing a vote to show that this fight is not over. We won't let this Conservative government trample over good government for the people while this PC government gets to operate under the cover of darkness. We won't let them grab more power, nor hide ties between their use of that power and PC party fundraising.

The Conservatives say that they're just making Ontario freedom-of-information laws consistent with federal laws in other provinces, but the Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner says, "No, that's wrong; it's consistent with many other provinces." And the commissioner said, before the bill was passed, "Even the federal access-to-information law has been interpreted by the Supreme Court of Canada in a manner consistent with how Ontario's current FIPPA is applied."

This Ontario PC government is gutting freedom-of-information rules by hiding the changes in its omnibus budget bill, then bypassing public hearings in committee, bypassing any chance of amending the changes and holding the final debate during a special night session. The

federal government, by contrast, is following its own laws and holding a year-long consultation, and then they will make changes.

Here's what the Information and Privacy Commissioner said about this government's changes: "This would remove Ontarians' right to know how and why decisions are made at the highest levels of government, who influences them, and how" our "public money is being spent."

Speaker, the fight is not over.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: Freedom-of-information rules help us ensure the public knows what our government officials are up to. At a very basic level, it's about transparency: how our tax dollars are spent and what informs the government's decisions. So while the Premier claims that changes to Bill 97 are about protecting cabinet confidentiality, they really prevent all of us from finding out exactly how he's abandoned his duties as Premier.

Almost right after that bill was passed—rushed through under the cover of darkness the night before to extend the debate—FOI requests were denied, including on the greenbelt fiasco. It's almost as if the rejection emails were already drafted, just waiting for somebody to hit send. It makes me wonder: Why the urgency to shield his actions and the actions of this government from the public? What else is the Premier hiding and, most importantly, how can we trust this Premier? He's lost his way.

Let's think about all the ways the government has failed the people of Ontario, some of which we found out through FOI changes. We found out that 150 criminals walked out the front door through FOI changes. We're finding out about so many other things that this government is up to through that.

And now we've got almost \$30 million being wasted on a private jet that was on our credit card before giving us all whiplash when that was reversed. I've never seen a government reverse course so quickly in the past.

All of this is just the tip of the iceberg, just the stuff that we know about. The only matters that the Premier and his cabinet want to keep confidential now are the ones that show what kind of leader the Premier really is: desperately wanting to fly around our province, our country and, recently, to Michigan in a private jet, high above everybody else, high above the people and completely unaffected by the same reality of everyone else in our province. It's almost the kind of behaviour you see in movies, not by the hero trying to save the day.

The reality is that freedom of information serves a vital purpose in our democratic system, and I don't think that this Premier or this government cares about that, quite frankly. The only focus now is to serve himself, to use his power and the power of the Premier's office to benefit well-connected insider friends while countless others continue to struggle to get by each month.

The Premier prides himself on championing transparency, but this government is not doing that right now. That's why I will say a future Ontario Liberal government will reverse these changes, Speaker, because it's what the

people of this province expect and it's the right thing to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate? Further debate?

I recognize the member from Toronto—St. Paul's.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues. I find it so rich that the government response relies on two arguments: Blame the previous Liberal government and call this bill modernization. Neither of them stand up to scrutiny at all.

On the first point, if past governments fell so short on transparency, the answer isn't to weaken the law further, is it? No, you strengthen it, you learn from it. Invoking past controversies doesn't justify carving the Premier and his cabinet out of freedom of information today; it simply avoids defending what this bill actually does.

Do you seriously expect the people of Ontario to believe what you are saying? Listen to all of us who have these arguments about FOIs. What, have you been brainwashed? Do you have things to hide yourselves? Please restore the people's faith in government—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): MPP Smyth has moved opposition day motion number 4.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear 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 nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1427 to 1437.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): MPP Smyth has moved opposition day motion number 4.

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

Ayes

Bell, Jessica	Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom
Bourgouin, Guy	Gilmour, Alexa	Sattler, Peggy
Bowman, Stephanie	Glover, Chris	Schreiner, Mike
Burch, Jeff	Hazell, Andrea	Shamji, Adil
Cerjanec, Rob	Hsu, Ted	Smyth, Stephanie
Clancy, Aislinn	Kernaghan, Terence	Tsao, Jonathan
Collard, Lucille	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanthof, John
Fairclough, Lee	McCrimmon, Karen	Watt, Tyler
Fife, Catherine	McKenney, Catherine	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Fraser, John	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	

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

All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Racinsky, Joseph
Anand, Deepak	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew
Babikian, Aris	Gualtieri, Silvia	Rickford, Greg
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hardeman, Ernie	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Harris, Mike	Rosenberg, Bill
Bresee, Ric	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sheref
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane

Ciriello, Monica	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian
Clark, Steve	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorne	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Cooper, Michelle	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, David
Crawford, Stephen	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Graydon
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McGregor, Graham	Smith, Laura
Darouze, George	Mulrone, Caroline	Tangri, Nina
Denault, Billy	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dixon, Jess	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dowie, Andrew	Parsa, Michael	Vickers, Paul
Firin, Mohamed	Pinsonneault, Steve	Williams, Charmaine A.
Flack, Rob	Pirie, George	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 31; the nays are 59.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I'm going to give everyone a few minutes to clear the room.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUTTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT FIRST ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 DONNANT LA PRIORITÉ À LA RÉUSSITE DES ÉLÈVES

Mr. Calandra moved third 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 Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I return to the minister to start debate.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security, the member for Whitby, the member for Markham–Unionville and the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler.

I appreciate the opportunity to give some brief words on Bill 101. Let me just begin by quickly saying that we had wonderful committee hearings last week where we were able to ascertain, get some diverse opinions on the bill. But ultimately what we saw from the bill was a great degree of unanimity, frankly, Madam Speaker, on some of the more important parts of the bill. Those parts that otherwise seemed to be divisive in nature when you listened to people in question period seemed to be less so when it was brought forward in committee, when it was explained properly.

The importance of Bill 101: It begins to provide a more consistent level of education across the province of Ontario. It brings our system back into check with respect to our trustees. It brings a professionalization of bargaining across the province of Ontario. And there are a whole host of measures, I think, that will lead to a much better education system. It also listens to our educators, specifically when it comes to things like attendance in our schools.

We heard a lot of different areas where there was agreement and some areas where there was some form of limited disagreement, but by and large, I think Bill 101 was vastly approved and respected by members on all sides of the House. I say that in part because many of the amendments that you would have thought you would have seen by some of the more challenging areas—in particular, I'd guide you to issues of bargaining. As you know, in part of the bill, it removes bargaining from trustees and it puts that back into the hands of the directors of education. There were no amendments, of course, that would have seen that moved.

With respect to creation of a chief executive officer in boards of education so that we could have a chief executive officer in charge of the business part of it, the human resources part of it, there were no amendments to change that role.

As you know, Madam Speaker, we protect the academic parts of the education system by ensuring that there's a chief education officer—no amendments to that either, which I think is a really good indication that the government is moving in the right path, given the fact that there were no potential amendments on either of those two areas.

I will acknowledge that there were a couple of amendments that were brought forward, if I'm not mistaken, by the Liberal House leader. One of those amendments was with respect to French education. Obviously, we voted against those amendments only because the amendments do not supersede the Charter of Rights, and the charter guarantees French-language education not only in the province of Ontario but across the country. And of course there is nothing that the province of Ontario, through legislation—that can happen that would supersede the Charter of Rights. Of course, our members sought to protect the Charter of Rights and voted against those amendments, which I think were not necessarily meant to water down the charter—I understand that; I understand where the member was going—but it was reconfirming, at least for our position, that the charter remains supreme and that French education, through the charter, would be protected in that fashion. I don't think the member brought it forward in a way that was anything other than ensuring that French education would be protected across the province of Ontario.

Of course, there were a couple of other amendments, I think brought forward by the official opposition, with respect to accessibility in our schools. Again, those measures are protected already by legislation that would supersede any of the amendments that were brought forward.

So, by and large, Madam Speaker, I'm pleased with the direction that we are going in. I'm pleased that we seem to have achieved, if not a unilateral consensus that this is a good way forward—at least it seems that we are all headed in the correct direction with respect to how education, how a ministry that spends \$43 billion a year—its focus should be on student achievement; its focus should be on ensuring that our teachers have the resources that they need in order to provide the highest level of student achievement. This

bill goes in that direction and, as I said, there are a number of other members that want to speak to it. So I think, with that, I will yield the floor to the member for Whitby.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm speaking today in support of third reading of the Putting Student Achievement First Act, and I do so as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Colleges and Universities, Research Excellence and Security.

I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the constructive debate that has taken place at second reading and committee. Those discussions made one thing clear across this chamber: We share a common goal, ensuring Ontario's education system continues to serve students and educators effectively. And Bill 101 is doing exactly that.

It's about keeping our education and post-secondary systems strong, responsive and centred on student success in today's classrooms and in the years ahead. It's about maintaining quality, strengthening accountability and ensuring our systems evolve as student needs evolve.

Speaker, any conversation about education must begin with teachers. Teachers shape lives every single day. They are mentors, role models and leaders in our classrooms, and the strength of our education system depends on how well we prepare them. Ontario's teacher education system is recognized across Canada and beyond for its quality, but as classrooms evolve and student needs grow more complex, we must ensure that the system continues to evolve with them. That is what this legislation does.

Bill 101 builds upon that strong base. It does not replace it. Instead, it reinforces it by keeping teacher education focused on what matters most: readiness for the classroom, meaningful practical experience and positive outcomes for students.

1450

Speaker, when teachers are well prepared, students benefit academically, socially and emotionally; parents gain confidence in the system; and schools are better equipped to respond to evolving needs in the classroom. That is why how we prepare teachers matters—not just to the profession, but to students, families and communities across Ontario, like Whitby and other parts of Durham region.

Let me be clear about why change is necessary. Student needs have become more complex, and expectations on educators continue to grow. At the same time, Ontario's current teacher education model is among the longest in the country. Since 2015, initial teacher education programs have typically required four academic semesters over two years. It has become clear that program length alone does not determine teacher readiness. Evidence, research and the lived experience of educators tell us that what truly makes a difference is the quality of practicum placements, strong mentorship and meaningful classroom experience. In fact, many jurisdictions across Canada offer shorter, well-designed post-degree teacher education programs while maintaining rigorous standards and strong outcomes.

Speaker, Bill 101 would enable a more focused and efficient teacher education model. Ontario would modernize teacher education by transitioning to a 12-month program delivered over three consecutive semesters, while maintaining Ontario's high professional standards.

All 14 public universities—like Ontario Tech and Trent Durham—and three private universities offering initial teacher education programs would adopt the new program for the first cohort beginning as early as May 2027. Importantly, this new model prioritizes in-classroom learning. It would allow teacher candidates to spend a greater part of their program gaining hands-on experience, supported by structured mentorship and strong practicum placements. It would also allow future teachers to complete their qualifications sooner and enter the workforce more efficiently, reducing time and cost barriers along the way.

Speaker, modernization also means ensuring the profession is accessible to those who already bring valuable experience into our classrooms. That is why Ontario is also exploring opportunities to implement advanced-standing pathways for teacher education applicants with prior credentials and experience. Across Ontario, there are passionate individuals with relevant backgrounds, such as early childhood educators, educational assistants like my daughter, and those with industry or skilled trades experience. Bill 101 supports exploring responsible ways to recognize prior learning, education and work experience, while maintaining standards and consistency. These kinds of pathways are not about shortcuts, Speaker. They're about acknowledging real-world experience and designing systems that are flexible, inclusive and aligned with workforce realities.

Speaker, program reform alone is not enough. Our government knows it must be paired with investment. Over the last several years, our government has made significant investments to expand teacher education capacity, particularly in high-need areas such as French-language education, French as a second language, technological education, and northern and rural communities.

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 training 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, I'll remind everyone here today that 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've 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're investing \$150 million into our teacher education program, funding 4,000 more seats and increasing per-student funding by 27%. 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.

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 in the future. We're growing the programs students want while building the workforce Ontario needs because that is how we protect this province.

Speaker, moving away from teacher education for a moment, I also want to touch on another component of the bill related to the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

Following the introduction of our government's historic \$6.4-billion new funding model that is supporting our post-secondary sector, we've modernized and strengthened our strategic mandate agreements with each post-secondary institution.

Those agreements include clear performance expectations and accountability measures, a role that was once central to the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario's mandate but is now firmly carried out by the government.

As performance and accountability functions already exist within government, and research is conducted across the sector, Ontario is introducing changes that would enable a future wind-down of the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. These changes would reduce duplication of functions in the post-secondary education sector, ensuring resources are focused on where they matter most: on student outcomes.

Speaker, this legislation is about focus: focus on outcomes, focus on preparedness and focus on ensuring our education system continues to meet the needs of Ontario students. It supports a teacher education system that's rigorous, practical and responsive to today's classrooms. It also strengthens oversight and accountability across the post-secondary sector. Taken together, these changes support students, educators and institutions alike.

For those reasons, Speaker, I am pleased to support Bill 101 at third reading, and I encourage all members of this House to do the same.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

1500

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'm pleased to rise today to join my colleague Minister Calandra, as well as my parliamentary assistant, MPP Coe, as we deliver third reading of Bill 101, the Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026.

At its core, Bill 101 is about ensuring Ontario's K-to-12 and post-secondary education remains strong, responsive and focused on student success, both in classrooms today and in the years ahead. It's about protecting quality, strengthening accountability and making sure our systems evolve as the needs of learners, families and communities evolve as well.

Speaker, before I speak to the substance of this bill, I want to take a moment to explain why student achievement and teacher readiness matter to me personally. My wife is a teacher. Every day I see the dedication, preparation and care that goes into supporting her students, not just academically but emotionally and socially as well. Through her work, I have a front-row seat to the realities of today's classrooms, the diverse needs students bring with them, the importance of strong preparation and the difference a confident, well-supported teacher can make.

I'm also the parent of three young children, all of whom are growing up in Ontario's education system. Like every parent in this province, I want to know that when my children walk into a classroom, they are met by teachers who are well prepared, supported and ready to help them succeed. That perspective, both as partner to a teacher and as a parent, shapes how I approach legislation like Bill 101. That is why this bill is focused on ensuring our education system continues to deliver high-quality outcomes for students today and for generations to come.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging that it has been an historic year for funding for Ontario's post-secondary institutions. Our teacher education programs are no exception. In February, we launched a historic \$6.4-billion funding model for the post-secondary sector. Through this new model, we're investing an additional \$150 million into our teaching education programs, funding 4,000 more seats and increasing per-student funding by 27%. Under this new funding model, we're investing \$1.7 billion to expand enrolment in key labour-market-driven programs, like teaching. Because we know Ontario needs more teachers, we're expanding seats to ensure our pipeline of highly qualified teachers remains strong, nimble and responsive to community needs today and into the future.

Now let's dive into how this bill strengthens that pipeline. Bill 101 would enable a more focused and efficient teacher education model. Under this legislation, we would modernize teacher education by transitioning to a one-year, 12-month program, reducing the time to launch meaningful, successful careers.

Since 2015, our teaching programs have been four academic semesters over two years. But our evidence shows that it's the in-classroom experience, not the length of the program, that creates a great teacher. By condensing teaching programs to one year, we're breaking down time and cost barriers to students, saving future teachers up to \$3,000 and enabling them to join the workforce sooner.

As I said earlier, our research shows that the strongest teachers spend the most time in the classroom during their education. That's why this legislation would enable us to identify a practicum length that best prepares future teachers for success. We would be consulting with the sector to maximize the length of time students spend in the classroom, getting the hands-on skills they need to thrive. Then we would build that practicum length into every single teaching program in Ontario so that every community has access to teachers who have the hands-on skills they need to give our kids an exceptional education.

Another critical piece of this bill is our intention to explore opportunities to implement advanced standing pathways for teacher education applicants with prior credentials and experience.

Across Ontario, there are passionate individuals with relevant backgrounds, such as early childhood educators, educational assistants and those with industry or skilled trades experience who want to become teachers and whose experience enriches the classroom. We think they should be recognized for that. With this legislation, we would explore opportunities to implement advanced standing pathways for teacher education applicants with prior credentials and experience.

The government would evaluate pathways consistently by applying a clear, standardized set of criteria developed with OCT and faculties of education to assess the relevance of applicants' prior credentials and experience, enabling more qualified, passionate individuals to jump-start their careers faster, bringing their valuable skill set into our classrooms, especially when it comes to second-career and mature applicants, who are bettering themselves through further education.

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, more responsive pipeline to meet the needs of students and families.

We recognize that shifting program design requires careful implementation. That's 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. In addition, we would also provide funding to our institutions to support the costs of transitioning to the new program.

This program would not go into effect until May 2027, meaning all of the programs that begin before then, like the ones this fall, would follow the existing format, keeping things straightforward for our current students. Our proposed start date of May 2027 also 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 graduates' ability to be hired and start their meaningful careers sooner.

Speaker, education is, at its heart, about students. It is about giving learners the support they need to succeed,

whether they are children in our kindergarten classrooms, teenagers preparing for graduation or adults returning to post-secondary education to build new skills and new opportunities. It is about ensuring that every student, regardless of where they live or the pathway they choose, has access to high-quality instruction and meaningful opportunity. It is about ensuring that the professionals who guide them, our teachers, are well-prepared, confident in their abilities and supported by a system that values both excellence and fairness.

Bill 101 reflects that responsibility. It recognizes that a strong education system does not stand still. It evolves thoughtfully, guided by evidence, informed by experience and grounded in what works best for students in the classroom. This legislation modernizes teacher education while maintaining the high standards that Ontario families expect and that our educators deserve. It protects current students by ensuring stability, clarity and continuity during transition. It removes unnecessary barriers for future educators while preserving the professionalism and accountability that define the teaching profession. And, of course, it is backed by critical strategic investment, because when we invest in strong teachers, we invest in strong classrooms. When we support students effectively, we support families and communities.

Bill 101 brings these principles together. It reflects a careful balance between modernization and stability, between flexibility and rigour and between responding to today's realities and planning responsibly for the future. For those reasons, Speaker, I am proud to support Bill 101 at third reading, and I respectfully encourage all members of this House to do the same in the shared interest of Ontario's students, educators and their communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Billy Pang: I will share the remaining government time with the member for Essex, after my speech.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 101, the Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026.

Ontario's publicly funded education system plays an important role in shaping the lives of children and families across this province. Over the past several years, our government has taken meaningful steps to strengthen accountability. In 2023, we passed the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, recognizing that serious governance challenges were emerging in parts of the system. However, despite that action, incidents of poor judgment, financial mismanagement and governance breakdowns have continued to surface.

1510

Since being sworn in as the Minister of Education, Minister Calandra has taken a close and careful look at how school boards across Ontario are operating. In too many cases, school boards had lost sight of their main purpose: supporting student achievement and well-being.

That's why, in November 2025, our government took another important step by passing the Supporting Children and Students Act. This legislation strengthened accountability measures for trustees and school boards and mod-

ernized the minister's oversight powers related to finance, governance and performance. Yet even after these reforms, troubling patterns persisted.

Today, eight school boards are under provincial supervision. While this shows that the minister is prepared to act when boards fail to meet expectations, stronger oversight tools and clearer accountability measures are needed to protect public confidence and to ensure education funding supports students in classrooms. Speaker, Bill 101 responds directly to this need.

The cases I outlined today clearly demonstrate how stronger legislation is not only appropriate but essential. The most recent example is the York Catholic District School Board. For years, this board has experienced instability, frequent leadership changes and ongoing governance disputes. Over nine years, it had seven directors of education and trustees fail at stabilizing the situation. Trustee infighting at the board has resulted in more than \$300,000 in legal costs related to internal disputes and code-of-conduct investigations.

Despite the minister giving the board advance notice and time to respond to concerns, it wasn't able to find realistic solutions. They were unable to address growing deficits and depleted reserves caused by years of inadequate financial management. The minister had little choice but to step in and place the board under supervision.

At Peel District School Board, ongoing financial mismanagement resulted in five consecutive years of deficits. These challenges threatened the board's long-term sustainability and led to a proposed mid-year layoff plan that would have seen 60 classroom teachers lose their jobs, disrupting learning for nearly 1,400 students in the middle of the school year. We put a stop to that and placed the board under supervision to restore financial discipline.

The Near North District School Board presents one of the clearest examples of how governance failure directly affects students. A ministry review uncovered years of dysfunction, weak leadership and chronic mismanagement. These failures contributed to serious disruption in student learning during the opening of a new JK-to-grade-12 school in Parry Sound. Hundreds of students were forced to temporary classrooms, remote learning or unsafe facilities in a half-demolished high school.

A review found a deeply divided board with limited understanding of basic governance principles. The minister issued 15 binding directions to address these issues and attempt to restore accountability and strengthen governance. The board failed to comply with most of them within the required timelines. At that point, supervision was not optional; it was essential to restore accountability and ensure students' needs came first.

Unfortunately, financial missteps are not isolated events happening at one or two boards, they are happening even at the largest board. Financial and governance issues have also affected the Toronto District School Board, the largest board in Ontario. In December 2024, the Auditor General of Ontario issued an extensive report that examined school safety, financial management and capital planning at the board. That report revealed serious issues, including

instances where purchases lacked proper documentation, multi-year financial planning was not consistently used to guide long-term sustainability, and the continued funding of programs without clear evidence of effectiveness.

These findings echoed many of the concerns the ministry had repeatedly raised with the board over the past few years. This includes a formal warning about the board's failure to meet its financial obligations under the Education Act.

Despite these warnings, trustees failed to take significant corrective action. A financial investigation followed and made it clear that the board was relying on short-term, unsustainable measures such as selling off properties to present a balanced budget while underlying deficits remained unsolved.

Between 2021 and 2025, millions of dollars in proposed cost-saving measures were either rejected by trustees or fell short of addressing the board's ongoing deficits. As a result, the board's financial position became increasingly fragile and put students and taxpayers at greater risk.

Similar issues have emerged at other boards. In 2025, the Toronto Catholic District School Board tripled its in-year deficit compared to the previous year and was at risk of default in the coming years. The board could have done more to avoid this financial decline, but they didn't. It lacked a viable financial recovery plan.

Similarly, since the 2021-22 school year, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has been reporting in-year deficits. At the end of the 2023-24 school year, the board had completely depleted its reserves.

Perpetually running deficits and plans to use proceeds from asset sales to balance its books are not sustainable in the long run. Financial investigators recommended these three school boards—the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board and the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board—be placed under supervision.

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board has also exhibited instances of mismanagement and poor decision-making that put its long-term financial health at risk. Following concerns about the significant accumulated deficit, ministry staff conducted a financial investigation of the board in June 2025. Not only were there growing deficits and depleting reserves, but that report found that the board was at risk of defaulting on its payments and financial obligations. Because of this, the board was placed under supervision to help get the organization back on track.

1520

Let me give you another example of how skewed some spending choices have become. One of the clearest and most troubling examples is the outrageous spending at the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board. Last fall, trustees spent nearly \$190,000 on a trip to Italy in July 2024 to buy religious art for two new schools, which also included expenses for luxury accommodations, fine dining, hospitality costs and legal fees to manage the fallout.

It was a shocking misuse of taxpayers' dollars, and our government could not ignore it. A governance review ordered by then-Minister of Education Jill Dunlop found mismanagement of public funds, poor transparency and failure to follow their own procurement policy. The minister was clear that taxpayer money had to be repaid and that accountability was non-negotiable.

When one trustee failed to meet the expectation, our government was forced to introduce proposed legislation that, if passed, would have vacated the office of the trustee who refused to repay the balance owed toward these travel expenses. The minister continues to closely monitor the situation at the school board.

Another example came from the Thames Valley District School Board. In August 2024, the board decided that sending 18 senior board officials on a three-day retreat to the former SkyDome hotel in downtown Toronto was a priority amid their multi-million-dollar budget deficit. This same board also chose to raise compensation levels for several executive members.

These actions triggered our government to order an investigation into the board's financial position and executive pay practices. It found instances of non-compliance with the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014, and the board's own policies regarding compensation frameworks. Between 2020 and 2022, when the world was grappling with the challenges and uncertainty of COVID-19, several senior board officials decided to give themselves an additional 10% pay bonus, which ranged from \$15,000 to \$24,000.

In another instance, the school board promoted a superintendent role to associate director level without the approval of their own trustees—a position that offered an increased salary range of \$40,000. As a result, the investigator recommended the ministry place the school board under supervision.

Madam Speaker, Ontario's public education system is one of our most important public institutions. Its success depends on strong governance, responsible financial management, and a shared commitment to student success.

Bill 101 strengthens accountability, clarifies expectations for trustees and provides the tools needed to act before problems escalate. This proposed legislation, if passed, is a key part of our government's plan to make sure every dollar supports students in classrooms, especially those who need it most.

Thank you for your time, and I'd like to share the floor with the member from Essex.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I think I've said this enough times, but I'm going to say it again. I grew up on the 2nd Concession of Anderdon township, and when you head north on the 2nd Concession and you turn east on the middle side road, you go two concessions down, and there you'll find Anderdon Public School. That was the best school in the world. That's where I went to school. That's where my brother went to school. That's where my sisters went to school and we had the best teachers.

One of the best things about going to Anderdon Public School was going to the library. When we lined up to go to the library, we were so excited because the library was the most awesome place in all of Anderdon Public School. The teacher always warned us before we went to the library: "You must walk through the hallways. You must walk. And do not run in the library."

So we would walk diligently to the library, and as we got closer and closer, we'd start walking a little faster, and as we got to the doors of the library, the first student would open the door, and the first few students would kind of start trotting into the library. They had to get there fast, because everybody wanted to get the dinosaur books. And the dinosaur books, we all knew where it was; they were on the lower shelves on the right-hand side of the library. You had to get there fast, because if you were too slow, all of the dinosaur books would be gone. And me being the very diligent and rule-abiding student that I was, I was always too late to get to the dinosaur books, because everybody else didn't walk. They ran to the library.

We had a marvellous librarian, and she was your quintessential librarian. She had a pair of glasses on a chain that hung around her neck. We would gather around and she would have us sit down and cross our legs, and she would read books to us. She had the most marvellous, beautiful accent. She had an English accent, which to me, as a little Italian kid, I was mesmerized by this English accent. It was beautiful. It was everything. It was royal. It was a royal accent, and she would read books to us, and I remember her so well. Her name was Jessie Klein-Lebbink. She was a marvellous librarian and epitomized everything that I loved about school.

Many years later, after I had read and reread my absolute favourite story about 16 or 17 times, it came out as a movie, and I could not but help myself to pick up the phone and call my favourite librarian and one of my favourite teachers. I said, "I haven't seen you since I left Anderdon Public School, but this movie has come out, and we have to go see it together. So I set up a date with Jessie Klein-Lebbink and Ms. Bland and the three of us went to go see *The Hobbit* on opening night, and it was the best experience. I am so glad that I did that with Jessie Klein-Lebbink.

It's a great, great thing to have a dedicated professional like that. Jessie Klein-Lebbink passed away on April 14, 2026, and that is my ode to her and to all the great people in that profession, especially the great teachers from Anderdon Public School, who did a great job in raising so many fine children in and around Anderdon.

Now I'll get more into the meat of our legislation today. I had the opportunity to participate in the committee hearing on Bill 101, and during that committee hearing, we heard from an individual named Domenic Scuglia—fitting name—and Mr. Scuglia is a retired educator. He had 41 years of experience in the education sector. He was, for eight years, a director of education. He spent five of those years in Saskatchewan and three in Ontario as a director of education. Mr. Scuglia said that "student learning, accountability and consistent standards must

remain at the centre of our education system.” And that, Madam Speaker, is the foundation of Bill 101.

1530

Mr. Scuglia talked about his experience as a director of education and, in particular, he made reference to his three years at the York Catholic board. Mr. Scuglia said this about his experience at the York Catholic board: “There were a number of decisions that were made by the elected officials that were not always in the best interests of children.” He said, “I don’t want to paint all the trustees with the same brush, but specifically, there was a majority in that particular situation that required the Minister of Education to intervene because decisions weren’t always being made in the best interests of children.”

This was coming from Mr. Scuglia, with 41 years of experience in the sector—a retired director with direct experience with that specific school board.

Mr. Scuglia touched on the provisions of Bill 101. He said that one of the strengths of the bill is that it responds to a real concern: the need for accountability in the school system. And he felt that Bill 101 was in fact seeking to address that strengthening of oversight and creating more consistency across Ontario. He said that consistency matters.

Mr. Scuglia took a moment to talk about financial pressures and operational inconsistency at school boards. He said this: “Decision-making that becomes disconnected from student outcomes”—when that happens, “the province has both the right and the responsibility to step in.” And he actually said that it was appropriate in those circumstances for the minister to step in.

He also had this to say about the York Catholic school board. He said he was a witness to these challenges. He said he was a director of education there for three years, and “it was evident that not all of the elected officials were present to ensure student and staff success. Hence, the Minister of Education rightfully intervened.”

I think if there was one thing that I remember most about Mr. Scuglia’s presentation, it was that he said that there needs to be a reset. He said that trustees are responsible for multi-million-dollar budgets. They’re responsible for creating effective policies. They’re responsible for leading strategic planning and hiring, the performance of managing, and they might not have any formal qualifications to do any of this. In his words, “It is not surprising that the system needs to be reset.” I think that’s what Bill 101 does: It’s a reset.

He also touched upon the creation of a financial officer for school boards, and he had this to say: “Obviously, you need someone with strong financial acumen to help manage a multi-million-dollar—in some cases, billion-dollar—budget.” He said that at present, there was no requirement for financial acumen, there’s no requirement for human resources acumen, and that from time to time, an elected official, unless they take that training, won’t have it. And the training is voluntary, so even if you offer the training, they might not take you up on it.

He ended his presentation by saying that public education succeeds when it’s “guided by high expectations,

responsible governance and a steadfast commitment to children. Bill 101 represents an opportunity to reaffirm those principles.” I agree with Mr. Scuglia.

During this committee hearing we also had an opportunity to hear from Judy Bornais. Judy Bornais is currently serving as vice-president, external, of the University of Windsor. She is in the nursing faculty. She has a pedagogical background, and her pedagogical background is in experiential learning. She spoke specifically to what this bill, Bill 101, does in terms of the training of professional educators. She said that there are four key reasons why our institutions—and when she said “our institutions,” I think she was referring to universities—“see this change in teachers’ education as a positive step for Ontario and students....”

What Bill 101 proposes to do is to change the teaching program to expand what I will call experiential learning. We can refer to that as practicum. We can refer to that as student teaching or practice teaching. She called it experiential learning. She commented quite favourably on that, and she said the following four points:

First, that it would reduce costs. And while that wasn’t the overriding principle at stake here, it was worth mentioning.

She also stated that “the proposed model looks to strengthen and standardize practicum which is central to teacher candidates’ development.” She said that there was an emphasis on that and that, in her opinion, it aligned with the philosophy of the University of Windsor. She said that it would assist in “integrating strong pedagogical in-class learning with high-quality, hands-on experiential learning for our students.” And when she said “students,” she meant those training to be teachers. She also underlined the fact that a strong practicum component, married with a really robust and thoughtful curriculum, as well as mentorship, were things that would ensure the success of people seeking to get training as professional educators, and she said that Bill 101 includes these components.

She went on to talk about mentoring. She observed that our government is committing \$16.8 million to support associate teachers and mentoring teachers in the classroom, and she believed that this was supported by the research. She said that the “research supports the view that a high-quality practicum, focused on mentorship and reflective practice, matters more for teacher preparation than” the mere length of the program. In other words, even if we shorten the program from two years to one year, it is the quality of the program that matters more than the length of the program. That was her observation.

She went on to observe that we need to get some qualified teachers into the classroom faster, when Ontario needs them. She made specific reference to the expected retirement projections over the next few years and also made reference to shortages in the French-language system, which need to be replaced.

I appreciated the comments made by Judy Bornais as the vice-president of the University of Windsor, especially with respect to her qualifications in the realm of experiential learning.

It is worth it to touch momentarily on what a candidate goes through when training to become a qualified teacher in Ontario. There is what I will refer to as an experiential portion of the training. It's often called practicum or student teaching or practice teaching. That is when the candidate actually goes into the classroom and takes responsibility for a class and teaches that class. Typically, when this occurs, the teacher who normally has the responsibility for that classroom is present in the classroom and observing the candidate as the candidate goes through the daily lesson or the daily activities that are happening in that classroom.

1540

At the end of that experience, or throughout the progress of that experience, what I will refer to as the mentor teacher will then do a report to the candidate, and that is to assist the candidate in showing the candidate what they're doing well, what they need to improve on, and assisting the candidate in improving their skills at a real level—that is to say, right in the classroom. A good mentor can give you very good advice but, even better, can show you exactly what needs to be done and how to do it. That is one portion of the training process that candidates go through in order to become teachers. At the end of that experience, they will even be marked.

Touching on, now, the other portion of the training, which is academic training, the candidate will be given certain courses at the university and take exams just like any other university course or any other university exam and, of course, be scored accordingly. One of those courses is typically a course in educational psychology. That is a method by which the candidates will learn how to properly manage their classrooms. We refer to it as classroom management. Some people might use the word “discipline,” but I don't think “discipline” captures the entire understanding of what there is to be done. “Classroom management” is a better phrase because with proper management of a classroom, often teachers avoid disciplinary measures with their students.

And so those are some of the positive aspects that we heard at committee with regard to Bill 101. I'm pleased to support the bill and, of course, pleased to improve education in Ontario.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: My question is to the minister. The minister tried to claim in committee last week that the 43 references to liability in the bill and the sweeping immunity protections that the bill gives him are standard for cabinet ministers, but here's what the Canadian Civil Liberties Association had to say about them: that they are “some of the most aggressive liability-shielding provisions seen in Ontario legislation in recent memory....”

“This arrangement is fundamentally incompatible with the rule of law's requirement that government be answerable for its actions. Bill 101's liability provisions come dangerously close to insulating provincial decision-making from all meaningful legal accountability.”

Why would the minister need to protect himself from all meaningful legal accountability? Is it because he plans to cut education funding even further and fire more teachers?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, it's clear that I disagree with them. Having said that, Madam Speaker, the member opposite had the opportunity to bring forward amendments that would have changed bargaining. They didn't do that. The member opposite had the opportunity to bring forward amendments that would have eliminated the CEO position. That didn't happen. They had the opportunity to bring forward amendments with respect to attendance. That didn't happen.

Ultimately, what I think here is that the opposition is seizing on one part of the bill which they think they can make some noise about, with respect to crown liability. We already have that. Ministers are already inoculated from liability when it comes to their duties. This bill just reinforces that.

But at the same time, we're bringing forward a bill—which I hope the member will appreciate and vote in favour of—that gives our teachers, students and parents the opportunity to ensure that they have the best ability to succeed going forward. I think the member would do well to support that bill, as she seemed to have done in committee.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: This bill is clearly applying a blanket control measure over all school boards because some of them misbehaved and didn't look after their funds appropriately, and the minister just wants to punish everyone. I'm wondering why that is.

Moreover, can the minister acknowledge that what's happening in our schools and our classrooms is a lack of support? The reason why our kids are not achieving their full potential is because their teachers don't have the full potential. The teachers are not staying in the profession because the support is simply not there and the working conditions are untenable and these are ripple effects. Our kids are not being supported. There are not enough adults in our schools to support the kids, so why is he not putting forward legislation that will actually make an improvement in our school system?

Hon. Paul Calandra: This is one of a series of pieces of legislation that reverses 15 years of catastrophic administration by the previous Liberal government.

This bill, in co-operation with the budget bill, brings forward resources directly to the classroom. It restores attendance and participation as part of the marks for student achievement. It is based on things that we have been hearing from educators themselves.

When we talk about school board administration, the Liberal Party themselves—when we talked about eliminating fees and outside fees and memberships so that trustees pay millions of dollars back into the classroom, the Liberals actually sent out something saying that they disagree with that. They actually disagree with putting millions of dollars—so on the one hand, they say, “Put

more money back into the classroom,” but on the opposite side, they say, “We disagree with anything that would take money away from trustees that goes back into the classroom.”

Look, I think we're going to continue to do what we said we were going to do: more money into the classrooms; more money to support teachers; more money to support our students; less money for the things that divide our communities; and more to bringing our communities together and focusing on student achievement.

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: I want to express my appreciation to all the members that spoke to this before, and I would have liked my question to actually involve the member for Essex and talking more about the books that he loved as a child because I also loved *The Hobbit* as well, but my question will be to the minister.

Speaker, people in my riding are telling me that there's just too much infighting, too much politics at the school board level. We have seen so many examples—the York district school board being one of them—but can the minister please talk about how Bill 101's new chief executive officer model will bring the kind of professionalism and qualified leadership to our school boards that we so desperately need?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I thank the member for that. It's obviously something that we saw almost unanimity on that, because there were no amendments brought forward to eliminate the position of chief executive officer.

What it does is, the chief executive officer will handle the business of the board: the capital, human resources of the board, the budgeting and the finances. The chief education officer will be focused solely on student achievement. That's it. Trustees will still have a role and trustees, we have heard over and over and over again, that they want to focus on representing students and parents; well, this bill allows them to do that.

I was very, very excited: One of the heads of one of the biggest unions in the province of Ontario also agreed with me that this bill would allow some of his members to be in charge of school boards, something that is not there. I don't know why the NDP, who claim to be sympatico with some of our unions, would keep them away from leadership roles in our school boards. That's not what Conservatives do. We believe that all people should have extraordinary opportunities, and this bill builds on that opportunity for even our best union members and our friends across the board.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: The minister put on a pretty disrespectful display in committee last week, attacking teachers and education workers who are on the front lines of our education system every day, who had just come to share their perspectives on education and what's in this bill and what's needed. But the minister also got the facts wrong in a number of areas, including what happens in

bargaining, who represents the employer's side and who is actually bargaining on behalf of the employer.

That included very aggressively attacking a respected constitutional and labour lawyer, Paul Cavalluzzo—cutting him off, not even allowing him to talk. Although the Catholic trustees in the afternoon were able to confirm that the minister was incorrect, that trustees are currently full bargaining partners and that they use highly professional labour negotiators in order to conduct negotiations, will the minister correct his record and apologize to Paul Cavalluzzo?

1550

Hon. Paul Calandra: Am I going to apologize to a lawyer who got his facts wrong? No, I'm not going to apologize to a lawyer who got his facts wrong. If the member felt so passionately about it, she could have simply brought an amendment to it, but she didn't.

Look, here's the reality: I believe that the Catholic trustees are going to maintain their ability to ensure the denominational rights are maintained. That is going to continue to happen through this legislation. The member opposite could have brought amendments forward, but they didn't bring those amendment forwards, which, to me, highlights the fact that they agree with the legislation.

The member for Essex—and a good Italian like me—if that was disrespectful, can you imagine these high-priced union lawyers, these high-priced union representatives, around our dinner table on a Sunday after the—come on. They wouldn't last five minutes around an Italian dinner table on a Sunday afternoon, my gosh. If that's the wallflowers that they have representing them, I look forward to negotiations in the fall.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I was in there in those committee meetings. I've got to say, I think that the questions put by the minister were actually very direct and pointed. I'm surprised that any member of the bar in Ontario would faint and fall on the floor simply by being asked a few hard questions—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): My apologies for cutting you off. I understand, because you were part of the debate, you cannot ask a question.

Questions?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: It's a pleasure to rise today and ask a question about this debate.

The member from Ottawa West—Nepean said that the minister was attacking a lawyer, wouldn't let him speak and was talking over him. The interesting thing is, I watched the minister. As you were asking your question, he sat there very silently. As soon as he started to give his answer, you were heckling him the whole time.

My question to you is, would you like to apologize for your rudeness to the minister, and would you like to withdraw that statement?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I agree. In the one sense, they're all bent out of shape. They're all bent out of shape that there—

Interjections.

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

Minister of Education.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, you saw right here, right? They heckle you. When they don't get the answer that they want, what they try to do is heckle you and shout you down.

But as you know, colleagues, Conservatives will not be shut down. We will not be heckled out. We are going to continue to do what's right for students, parents and teachers, and that's why the—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I want to note that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Windsor West. Also, given the government side's new-found appreciation for decorum, I look forward to delivering my remarks without any heckles or remarks from the government side.

Look, Speaker, I want to bring down the tone of this debate a little bit to reflect on what's really at stake here, because despite all of the minister's antics and theatrics, what we're talking about are very serious issues that have an incredibly profound impact on our kids, on their futures and on the many caring adults who support them every single day, on their parents, their families and their communities.

I just want to talk about the number of incidents I had over the past three days over the weekend in Ottawa West—Nepean and how that reflects on our education system. It started on Friday in my office in Ottawa, where my staff told me about a situation where a severely disabled 17-year-old student at Bell High School in Nepean—she's non-verbal. Like many disabled students, having a familiar location, familiar routine and adults that she knows caring for her every day are incredibly important. Her family moved not too long ago, and she was assured that she would be allowed to stay at Bell High School for the rest of her school career. This was incredibly important to her family. They were very grateful.

But since the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board came under the supervision of a Conservative appointee named by the minister with no experience in education, who has already started making cuts to special education, this family was informed that their student will not be allowed to stay at Bell High School. There was no consultation with the family. There's been no opportunity to develop a transition plan. This is going to have a huge impact on the life of this 17-year-old and her family. This is just one of many decisions that I hear about constantly in Ottawa, where our most vulnerable kids are paying the price again and again for the lack of heart from this government and from the people who it appoints, who it has given full control for all of the decisions in our schools.

On Saturday morning, I was at Woodroffe United Church for their spring sale and a parent stopped me to tell me her story about her son who has autism. He's extremely bright, but he has some regulation issues and he has not been allowed to be at school full-time in quite some time. As a result, this parent—who is a teacher—has had to take

a leave of absence from her job. She told me about the stress and anxiety and the financial impact on her family. She was just one of three parents in four days who I heard from who have had to quit their job or take a leave of absence from their job because of the failures of this government on special education and the Ontario Autism Program. Their kids can't get supports. They're not allowed to be at school full-time, so parents are unable to work because they have to provide that care.

And yet, year after year, what we keep seeing is more cuts to special education, not investments that would allow these kids to succeed and give them the future that they deserve. But it's also having a huge financial impact and strain on these families. The most extreme example, of course, is Arizona, whom I've already spoken about, who ended up in a shelter with her parents. She's four years old and non-verbal. Maybe not every family is at the point of ending up in the shelter, but many of them are really paying the price financially and are at a point where they have no cushion, no resilience. One more thing happens and it may be them who are living in a shelter.

That afternoon, my daughter was at ringette tryouts, and my husband said a teacher from her school came up to talk to him, knowing that I am the shadow minister for education, because the teacher just wanted to share that she's on leave from Sir Robert Borden High School, because of the number of violent incidents that she has witnessed or experienced. It just became a source of burnout and moral injury to be doing your best to support kids every single day, but seeing that level of violence and just being expected to carry on and keep going.

My daughter's gym teacher also hasn't been at school since March break, so my husband took the opportunity to ask about him. My daughter loves her gym teacher; he's an absolutely great guy. Our whole family knows him. She said he is likely on leave as well, due to the same issue. That's something that I've heard from many teachers, as well: the fact that they love their jobs, but they need to take leaves because of burnout.

My oldest daughter Mira was listening in on this conversation, as teenagers do when you're talking about something else—not what they do when you're talking to them. But she popped in to the conversation to say that there's an EA at her school who checks in on her and her friends frequently. They sit in the same spot in the hallway at lunch, and this EA will just stop in and ask the girls how they're doing. They love her so much that at Thanksgiving they did a potluck lunch to say thank you to her for all their support. This EA was on leave for a while, again due to burnout and disability issues. She came back, they saw her one day and she's gone again, like many education workers across the province.

Then, yesterday, I received a few messages from teachers, one saying that things have never been this bad, in 30 years of teaching. They have never seen the conditions in our schools so bad, never seen schools so cash-strapped, and they're worried about younger teachers who have no idea what education can actually be like when it's properly funded. Another teacher said to me, "Why we don't seem

to put student well-being above power-grabbing is truly beyond me.” That’s just a snapshot from three days about what our students, what our teachers and education workers and what parents are experiencing.

I also want to share this submission from a teacher—Kimiko Shibata, who is an elementary teacher and parent from Kitchener, Ontario—which she shared with the social policy committee. I’m going to be sharing a lot from the social policy committee today because the government didn’t allow hardly any time for people to share their perspectives, but I think this really provides the context for what our teachers and education workers are feeling right now. Kimiko says, “Educators and education workers are becoming increasingly burned out. We are tired of being given Kevlar and told that being injured on a regular basis is ‘just part of the job.’ We are tired of the moral injury of watching so many children’s needs go unmet, day after day, and being told that we somehow need to teach academic and social skills while taking the place of trauma and grief counsellors, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists and more ... often while also feeding and clothing many of the children in our care. We are already giving so much of our own time, money, resources and love to fill in the ever-widening gaps left by this government. We simply have no more to give.”

1600

I also want to share this from a teacher in the Peel District School Board, one of the 331 teachers who have been fired by the supervisor that the Minister of Education appointed—an appointment the minister supposedly made to save 50 or 60 jobs that would have been lost centrally. The supervisor then turned around and has fired 331 teachers from classrooms, and this is what one of them says:

“Losing my position within the PDSB has been a deeply destabilizing experience, especially after the immense effort it took to overcome my personal anxiety, and mental health struggles to start my career as an educator. I finally work in a school and classrooms where I feel safe and effective and now I am forced to leave. Being forced to leave a space where I am truly making a difference feels like a setback not just for my career, but for my well-being. The impact on my students is what weighs most heavily on me; seeing their devastation and hearing them question why their safe, caring adults are being removed is heart-breaking. They are losing their motivation to show up and learn because the supportive connections they rely on are being stripped away. This displacement doesn’t just affect my livelihood—it disrupts a vital support system for my kids and removes a ‘bright light’ from a staff community that is already struggling with the loss of dedicated educators.

“The hardest part is looking into my student’s eyes and having no good answer for why the person they finally felt safe with is being forced to walk away. It feels like I’m being asked to abandon a fire I worked so hard to light, leaving both my kids and myself back in the dark. Leaving my colleagues feels like losing a second family; we’ve leaned on each other through every challenge, and knowing

my departure leaves a hole in our team’s heart is almost as painful as leaving the kids. It’s devastating to realize that the person my fellow teachers called a ‘bright light’ is being extinguished from the hallways we built together.

“It is terrifying to realize that after finally finding my light in the classroom, I’m now facing a future where I don’t know where my next paycheque or my next sense of purpose will come from, as this pattern is being seen in boards across the province.”

Again, this is just one of 331 teachers who’s being fired in the Peel District School Board, but they are among the thousands of teachers and education workers across the province who are being fired under this government right now.

I think that this really gives a sense of the urgency of the conditions in our schools: the crisis that our children, our students, our parents, our teachers, education workers, principals and community members are all experiencing. Things are pretty dire. What we really need to address this is, crucially, we need funding to reverse the repeated funding cuts that this government has made over the course of eight years in power—more than \$6.3 billion taken out of the system; \$500 million that was committed last year but not spent, despite the fact that these are the conditions in our schools; and the Financial Accountability Officer is saying another \$900 million was cut in the government’s most recent budget.

We need to bring down class sizes so kids can get academic supports that they need, and ensure that they have access to educational assistants and other supports that will help them succeed academically but also to keep them safe—child and youth workers and professional support staff who can address their mental health challenges and behavioural challenges and help keep them safe in the classroom supported in learning.

We need to address the health and safety of our schools, the fact that far too many of them are crumbling, are not in great shape and are overcrowded. We need to properly fund student transportation so that kids can get to school safely so that they can learn. And we need to properly fund special education so that our most vulnerable kids are even allowed to be at school, safe and supported in learning, with a meaningful education. Right now, 21,000 of them aren’t even at our schools, and one in four of them is not allowed to attend school full time. That is a really shocking failure of the most vulnerable kids in our province.

That’s what we need, but that’s not what we’re getting from this government and it’s not what we’re getting from this minister. Despite all of the funding cuts his government has made, despite the many areas where they are not funding what they know the costs of education are—whether it’s the sick leave that they’re bargaining or the CPP and EI premiums that the federal government sets, the student transportation costs that they require boards to bargain with private operators—they’re not funding those full costs.

The Minister of Education refused in committee last week to commit to eliminating that gap and to properly funding education. He would not even commit to closing

that \$850-million shortfall for special education that is leaving our kids suffering and excluded from school. That \$850 million would at least allow the boards to break even on special education. That wouldn't even begin to address the fact that so many of them are not safe or supported at school and that half of the parents don't feel that their child is getting any kind of meaningful education at school.

What we're getting from the minister is a power grab—centralization of power in his own hands without any kind of accountability. That's despite the fact that he does not have any education experience himself and that on every occasion he profoundly disrespects the people who are partners in delivering our education system every single day: the education workers, the teachers, the principals, who are on the front lines of our schools every single day, interacting with our kids, who know exactly what our kids need, the trustees, who are elected by their communities to be local voices, who are bringing the concerns of parents, of municipalities, of communities to the table and ensuring that they're reflected in education decisions. The minister has no respect for those partners whatsoever, and he is doing everything he can to squeeze them out of decision-making, despite the fact that it's really his government's decisions that are responsible for the challenges and crises that we're seeing in education today.

As I mentioned, he's showing a profound, sweeping disrespect for teachers and education workers, attacking them in committee when they came to share their perspectives on this legislation and what is needed, using those attacks to run attack ads—including against his own teacher, Speaker, which shows you exactly what this Minister of Education thinks of teachers and the work that they do.

He's creating new layers of bureaucracy, both within school boards, with the creation of now two executive roles, chief executive officers and chief education officers, and within the Ministry of Education, where all of the government's new red tape—which apparently they like eliminating elsewhere but they like creating in education. All of these new layers of bureaucracy—he said he's not going to add a single penny to our school boards to cover those costs. He said, "The ministry will not be providing boards ... with any additional funding" for "administration."

We know what that means, Speaker. When the costs go up at a school board and no funding goes up, that means the money is coming out of our kids' classrooms instead. That means fewer educators. It means fewer education workers. It means fewer custodians in the school. It means less paper, less pencils, less books, when our kids already hardly have enough to get by.

The bill gives the minister sweeping immunity from the consequences of all of his actions. And I have to say again, Speaker, I don't think a minister who is genuinely committed to working with parents, with students, with teachers and education workers and principals to address the very real challenges in our education system needs to provide himself with sweeping immunity protections. Nobody is going to sue the Minister of Education in court

if he properly funds education. Nobody is going to sue him if he makes sure that every class has a qualified teacher or education worker in it, if he brings down those class sizes. Nobody is going to sue him if he makes sure that there are mental health supports available in every single school on a regularly scheduled basis. Nobody is going to sue him if he makes sure that school buses are running on time and that routes are reasonable. The only reason that the minister would need such sweeping immunity protections is because he does not actually want to do the things that will make our education system safer and healthier for our kids or because he wants to actively do the opposite.

When the minister so viciously attacked teachers and education workers in committee, he was asked by journalists outside the room why he had done that, and he said he shouldn't be silenced, which was pretty ironic because there was only one day of committee hearings after the minister's one hour. That left only five hours for members of the public and for education partners to come and share their perspectives on the bill. So the vast majority of people who wanted to share their perspective on this legislation never had the opportunity; they were deliberately silenced by this government. And yet, somehow, the minister thought that he was the victim here, that he was being silenced and he needed more airtime.

1610

He got his facts completely wrong, but that didn't stop him from yelling at witnesses. But this is part of the problem, because all of the partners who came to speak at committee confirmed that they had not been consulted on this bill. He didn't talk to education workers, he didn't talk to teachers, he didn't talk to principals, he didn't talk to parents and he didn't talk to trustees. And when you don't talk to anybody who is responsible for delivering education on the ground, who is in our schools every single day, who are in our communities around the province, who know their kids, who know what their kids need, who know what's happening in their kids' schools—when you don't consult them, then you're going to get facts wrong. And that's what happened to the minister.

And it's just one of the additional risks with this bill. When he's giving himself sweeping power over many, many things, but he thinks he knows everything and doesn't need to consult a single person, then we're going to continue to see more harmful decisions being made, more errors being made. Because the minister fundamentally does not understand education, does not know what is happening in our schools and does not care to work with the people who do.

And you know what that means, Speaker: It means, effectively, that we have a dictator in education. We have an emperor of education. Because fundamentally, education should be a partnership that respects student voices about what they need, that respects the professional expertise of teachers and education workers who have training and experience in the classroom, that respects the community voices that trustees bring to the table and the accountability that trustees demonstrate towards the people that elect them, that respects the voices of parents

and advocates, whether they're advocating for accessibility for students with disabilities, whether they're advocating for equity and respect for the human rights of Black, racialized and Indigenous students, whether they're advocating for the fundamental constitutional rights of Franco-Ontarians. Those voices all need to be involved in education decision-making.

Education functions best as a partnership, but this minister doesn't like partnerships. He doesn't see any value in partnerships. He thinks he knows better than everybody else, despite the fact that he can't even get his facts straight.

And then, Speaker, there was the fact that when he was asked about the 21,000 kids who are excluded from our schools every single day and how he can possibly mandate that attendance be part of a student's grade when he won't even take action to ensure that every child in Ontario can be at school, his response was just that kids with disabilities will be exempted from the attendance requirement.

Parents of kids with disabilities don't want their kids exempted. They want their kids to have the same right that every other child in Ontario has: the right to be at school and the right to a meaningful education and the right to safety and support while at school.

So the minister's continued lack of respect for these kids by saying, "Don't worry, we just won't count it towards your grade," is incredibly problematic. I mean, these kids aren't even going to get grades if they can't be at school. The minister actually needs to listen to parents. He needs to listen to advocates and he needs to listen to students with disabilities about what they actually need.

And since the government didn't care to allow many voices at committee, I'm going to spend some time here sharing about the concerns that the committee heard, whether it was from the testimony that we did get to hear in person or whether it's from the over 100 written submissions that the committee received. More than 90% of them opposed the government's bill and said that the government should go back to the drawing table. So I'm going to talk about what concerns people raised in hopes that the government members will actually listen to the people of Ontario, listen to the people who are deeply affected by the measures in Bill 101, and do the right thing and vote against this bill at third reading.

The first thing I want to flag is that there are several parts of this bill that are potentially unconstitutional. And beside the fact that no government should be adopting legislation that is unconstitutional, what this also means is that if the government proceeds with this, then the people of Ontario are once again going to have to pay for this government to defend itself in court—for who knows how long, for who knows how many lawyer hours—when they could simply listen to people upfront and not adopt legislation that's unconstitutional.

They voted against numerous amendments in clause-by-clause that would have addressed unconstitutional provisions and would have ensured that the legislation respected constitutional rights. The committee members from the government side wouldn't even speak up to

defend the government's position and why they thought unconstitutional measures should be in the bill.

I'm going to talk about the different areas where this bill may potentially be unconstitutional. The first is the impact that it has on francophone school boards, because we know that francophones have the constitutional right to an equitable education that is governed by and for Franco-Ontarians. And it's not a right that was given to them by the government; it is a right that they fought for, for decades, and won.

But this bill gives the government power over French school boards in a number of areas which infringe on their right to govern their own education system, "par et pour les Franco-Ontariens." And that includes the minister giving himself the power to determine where school boards may and may not buy land and whether or not they are allowed to do repairs.

Currently, they need to have the minister's approval to build or expand a school, but not to repair a school. This legislation says even for repairs, now, they need to go to the minister. But the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens says, "Ces mesures réduisent l'autonomie décisionnelle des conseils scolaires et limitent leur capacité à répondre rapidement et efficacement aux besoins des communautés francophones qu'ils desservent."

They also note that when it comes to francophone materials or materials in the classroom, it's very important that any such materials actually reflect the reality of Franco-Ontarians and the language of Franco-Ontarians: "Ces nouveaux pouvoirs centralisent des décisions pédagogiques essentielles et risquent d'imposer des approches uniformes qui ne tiennent pas compte des réalités linguistiques et culturelles du système francophone ni de l'expertise des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation."

And finally, like many others, the AEFO raised concerns about the elimination of the "commission des langues d'enseignement" and the centralization of that power in the hands of the minister. They say, "Le remplacement d'un mécanisme spécialisé par une prise de décision ministérielle centralisée soulève des préoccupations quant à la protection des droits linguistiques et à la prise en compte des besoins éducatifs et culturels des francophones."

FESFO, which is the Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne and represents francophone high school students in Ontario, says that they are also very concerned about the fact that the law does not respect the right of Franco-Ontarians to their own resources and materials in the classroom, "par et pour les francophones."

"Plusieurs élèves s'inquiètent du fait que le projet de loi ne précise pas suffisamment si ces ressources seront créées par des francophones en Ontario. Ils et elles craignent que certains contenus soient simplement traduits de l'anglais, sans vraiment tenir compte des réalités culturelles vécues par les jeunes francophones de la province. Pour eux, il est important que les ressources ne soient pas seulement en français, mais qu'elles soient aussi pensées pour la francophonie ontarienne."

And I just want to say, Speaker, one concern I frequently heard from francophone youth is that, far too often, their materials for the classroom, their textbooks, are available only in English or very poorly translated French. So the fact that the minister is giving himself the power to dictate what materials, textbooks and resources a francophone teacher in Ontario can use in a francophone school is incredibly concerning.

And this is what ADFO, who represents the francophone principals and vice-principals in the province, says about the elimination of the Languages of Instruction Commission and to the minister: “The dissolution of the Languages of Instruction Commission of Ontario removes an important specialized mechanism that supports equitable access to French-language education in minority settings and risks weakening safeguards aligned with section 23 charter obligations.

“Increased centralization of authority at the ministry level may reduce responsiveness to the demographic, cultural and territorial realities that shape student success in French-language minority communities.

“The introduction of different employer governance models and labour relations may undermine staffing stability and labour relations in French-language schools, which already operate in a constrained recruitment environment.”

1620

So they are also concerned, Speaker, about the fact that they are changing the governance model for bargaining for English boards but not in French boards, creating a dual structure where it's going to be difficult for francophone boards to maintain their rights when the dominant majority is seeing a change. So that's the rights of francophones.

Then there are concerns about the impact on the denominational rights of Catholics, who also have a right under section 93 of the Constitution Act to govern their own education system.

This is what the Catholic teachers say about the bargaining changes: “Under the proposed legislation, CODE becomes the employer bargaining agency. However, CODE is not independent of the government, insofar that the government may substitute another person or body for CODE—and also may make decisions regarding the authority of CODE's bargaining committee, its processes for decision-making under the legislation, and requirements to provide information to the government.

“This lack of independence from government control demonstrates that CODE cannot be a steward of denominational rights protecting Catholics from government intrusive actions....

“In short, the body enshrined by our constitution to protect the Catholicity of the system has been sidelined by the government, which has been constitutionally prohibited from interfering in the system....

“To remove the custodian of denominational rights from collective bargaining and replace it with a government-controlled body creates the conditions for unconstitutional intrusion.”

This was a concern that was echoed by the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association as well, when the minister got his fact wrong about how Catholic trustees are actually engaged in bargaining currently.

There are also concerns raised by both sides about the impact of the government's changes to bargaining on the rights to free and fair collective bargaining in Ontario.

This is what the Catholic teachers have to say:

“The Supreme Court of Canada has repeatedly affirmed that s.2(d) includes the right to meaningful collective bargaining, including the ability of employees to engage in a process that is independent, in good faith, and free from substantial interference by the state. Legislation that undermines the capacity of one party to bargain freely or that gives the state undue control over the process may constitute an infringement of this right.

“In this context, Bill 101 raises concerns that:

“—the minister's ability to override or replace the employer bargaining agent may constitute substantial interference in the bargaining process;

“—the regulation-making authority over bargaining structures may limit the independence and autonomy of the employer side; and

“—taken together, these provisions may undermine the meaningful nature of collective bargaining, as required by the charter.”

But when the NDP moved amendments to say that the government was going to keep collective bargaining free of any political interference and that it would abide by section 2(d) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the government members voted against those amendments.

Another area where the government voted against an amendment is the minister's unprecedented control over board communications. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association particularly flagged the minister's ability to control the communications of individual trustees, especially given that trustees are an elected level of government in Canada, saying that this is possible infringement of freedom of expression under section 2(b) of the Charter.

This is what CCLA has to say: “Ministerial control over the public communications of elected trustees is particularly alarming. Elected officials have a fundamental right—and responsibility—to communicate with their constituents. Restrictions on that communication interfere with the free flow of information between public representatives and those they represent and may also raise concerns under section 2(b) of the charter.”

Again, this is a pretty profound infringement of a fundamental right in Canada, which is setting the government up for a potential charter challenge that we're all going to have to pay for. That's money that will be going to pay government lawyers that should be going into our classrooms to make sure that our children have EA and mental health supports.

So the government is attacking all of these constitutional rights—of francophones, of Catholics, of unionized workers, of freedom of expression and freedom of speech—in the province, which might be why they have to give themselves such sweeping immunity provisions.

As I've noted before, the bill says "liability" 43 times, but only says "student" five times, and it doesn't mention classrooms, mental health or special education at all. In committee, the minister tried to claim that the liability provisions of this bill—none of which appear in the Education Act, which has existed for 36 years and has been in place under Ministers of Education of all parties, who have managed to function without these liability provisions—the minister still tried to claim that these are "standard" for ministers, but here is what the civil liberties association said:

"Proposed sections 17.2 and 17.3 contain some of the most aggressive liability-shielding provisions seen in Ontario legislation in recent memory. These sections extinguish causes of action against ministers and crown agents personally, bar most tort and related remedies in court, and eliminate causes of action against the crown for acts of third parties related to functions under the act.

"By barring claims in tort, contract, restitution, unjust enrichment, breach of trust, and fiduciary duty—while simultaneously deeming government-appointed supervisors to be officers of the board for vicarious liability purposes—the bill transfers financial risk to local boards while insulating the province from legal consequences for its own decisions. This arrangement is fundamentally incompatible with the rule of law's requirement that government be answerable for its actions. Bill 101's liability provisions come dangerously close to insulating provincial decision-making from all meaningful legal accountability."

"Fundamentally incompatible with the rule of law's requirement that government be answerable for its actions," Speaker: It's hard to be more clear than that about the dangers of this government's legislation.

We also heard concerns from parent groups like Parents of Black Children Canada, who said that the "expanded liability protections for the minister and decision-makers, including 'good faith' provisions"—which means that the minister and the supervisors don't even have to demonstrate that they acted in good faith—"do not require any consideration of equity," which "reduces families' ability to seek redress and weakens accountability when harm occurs." And Parents of Black Children Canada raised concerns that, over a year after the human rights commissioner said there is systemic anti-Black racism in our education system, the minister has still not implemented the Dreams Delayed road map to address that systemic anti-Black racism. So when the government is doing that on one hand and providing itself with these sweeping protections on the other, then you have to think that there is no intent at all to address anti-Black racism and that what the government is trying to do is to protect themselves from any attempt to hold them accountable for that failure.

The AODA Alliance, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance, also raised concerns for the liability protections, saying:

"Bill 101 gives the education minister and cabinet a vast amount of highly discretionary power. Yet it imposes

few if any legislative guardrails limiting or constraining how these sweeping and arbitrary powers are to be used. In large government bureaucracies such power too often risks bad decisions and troubling abuses.

"At the same time, this bill is replete with unnecessary and harmful provisions that are designed to insulate Ontario government officials and some others as much as possible from legal liability in the courts for their actions. This substantially reduces the important checks and balances that the court system provides in a democracy. It is a cruel irony that Bil 101 aggressively protects the power of the Ontario government to sue others."

So again, just like with consultation, if you want to centralize 100% of the power in your own hands and you want to have zero accountability for your own actions, then essentially you are demanding to be a dictator. You are demanding power with no accountability and no consequences for your own actions. There's really no other word for it.

The informal association of parent involvement councils also raised some significant concerns on behalf of parents, noting that there have been a few deaths of students in Ontario schools that have been related to the lack of funding and the lack of supports at school to keep people safe. They say that these limitations of liability therefore "raise grave concerns about minimum levels of funding to ensure that all students are able to learn to capacity and be safe at school." They want the bill to be amended to allow the crown and the Ministry of Education to be held legally and financially accountable for remedies imposed by courts, tribunals and/or arbitral remedies so that they may be compelled to make financial adjustments to ensure all our children have enough qualified teachers and staff at school and can return home safely.

1630

And again, Speaker, if it was your intention to have enough qualified teachers, to have enough qualified staff to ensure that every child could return home safely at the end of the day, why would you need immunity protections? No parent is going to be upset with you for making sure their kid comes home safely at the end of the day.

But while the minister is busy shielding himself from any kinds of consequences for his actions, he is grossly overreaching in powers in the education system, particularly for someone who has no educational experience and who does not consult. As I already mentioned, he's giving himself the power to include attendance as part of a student's grade. But there are more than 21,000 students in our province who are not in school every single day because the funding is not there and the resources are not there to allow them to be at school safely and supported. Yet the minister isn't going to do anything about that except to exempt them from the attendance requirement.

The ARCH Disability Law Centre raised concerns that uniform rules around attendance do not take into account the needs of students with disabilities.

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation also raised equity concerns, saying, "It is unclear that students who have a history of low attendance would be

positively affected by a corresponding low mark bestowed on them for their lack of attendance. What is clear, however, is the fact that many of our students do not attend school regularly due to factors such as mental health issues, anxiety brought on by overcrowded classrooms and few support systems, violence in the schools, bullying and other factors that are the root causes of the student absenteeism so keenly obvious in our school system. OSSTF/FEESO encourages the government to devote more resources to the classroom in support of our most vulnerable students instead of exacerbating the issue even further by tying their absenteeism to an even lower mark which does nothing to promote their success.”

And I also want to add some more feedback from my own 15-year-old, Speaker. She noted that one of her teachers has regularly not been at school this year—which is something that’s happening between increased rates of illness and injury among teachers—but that there’s not always a qualified substitute that is in place. So students in her class have just stopped attending those classes because they’ve come to expect that nothing meaningful will happen in those classes. That’s something I heard from student trustees as well, that if three out of your four classes for the day don’t have a qualified teacher, if you keep being sent every day to the library, along with a number of other classes, to essentially be babysat, you’re going to stop going to school. So that’s another area where the government is failing to address one of the root causes of student absenteeism.

And then this is also an important point that’s raised by the informal association of parent involvement councils, which is about student transportation: that, far too often, student transportation is not reliable, whether that’s due to the underfunding, which means that there’s a shortage of qualified drivers; or whether that’s due to the lack of investment in northern and rural highways, which means that an accident can shut down the road for the entire community and students can’t get to and from school; or whether it is socio-economic and cultural barriers such as parents who are working multiple jobs and therefore don’t have the opportunity to take their kids to school when the bus is running. They offered a few examples of this, such as one Ontario school board that serves 5,000 students that had more than 100 bus cancellations in the 2025-26 school year, which isn’t done yet. So that’s more than 100 bus cancellations to date, which represents a significant disruption in the ability of students to get to school.

There are also weather-related service suspensions, particularly in the north. Within one board: at least 10 full days this year with little or no bus service across multiple communities, although the schools don’t always close, so kids are supposed to be there but they have no way of getting there. So they are asking the government to properly fund student transportation and to address the issue of highway safety and also to ensure that there are opportunities for students who genuinely can’t get through due to transportation limitations, including high-quality hybrid video conferencing and guaranteed telecommunications access for rural areas.

I also want to share these comments from a student Noah Rosenthal, who is 16 years old and a student at Michael Power–St. Joseph High School in Etobicoke. He said that this bill “doesn’t attack the root problem of truancy. Research shows that truancy is rarely about laziness or not caring, it’s about the environment a student is in. For example, mental health issues (such as anxiety, depression, and social anxiety), home circumstances (such as unstable housing, family responsibilities like caring for a sibling, parents with illness or addiction, poverty), bullying, chronic illness and disengagement.” Noah is 16, but he gets it, so why can’t the government get it?

Noah was also one of many students who raised the concern about eliminating school climate surveys, eliminating the voice of students. He says, “I personally find these surveys a relief, they let me voice my opinions and concerns so they can be heard and analyzed.”

The Franco-Ontarian students, FESFO, raised similar concerns, and the principals also noted that, because these surveys offer an opportunity for students to provide feedback anonymously, they’re able to hear about more concerns that students may not feel comfortable bringing forward on the record with their name and face attached to it. And if we truly want to address all of the conditions in our schools, including the problem of bullying and of mental health challenges like anxiety, then we need to know what’s going on and we need to be able to track over time whether our measures are addressing them or not. But this government is taking away that capacity to do that, ending that student voice.

By giving itself the power to require school boards to use certain materials, require educators to use materials—I’ve already spoken about the risk of this government introducing a book ban much like their friends in Alberta. But teachers and education workers and parents and students have also raised significant concerns about the impact on the ability of teachers to use their professional expertise and judgment, but also to deliver responsive, inclusive and effective instruction.

This is what the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario says: “Restricting the range of resources that educators can use to deliver the curriculum limits their ability to reflect the diversity of Ontario’s classrooms. Students come from a wide range of cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds, and effective teaching requires the flexibility to select resources that are relevant, inclusive, and responsive to those identities and experiences. . . .

“Limiting access to diverse resources undermines these efforts and will disproportionately impact students from historically marginalized communities.”

The government is also giving itself the power to approve or not approve or direct school boards’ ability to acquire new land. This is what a parent, Lu-Anne da Costa, says about that ministerial power: “This approach undermines the rule of law”—oh, sorry. Wrong one—but she’s also concerned about the minister undermining the rule of law with his liability provisions. She says, “Granting the Minister of Education unilateral authority over the land sales of schools erases the essential checks

and balances and local input from communities. Decisions about public assets should involve local community voices and be transparent to ensure that the best interests of students and communities are protected.”

There were many, many, many concerns raised about the government’s new corporatization of education, Speaker, and their addition of new layers of bureaucracy. This is a parent from Toronto, Sara Blumenstein: “This legislation involves having CEOs run our school boards. C-level executives tend to be very costly, and in a time when Ontario is laying off staff and removing programs for multilingual language learners and children with special needs, I just don’t understand how we can afford to pay for additional staff in every school board who will not be working directly with children.”

She goes on to say, “Children are not lines in a spreadsheet or inventory items to be stocked, tracked, and shipped. Schools are not factories or warehouses, and school boards are not businesses. Addressing public education with a rigid business model ignores the humanity of our schools and risks further alienation of vulnerable children and families in our communities.”

Sara was one of many, many, many parents to raise these concerns, Speaker. In fact, there were many people who talked about the fact that education should be a public good. They’re deeply concerned about this government’s move to treat it like a business and how that impacts our kids.

CUPE education workers also share this concern, saying, “The legislation intends to divorce the role of financial and administrative oversight from academic governance. The vision appears to be one where school boards are run like businesses, with financial considerations taking primacy over education quality—a big step in the wrong direction.

1640

“School board managers should be educators, working to increase service quality. Board finances are a means to that end, not an end in themselves. Students must come first.”

There are many, many, many other concerns that were raised, Speaker—more than I can possibly raise here; more than we could have possibly heard in a single day of hearings, although I think that was deliberate on the part of the government to make sure that many of the voices never had the opportunity to be heard.

One of the concerns was about losing local accountability and local voice, reflecting that trustees are the ones who are elected by the community to bring their voices to the table, but these new CEOs will have the power to override their voices and prevent them from even being able to bring forward a concern, let alone to adopt a motion or a budget that reflects those concerns.

Just in the last two minutes I have, Speaker, I want to talk about the fact that the government talks about how they want every dollar going into classrooms, and yet they are creating this new level of bureaucracy that will cost a great deal of money. They are also making other decisions that make no financial sense, including their attacks on the

trustee associations, which seems like it’s just personal on the part of the minister, particularly as these trustee associations result in significant financial savings for our school boards. For every dollar that members in the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association and in the Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association—for every dollar of membership, they return more than four dollars of savings through shared services that enhance system efficiency and support responsible use of public resources, such as the policies that they’ve negotiated around copyright, which reduces the fees for school boards in Ontario, and around energy savings.

When you take those numbers, Speaker, and you calculate at the level of just one board, like for the Peel District School Board, that amounts to \$1 million in direct savings to a board like Peel’s. The government may be saving \$250,000 in Peel by not paying membership fees to the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association, but that’s actually going to cost the board \$750,000. Again, if the government is not going to give a single penny more to school boards, then that is money that is coming out of our kids’ classrooms.

This is fundamentally not about good financial management. It is not about supporting our kids. It is about a partisan power grab by the minister and being vindictive to people who have advocated against his government’s policies and whom he simply does not like.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

MPP Lisa Gretzky: It’s my pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents to talk to Bill 101, which is titled Putting Student Achievement First Act, which is not at all what this bill is about, Speaker. As my colleague from Ottawa West–Nepean just spoke to, this is about the government—the minister specifically—consolidating power to himself and then abdicating any responsibility for the decisions he makes. It is about isolating himself and this government from the decisions they make that are detrimental to the public education system here in Ontario.

Speaker, in the budget we saw huge cuts to education. There is an over \$17-billion school repair backlog, and yet, there is nothing in this bill to address that, absolutely nothing. So as we get into warmer weather, we have students in sweltering hot classrooms. We have teachers and education workers in sweltering hot classrooms. How do students concentrate on learning in those conditions? We have students in colder weather who are freezing in the classroom and having to wear coats. How is that conducive to learning?

Now, Speaker, I want to talk about this government’s history when it comes to education. It is not surprising at all to me—it is shameful, the behaviour from the minister, but it is not at all surprising—that when people would come forward during the one day that the government provided to hear from the public on this—they didn’t consult the public before bringing this legislation forward—the minister then took it upon himself to attack the witnesses that came forward to speak to this. He was incredibly aggressive.

Again, it's shameful, but it's not surprising to those of us on this side of the House because the government and the minister have already shown us and the public what they think about education workers in this province. We saw it with Bill 124, when they attacked education workers and others through legislation that trampled on their collective bargaining rights. We saw it again with Bill 28, when they attacked the lowest-paid education workers in this province and tried to trample on their collective bargaining rights. We've seen this behaviour from the government. This is not new. So regardless of what they say, their behaviour shows differently.

I want to talk about one of the provisions in the bill where it gives the minister and the government sweeping powers to do whatever they want but have protected themselves from liability. Now, Speaker, this is also not new. We just saw it when the government changed the freedom-of-information laws to protect themselves from having to release information about the greenbelt scandal. The news just broke—just broke—that they're doing it again over the Skills Development Fund scandal. They're hiding behind their change, their legal change, to protect themselves from having to release that information.

What we've seen is a government who likes to point fingers at others, who likes to accuse others, such as trustees—duly elected school board trustees, those that are elected in their communities. We've seen them point fingers at them and level accusations. But we have a government who is under an active RCMP investigation—an active investigation. This government has been under OPP investigation. And what do they do? They change the law to protect themselves. That's what we see.

So it's a little rich when the Minister of Education stands up, all holier than thou, mister high-and-mighty, and claims to be one of the most principled and above-reproach people in the entire province. Yet we see this legislation that they brought forward specifically so the minister can protect his own hide from any type of legal action taken or any consequences caused by this legislation. And that would apply to any of the government members who have spoken up in favour of this legislation, defended this legislation and will ultimately vote for this legislation. It's very, very much a "do as I say, not as I do" situation. Anybody here have parents who used to say that to you? Do as I say, not as I do? That's the government; that's the government.

Speaker, I want to talk about another piece of this legislation, which is around the attendance of students. It is completely out of touch with the realities of this province—completely out of touch.

Actually, I'm going to back up a little bit. When we're talking about the underfunding of the education system, I also want to point out, as they're firing teachers and education workers, that the Premier and his entire cabinet decided that it was okay for the Premier to spend nearly \$30 million dollars on a private jet—on a private jet—when we have ballooning class sizes, when we have an increase in violence in the schools. StatsCan has released numbers that show that Ontario has the third-highest

poverty rate in the entire country—the entire country—but the Premier buys himself a jet.

They're spending money on a privately owned luxury spa in downtown Toronto, building some fantasy island, probably a Ferris wheel—\$17 billion in a repair backlog in our schools. We have children going to food banks and relying on school nutrition programs. That's not this government, by the way; that's community that's taking care of these children. And the government is pointing fingers at duly elected trustees, saying they're the problem.

1650

Special education has long been underfunded under the previous Liberal government and even worse under this Conservative government.

Speaker, I'm going to go back to StatsCan—the third-highest poverty rate in Canada. We have a record number of people visiting food banks. We have a record number of people experiencing homelessness. Some of them are education workers, by the way. And this government is saying, "We're going to go after student attendance." When a student and families cannot afford a roof over their heads or food on the table, that impacts a student's ability to not only attend school but to be successful in their education if they can get to school.

We have students with disabilities who are being excluded from participating in school—their right to an education. That right doesn't mean that they're told that, because they do not have the staff to be able to support those students, that that parent, that student is going to be sent home after an hour in school because there's no supports. It doesn't mean that parents have to come and sit outside the principal's office just in case their child needs to be sent home because there isn't proper support. It means they have a right to be in classrooms and have a meaningful education with a fully, properly funded education system that provides all the supports that that student needs. That is not in this bill.

There is nothing in this bill that will actually help with student achievement—nothing. Absolutely nothing.

Speaker, when I was a trustee many, many years ago, the one thing that we grappled with the most, aside from the abysmal special education funding, were the situations when families who were lower-income—when their child had to work in order to help support the household; when there was violence in the household and the student couldn't access the community supports, the mental health supports, or the victim supports that they needed. Or their mother couldn't flee a violent situation because there were no supports for them in community.

So we had to think of creative ideas in order to let those students still receive an education but understanding that not every student is going to be able to attend every single day during regular school hours. There is nothing in this bill that addresses that huge gap. My colleague from Essex would probably know that there are many farms in our area where those students actually work on the family farm and we had to make accommodations for them to be able to attend school outside of those hours.

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

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I wanted to ask the member from Ottawa West–Nepean—and the presentation was so detailed this afternoon. So many angles covered by yourself and the member as well from Windsor West.

If Bill 101 passes largely unchanged, what long-term impacts on local school board democracy concern you the most?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member from Toronto–St. Paul's for that question.

I think the lack of power of trustees, who are the voice of local communities, to actually make changes in policies to reflect local needs and concerns is what worries me most at the local level of all of the changes that are happening in Bill 101.

Trustees don't just take phone calls to answer questions or to arrange a sit-down mediation with a superintendent or a principal. They take all of that feedback that they're hearing from the community—whether it's systemic issues or they're hearing a concern from many, many community members—and they can address that through local policies, through motions that they bring forward, through programs that they put in the budget, through the hiring and allocation of resources. Now an unelected, unaccountable person who does not reflect the voices of the community and is in no way responsive to them can simply overrule them when they try to do that. So what we're seeing is the removal of any reflection of community needs and community voices in our schools, and the people making decisions will be accountable only to the Minister of Education in downtown Toronto, who clearly does not know the reality on the ground across our province.

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

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: To the member from Ottawa West–Nepean: My view on the trustees is that our Minister of Education has finally realized that they have overstepped in so many ways. We see this in Toronto. We see this where they bring in conversations into meetings that have nothing to do with the welfare of the students. We see that they never sanctioned egregious spending by so many school boards.

I think what is important is that part of the changes for the trustees is to say, yes, they have a role, but it is not to do what they have done in the past couple of years: turned a blind eye on one thing, and that's the students.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: What I find pretty rich is that there are over a million people in this province who are using a food bank, and yet the Premier thought it was a good use of our hard-earned taxpayer dollars to buy himself a \$30-million private luxury jet that can't even land at 90% of the airports in the province.

I think it's pretty rich that at the same time he was going to use our taxpayer dollars to build a convention centre in the middle of Lake Ontario, a \$2.4-billion spa to be run by a bankrupt Austrian spa company that we're all paying \$400 for, even though most of us across the province will

never go there. By the minister's logic, what we should be doing is asking the federal government to step in and remove this government from power because they have clearly lost sight of the priorities of the people of Ontario, what the needs of the people are, and they are shielding themselves from any accountability or consequences for their actions, including hiding from freedom-of-information laws and changing the rules so that they can hide.

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

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you to my two colleagues. Almost every student, teacher, education worker that we speak to these days talks to us about feeling less safe in very overcrowded classrooms. We hear that any time we're out and talking to anyone. I've had parents even wonder out loud whether pulling their kids out of the public system is the direction that they have to go to if things don't improve.

Do you see a pattern here where this government is eroding the public system, pulling resources out of the public system and pushing people and pushing, whether it's health care or education, those public services toward privatization?

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the question from my colleague. Absolutely—what this government is doing is purposefully underfunding the education system in order to push a privatization agenda. We have seen it in the health care system. I suspect at some point they're going to be talking about private jails. They're talking about jails a lot; they're probably going to be talking about a privatized justice system as well.

When this government purposely underfunds our public education system by \$6.3 billion during their eight years of government, when we are seeing crumbling schools, when we are seeing ballooning class sizes and an increase in violence in our schools, when we see a minister at committee who is attacking the very people who work within the education system and trying to discredit the parents and students and education workers who have been raising alarm bells for years, what we see is a government that is intentionally eroding a public system in order to create this narrative that, somehow, privatization would be better.

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

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I wanted to ask the member from Windsor West—you talked about student attendance. It made me feel so sad, because sometimes you miss school, sure, the odd time you want to skip a class or whatever, but what we're dealing with right now, where we're talking about affordability, kids not being in the classroom for reasons beyond, say, being lazy, and not deserving a passing because they weren't there three quarters of the time—can you talk again about the impact of poverty—one in 10 going to food banks, including children—on attendance, and how this is just so out of touch of this government?

1700

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the question from my colleague.

I would say that this government is not just out of touch, they're entitled. Buying a \$30-million private luxury jet for the Premier is entitlement. He's not looking at all of those students who are hungry, who can't access food or have to go to food banks. He's not taking into consideration the number of families that are struggling just to get by and how that impacts students.

They're not looking at—or, frankly, I don't think they care about the reality for so many in this province. We saw it earlier today when my colleague asked a question about the justice system failing sexual assault survivors and the Attorney General gaslit her, and said, "They're doing wonderfully. The government is doing everything right." This is what we see from this government. Rather than looking at what's truly impacting education in our province, rather than looking at what actually might keep students out of school—whether that is health issues, whether that is that they're hungry, they don't have a place to live, perhaps there's violence in the home—this government is simply pointing the finger and saying somehow the students and the parents and the education workers are failing because those students aren't attending class.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafopoulos): Question?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the members for their comments this afternoon. I want to talk about trustees, and I just want to share some numbers with the members.

Over the last four years, the York Catholic District School Board trustees have burned through \$340,000 in legal fees fighting amongst themselves; Grand Erie has spent at least \$300,000; Hastings and Prince Edward has spent \$175,000—that's nearly \$1 million wasted by these trustees. Bill 101 puts a stop to this dysfunction.

Could the members please explain to parents in York region, Brant, Belleville and other places across the province why they should keep paying for this trustee infighting?

MPP Lisa Gretzky: Speaker, the gall of the Conservative members to get up and ask a question like that, when we have seen this government bring forward unconstitutional bills that have cost the taxpayers money because they continue to have to go to court to defend their decisions. When millions, hundreds of millions of dollars—but you know what? We won't know the entire cost, the total cost of this government's court costs because they changed the laws in order for the people of this province to be able to access that information through freedom-of-information requests, so that we could see how much this government is actually costing taxpayers rather than investing it into our education system, our health care system, our justice system, ensuring that people have wages where they can have a roof over their head and put food on their table.

I cannot believe that a government member, of all people, would get up and ask a question about somebody

else's legal costs when this government is the number one employer for lawyers in this province as they defend your record.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafopoulos): Further debate?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: It's nice to be here this afternoon with colleagues to talk about such an important issue: Bill 101, an education bill, which should be the focus of a lot of attention here in this chamber. I will start by indicating that I will be sharing my time with the member from Ottawa South.

As we're moving into third reading of Bill 101, I have to say that I'm quite frustrated with the process—our legislative process that is not delivering on what it is meant to accomplish.

I'm just going to go back to second reading, during which, when we debated this bill, many members of this House raised serious concerns about the bill—concerns about centralizing power, about weakening local voices in education, about threatening francophone control over key aspects of French-language education and advancing policy without clear evidence that it will improve outcomes.

After second reading, we went to committee, which was actually a good thing, and we were all looking forward to contributing to the committee work and hearing from stakeholders. They came, and those stakeholders who came to committee actually echoed these concerns across the sector.

That process in committee actually also gave us an opportunity to bring forward some thoughtful, constructive amendments a couple of days later, a lot based on what we heard, but also based on what stakeholders had been saying. But unfortunately, I guess, members who were also at the committee with me were a little bit disappointed to see that the government committee members had no intention of engaging. So what we saw during committee is that amendments of the opposition were dismissed without discussion, without debate. They were simply voted down every single time. It's as if they didn't even listen to the amendments that we were putting forward and that we were explaining at length.

That is not meaningful legislative review. And in addition to that, the government also brought forward some amendments that gave the minister even more powers, with no explanation at all.

So I will say, Madam Speaker, that despite its title, this bill does not put student achievement first. Instead, it shifts blame onto trustees while ignoring the real challenges facing our education system.

For a government that claims to believe in smaller government, it's striking how much this bill expands centralized control. And while the reduction in the length of teacher training may help address the shortage of French-language teachers that's putting a lot of pressure on access to quality education, this actually does not address the root of the problem, because the real issue here that we have with teachers is retention. Too many teachers are leaving the profession within the first five years, not because they

lack commitment, but because the working conditions make it unsustainable. I have to say—I've said that often enough to teachers especially—that I have four children, and you could never pay me enough to be a teacher in a classroom today with the conditions that we have.

A recent report from the Ontario Teachers' Federation estimates that approximately 40,000 qualified teachers are not working in Ontario's kindergarten-to-12 system, so that's nearly actually 18% of those certified. But "qualified" does not mean available, and it certainly does not mean willing to stay. Many have moved on because workloads are too heavy, supports are insufficient and classroom challenges continue to grow without the resources to match. We've been hearing that a lot: The teachers are just exhausted and are losing motivation because they feel like they're beyond being stretched thin. That is the reality in our schools today.

Bill 101, unfortunately, despite its title, does nothing to change this. It does not reduce class sizes, it does not increase support for students with complex needs, and it does not improve working conditions for educators. Instead, it removes decision-making from those closest to students and concentrates it at Queen's Park. I don't know if the minister intends to spend a lot of time in our schools and in classrooms with teachers, to truly understand what their real need is, because he's going to have the responsibility of making those decisions to try to improve our education system.

Madam Speaker, if we're serious about student success, we must focus on what actually keeps teachers in the classroom, and that is support, stability and an environment where both students and educators can succeed. If we don't have that, we will continue to see teachers leave, not because they cannot teach, but because the system is not set up to support them.

1710

We also have to consider the financial pressures facing new teachers. Now that the government has cut OSAP, graduates are carrying higher levels of debt. That reality will also influence those career choices. Maybe people that would have chosen education will move towards another, higher-paying profession that offers more sustainable working conditions. So we're not helping here in training and keeping teachers.

Meanwhile, the government continues to claim that governance issues are the root of the problem. But that's when even the minister has actually acknowledged that francophone boards—boards with strong governance; he said it himself—are facing deficits. How is that? If francophone boards that have great governance, that are managing the education system properly, that don't deserve the worth of the minister, why is it that they are still facing deficit?

I would argue, Madam Speaker, that it is not a question of government; it's clearly a question of underfunding. And these rising costs, such as transportation for French boards because there are few and less between, are creating pressure, and that kind of pressure cannot be solved through centralization.

Je veux maintenant aborder plus précisément en français les impacts que ce projet de loi va avoir sur l'éducation de langue française.

Même si la gouvernance des conseils scolaires francophones n'est pas directement modifiée, plusieurs pouvoirs sont centralisés et s'appliqueront à eux avec un risque réel d'empiéter sur leurs droits constitutionnels. Je sais que le ministre argumente constamment que ce n'est pas le cas, mais la loi n'est pas claire à cet effet. J'ai proposé plusieurs amendements lors de la révision en comité pour s'assurer qu'on mettait noir sur blanc que ces droits seraient protégés. Parce qu'à la fin de la journée, ce qui va arriver, c'est que le ministre a les pouvoirs d'apporter toutes sortes de changements, et les détails vont être dans la réglementation ou dans des directives aux conseils scolaires. Comment est-ce qu'on peut avoir une garantie que les francophones ne seront pas affectés négativement?

Le ministre va pouvoir maintenant imposer des politiques sur différents domaines qui vont toucher tous les conseils francophones : des politiques sur l'évaluation du rendement des élèves, sur les dépenses des conseils scolaires, sur le matériel pédagogique utilisé—il y a une grande préoccupation ici—et sur les communications publiques.

Et comme je l'ai dit, ces pouvoirs-là vont s'appliquer à tous les conseils, y compris les conseils francophones. Ce qui est préoccupant n'est pas seulement l'existence de ces pouvoirs, mais leur portée potentielle qui va être définie par règlement à un autre temps où le public ne portera pas nécessairement l'attention nécessaire.

Madame la Présidente, il faut rappeler que l'article 23 de la Charte canadienne protège non seulement l'accès à l'éducation en français, mais aussi le droit des communautés francophones de gérer et contrôler leurs institutions scolaires. Or, plusieurs mesures du projet de loi 101 viennent fragiliser ce principe. Les limites imposées aux allocations des conseillers pourraient décourager la participation démocratique. Les conseillers scolaires ne font déjà pas beaucoup d'argent avec leurs allocations, mais si on est pour les réduire encore, je me pose vraiment la question : y a-t-il des gens qui vont être encore motivés de mettre leurs noms de l'avant pour être représentants comme conseillers scolaires?

Les restrictions sur les associations comme l'ACÉPO, qui est l'association qui représente les conseils scolaires publics de langue française en Ontario—si on les empêche de fonctionner parce qu'on limiterait la cotisation des conseils scolaires envers leur association, ça pourrait définitivement avoir comme effet d'affaiblir la capacité des conseils de défendre leurs intérêts collectifs à travers cette même association-là, qui fait un travail remarquable d'ailleurs, et qui vient souvent à Queen's Park pour rappeler aux élus que le système francophone a besoin de plus d'appui et a de grands besoins parce qu'on est en croissance constante. Alors c'est une bonne chose, mais on a besoin d'un appui si on ne veut pas perdre les élèves.

Il y a également des nouveaux pouvoirs en matière d'infrastructure qui pourraient permettre une ingérence dans les priorités locales; la même chose pour le contrôle

des communications qui pourrait limiter la capacité des élus de jouer leur rôle de porte-parole. Alors on ne peut pas les museler alors que leur rôle c'est justement de faire valoir les droits en éducation.

On est également très préoccupé par la centralisation du matériel pédagogique qui risque de ne pas répondre aux réalités linguistiques et culturelles des communautés francophones. On l'a répété assez souvent, je pense : les francophones ne veulent pas avoir du matériel anglais qui est traduit, puis souvent mal traduit, en français. Ça ne répondrait pas aux besoins des francophones.

Et je dois ajouter également que l'obligation qui serait contenue dans la loi si elle est adoptée—on fait confiance que ça va arriver. Mais les conseils scolaires vont devoir obtenir l'approbation du ministre pour des projets immobiliers.

Il faut savoir que dans un contexte où les conseils francophones doivent agir rapidement pour répondre à une croissance importante de leurs effectifs, d'avoir un délai pour pouvoir acquérir un immobilier ou un terrain, ça pourrait faire toute la différence et réduire l'accès à l'éducation en français.

Madame la Présidente, ce ne sont pas des préoccupations isolées; c'est l'accumulation de ces mesures qui pose problème. Parce qu'en matière de droits linguistiques, les reculs ne sont pas toujours brutaux, mais ils sont souvent progressifs—une décision à la fois, une contrainte à la fois—jusqu'à ce que les droits perdent leur substance. Et c'est quelque chose qu'on ne peut pas ignorer, parce que c'est une érosion qui est sournoise et qui vient gruger vraiment dans les pouvoirs des francophones à gérer leur éducation.

At the same time, the bill ignores the issues that actually affect student achievement, the reasons for absenteeism, rising class sizes, lack of support for students with special needs, increasing violence in school. These are the realities students and educators are facing every day. When these pressures build, the consequences are predictable: burnout among teachers, disengagement among students and declining outcomes.

Instead of addressing these root causes, the government is using isolated cases of mismanagement to justify broad, disproportionate changes—changes that concentrate power rather than solve problems. This is not reform; it's a distraction.

Over the past eight years, we've seen a gradual erosion of our education system, and now, instead of investing in solutions, the government is simply rearranging structures and calling it progress.

So I ask the government: Will this bill reduce class sizes? Will it increase mental health support? Will it ensure that every child who needs mental health support or support in the classroom will get it? If the answer is no, then this bill will not improve student outcomes.

I would like to cite a few of the submissions that we got from different interveners that we heard from. I think they haven't been heard enough, because obviously we're not seeing a listening mode from the government to address what they've been raising at committee or elsewhere.

Je vais commencer avec la soumission de l'ADFO avec les conseils de direction anglophones. Ils ont mis dans leur soumission : « L'uniformisation à l'échelle provinciale risque d'imposer une approche standardisée limitant la capacité de répondre aux besoins spécifiques des communautés et des élèves. Les groupes les plus susceptibles d'être touchés sont notamment les élèves traditionnellement mal desservis et les élèves ayant des besoins particuliers.

« De façon générale, bien que ce projet de loi vise à modifier un système éducatif en difficulté et sous-financé, il le fait d'une manière superficielle qui risque d'accentuer l'écart entre les décideurs et les éducatrices et éducateurs sur le terrain. »

1720

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association's written submission included a quote that says, "Ministerial control over the public communications of elected trustees is particularly concerning and may infringe freedom of expression under section 2(b) of the charter.

"Ministerial control over the public communications of elected trustees is particularly alarming. Elected officials have a fundamental right—and responsibility—to communicate with their constituents. Restrictions on that communication interfere with the free flow of information between public representatives and those they represent and may also raise concerns under section 2(b) of the charter.

"The power to make retroactive regulations also raises some rule-of-law concerns. Retroactive legislation undermines legal certainty, prejudices parties who have acted in reliance on existing law and constitutes a departure from foundational principles of legislative governance."

OECTA actually, during the public hearing, said: "Bill 101 centralization extends in the class, giving the minister authority over student assessment and threatening teachers' professional judgment. By creating a framework that potentially mandates materials used in the class by teachers, it would perpetuate a deprofessionalized teaching. It would turn teaching into a one-way scripted session devoid of the very spark that brings learning to the students' lives, shifting the profession from grounded in expertise and relationships to the model of government control that we have seen fail down south. Teaching is about real, authentic interactions with students, and that's how we improve students' achievement."

This is also from OECTA representatives: "Well, the concern for me is that it's being framed as a business—it's not; it's a common good. This is a community value, and it's based on people. Kids aren't standard. All of the people in schools are caring adults, and we have less caring adults. So when you unspend that money, you put less people in the class.

"Every parent knows, if you have three siblings in the house and one of them starts to get dysregulated, you want to pick up on that early and deal with it and you can cut that off. If you don't get to it, the two kids start fighting.

"Every parent in Ontario is struggling with the issues of social media, screen time, dysregulation because of technology and cellphones etc. Every community has that,

and the schools are in the community, so we're dealing with the same thing.

"There is this collective social effort we need to undertake, and it is being exacerbated—at a time when kids need us more, we have withdrawn the money and the time for human beings to show care and to deal with these kids and that's a real problem.

"This bill deals with governance and control and other things, but it doesn't address what we need. It's about the spending cuts. It's about not having caring adults."

Sound familiar? This is what we all been saying here in the House.

Madam Speaker, if we truly want to put student achievement first, then we must start by listening to educators, to families, to communities. We must invest in what works and we must respect the constitutional rights of francophone communities to shape their own educational future. Because, in the end, education is not about control from the top; it's about supporting students where they are, empowering those who work with them every day and building a system that reflects the realities of the communities it serves.

This bill does none of that and because of that, I can't support this.

I'll yield the time to my colleague from Ottawa South.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I'm glad to be able to be debating Bill 101 this afternoon. I do want to say that, in this debate, we're debating under a shadow—under the shadow of the Premier's private luxury jet. It's actually a shadow that casts over everything we do here now. And it's a symbol, right? It's a symbol of a Premier and a government that's tired, out of touch, losing it, has lost its way. The government has lost its way, and Bill 101—it's not a physical symbol like the plane, but it's also an indication that the government has lost its way.

After eight long years of starving education, taking \$6.3 billion out of it, the 5,000 schools, the two million students that we have here in Ontario, the chickens are finally coming home to roost. So what does the minister do? The minister says, "It's not our fault. We didn't do this. We didn't create this problem. It's them. It's not that we didn't put enough gas in the engine. It's not that we didn't give people enough to work with. It's not that we didn't hire enough teachers. It's those folks over there. So I'll cherry-pick some of those folks over there and I'll make them the bad guy." And do you know what? That's not going to work, because the reality is, we're looking at outcomes.

Here's the thing I know about our schools. Here's what the problem is in our schools: Class sizes are too big. This government has allowed them to grow. Special education has been starved. Trustees had to find \$800 million that wasn't given to them for special education in other envelopes. And there's a mental health crisis in our schools that's just reflective of what's going on in our society and the things affecting our kids that's not being addressed.

There are things that are happening in our schools right now that none of us have any context for, like a primary

grade class being shut down because of one child's behaviour because there's not enough adults in that classroom, there isn't enough educational support for that student that has an exceptional need and maybe a behavioural need. Everybody's learning is getting interrupted.

Schools are not safe places to learn or to work because of those three things. Class sizes that are too big, special education that's been starved—we're not meeting kids' needs. We know that. And even with what the trustees were able to find, we're still not meeting those needs. And we're not addressing the mental health crisis that exists in our schools.

When I look at Bill 101, do you know what? Here are the questions I ask myself: Is Bill 101 going to make any child's class size smaller? Not one. It's not going to do a thing. There are 1,000 classes between grades 4 and 8 in Ontario that are more than 30 kids. Think about that. Think about a little less than half your caucus having one person trying to keep them in control—not that you guys are kids, but you get the idea. It gets hard; I know. There's only 14 of us, and that's hard enough. Think about it. I'm only trying to tease it out of you and get you to laugh because we're asking teachers in classes of 30 and larger to do something that we couldn't do, that we wouldn't want to do. It's not about the work that they're doing; it's about what the kids are getting. It's about what the kids are getting, and they're not getting enough. They aren't getting enough.

Then I ask myself, what's the next question? The next question is: Is any child whose exceptional need is not being met going to have that exceptional need met because of Bill 101? No, not one—not a single thing.

Then I ask myself—we have a mental health crisis in our schools. I think we can all agree our kids are under a lot of pressure. There's a lot of stuff happening to them right now that never happened to us. The minister even admitted that there was a mental health crisis in our schools at committee, but there's no answer. "But I'm going to do this thing where I'm going to centralize power in one corner office of Queen's Park." That's not going to help any child with a mental health need. There are 5,000 schools in Ontario. There are two million students. Ontario is a big place. Schools are different in Thunder Bay than they are in Windsor, than they are in Timiskaming, than they are in Ottawa, than they are in Niagara—they're different. And schools belong not to this place at Queen's Park, not to us, not to someone in the corner office, not to the Premier; they belong to the families and the communities they serve.

1730

What this government is doing with this bill is centralizing power and not making schools respond to the community. The government won't respond to the community; it will respond to the corner office at Queen's Park. The CEO doesn't work for the community; he works for the minister. The new CEO is going to work for the minister. It's not going to be a board that that CEO works for; it's going to be the minister.

I'll give you an example of why this isn't going to work: the EQAO results. The minister, this current minister, said, "I've got the EQAO results on my desk. I want to look at them a little bit more." Well, he didn't really quite understand that those results actually go to families and to educators to help the kids who took the test. But no, no, they could sit on his desk. He's like, "I'm looking at it. I'm the big guy. I can look at it. I'll give them to you when you need them. I've got to think about it. And you know what, I'll tell you all exactly how it is"—it's unbelievable. It's unbelievable that a Minister of Education would not fundamentally understand the thing that was in front of him.

I'll give you another example of that. This is why it's bad to centralize power in one place. I asked the minister—first question in committee: He's been talking about absenteeism and the rise in absenteeism, and how bad it actually is. So I said, "Minister, can you please tell me what the top three reasons are for absenteeism in our schools?" The member from Essex was there; he would know. I couldn't get an answer. He gave me a bunch of anecdotal stuff—"It could be this and that, and over there, it's this."

No, no. You're doing something to attach attendance and participation to people's marks, and saying that's going to be a solution to a problem that you do not fundamentally understand. You don't know why that thing is happening, but you're pretending you're going to fix it, because it's a nice, easy answer: "Let's just put it on the kids. Let's just make the kids bad. It's their problem." No, it's not, actually. It's our problem. As adults, it's our problem.

I was shocked at the minister's response. It makes me believe that he does not—EQAO results, absenteeism—fundamentally understand the thing that he's running, and what's needed.

I do want to thank the member from Essex, because after four hours of putting forward amendments, we got the first response to I don't know how many amendments—it was about 30 amendments, right? At first, not one word; even on the government's amendments, they wouldn't explain them. What? You're putting forward an amendment and you're not going to say, "Please vote for this amendment because I'm going to do this and this"? It's just, "Here's our amendment. We're going to vote. You don't need to know." Besides, the thing that you're putting forward that we don't like, there may be a good reason that you don't like it, but you can't tell us?

But I will give it to the member from Essex, because when he saw that problem, he would respond. And he responded after that, but it took half a meeting to get there, just to get a simple answer.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, we did call them out, but that's okay. As my former boss said, "It's never too late to do the right thing," right?

The other thing I saw in committee—and this is what really concerns me about the minister. I have been here for a while and I've been working around this place since

1999. I cannot remember a minister staying after their deposition before committee to cross-examine witnesses. The Catholic trustees, or the Catholic educators, came in and there was a constitutional lawyer—I can't remember his name right now; great constitutional lawyer. So the minister was arguing with a constitutional lawyer. It was almost ridiculous. It was. There were five members on the committee. Maybe they had to get warmed up because they couldn't actually give us any responses, so maybe that's why the minister was there. But it was like, are you trying to pick a fight? Are you trying to pick a fight? Is that what you're here for? Because that's what the minister was doing. There are five members on the committee—smart people, good people. They can think on their own. They know what they're doing. But the minister had to hang around. What's with that? Give me a break. It's not the minister's show; it's the committee's show—honestly.

And then, here's the kicker: Using clips from that committee—because that's why he did it—and putting it on social media to attack educators. Are you the minister? You're in government, guys—you're in government. Sometimes you have to play defence; you don't play offence the whole time. Just think about that. I've never seen that. There was no need for that, I thought. But then if you want those social media clips, then that's what you do.

I just think our students and our families deserve more than a minister who's going to be there to attack educators; to fight constitutional law with a constitutional lawyer who, I am sure, understands more than he does—definitely more than I do, but I would hazard a guess that more than the minister knows about constitutional law. I'm not an expert and I don't pretend to be. I was just shocked at seeing that.

My colleague the member from Ottawa-Vanier did raise the issue of the lack of clarity around the constitutional rights of francophones in this province around education. Those comments are very fair. I think that they were dismissed. There's too much that's being left in this bill to, "We'll put it in regulations; we'll figure it out when we get there. Don't worry; trust us. Don't worry; trust us."

Here's another comment the minister made—not in committee, but in the public. Someone said to him, "When you do this bill and you have these CEOs and you do all this centralization of power, won't this be like supervision?" And the minister said, "Yes, it will be like supervision; they will be like supervisors there. They work for me." Well, here's something that I found—well, first of all, supervisors are firing teachers, gutting programs, disposing of property. But, besides that, this was a real shocker that I heard. The Toronto District School Board—the supervisor says, "Oh, they're not going to report to parents on class sizes." What? They're not going to report on class sizes. Like, I think everybody knows—I'm not an educator, but it's just common sense that when class sizes are too big, kids don't get as much. It's not as easy for them to learn. That's why class sizes are important. These supervisors basically shut down public reporting. Anything being online that had to do with special educa-

tion advisory committees: “Public doesn’t need to know.” I guess it follows suit since this government just gutted freedom of information. The public doesn’t need to know, right?

That’s what the minister believes. That’s what the Premier believes. I don’t know if the rest of my colleagues here believe that. I would like to think that they don’t. I would like to think that if they had a child at school that the people running the board would be local and that they would respond to them about the concerns that they have and report to them some measurement of how things were going.

1740

The other concern that I have—and it has to do with Bill 33 and Bill 101 together—is what’s going to happen with regard to properties and schools that boards own right now? By my reading of it, the minister will have much more power around the disposition of property.

I have two concerns with that, because those properties belong to the community. The community owns it. It’s not for the government to take value out of that and then use that to backfill money that they’re not giving. “Oh, you got \$20 million for that property? Well, we’re not going to send you this money now because you got the \$20 million.” That’s the first problem.

The second problem is this government and how they treat things like property, like the greenbelt, like MZOs. It’s not that it will be disposed of; it’s who gets it and who has the inside track. That’s the risk that’s in this bill as well, too. School boards are two different things, right? They are an organization that educates kids, young people, but they’re also these gigantic property corporations. They’re property managers, property owners. They’re real estate. And we know, this government, they’re interested in real estate. Toronto Islands—I digress.

What did I say today? It’s like Ford-walk Empire. I’ve got to keep saying it until I get out of it today. I’m stuck on it. I know the show is about 16 years old, but it’s stuck in my brain. It will be gone by tomorrow, so don’t worry, folks.

MPP Paul Vickers: Okay.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you. Thanks for coming out, guys.

MPP Paul Vickers: These Ottawa guys.

Mr. John Fraser: These Ottawa guys. So, Speaker—*Interjections.*

Mr. John Fraser: You know, I just love hearing your voice down there. It just eggs me on even further.

So let’s recap here, folks, because I don’t want you all to fall asleep. I know that you seem to be drifting off. I can tell—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: There’s a nice sigh. There we go. It’s late afternoon. While we’re here, we might as well enjoy ourselves, right? We might as well enjoy ourselves.

So to recap, here we go: I’m not going to support Bill 101 because it’s not going to make one child’s class smaller. It’s not going to get one child with exceptional needs’ needs met. And it’s not going to address the mental

health crisis in our schools. I’m not going to support it because of that.

The other piece—I’m so glad. I almost forgot this. I do like the change that they made to teachers’ college. I like to say good things. The problem is, it’s the back end that you’re not getting. When there’s something like 70,000 teachers not teaching in this province, there’s a reason. And you know what those reasons are? I just mentioned them: Class sizes are too big, special education has been starved and there’s a mental health crisis not being addressed. Schools aren’t safe places to work or to learn. So you can front-end it all you want, but if you don’t fix the back end by making classes smaller and safer, and addressing kids’ needs, you’re going to have a hard time keeping teachers. You will educate them, but they won’t stay. They leave after five years. You will have to do something about teacher retention if you want it to work.

So, to sum up, I want to thank you for giving me this time. I want to leave some time for questions. I will yield the floor, and I look forward to people’s questions.

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

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: I appreciate the opportunity to ask some questions this afternoon, and I want to say thank you to the member for Ottawa South for leaving us some time to ask some questions.

One of the things that struck me is the rhetoric that both the opposition and the third party used when discussing our schools. They say that there’s a mental health crisis. I’m thinking, well, no wonder. Look at the way that you talk about these places. So I thought, well, why don’t we take a look at the results, see where our students stack up globally against the rest of the world.

Well, there’s something called the PISA rankings; you may have heard of them. We consistently rank above the international average, consistently ranking among the top jurisdictions globally, within the top 15 internationally in math, within the top 10 internationally in both reading and science.

So how do you square the comments that you’ve made, which seem largely to be out of touch and not associated with what’s actually going on in our schools, with the rhetoric that you’ve produced?

Mr. John Fraser: Our schools have been declining for eight years, number one. Number two, go to a school. Number three, I’ll give you a story: I’ve got a principal who lives around the corner from me, and I was talking about the issue of—I say it’s violence in school, but it’s behaviours. So, Speaker, he says to me, “There’s a 12-year-old girl in my office, and she threw a chair”—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, good. I hope you hear it again.

“She threw a chair at me.” And then he said in the next breath, “It’s just another day.” That’s what’s happening in our schools. There is a mental health crisis. There’s not enough support for special education. They aren’t safe places to work.

I take no joy in saying this, but a government that's wilfully blind to these things is putting forward a bill that's not going to make one of those things better.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: Bill 101: I want to say to the leader of the third party—no disrespect—my wife was a principal. Listen to this: My wife was a principal; my daughter is a teacher in a Catholic school board in St. Catharines, and I can tell you, class sizes are too big. They can't get to the students that they need. They have mental health issues in their classes. They continue to face violence every single day. Every single day, a teacher is getting hurt at school—every day. My daughter is coming home with bruises because of what's going on, because the class sizes are too big, because they're not addressing the real issues that are going on in our schools.

So when you stand up and you say what's going on in our schools—nothing in this bill is going to correct that. And they've got to smarten up and understand what's going on in our schools instead of attacking teachers, trustees, the unions. Everybody else has got a problem but them, and the problem is them.

My question to you: Do you agree with all that?

Mr. John Fraser: Yes.

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

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I sit and look and wonder, how could it just be us? I've got four kids. They all went to school—all class sizes, too big. Has anybody else had kids in school or a family member who does? Have you never heard anybody complain about class sizes? If you say no, I don't believe you, because it's epidemic in schools, and it has been for years.

And I want to ask the member from Ottawa South: \$6.3 billion has been taken out of schools. What is this government's priority? They can't admit that anything is wrong and it's all wonderful in schools. What is the priority here for this government?

Mr. John Fraser: Well, they took their eye off the ball and focused on a luxury private jet.

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

MPP Paul Vickers: We're talking a lot about not being able to fund the schools properly and everything else, but we have examples of—the York Catholic District School Board has burned through more than \$340,000 in legal fees fighting amongst themselves over the last four years. The Grand Erie has spent at least \$300,000. Hastings and Prince Edward has spent \$175,000 fighting amongst themselves and lawyers. This is nearly a million dollars spent by trustees suing each other instead of supporting the students that we care so much about. Bill 101 puts a stop to this dysfunction by professionalizing board leadership, ensuring decisions are made by qualified CEOs, not by trustees locked in personal vendettas.

Will the member opposite explain to the parents in York region, Brant region and Belleville why they should keep paying for trustees' infighting instead of investing that money in their children's classrooms?

Mr. John Fraser: I will as soon as the Premier explains how he's lost more court cases and spent more money—more millions and millions—on losing court cases than any Premier in the history of this province. He's spent a ton of money and he's lost every case, just about—he might have won one.

1750

Now, what I would like is for this member to understand that class sizes are too big. It's this government. It's the gas you put in the engine, right? You're not giving them enough money. Special education has been starved. If you don't put gas in the engine, the tractor doesn't run, and that's what's happening.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague. It's interesting: In the budget, people were talking about record-high unemployment, record-high unemployment for youth and the fact that people can't put food on the table, and the Premier's answer was he bought a \$30-million jet.

In this situation, for this bill, you have parents saying, "What my kid needs is more attention and smaller class sizes." You have teachers saying, "What we need to be successful is more attention for the children and smaller class sizes." And then the Premier hears, "Well, what we need is trustees making about \$400,000 a year and a bunch of stuff that doesn't address class sizes or more attention for the students." What's being lost in translation here?

Mr. John Fraser: Just about everything, actually. We're talking about, like, a glass of orange juice in an expense compared to a luxury private jet.

I told the story about Marigold, who is a girl who's six now, who came to school with an assessment. For two years, she has received no services. When Marigold's parents look at that, and then they look at the Premier purchasing a luxury private jet, what do you think they think? Maybe a member on the other side, in their question, could answer that question.

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

MPP George Darouze: My question is for the leader of the third party and the member from Ottawa South. I heard you talking about the minister being at committee. Do you know what? It's so nice, a breath of fresh air, to see a minister going to committee answering question, not hiding behind his bill.

At the end of the day, you have a minister answering questions and you have a minister—also, he's an MPP—defending his community, protecting our kids and explaining his bill. How do you explain that?

Mr. John Fraser: Well, he should come to committee and answer for what his bill is, and he did that. It was the

staying after that I had a problem with. He had five members on the committee who actually were mute until that point—actually, until 2 o'clock—so maybe that was the reason that he stayed.

I just have never, ever, ever seen a minister stay and badger witnesses and cross-examine witnesses and pick fights with people. He's supposed to be bringing people together. So that was my point, not that he was there. I wasn't upset that he was there; I was upset that he stayed and didn't give the members of his party who were on the committee the opportunity to ask questions of these witnesses. They had to sit there silently and listen to the minister.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): We have time for one more quick question and response.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Very quickly to my friend opposite: Let's go back to the trustees. Let's go back to exactly what this bill says about holding the trustees to account, to make sure that they don't use their pulpit, as they have been in certain boards, to authorize ridiculous expenses and bring indoctrination into discussions that should not have been there. I want to ask my friend to comment on the trustees.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, look, here's what I think: The cabinet lined up in a conga line to approve the Premier's luxury private jet. I will leave it at that. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Ms. Jess Dixon: It's a pleasure to rise and speak on this bill. I confess, I'm mystified by the criticism of our Minister of Education coming in to address his own bill in committee. It really does feel like you simply can do nothing right. They're either absent and not answering questions, and if they do come and actually lead debate and lead questioning, they're offended by that as well.

It generally mystifies me why we would not want to have the minister. In fact, I actually was expecting the Liberals would want to make it regular practice that ministers always attend and lead questioning on their own bills. Frankly, I enjoyed having a minister who is so informed and competent in his subject matter leading questioning on that. I found it refreshing. I did ask him why he didn't bother also becoming a lawyer, but I know myself and the member from Essex were enjoying seeing him work.

This is one of those bills where I found so much of the opposition to it just, frankly, mystifying. There is one thing in particular, though, that I keep coming back to, which is this idea that it's not in some ways delivering for students and not delivering for the classroom, which to me is at odds with what classrooms and our education system are supposed to do, which is very much actually deliver learning.

One of the things that this bill is doing that I am so in support of is this idea of making sure that we are standardizing and providing learning resources to our teachers, to our educators to use in their classrooms.

Now, it's amusing because so many of us, when we talk about education, end up referencing our own school days. With the exception of a handful of the young 'uns in my caucus, for many of us that has actually been quite a long ways away. I was thinking about the days where you would get your textbook and then you would cover your textbook with brown paper or wrapping paper in order to customize it and put stickers on it and stuff like that. But actually, to be honest, I didn't realize that the days of the standardized textbook had in some ways passed in a way.

I want to talk about something that a friend of mine brought up in relation to her daughter, who was going into grade—I think she would have been in grade 6 at the time. This is a resource called Teachers Pay Teachers—P-A-Y—and it is a service where Ontario teachers can go online and purchase learning resources because they have not had the time or the ability to put their own learning resources together. I get it—our teachers are working in an incredibly fast-paced environment and one of the things that we have heard over and over again is that teachers are being expected to parent even more before they are asked to teach.

But anyway, this Teachers Pay Teachers resource: My friend literally brought it to me—it was, of course, on a Chromebook; it is not even a written resource—to look at it. And this was an approved resource, essentially approved by the school and the teacher, that she had sent home. But it was all American. It was all in imperial and asking the kids to do their work in Fahrenheit. And then it was asking them to comment on media sources, and the media sources were all Fox News. And the two of us were looking at it, thinking, “How is this an appropriate learning resource to give to kids? It's not even in our actual unit of measure.” Really, that is one of the things that this bill is working to combat.

I also want to put in my own little plug for some of the work that we've done on intimate partner violence. There's a program that is particularly close to my heart called the Fourth R, which provides curriculum content for an existing section of Ontario's health and physical education curriculum. It's Ontario-developed. It's a great program, and a few years ago, this government—thanks to our at-the-time Minister of Education, now our wonderful Minister of Energy—provided some funding for this resource to allow more schools and more boards to access it. Again, evidence-based, randomized control trials—an incredible program. What happened? Well, a number of boards declined to offer it. They said that they didn't feel that teen dating violence was an issue in their region. They felt that they were already appropriately serving that through some program that they may have developed in conjunction with a local partner. And it boggled my mind to have this Ontario-developed incredible program paid for by the Ontario government rejected by the boards and the educators that were actually given money in order to provide it.

That's something that I'm actually very excited about in this bill because it now gives us the opportunity to take what previously would have been a learning resource that we can't mandate, in a sense, and actually gives us the ability to do that. From a crime-and-violence-prevention perspective, which, as many in this House know, is my pet project and passion, the ability to take that type of curriculum material, those types of learning resources, mandate them, make sure that they are being delivered in every publicly funded school across the province is an incredibly

exciting opportunity that we didn't have the ability to do before this bill actually comes in.

I did also want to address something that—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):
I'm sorry to cut off the member.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):
But as it is 6 o'clock, the House now stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt
Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Donna Skelly
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day
Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,
Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Allsopp, Tyler (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Cerjanec, Rob (LIB)	Ajax	
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux
Ciriello, Monica (PC)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Cooper, Michelle (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	Oakville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises et de l'Approvisionnement
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Darouze, George (PC)	Carleton	
Denault, Billy (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence
Fairclough, Lee (LIB)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Leader, Third Party / Chef du troisième parti
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gilmour, Alexa (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)	Milton	Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Solliciteur général associé responsable de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	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	