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JP-14

Standing Committee on Justice Policy

Comité permanent de la justice

Estimates

Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery
and Procurement

Ministry of Francophone Affairs

Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response

Budget des dépenses

Ministère des Services au public et aux entreprises
et de l'Approvisionnement

Ministère des Affaires francophones

Ministère de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention
en cas d'urgence

1st Session
44th Parliament

Tuesday 6 October 2026

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44^e législature

Mardi 6 octobre 2026

Chair: Lorne Coe
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Président : Lorne Coe
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
JUSTICE POLICYCOMITÉ PERMANENT
DE LA JUSTICE

Tuesday 6 October 2026

Mardi 6 octobre 2026

The committee met at 1000 in committee room 2.

ESTIMATES

BUDGET DES DÉPENSES

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC AND BUSINESS
SERVICE DELIVERY AND PROCUREMENT

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Justice Policy will now come to order.

On today's agenda is the review of the 2026-27 estimates of three ministries, including the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement, the Ministry of Francophone Affairs and the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response.

Each ministry will be considered for two hours, with a 20-minute opening statement from their respective ministers, followed by questions and answers in rotations of 15 minutes for the official opposition members of the committee, 15 minutes for the third party members of the committee and 15 minutes for the government members of the committee for the remainder of the allotted time.

From the ministry, we are joined by the Honourable Stephen Crawford and ministry officials and staff.

Now, I would like to take the opportunity to remind everyone that the purpose of considering the estimates is for members of the Legislature to determine if the government is spending money appropriately, wisely and effectively in the delivery of the services intended. As the Chair of this committee, I will allow members to ask a wide range of questions pertaining to the estimates before the committee to ensure they're confident the ministry will spend those dollars appropriately.

In the past, members have asked questions about the delivery of similar programs in previous fiscal years, about the policy framework that supports a ministry approach to a problem or a service delivery or about the competence of the ministry to spend the money wisely and efficiently. However—and please note this—it must be noted that the onus is on the members asking the questions to make the questioning relevant to the estimates under consideration. If your question is outside the scope of what we're considering today, I will rule it out of order.

As a reminder, the ministry is required to monitor the proceedings for any questions or issues that the ministry undertakes to address. I trust that the deputy minister with

Minister Crawford today has arranged to have the hearings closely monitored with respect to questions raised so that the ministry can respond accordingly.

Are there any questions from members before we start? I see none, Mr. Clerk.

I am now required to call vote 1801, which sets the review process in motion. We will begin with a statement from the minister for up to 20 minutes.

Minister, the floor is yours, sir. We're going to time the 20 minutes, and I'll let you know when you have one minute left so that you can sum up. Please start, sir.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Good morning to everybody on the committee. It's great to be here today.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today. I am pleased to present the 2026-27 expenditure estimates for the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

For 2026-27, the ministry's planned operating and capital expenditures total approximately \$1.52 billion, including consolidation and other adjustments, excluding assets. These estimates support the programs, technologies and services that Ontarians rely on daily. They reflect our commitment to modernizing government, protecting consumers and delivering value for the taxpayers.

Chair, there is no question about it: Ontario is the best place anywhere in the world to live, work, raise a family and start a business. However, like much of the rest of the world, our province is navigating a global economic uncertainty and adapting to a rapidly evolving technological landscape. Despite these challenges, our government remains steadfast. We adapt, we act decisively and we maintain a focus on protecting Ontario.

I am proud that my ministry plays a central role in that work, bringing together expertise from a wide range of areas. Through ServiceOntario, we deliver more than 220 services to people, businesses and across government, both over the phone and in person.

Behind those services, my ministry leads enterprise technology and cyber security, drives the implementation of Buy Ontario through procurement policy and oversight and provides financial and operational expertise that keeps government running. Simply put, ours is a critical mandate with a straightforward objective: building a more modern, secure and effective government for Ontarians. I welcome the opportunity to update the committee on our progress.

Let me turn first to the current global economic and trade environment and the actions our government is taking

to protect Ontario's economy, jobs and businesses. As Canada continues to face an unprecedented trade war with the United States, our government is taking every measure necessary to strengthen domestic supply chains. Each year, the province spends approximately \$30 billion procuring the goods and services needed to deliver public service programs and support to Ontarians. By leveraging that purchasing power strategically, we can support Ontario businesses and workers, strengthen domestic capacity and deliver better value for taxpayers.

Our objective is clear: Wherever possible, procurement dollars that can be spent in Ontario should be spent in Ontario. That is why, on April 4 of last year, our government introduced a procurement restriction policy that prevents the Ontario public sector and the broader public sector from procuring from US businesses while tariffs remain in place.

We then followed through with the Buy Ontario Act, an historic piece of legislation that further empowers us to prioritize Ontario and Canadian goods and services in public sector procurement. The act extends Buy Ontario beyond the provincial government, directing municipalities and other organizations to join us in supporting local suppliers. The first Buy Ontario procurement directives came into force April 13 of this year, turning that commitment into action by ensuring more public dollars go towards supporting Ontario jobs, supply chains and businesses of all sizes.

At the same time, we are improving visibility into government spending to make coordinated and better-informed procurement decisions. Alongside our partners at Supply Ontario, my ministry provides policy leadership and oversight in support of our shared mission to build a supply chain that is better equipped to withstand disruptions, protect public services and support economic growth.

The Buy Ontario Act also established a Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day, recognized annually on the last Friday of each June. It encourages residents throughout our communities to buy locally made products, support our homegrown business owners and explore destinations across Ontario and Canada when looking at potential travel opportunities.

Together, these initiatives form a coordinated economic response. We are using every tool available to protect Ontario, support local businesses and build a stronger, more self-reliant economy.

Protecting Ontario also means standing up for consumers in a marketplace that is changing faster than ever. As more transactions move online and fraud tactics become increasingly sophisticated, our government continues to enforce stronger protections, maintain rigorous oversight and empower consumers with the information they need to make confident purchasing decisions.

In 2025, my ministry handled more than 31,000 customer interactions and helped negotiate more than \$722,000 in complaint resolutions. We also conducted 376 risk-based compliance inspections, laid 97 charges and obtained 68 convictions, resulting in approximately \$834,000 in fines and more than \$318,000 in court-ordered restitution.

These results demonstrate our approach to consumer protection: active oversight, meaningful enforcement and practical assistance when and where it matters most.

Chair, I am proud to say that my ministry is actively supporting the important work of protecting survivors of human trafficking from coerced debt. In June of last year, the Ministry of the Attorney General consulted on the implementation of Bill 41, Protection from Coerced Debts Incurred in relation to Human Trafficking Act, 2023. My ministry spearheaded engagement with credit-reporting agencies in support of this implementation. On May 25, 2026, our government introduced the Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act, 2026, which builds on the intent of Bill 41 by introducing measures to help survivors address debt incurred through coercion.

1010

My ministry has advanced many important protections in 2025-26, namely through the Protect Ontario by Cutting Red Tape Act and through the implementation of new measures to crack down on unfair practices in the province's ticket resale market. During the Toronto Blue Jays' triumphant run to the 2025 World Series and the city's hosting of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, we strengthened the Ticket Sales Act of 2017 by capping ticket resale prices, increasing penalties against bad actors and publicly calling out sellers who violate the law through the Consumer Beware List. These actions not only crack down on unfair ticket practices; they protect consumers from being price-gouged by improving fair access to concerts, sporting events and other major attractions.

We have also modernized the Retail Business Holidays Act, giving retailers the choice to open on Family Day or Victoria Day. This provides greater flexibility for businesses and workers while preserving protections for employees who choose not to work.

Effective July 1, 2026, amendments to the Consumer Reporting Act introduced security freezes and credit-monitoring protections to help Ontarians protect their credit information and reduce the risk of identity theft. These tools are particularly important for seniors, newcomers and other potentially vulnerable consumers. My ministry complements these safeguards with multilingual resources and targeted outreach, helping consumers understand their rights and businesses meet their obligations.

We are also preparing consumers and businesses for Ontario's new Consumer Protection Act, 2023, which will modernize protections for an evolving marketplace. Together, strong safeguards, effective enforcement and practical education help maintain public confidence.

My ministry also provides the technology, infrastructure, cyber security services and digital expertise that support public sector organizations across government. Through GovTechON, we design, operate and modernize the applications that support health care, justice, transportation, social services, environmental protection, as well as financial administration and other essential public programs.

Our one-government approach reduces duplication, promotes the reuse of technology and helps ensure digital

investments are secure, sustainable and aligned with government priorities. In 2025-26, my ministry hosted approximately 1,200 applications across the Guelph Data Centre and cloud environments, with cloud adoption increasing from 51% to 55%.

We also modernized government voice services by replacing outdated land lines and aging telephone systems. By January 2026, more than 13,800 legacy voice lines had been cancelled, generating approximately \$4 million in annual savings.

In October of 2025, my ministry and the Treasury Board Secretariat successfully moved the province's Integrated Financial Information System to a modern, secure and scalable cloud environment. The system supports more than 50,000 users and essential government functions such as financial processing, budgeting and reporting. Its successful migration strengthened resilience without disrupting users. These are clear examples of responsible modernization delivering stronger systems and measurable value for taxpayers.

Modern digital services also carry a fundamental duty to protect the systems and information entrusted to government. Cyber security is and will remain a core priority. A cyber incident can interrupt essential services, compromise sensitive information and undermine public confidence.

Ontario's Cyber Security Operations Centre works around the clock as the government's first line of defence. In 2025-26, the centre helped defend the government system against approximately 109 million cyber attacks, illustrating both the scale of the threat and the importance of sustained vigilance.

Through the Cyber Security Centre of Excellence, supported by a \$5-million investment in cyber security, capacity and innovation, we provide advice, education and practical resources to broader public sector organizations and municipalities. Our cyber community of practice has grown to nearly 2,400 participants from 720 organizations, strengthening collaboration and information-sharing across the public sector.

In 2025-26, the ministry conducted 16 cyber security tabletop exercises involving more than 1,000 participants. These exercises helped organizations test their response plans, identify weaknesses and clarify responsibilities before an incident occurs.

October is Cyber Security Awareness Month, and Ontario continues to work with partners across sectors and jurisdictions to strengthen collective resilience.

One of the most consequential areas overseen by my ministry is the responsible and accountable use of artificial intelligence. AI presents significant opportunities to improve productivity, strengthen public services and support economic growth. It also presents risks that must be managed carefully and transparently to build public confidence.

In March of 2026, my ministry joined partner ministries in hosting the Ontario AI summit, a groundbreaking event that brought together government, industry and academia

to discuss trust, competitiveness and leadership in Ontario's growing AI economy.

Within government, we are adopting AI deliberately and responsibly. Ontario is the first province or territory in Canada to establish guardrails for the responsible use of AI in the public sector. Ontario's trustworthy AI framework is built around three principles: no AI in secret, AI that Ontarians can trust and AI that serves everyone.

The framework includes the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act, the responsible use of artificial intelligence directive and Ontario's public inventory of AI systems used across the Ontario public service. Together, these measures require AI use to be transparent, accountable and risk-managed.

As we continue to invest in technology, we are also investing in the skills to use it effectively. My ministry is building internal expertise through initiatives such as the AI technical certification pilot program, created in collaboration with industry partners. This work is anchored by strong AI and data governance, including the Ontario data strategy, which reduces silos and enables the responsible adoption of AI.

Our objective is not innovation for its own sake; it is to use technology responsibly, to improve services and deliver greater value to the people of Ontario.

1020

My ministry has also led important work under the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act. Following extensive consultation, we advanced measures to strengthen cyber security and support safe and age-appropriate digital experiences for children. Ontario school boards must now notify parents when a student's personal information is shared with third-party software providers. That gives students and parents and families greater visibility into how sensitive information is managed. New cyber security requirements for key public sector organizations are also establishing clearer accountability, stronger preparedness and a more coordinated approach to cyber risk.

I'd now like to highlight the work of ServiceOntario. ServiceOntario is often considered the front door through which millions of people and businesses access government services, whether it's registering a birth, obtaining a health card, renewing a driver's licence, ordering a marriage certificate or starting a business.

From 2025-26, ServiceOntario supported approximately 64.7 million public-facing transactions and information-and-referral interactions. That figure reflects the scale of ServiceOntario's operations and the importance of delivering reliable service wherever and however Ontarians access government. That means meeting people in person, by telephone, through extended hours at select locations, through mobile service delivery and through community outreach. Modernization means expanding convenient digital options while maintaining accessible alternatives to those who prefer them, which is why the ServiceOntario Account gives customers a secure and personalized way to access various services online.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, you have one minute left in your presentation, sir.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Okay.

In 2025-26, we enhanced more than 30 services through the account, giving people more options to renew documents, sign up for reminders and access temporary documents online. At the same time, we are modernizing individual services to eliminate unnecessary paperwork, travel and delays. Couples can now submit documents online for their marriage licence. Seniors can renew their driver's licences at ServiceOntario across Ontario rather than attending group sessions at fixed times and locations.

For businesses, digital dealership registration allows participating dealerships to complete more of the vehicle registration process online while reducing paperwork and unnecessary visits. Businesses are also benefiting from the Ontario Business Account, improvements to the Ontario Business Registry and the broader "single window for business" initiative.

The ministry is also supporting the development of a beneficial ownership registry by 2027 to help law enforcement bodies and regulators combat fraud, money laundering and financial crime.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister Crawford. That is the time that you have for your presentation.

We will now begin the question-and-answer segment in rotations of 15 minutes for the official opposition, 15 minutes for the third party member and 15 minutes for the government members for the remainder of the allotted time. Please remember to make your comments through me.

As the Chair, if a member seeks to reclaim the floor during their rotation while the minister is responding, I will recognize the member and allow them to reclaim the floor to ask a new question.

For the deputy minister, assistant deputy ministers and other staff: Please state your name and your title the first time that you speak so that we can accurately record in Hansard who we have before us this morning.

I will now start with the official opposition with MPP Rakocevic, please, when you're ready, sir.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Good morning, everyone. Good morning, Minister.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Good morning.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I just want to thank you for your work. I want to thank you for your presence here and for, in advance, answering questions. I also want to thank your staff, who have been accessible over the years to me when I've spoken to them, and I appreciate that.

I'd like to begin with Buy Ontario. The official opposition for years—even prior to the tariffs and the situation with the States—have pushed the government to prioritize procurement from Ontario businesses, particularly smaller businesses. This was something that we always received pushback on. During the course of the pandemic, Shoppers was awarded vaccinations versus the smaller pharmacies. If you looked at even most recently with ServiceOntario, we saw, including small business locations—small locations were closed down while they moved to Staples.

You talked about the buy-Ontario policy, something that we've been pushing for for years, and you said that

since the tariffs, you have not been allowing procurement or awarding contracts to American companies. So the question is, since the tariffs have begun before this year, can you tell us and confirm that not a single contract has gone to American companies in the year 2026?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you for the question. Our government is very focused on protecting Ontario businesses, Ontario workers. We're going through a difficult time, and I think Ontarians and Canadians are united with that overarching view that we want to support Ontario businesses.

In terms of what our government has done, we are the first government, really, to bring in policies like the procurement restriction policy, BOBI, the Buy Ontario Act, which we have now started implementing. We are supporting Ontario and Canadian businesses where we can. As an example, Supply Ontario: Approximately 89% of the vendors of record that are on the VOR list for Supply Ontario are Ontario-based; approximately 97% of them are Canadian. So the overwhelming majority of vendors that Ontario government does business with through Supply Ontario are Ontario- and Canadian-based. So this legislation is having an effect not only with government of Ontario procurement but indeed across the broader public sector. It's the first legislation that's gone beyond the public sector to the broader public sector.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

New question, please.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you for the response. I'm hearing there still are situations where American companies are being awarded contracts. You said that there are smaller numbers.

My second part to that question is, what happens when you have long-term contracts with companies? You know, perhaps they're awarded on a year-to-year basis or there are extensions. What happens in those situations now when those are American companies? Do you now move over to Canadian companies or Ontario companies?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: The government of Ontario supports law and order, so we don't change contracts midway through the game. So if we're in a current contract, that contract—

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: No, no. That's not what I'm asking.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: When it's up for renewal, for example, it will be reviewed, most definitely.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: But you would then say, if it's up for renewal, or at some point now, and the tariffs are in place—I would assume based on what you're saying that your ministry, your government would then say, "We are going to choose an Ontario alternative"—or not?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Where possible—if there's extreme service disruption or it affects the health and well-being of Ontarians, then, in some cases, of course we'll have to continue. I mean, there are circumstances—I'm sure you'd agree—where, for example, there is health equipment for hospitals that simply is not manufactured in

Canada or Ontario. So in some cases, we will have to go to global suppliers.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

New question, please.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you. I'd like to now move on to freedom of information. I think people were quite surprised to see that this government changed the actual—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP Riddell, please.

Mr. Brian Riddell: FOI has nothing to do with estimates.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I agree. It's outside of the scope of what we're considering right now, 1801.

New question, please.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Okay. Well, all right. I won't argue with the Chair on that one, although I respectfully disagree, but I respect your authority.

Uninsured drivers fund and auto insurance changes: Now, this is the Ministry of Finance, but this does affect you because the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund is something that's run by your ministry. The changes at the Ministry of Finance have severely reduced the number of mandatory coverages that a person is required. So where an insurance company was required to sell something like 12 before, now it's gone down to three. Many, whether they are lawyers, whether they are health practitioners, whether they are advocates, whether they're just everyday drivers, have noticed that this has a huge impact. It has an impact not just on them but on the choices others make and can put many at risk.

We've noticed that the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund has nearly doubled. Is this because you are expecting more people to now make claims as a result of this government's changes in terms of auto insurance? This suggests to me that the government is conceding that a decision they made is putting people at risk, and so you've now had to double this claims fund. Could you provide the reason as to why this has occurred?

1030

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Yes, I think what you're referring to is the choice, if I'm not mistaken, within the insurance industry to offer more options for drivers and—if I'm not mistaken. Is that correct?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Well, yes. I mean, we may characterize it differently.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Okay, so, yes, our government provided consumers with more options with respect to the options that they can pursue in having car insurance.

With the specifics of the dollar amount, I would refer to my deputy for a more detailed answer on that.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, please state your name—full name, please.

Ms. Samantha Poisson: Thank you, Chair. My name is Samantha Poisson. I am the deputy of MPBSDP.

With response to your question, the increase is primarily related to higher projections based on actuarial estimated amounts for accident benefits and third-party liability payments through the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund. The actuarial estimates are used due to the uncertain

nature of the program, specifically the unknown volume, ultimate value or the number of claims.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Sorry. Just for clarification, you've doubled the amount of this fund due to uncertainty. So, again, I'm hearing that the most recent changes by this government to allow companies to sell policies that have far, far less required protections and coverages—are you then suggesting that there is in fact a link and that your ministry stepped in expecting that more people won't be compensated and they had to increase the amount they would give out?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Could you please direct who you're asking that question to?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Sorry—to either the minister or deputy minister. I understand that he asked her to answer, so from anyone is fine.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, please. Thank you.

Ms. Samantha Poisson: Sorry, Chair. Could the question be repeated?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: So your actuaries have now expected a doubling, essentially, of claims, and the only thing that's really changed is the fact that this government has allowed insurance companies to reduce the amount of mandatory coverages down from 12 to three. And so I think everyone has suggested this is putting a lot more people at risk.

I'm just wondering if you'll confirm the fact that this is the relationship; this is what is the result. Your ministry is expecting more claims now because these coverages have been reduced, because your actuaries have weighed in and they said there seems to be more risk out there.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, to the question, please.

Ms. Samantha Poisson: For specifics related to the program—sorry. The amendments to the Insurance Act made certain statutory accident benefits optional, including income replacement, housekeeping, death and funeral benefits. As benefits available through the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund, aligned with mandatory Insurance Act benefits, these optional benefits are no longer covered by the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund for accidents occurring on or after July 1, 2026.

The Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund continues to provide mandatory attendant care and medical and rehabilitation benefits.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Okay. Sorry—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Deputy, for that answer.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: In the interests of time, I'm going to move on, but you have seen the reason to double the amount that is expected to be paid out, so—all right. We're going to move on.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): A new question, please. Thank you.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Yes.

Ticket resales: This is something that the official opposition has been calling on even before the Raptors won a championship many years back in Toronto—capping

resale at zero. This is something that the government derided, said no, said it was not possible, that it was “unenforceable”—everything you could think of over the course of the years—and then, all of a sudden, has decided they would listen and did so. And we saw that there were people, organizations, huge companies that continued to sell tickets at many times the value at which they were purchased in the first place.

I’d like to hear more information about the enforcement efforts, because we know that all of these policies live and die by the enforcement. What can you share in terms of enforcement? Because initially there continued to be stories in the media where people were giving constant proof of tickets being sold many times their value. So, can you tell us what your enforcement efforts have been and what they look like? Like, how many inspectors do you have out there, what’s the total cost for your enforcement?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for the question.

Minister Crawford, please, to the question.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Chair, through you, to the member, ticket reselling was an issue that we felt very strongly on. I mean, particularly, you saw the Blue Jays’ World Series—unfortunately, they won’t be able to make it this year, but last year they got very close. And ticket sales got so far out of reality in terms of the resale market for that series, families in most cases wouldn’t be able to afford to go to games like that or hockey games, concerts etc.—Taylor Swift, all these different types of events where there was exorbitant pricing.

So we modified the legislation to ensure that it went down to a zero resale value in terms of the additional price markup on ticket sales. We brought that legislation in, and we feel very strongly about this legislation. We are enforcing the legislation. For example, we’ve had 323 businesses posted on our Consumer Beware List, 40 notices of inspection to secondary sellers, and we’ve sent out four compliance orders.

You may have seen—I’m not sure, to the member, if he has seen in the media, a few of the larger established companies in the ticket-reselling market have actually received administrative penalties. StubHub and SeatGeek have been issued five administrative penalties totalling \$45,000 and issued 33 warning letters, so this is an issue we take very seriously. There may be instances of companies that are taking advantage of the law and still doing this. But the good news is the overwhelming majority of companies that we have dealt with are in compliance with the law. If there are any outliers, they will be dealt with.

And I would certainly pass to my deputy if you’d like some specific details on what we’re doing on the consumer protection side to ensure compliance with this important legislation.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, to the question, please.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I mean, there’s only about a minute and a half, so if you can just provide as much detail

as possible, if you could tell us how many inspectors you have, what the infractions are, what’s—

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Sure. I will pass that to my deputy for some of the specifics.

Ms. Samantha Poisson: Thank you for the question.

The recent enforcement actions related to companies are publicly posted on the Consumer Beware List, and there are some matters currently before the licensing and appeals tribunal.

We take a risk-based approach to enforcement. We review complaints that are made and apply that risk-based approach to use our authority to educate, mediate, have compliance and enforcement tools. Customers have a way of lodging any complaints about ticket sales to the Consumer Protection Ontario line.

If you’d like specific details, I can call up my ADM of consumer protection operations to provide you with those specifics.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I mean, there’s very little—how much time—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have 44 seconds left.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: As quick as possible, I’d like to hear it. This is something that we were fighting for and pushing, and we want to hear what the enforcement has been like.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have 35 seconds, sir, but you have to introduce yourself, please.

Mr. Teepu Khawja: Yes. Good morning, committee. My name is Teepu Khawja. I’m the assistant deputy minister of our consumer services operations division. I’m happy, with the remaining time, to answer whatever I can to the member.

So, our division, we are responsible for enforcing a number of statutes, the Consumer Protection Act and the Ticket Sales Act, as well as other regulated sectors. In terms of the Ticket Sales Act itself, the minister and the deputy minister have already provided some information in terms of stats.

Our enforcement staff, as I said, enforce not just the Ticket Sales Act but other statutes as well. We’re a—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir, for that response. I think the member could pursue this in the second round if he so desires.

Moving to the third party, please: MPP McCrimmon, welcome to the committee. Please start your questions. Thank you.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the minister and staff who are here to explain to us what’s going on inside the ministry when it comes to how money is spent. I think that’s a really important thing, and it’s good that you bring your team with you.

1040

I’m going to start with a question about the ministry’s artificial intelligence data archives and privacy program, which oversees FOI and privacy policy. Now, the amount committed to that falls by \$1.66 million to \$37.6 million in 2026-27.

I know that records in the Premier's and ministers' offices are now excluded from freedom-of-information law, and so that might save some money, but at what cost? Can the minister tell me how many cases have been closed or refused because of the change in the law, and how much money did we save?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for the question.

Minister Crawford, please, to the question.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you for the question. I'm not sure I fully understand it, but with respect to what we're investing in in terms of IT and cyber operations in the province and artificial intelligence, it's something we take very, very seriously.

We've been a leader in artificial intelligence. Out of all the governments in Ontario, we have the largest percentage of users of AI on a weekly basis. We have ongoing training for our staff with respect to using artificial intelligence. The average public official is saving well over an hour a week on average, which is making their time much more efficient.

So as a government, we are very focused on ensuring the public service spends their time wisely and efficiently, and we will certainly continue to do so.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: But how can we say that's a priority of ours when we're cutting their budget? That's the thing that I don't understand. Their budget goes down by \$1.66 million this year.

I totally agree with you; I think this is absolutely key. But how is cutting that budget actually going to make it easier for us to actually achieve the results that you're seeking?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: In that situation, there are one-time program and modernization and contract costs that you may see in a previous year that fall off the previous year, and that would be the explanation for any deductions.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: All right.

Right now, FOI response deadlines have been extended to 30 to 45 business days. Now, with this cut in that particular budget, is that going to get worse?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: The FOI timeline—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I'm going to allow it. Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: The FOI timeline did move from 30 to 45 days in the legislation; you are correct. That was very well received by the municipalities across Ontario, because the magnitude and the number of requests that come in for information has really exceeded the number of employees and people they have involved in getting that information back. So they were very supportive of that as well, of our government making that decision. Because again, the magnitude and the complexity of the information that's being requested is so much greater than it used to be.

They were calling for that as well, I might add—the clerks of all the municipalities. I've met with them in my role as minister and in AMO. That was one of their key requests, actually. So I think by doing that it will allow us to get more accurate information out there and meet our timelines.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister, for that response.

New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: The Information and Privacy Commissioner warned that trying to save money on the back of FOI changes will eviscerate public accountability. Can you tell me if you've met with the commissioner, what she had to say to you and if she asked the government to do anything?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Obviously, you're well aware of the changes we made in the last legislative sitting to freedom of information. What we were doing with that was bringing Ontario in line to a majority of other jurisdictions in Canada, including the federal government in your home city of Ottawa, of course, and most provincial governments across Canada in terms of what information is accessible when. That's the traditional Westminster system with cabinet confidentiality.

I think it should be noted that 95% of whatever information was accessible before will continue to be accessible, so there's very little change in that. In terms of whatever outcomes come through any cabinet deliberation, they're still fully accessible. We're accountable to the people of Ontario and, I might add, to the privacy commissioner, to the Integrity Commissioner and Auditor General as well.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: All right, next question: In January of 2024, the government announced it would close nine stand-alone ServiceOntario centres and move them into Staples stores, with two Walmart locations also involved as a three-year pilot. Staples received \$1.75 million in set-up costs and \$8.29 million over three years to run nine locations, and staff at closing centres were offered jobs with Staples.

This three-year pilot is due to expire in 2027. Has the ministry decided whether to renew or expand it, and how much of the \$295.5-million ServiceOntario budget this year is paid to Staples and other retail partners?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you, Chair, through you to the member, for the question. Thank you very much for the question. You are correct; I guess it was 2024 that Ontario worked in collaboration with Staples Canada to be able to deliver services to the people of Ontario, and it has been a very successful pilot.

The feedback from users that go to those ServiceOntario locations has been overwhelmingly positive. The hours of operation are very attractive to people—extended hours which typical locations may not be able to offer. People that work on shifts—maybe they're nurses or they're auto

workers or they just don't have the time in the regular business days to go visit a location. Convenience has been very paramount—and the service delivered through those locations.

I think it has been a tremendous pilot program, but I can certainly offer my deputy to give you more specifics on the Staples pilot.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Deputy Minister, please, to the question.

Ms. Samantha Poisson: Thank you.

Building on what the minister has indicated, Staples offers accessible parking, longer hours—it's very convenient—appointment booking, and it has been a well-utilized service. According to our statistics, there have been 670,000 transactions that have been processed by Staples Canada.

As a ministry, we are continuing to evaluate Staples Canada in partnership, including performance and costs, and we will certainly be taking steps to ensure that there is ongoing service delivery in the nine communities that are served by Staples Canada stores.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Deputy.

New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Thank you for that. That's actually quite helpful.

I know that when I looked at the numbers, the Staples deal actually cost \$1.5 million more than the government estimated. Renewing the existing agreements with the previous vendors would have saved us about \$800,000, so this is the more expensive option.

What did the deal actually cost us? And did we have an open and fair competition, and will we?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please. Thank you.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you for the question on that. It should be noted that there are additional hours. When you look at cost, it's not just a dollar value, but when you factor it over those additional hours, the cost is less. We need to be fully aware of that because the operating hours here are significantly more than a typical store. So when you factor that in, you're in a much better position.

I'll pass it back to my deputy for more specifics.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister.

Deputy Minister, please, to the question.

Ms. Samantha Poisson: Thank you for the question.

With respect to your question about procurement, at the time, in 2024, the expiring contracts in the service provider network presented an opportunity to reassess the type of ServiceOntario presence that is required based on each community's needs, ensuring a sustainable presence and enabling the organization to really pivot to a ServiceOntario of tomorrow.

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In exploring potential partners, ServiceOntario completed consultations with potential retailers that have significant province-wide presence. Ministry officials assessed each potential partner against four criteria: customer service excellence, community presence, cost-effective-

ness and scalability. ServiceOntario locations in Staples Canada were selected to meet the service standards for communities where existing service provider contracts were expiring. Service Canada offered convenient locations, ample parking, extended hours—as the minister has mentioned—and the ability to launch quickly, with no separate lease negotiations required.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please. Thank you.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Thank you for that. ServiceOntario funding is rising by \$19.8 million this year. How many ServiceOntario locations will open, close or move, and will the ministry commit that no community loses in-person service without public consultation?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please. Thank you.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you for the question. I appreciate your question on serving the people of Ontario. I think that's what ServiceOntario does an absolutely terrific job of.

We had 64.7 million annual transactions, so the volume that we're talking about here is significant. Every single Ontarian touches ServiceOntario, whether digitally or in person. We've got 25 million online transactions, for example, in 2025.

We have approximately 276 locations across Ontario in communities large and small. Some of these are run by our ministry. Some are, as we call it, in a box, where they're mobile. Some of them are in partnership with municipalities, and some are in partnership with retailers. There's always an ongoing number of contracts that are coming up for renewal. I can't speak to the number, but I will get my deputy to go into the specifics in a moment. But there's always ongoing—every year, there's always going to be some locations that will be coming up for renewal. We always factor in community input. We factor in, obviously, the number of transactions that are done. Location is very important to us, because we want to ensure, as I'm sure you do, that service delivery to everybody in Ontario, wherever they may live and whatever their accessibility is, is a top priority.

I'll pass it to my deputy for some specifics on how that's going.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, to the question, please.

Ms. Samantha Poisson: Building on the minister's response: ServiceOntario has a strong community presence with more than 270 ServiceOntario centres across Ontario, including two mobile centres. The government recognizes the importance of the in-person network and the people it serves, which is why ServiceOntario centres will continue to be available for those who want in-person services in communities across Ontario.

The government's effort to expand online is intended to make it easier for Ontarians. ServiceOntario's online services are easy to use, fast and convenient. Many are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The products are mailed directly to customers if applicable. Customers renewing online will instantly be given a receipt as proof

of purchase while the products arrive in the mail. Customers can also review the mail in some cases.

We continue to provide our services in person, online, ensuring that citizens have a choice for what is most efficient and convenient for them.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

MPP McCrimmon, you have less than a minute left for your last question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Okay. A quick question, then—and I'm back to the deputy minister, because it's a detail question: What share of ServiceOntario transactions are still done in person? And what is the ministry doing to make sure that people who don't have an online presence still have access throughout all of Ontario?

Ms. Samantha Poisson: In terms of the breakdown of in-person transactions versus online: In 2025, our in-person network served over 12 million customers at the 270 service locations, and 25 million transactions were completed. We also handled over five million telephone calls for the over 100 government programs that we provide.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Deputy, for that response.

MPP McCrimmon, that concludes the time for questions for the third party.

We'll now move to the government. MPP Allsopp, please, when you're ready, sir.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you very much, Chair. I appreciate the opportunity.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today as well as to all your staff for being here as well. We appreciate the opportunity to ask you some very important questions about the work that your ministry does.

My question will be related to the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act. Minister, as you know, Ontarians are using online services more than ever before to access health care, education, government programs and other essential services. At the same time, cyber attacks are becoming more frequent and more sophisticated, with hospitals, schools and public institutions facing growing threats to the sensitive information that they hold. Parents are also increasingly concerned about how children's information is being collected, used and protected in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

Minister, can you tell the committee how the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act is helping strengthen protections for children's personal information while also improving the ability of public institutions to prevent, prepare for and respond to cyber threats?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please, sir.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: To the member, thank you for the question. I really appreciate that question; it's a very good question.

This is an issue that affects every single Ontarian who accesses public services today. Whether it's a health card, a student record or a driver's licence, people expect government to protect their information and keep pace with a

rapidly evolving digital landscape. That's exactly why our government introduced the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act, or EDSTA.

The reality is that cyber threats are growing more sophisticated every year. Hospitals, schools, colleges, universities, children's aid societies and other public institutions are managing vast amounts of sensitive information and are increasingly being targeted by cyber criminals. Ontario needed a modern framework that helps these organizations better prepare for, respond to and recover from cyber threats. Under EDSTA, new cyber security requirements came into force on July 1, 2026. These requirements help strengthen cyber readiness across the broader public sector by requiring organizations to establish cyber security programs, designate cyber security contacts, complete regular cyber maturity assessments and report critical cyber incidents. These measures create greater accountability, improved preparedness and support in a more coordinated response to cyber threats across Ontario.

At the same time, EDSTA is helping strengthen protections for children. As technology becomes a bigger part of everyday life, parents deserve to know how their children's personal information is being handled. That's why a new regulation under EDSTA now requires Ontario school boards to notify parents, guardians or students aged 16 or 17 when personal information is being disclosed to third-party software providers. This provides greater transparency and helps families make informed decisions about the digital tools being used in educational settings.

We're backing this legislation with practical cross-sector investments. Our government invested up to \$5 million to launch the Ontario Cyber Security Centre of Excellence, which supports small and mid-sized businesses to develop and adopt security solutions. We also maintain a Cyber Security Community of Practice that includes approximately 2,400 members and supports more than 1,000 participants through cyber security tabletop exercises designed to improve preparedness and incident-response capabilities.

Within government, Ontario Cyber Security Operations Centre operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, forming the first line of defence against the 109 million cyber attacks Ontario faced and defeated in the last year alone. This work is delivered through the enterprise information technology services program, which has a 2026-27 operating allocation of approximately \$174 million, funding that directly supports stronger infrastructure, cyber risk management and the protection of government systems and data.

The goal of EDSTA, alongside our targeted investments, is simple: Protect the information and infrastructure assets of the people of Ontario, strengthen public trust, support responsible innovation and make sure public institutions have the tools they need to operate safely and securely.

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The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister, for that response.

New question: MPP Ciriello.

MPP Monica Ciriello: Thank you, Minister, for being here today, and to the entire team. We are so happy to have you in this ministry and weathering us through some pretty tough economic times. I know we welcomed you to Hamilton not too long ago and we certainly saw your advocacy on the ground. Hamilton is a city that is being hit with the US tariffs, and that's where I'm going to focus my question.

We know Ontario workers and businesses continue to face significant economic uncertainty due to US tariffs and growing trade pressures. During challenging times like these, it's never been more important to support local businesses, strengthen domestic supply chains and ensure that public dollars are helping create jobs right here at home.

Can you explain how the Buy Ontario Act is helping the province's purchasing power to support Ontario workers, protect local businesses and strengthen Ontario's economic alliance?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that question.

Minister Crawford, please.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Chair, through you to the member: I enjoyed my time in Hamilton. It was great to see these innovative Ontario companies that really want an opportunity. It's important that we as a government put them on the shelf and give them some awareness into the marketplace. It's critically important. The Buy Ontario Act is very important.

This goes really right to the heart of what Ontarians expect from their government right now. Families, workers and businesses across Ontario are facing unprecedented economic pressure as a result of US tariffs and global economic uncertainty. At a time like this, Ontarians expect their government to stand up for local jobs, local businesses and local supply chains. That is exactly what we are doing. The reality is that the public sector spends approximately \$30 billion every year on goods and services.

Our government believes that whenever possible, these procurement dollars should be supporting Ontario workers, Ontario businesses and Ontario communities. That is why we introduced the Buy Ontario Act, 2025, and implemented the Buy Ontario procurement directive. Together, these measures provide Ontario with a strong framework to prioritize Ontario and Canadian goods and services while strengthening supply chains and helping protect our economy from external pressures. The Buy Ontario framework is already delivering results. Today, approximately 89% of vendors on Supply Ontario's vendor of record arrangements are Ontario-based, while 97% are Canadian-based. Those are public procurement dollars supporting jobs and businesses here at home.

Our government has also restricted US businesses' access to approximately \$30 billion in annual public sector procurement opportunities while tariffs remain in place. At the same time, we have leveraged government purchasing power to create more opportunities for Ontario and Canadian businesses to do business with government.

We're seeing strong results through Supply Ontario, which now manages approximately \$7.4 billion in contracts across government and has awarded 98% of strategic inventory contracts to Ontario firms. Those contracts are strengthening local supply chains while supporting local businesses and workers.

The Buy Ontario Act is about building long-term resilience. Over the last several years, we've all seen the consequences of supply chain disruptions. Whether it was medical supplies, critical infrastructure components or everyday consumer products, jurisdictions that relied too heavily on international supply chains faced significant challenges. Buy Ontario helps ensure more of those products and services government depends on can be secured closer to home.

Ultimately, our goal is simple: Keep public dollars working here in Ontario, support good-paying jobs, strengthen local supply chains and build a stronger, more resilient economy for future generations. That's exactly what Buy Ontario is helping us to achieve. Thank you very much for the question.

MPP Monica Ciriello: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister.

New question, please. MPP Darouze, when you're ready, sir.

MPP George Darouze: Thank you, Chair, and through you, also, I want to thank the minister and deputy minister and the team for being here this morning to deliver the estimates. But also, on a personal note, I want to thank you. I can relate to the Buy Ontario Act first-hand. You came to our riding, to Ottawa, and especially my riding, and we discussed it with our stakeholders. I appreciate everything you've done so far to protect our communities and our sector.

Minister, I'm going to gear up to: So many families in my riding especially, in Carleton, know the frustration of logging on to buy concert or sporting event tickets only to find they have already been scooped up by resellers and listed at significantly higher prices. Too often, fans have felt priced out of events because of unfair resale practices and ticket scalping. What steps has your government taken through the Ticket Sales Act to protect consumers, improve transparency and help ensure fans not only in Carleton but in Ontario have a fair opportunity to purchase tickets at a reasonable price?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for the question.

Minister, please, to the response.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: To the member, through the Chair, thank you very much. I did appreciate being in your riding and meeting folks. It's great to see the resilience and the overwhelming support for protecting Ontario in these difficult times. Whether you're an individual with your purchasing power or a business wanting to get on the shelf and support, it's all important. It's critically important. It's all hands on deck right now as we get through these turbulent times.

The Ticket Sales Act, to what you were asking about, also falls into that, because it's about protecting consum-

ers. Families save their hard-earned money to take their kids to a hockey game, to see their favourite artist in concert or to attend a major sporting event, only to discover that tickets have been snapped up and re-listed at inflated prices before they've even had a fair chance to buy them. Ontarians were frustrated and, frankly, they had a right to be. A lot of these bots would go in and scoop up all these tickets, knowing that they could resell them for a significantly higher margin.

Our government believes that tickets should go to fans, not professional scalpers, ticket bots and bad actors looking to make a quick profit. That's why we updated the Ticket Sales Act, 2017, as part of the 2026 budget to strengthen Ontarians for Ontario consumers and to help restore fairness in the ticket marketplace.

One of the most important changes we made was putting a cap at resale prices. Today's tickets cannot be resold for more than the original purchase price, including all fees, service charges and applicable taxes. That means consumers are protected from excessive markups and exploitive resale practices.

We've also strengthened transparency requirements—and that was a part of the question that you had asked—throughout this process. Under Ontario law, ticket bots are banned. Resellers must provide proof of the original ticket price before re-listing that ticket for resale. Businesses selling or reselling tickets must provide key information, such as seat location and ticket details. Ticket prices must be displayed in Canadian dollars, and businesses facilitating ticket resales must provide a valid ticket guarantee or a refund protection.

We've backed these protections up with strong and effective enforcement. As of June 10, 2026, administrative penalties increased from a previous maximum of \$10,000 to as much as \$25,000 for each contravention. I repeat that: for each contravention.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Excuse me, Minister. There's one minute left for questions and responses. Thank you.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Okay.

A business that violates multiple requirements can receive multiple administrative penalties, and corporations convicted in court can also face fines up to \$250,000, with individuals facing fines up to \$50,000.

Ontario has already used these stronger tools. The designated director has imposed administrative penalties totalling \$45,000 against StubHub and SeatGeek Canada Inc., issued 33 warning letters, sent 40 notices of inspection to secondary sellers and issued four compliance orders. The added enforcement includes a \$6,000 penalty issued to SeatGeek Canada on April 16, 2026; a \$25,000 penalty issued to SeatGeek Canada on August 28, 2026; and a \$20,000 penalty issued to StubHub on September 9, 2026—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister.

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That concludes the time available—on this round, at least—for the members of the government to ask questions.

We'll return to the official opposition. MPP Rakocevic, please, when you're ready.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm ready.

I was happy to be able to take a moment to do a little research and step out of the chamber for a moment. I looked at this ministry's estimates briefing book and I found that, on page 11, it stated that the modernization of Ontario's access-to-information and protection-of-privacy requirements is actually part of the ministry's 2026-27 plan, meaning that handling complaints around FOI is something that requires staff. It requires money. Money is part of the estimates. Staffing is part of the estimates. How they spend their time, the fact if they're going to reject or accept—all of these are literally, effectively, line items.

I'd like to know, from the minister, how the changes to FOIs originating from his ministry changed staffing and what their priorities were. Was there an actual physical change in the numbers? What is the change as a result of that?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member for the question. As we're aware, we're discussing the FOI changes that came in earlier this year. Your question is specifically on staffing changes within our ministry.

I should also note that while our ministry has responsibility for that legislation, there are also FOI officials embedded in various ministries. Just so you're aware, it's not entirely our ministry.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Understood.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: We haven't changed anything we've done in terms of how we deal with information. Again, 95% of information is still accessible. Of course, most importantly, outcomes of government—we are accountable to the public, most importantly, but also the privacy commissioner, the Auditor General etc.

For specifics to your question, I'll pass it to my deputy.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, to the question, please. Thank you.

Ms. Samantha Poisson: Thank you for the question. As the minister has referenced, each ministry is, under FIPPA, deemed to be its own institution. While we have oversight and responsibility for the legislation itself, we do provide the strategic leadership, policy expertise and enterprise oversight for record-keeping practices, freedom-of-information processes and collection and use of disclosure of personal information.

The responsibility for FOI requests really does rest with the individual ministries. They manage their operations and resources according to their specific business needs and volumes of requests. We continue to work with ministries across the government to support compliance with the legislative requirements and to promote best practices. The government continues to comply with its obligations under FIPPA, and remains committed to upholding the rights and access to records.

Speaking specifically for our ministry, I can indicate there have been no changes to staffing levels.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for that response.

New question, please.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: You withdrew something with regard to that, though—with respect to staffing. At the time of the change with FOI, DMs were told to halt all FOI requests. The DMs said they did not want to do this or put this in writing, and this was refused.

I'm just curious with regard to where this directive came from. Was it in fact from the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement, or did it come elsewhere? Because this obviously affected staff—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I have a point of order, please.

Mr. Brian Riddell: Yes. I understand, if it's in the estimates, it's allowable. But I think the opposition is going too far and elaborating on the question.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I'm going to allow the question.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, please.

Ms. Samantha Poisson: As you can appreciate, these were significant changes to FIPPA. We built into FIPPA a transition period to ensure that the transition would go smoothly.

As the public service, we wanted to approach this with discipline and consistency. There was a very brief one-week pause which then was punctuated by a memo, from me to the field, with clarifying direction as a result of really wanting to get the implementation right.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for that response.

New question.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you for your responses.

I'd like to really quickly go back to the procurement side with regard to Buy Ontario policies. Very recently, we will remember that teachers were actually given, essentially, money to be able to spend in a classroom, and rather than to be given the ability to purchase from wherever—whether it be a Canadian business, a small business—they were told they were given a card and they had to go through Staples—again, an American company. In fact, many teachers reached out and said, “This is actually costing more. We found comparable supplies in other stores.” Here is a government talking about Buy Ontario policies and yet again we're back at Staples.

Can you tell us the rationale for this? Because in fact, as teachers are pointing out, this isn't necessarily saving money. In fact, it's costing more in many cases, and it's restricting where they get to go.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Yes, point of order.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Yes, point of order: The question falls under other ministries' responsibilities, as it's a question about EDU.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I agree. Restate your question. That question is better put to the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I understand, but—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I've ruled on it.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): A new question, please.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: All right.

I'd like to move on to the delegated authorities that are essentially under the responsibility of this government. In fact, all of the DAs pay what are called oversight fees. I'd like to know what the actual cost of these oversight fees were last year, and what does the ministry actually do for this oversight money? How many staff do they employ for it? What are the audits? Do you have performance reviews?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Through you, Chair, to the member: So people are aware, we have 12 administrative authorities that are independent of government but are bound by government of Ontario legislation. For example, when you buy a new home, Tarion is the warranty record keeper; there's the condo authority; when you buy a vehicle, OMVIC; ESA for electrical safety; TSSA, technical standards. We have a number of organizations that do their part to protect consumers throughout Ontario. They are from Ontario legislation. They are independent in terms of their staffing and what they do in their day-to-day operations and policies. They are independent of government. We do oversee them. We receive from the majority of them—with perhaps one or two exceptions—an oversight fee, if that's what you're referring to, annually. That's to ensure that we work with those organizations, keep communication lines open, get understandings of what's happening with their respective organizations. Are there areas that we need to be aware of that they can relay to us? We have people responsible for that if you'd like me to—

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I appreciate that answer. I'd like to then move on to RECO as an example. This is an example of an administrative authority. As we know, in May 2025, we learned of about a \$10-million trust shortfall at one of the realty brokerages. It took a lot of time for this ministry to respond. In fact, it leaves a lot of questions as to how this could have occurred in the first place. How is it possible that we would get to there when these administrative authorities are paying a lot of money for oversight? Eventually, someone was brought in by the ministry to take over.

So, here are a couple of questions I want to know: Did RECO pay for the person that was brought, who was taking over? Was this a ministry cost? Did it come out of that oversight fund? I want to know how much of that missing money was in fact recovered and given to the realtors that were affected.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please.

And if you could, please direct your questions through me.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Yes, yes. Thank you, Chair. Sorry.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, please.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: To the question from the member with respect to RECO: RECO is, for those that are not aware, the Real Estate Council of Ontario. They regulate the realtors throughout the province of Ontario, of

which there are probably approximately 100,000—certainly many, many tens of thousands of realtors in the province.

When we discovered that there was money missing in a trust account through RECO, our government acted very swiftly to bring in an administrator to run that organization, and the gentleman is still helping run that organization today. They've made tremendous changes to that organization to ensure protection of Ontarians through trust accounts.

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Your questions about whether realtors that were—first of all, no consumers were impacted, number one. So, no consumer doing any transaction there was impacted in any negative way at all—number one.

Number two, with respect to the realtors who were affected because there was missing money to pay them, commissions have been reimbursed.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Fully?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: All of it, yes.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Okay.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Yes, so I think RECO is an example of why we need good oversight, why we need good organizations like them to manage that sector. And they're making and continue to make—and we're always, of course, open to your input if you have good ideas. We're all ears in terms of how we can make them even more effective.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I understand. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister, for that response.

New question, please.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I mean, through the Chair, it's sort of like putting in a crosswalk after the accident. I understand.

We had called for action, and it took time, but the government did take action in this case. We understand that there are a number of cases—because this isn't the only brokerage. In fact, many of the realtors I speak to say that this is just simply the tip of the iceberg. Can you confirm that there were more brokerages that have seen trust funds being raided in a similar way, and what action the ministry and RECO have taken to deal with that and to make these realtors whole? And what they're actually doing to stop this from happening, full stop.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Yes, thank you very much.

I mean, our first priority is to ensure a fair, confident and trustworthy real estate market. Let me be very clear about that, because Ontarians are investing their life savings; it's often the largest purchase they will ever do in their life. They want to ensure a safe, transparent market. Trust is a cornerstone of that. So, absolutely.

In terms of have there been other examples, I believe there have been. You would have to—you know, they make all their records publicly available on their website. I believe there have been some smaller instances of some issues with trust accounts. I can't speak to each specific

one, but there have been some cases and they have dealt with—those organizations are maybe dealing with them on an ongoing basis as we speak.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Yes. There is not so much time left, so I want to say that, unanimously, all members of all sides in Ontario voted to get rid of NOSIs. In fact, we had brought in a bill saying we'd like to see them discharged. The government moved to expire them. It's weaker but it had a bit of a similar effect, except these liens still remain on title, and it's up to people at the time when they discover them to actually have them removed through a lawyer, and often, there's a cost. We wanted them set to zero.

The thing is, we still continue to hear from people across the province that are still being targeted. Now, we know that there is something called the Land Titles Assurance Fund, which is that \$5 million a year, but the estimates show nothing was paid out in 2024-25 and again nothing in 2025-26.

So we did get rid of these notices of security interest, something that we pushed for and the government finally agreed and said, "Okay, we'll remove it," but there still is damage being caused. People are still being defrauded. This can cost people thousands and tens of thousands of dollars, but yet you have a fund to be able to deal with or help people. Why has nothing been dispersed from this fund? There are all sorts of examples of title fraud.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question about the fund.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Yes, thank you, Chair and thank you to the member opposite. I'm glad we agree on the changes we made to the NOSIs. That was definitely a consumer protection issue we felt very strongly on and acted in the best interests to protect particularly vulnerable consumers.

For some of the specifics on that to the fund you're talking about, I'll defer to my deputy on the specifics on that.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister.

Deputy Minister, to the question please. You have one minute and seven seconds to respond, please. Thank you.

Ms. Samantha Poisson: The Homeowner Protection Act banned the registration of NOSIs on title for consumer goods, deemed existing NOSI registrations for consumer goods to be expired and provided mechanisms to have those expired consumer NOSIs removed from title.

With respect to the fund that you were referring to, that is a \$5-million statutory fund for which, if there is an administrative error on our part, the client can be made whole. So the stats that you're referring to would then suggest that we had no claims against the fund, based on the comments—

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: So you're saying the criteria of the fund isn't met in these instances. It has to be for some other reason.

Ms. Samantha Poisson: I would like to call upon—let me just think—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, there is no time for that response. The time has elapsed for the official opposition for this round.

I will now move to the third party, to MPP McCrimmon, please, when you're ready. Thank you.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Cyber security and protecting the data of Ontarians—so, in 2025, that ransomware attack on Ontario Health atHome supply, a vendor to Ontario, exposed the personal health information of at least 200,000 home care patients, which is about a third of all home care patients in Ontario. The patients were notified a month later, and the government admitted that the notification process wasn't followed.

Now, this ministry runs the government's central IT and cyber security services. Application and information technology services was funded at \$626.5 million, down \$12.5 million. Enterprise information technology services at \$174 million was down \$42 million.

Now, with enterprise IT services cut by \$42 million and application cuts by \$12 million while cyber attacks on the public sector appear to be increasing, how much is the ministry spending on cyber security in 2026-27, and is that amount going up or down?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please. Thank you.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Through you, Chair, to the member opposite: Thank you for the question. Cyber security is something we take very, very seriously at the province of Ontario.

I think Ontario really is a gold standard across Canada and indeed globally for the great work that our team does here—as I mentioned earlier in my speech, 109 million cyber attacks a year against the government of Ontario that we have been able to defend against. So this is something that is evolving and changing rapidly, especially as artificial intelligence and other bad actors are appearing more at our doorstep.

The reduction in fees that you referred to is simply one-time contracts that are expiring. So, it's not any less investment in AI or cyber security. We recognize the importance of this and are continuing to invest in this in a very, very large way.

With that, I'll pass to my deputy for a little more detailed explanation on that.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister.

Deputy Minister, please, to the question. Thank you.

Ms. Samantha Poisson: Thank you for the question. I can concur with the minister that the way I&IT projects are funded, there is an ebb and a flow to them, and that does account for some of the variance that you would see.

I'd actually like to call upon Associate Deputy Minister Mohammad Qureshi to provide you specifics with respect to the cyber security allocation.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Welcome, sir. I need your full name, please, when you respond. Thank you.

Mr. Mohammad Qureshi: Thank you. Mohammad Qureshi, corporate CIO and associate DM leading the

I&IT organization, reporting in to Deputy Minister Poisson.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for being here, sir.

Mr. Mohammad Qureshi: Thank you for having me.

I'll just highlight that, from a cyber security perspective, our investments have been going up year over year. Sometimes there are one-time shortfalls that happen. That's related to either project initiatives or one-time funding that happens to help strengthen our cyber security posture.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: That was my next question, and he gave me the answer already. Okay.

So, question: During that Ontario atHome exposure of that data, a lot of people were not notified, and they needed to be notified. Has the ministry fixed that process so that's not going to happen again?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To question please. Thank you.

The question should go to the minister, and he can decide who he refers it to. Thank you.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Yes. Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you for the question. I would defer that to the associate deputy minister.

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The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Mohammad Qureshi: Thank you, Minister, and thanks for the question.

I would highlight Ontario Health atHome as a separate entity under the Ministry of Health, so that question should be—any specifics to that should probably go to the Ministry of Health.

I will highlight that MPBSDP has a centre of excellence that supports the broader public sector as well as municipalities and others. There is a communication protocol that has been established between MPBSDP and, for example, through Ministry of Health and Ontario Health, to ensure that we have resources available to help support them and guide them through any cyber security attack that might be happening and provide advice and guidance as well—just keeping in mind that accountability for service delivery sits with the accountable ministries and their agencies as well.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

New question, please, to the minister.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Okay, and this might be kind of a general question. Now, does your ministry—it could be not through health, but that would be actually an interesting question. Do you require that vendors report breaches, and in what kind of time frame?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister Crawford, please.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you very much. For example, with our new legislation, we do require municipalities and broader public sector organizations that we work with to report breaches within 72 hours. We require a cyber maturity assessment every two years, and we require a key contact person. So if a municipality, for

example, or a hospital was breached, they would fall under that.

In terms of vendors, I would pass that over to my deputy or associate deputy to discuss that in more detail.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Associate Deputy Minister, please. Thank you.

Mr. Mohammad Qureshi: From a vendor perspective, we have very stringent Ts and Cs—terms and conditions—within each of our contracts, and it's negotiated by vendor. We have very specific security requirements as well. All of our security requirements are publicly posted under our GO-ITS, our IT standards. From a cyber security perspective, they're embedded in each of our contracts, which also requires them to notify us on any cyber security incident as well, and there's a time allocation embedded in that.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: And is that run—let's say, for a third-party vendor, how are you involved, as opposed to the Ministry of Health?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister Crawford, please. Thank you.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I would defer to the associate deputy minister.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir.

Mr. Mohammad Qureshi: We would be involved if we owned the contract directly for the services that are involved as MPBSDP. Our agencies or ministries, if they have any direct contracts, they would have direct oversight over those contracts.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Okay, third-party vendors—I think that's probably where my greatest worry is, and we've seen it already.

What are we spending—maybe that's a better question—and what processes are in place to ensure third-party compliance?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister Crawford, please. Thank you.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I'll pass it to the associate deputy minister.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Associate Deputy Minister, please, to respond.

Mr. Mohammad Qureshi: I don't have an exact number of what we're spending, but I will highlight that, as part of our contracts and our terms and conditions for those contracts, there are very stringent security requirements and reporting requirements embedded in there. So for example, we will use SOC 2 Type 2 reporting requirements that actually provide third-party audit opportunities for any of our contracts that we have with vendors. That actually gives us a level of confidence and information to ensure that third-party vendors are keeping up to speed on cyber security, have the right controls in place and are protecting the data that is interested in them. Again, those standards are posted as part of our GO-ITS standards, and

they're embedded in our contracts. Then, any broader procurements that would be happening, we would be providing advice to ensure that those are also included.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Thank you. That's very helpful, actually. I appreciate that.

Under the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024, the government can set cyber security requirements for hospitals, school boards and children's aid societies. Which requirements are in force in 2026-27, and how much funding is being provided to help these organizations actually meet the standards that we've set?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister Crawford, please. Thank you.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you for the question. I'll start out at the high level and then defer on that.

We work very collaboratively with the broader public sector in ensuring a safe cyber network within the province of Ontario. So again, that would include hospitals, colleges, universities, children's aid societies etc.

We play a role. Ultimately, they are responsible themselves. They interact with us. We do have the security centre of excellence, which collaborates with them, gives them advice and is there 24/7 to help them out, so I want to make it very clear that we do work very collaboratively with them.

For the specifics on that, I'll defer to the associate deputy minister.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Associate Deputy Minister, please, to the question. Thank you.

Mr. Mohammad Qureshi: What I will highlight as part of EDSTA, that was brought into law just over a year ago—part of the requirements as the regulations have been implemented is the intent for our BPS counterparts in health, social services and education to report, on an every-two-year basis, their cyber security maturity assessment.

A lot of this work is really tied to, "What does good cyber security look like?" and a lot of organizations don't have that maturity level around, "What does good cyber security look like?" So, the intent of that maturity assessment is to really showcase to our broader public sector entities what a good maturity assessment looks like and how they could actually improve their maturity assessment over time.

A lot of times, the money is already existing within those organizations. They may not be allocating it in the right places. So the intention of EDSTA and the regulations that have been brought in is to help guide and influence and push forward a good cyber security practice through the work that our Security Centre of Excellence does.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

MPP McCrimmon, you've got three minutes and 50 seconds. New question, please. Thank you.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Thank you for that.

A question following on: If you're responsible for the cyber security of the overall system, and you count on third-party vendors and the public, like school boards and hospitals, to do their part, aren't you afraid that with all of the budget cuts that have been going through that there might—do you control the money that goes to school boards and hospitals? Aren't you afraid that they're not going to have the money they need to actually implement a really robust cyber security program?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, Minister Crawford, please. Thank you.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Yes, thank you for the question, to the member.

Cyber security is something that I think everybody in Ontario recognizes the importance of now. So, whether you're a school, a hospital—we all have very important data that we need to protect and keep safe.

The funding for their own internal security comes from—our ministry does not fund their security in any way, shape or form; what we do is help them. We help guide them where there is a resource, but our ministry does not deliver funds to a hospital or a school or any organization, for that matter, in the broader public sector to pay for their security. We help work with them collaboratively and give advice. We have, obviously, a very experienced, very solid team here in Toronto that protects the cyber operations of the province of Ontario, but we don't specifically fund them.

But I think every organization now in the province of Ontario—and that even goes to the private sector, to be quite frank—recognizes the importance of protecting our data and our information right now, because it is under attack. It's growing and increasing. So I think investing in those areas is paramount for any organization or individual, for that matter, in the province of Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please. Thank you.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Okay. Following on from that—and I think you're absolutely right in that the requirement for cyber security and the protection is just going to continue to grow. What mechanisms do you have to actually disseminate? Are there any improvements that need to be made? What are the latest trends, so people are kept up to date?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please, Minister Crawford.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: To the member: That's a very good question in terms of how we collaborate with the broader public sector. It's critically important, because we, at our level of government, sometimes see things that they may not. Or we may hear about things that they may not have heard. Or we may see one of our broader public sector partners have some kind of breach, so that we need to share that information with the rest of the broader public sector. That's critically important, so we have a team with our cyber team that will do that, will work with the broader public sector in collaboration and, of course, give them advice on dealing with it.

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Perhaps my associate deputy minister could add a little bit to that.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Associate Deputy Minister, please, to the question. You have 15 seconds, sir.

Mr. Mohammad Qureshi: I'll just highlight what the minister was saying. We do have a Cyber Security Ontario website that is dedicated.

The minister, as part of his opening remarks, also talked about our community of practice that we have. We have over a thousand organizations that joined that community of practice. We disseminate—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir, for that response.

That concludes the time for questions from the third party. To the government members: MPP Riddell, please, to your question.

Mr. Brian Riddell: Good morning, Minister. The people of Ontario expect government services to be accessible, reliable and convenient. While many people continue to rely on in-person services, there is also a growing demand for online services that can be assessed quickly and securely from anywhere in the province.

Can you tell the committee what progress ServiceOntario has made in delivering faster, more convenient services while continuing to maintain reliable in-person access for communities across Ontario?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please, Minister Crawford.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: To the member, through the Chair: Thank you for the question—a very good question. As I mentioned, people have different schedules and accessibility is critically important for ServiceOntario. ServiceOntario is often the front door to government for millions of Ontarians. It delivers more than 100 services to the public and more than 90 services to business on behalf of over 20 ministries. Whether someone is renewing a driver's licence, updating a health card, registering a business, ordering a birth certificate or accessing one of many government services, people expect those services to be simple, reliable and convenient. That's exactly what our government has been focused on delivering.

Over the last several years, we've made significant investments to modernize how people access government services while maintaining a strong in-person presence across the province. In 2025-26, ServiceOntario handled approximately 64.7 million public-facing transactions and information interactions, an increase of roughly 1.5 million over the previous year. That included 24.3 million driver and vehicle transactions, 7.7 million health registration transactions and 4.1 million personal property security registrations and searches. That is why the 2026-27 estimates increase ServiceOntario's operating allocation by \$19.8 million, or 7.2%, to \$295.5 million.

We are also increasing its capital asset allocation from approximately \$9.8 million to \$12.9 million, supporting better services for people and businesses and the continued development of the single window for business and permitting systems. That investment is producing tangible

results, more services available online, fast turnaround times, stronger performance standards and reliable in-person services across the province.

We've also made tremendous progress through the expansion of ServiceOntario Account. More than 1.6 million Ontarians have created an account and have used it to complete nearly nine million transactions, including more than 2.3 million online self-service requests related to the Ontario taxpayer rebate program, reducing unnecessary calls and allowing people to get answers directly.

We are also delivering practical improvements that save Ontarians time. The Ontario Business Account now supports approximately 1.4 million business profiles, making it easier for businesses to access services, complete filings and interact through government in a single digital portal.

Online marriage licence services expanded to 116 municipalities and supported more than 30,000 licences. Instant digital certification is now available for more than 755,000 real estate documents, eliminating a process that previously took up to 15 days.

Digital dealership registration eligibility has reached 89%, and dealerships can now upload required documents in under 10 minutes.

These are meaningful improvements, but the most important measure is whether services are delivered when promised. Between April 2024 and March 2026, ServiceOntario met its eight money-back service guarantees an average of 99.8% of the time. These are excellent numbers.

At the same time, modernization does not mean eliminating in-person services. Our government recognizes that many Ontarians still prefer to access services face to face, which is why ServiceOntario continues to maintain a strong provincial network of more than 270 ServiceOntario centres, including publicly and privately operated locations, along with two mobile service units that travel directly into under-served communities. In fact, approximately 11.6 million customers continue to use in-person ServiceOntario services annually.

We have expanded appointment booking, extended hours at select locations and launch practical initiatives that make everyday transactions easier. For example, more than 130 municipalities now participate in Ontario's online marriage licence application program; senior drivers can now renew their licence through ServiceOntario centres rather than attending separate group sessions; and more than 680 dealerships now participate in dealership registration, helping vehicle buyers get onto the road faster.

The common thread behind all this work is customer choice. We understand that one size does not fit all. Some Ontarians want to complete transactions online from home; others prefer to walk into a ServiceOntario centre and speak with someone directly. Our goal is to make both options available, reliable and convenient.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

New question, MPP Sarrazin.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Thank you, Minister. It was really nice to hear all of this about ServiceOntario, all these numbers. We don't do that kind of research, and it's a good opportunity for us to learn more about how many people we're serving every year.

But on another note, I want to know—over the last several years we have seen how important strong supply chains are to the delivery of public services. Whether it is securing critical products during emergency or ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently, Ontarians expect government procurement to be modern, reliable and cost-effective.

Can you tell the committee how Supply Ontario is transforming public sector procurement, strengthening domestic supply chains and helping deliver better value for taxpayers?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please. Thank you.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Chair, through you to the member, thank you very much for the question about Supply Ontario. It plays a critical role in procurement here in the province of Ontario.

And the last several years have shown how important resilient supply chains are to Ontario's economy, public services and emergency preparedness. Whether it was the pandemic, global supply chain disruptions or the economic uncertainty caused by US tariffs, Ontarians expect their government to be prepared, protect critical services and ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. That's exactly why our government created Supply Ontario and continues to modernize public sector procurement across the province.

For too long, procurement was fragmented across government and the broader public sector. Different organizations were often buying similar goods and services independently, limiting our ability to leverage purchasing power and secure the best value for taxpayers.

Supply Ontario is changing that. By centralizing procurement, Supply Ontario is helping government consolidate spending, increase bulk purchasing, improve coordination and build stronger supply chains.

The results are becoming very clear. Today, Supply Ontario manages approximately \$7.4 billion in contracts across the Ontario public service. It has significantly expanded domestic sourcing, with approximately 98% of strategic inventory contracts now awarded to Ontario firms, which are procurement dollars supporting Ontario jobs, Ontario businesses and Ontario communities.

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Supply Ontario is also helping government make better decisions through data and analytics. The agency has developed a procurement database containing more than 22.8 million invoices and approximately 18,500 contracts, helping support evidence-based procurement decisions and identify opportunities for additional efficiencies and savings.

The agency has also expanded support for Ontario businesses by providing vendor education, outreach and engagement opportunities to help more businesses com-

pete for government contracts. Through the more than 40 stakeholder events and webinars, Supply Ontario has helped Ontario vendors better understand how to do business with government.

Supply Ontario continues to play a critical role in strengthening domestic supply chains and improving Ontario's preparedness for future disruptions. The agency is responsible for managing Ontario's strategic inventory and ensuring critical supplies remain available when they are needed most. This work aligns directly with our government's broader economic priorities. Through initiatives like the Buy Ontario Act, the Buy Ontario procurement directive and the procurement restriction policy, we're using government purchasing power to support Ontario workers and businesses while building a stronger, more resilient economy.

The 2026-27 estimates provide \$213.9 million for Supply Ontario. With Ontario's PPE inventory in a strong position, planned purchases are \$132.5 million lower, while Supply Ontario's core mandate remains unchanged: Secure critical supplies, strengthen domestic supply chains and deliver better value for taxpayers.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister.

New question: MPP Allsopp, please.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Could we have a time check before I begin?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Yes, you can: three minutes, five seconds.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: I will be prompt.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Keep it tight.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Yes, sir.

Minister, Ontarians expect government to help them understand their rights and take meaningful action when businesses engage in unfair and deceptive practices. How is your ministry using education, complaint resolution, inspections and enforcement to protect consumers and hold bad actors accountable?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, Minister, please. You've got two minutes, 41 seconds to answer.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member for that very good question. As you are aware, we as a government are very strong supporters of strong consumer protection measures across the province. Unfortunately, there are bad actors operating in the province of Ontario. Ontario's approach is clear: Inform consumers, resolve complaints, inspect high-risk businesses and hold bad actors accountable.

In 2025, the ministry handled 31,590 consumer interactions, helped Ontarians secure \$722,694 through complaint resolutions and conducted 376 risk-based inspections in sectors generating frequent consumer concerns. When businesses broke the rules, we acted. Ministry investigations led to 97 charges and 68 convictions, resulting in almost \$834,000 in fines, \$318,000 in court-ordered restitution and 72 months of probation. Combined with negotiated complaint resolutions, that represents over a million secured for consumers.

That is why we are backing this work with significant resources. The 2026-27 estimates provide approximately

\$29.6 million for consumer services—nearly \$23 million for salaries and wages, an increase of \$3.7 million or 19.3%. This supports the program's broader education, complaint resolution, inspection, enforcement and regulatory responsibilities.

Our reach extends across Ontario's marketplace. The ministry oversees 12 administrative authorities delivering consumer protection and public safety services in sectors including real estate, new home construction, motor vehicle sales, travel, condominiums and technical safety.

We are also helping consumers protect themselves before money changes hands. Ontario's Consumer Beware List allows anyone to check whether a business has unresolved complaints, charges, convictions, or compliance notices. Businesses that repeatedly fail to respond to the ministry or address a consumer complaint can also now be publicly identified. That is how—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister, for that response. That ends the time for the government members.

We now have, my Clerk tells me, seven minutes left for questions. Is that correct? Yes. We'll go back to MPP Rakocevic, for your question, please, sir, when you're ready.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'd like to go back to Supply Ontario—certainly, a big topic of conversation this morning. I had earlier mentioned about the \$750 school supply cards. The decision that these cards could only be redeemed at an American company, Staples, happened through Supply Ontario. There were a number of bidders, but ultimately it was Supply Ontario who chose the American company, presumably over Canadian alternatives, even though we've heard that this ministry, only under certain circumstances, would not do so. What cost savings, if any, or potential losses are expected as a result of the decision to make this card only redeemable at the American company Staples?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I certainly appreciate the question from the honourable member. There's a lot to unpack there.

Let me start by saying that we in this government, I want to make it very clear, appreciate foreign investors, number one, coming in the province. When you come into Ontario, there's a sign; it says, "Open for Business." So we appreciate investors that are investing and creating jobs in Ontario and Canada from anywhere in the world. That's how we grow the economy. We want to grow the economy here. Staples Canada has approximately 11,000 workers working for them.

Now, with respect to the specific contract you're referring to, while Supply Ontario was involved in that, ultimately it was another ministry, the Ministry of Education, that made that decision. I can't speak for them. However, what I can say is speak to the high level of professionalism at Supply Ontario. Any decision that they would make, they would be looking at price, they would be looking at value, they would be looking at the availabil-

ity to be able to get this online operation up very quickly and serve over 80,000 teachers.

They make decisions independent of me and our government. That's their responsibility. It's critically important to be aware of that. And from what I understand, they were the company that won the contract from other bidders bidding on that contract. And what I understand is there's always going to be a few bumps along the way, but overall, the program is going very, very well with Staples Canada, and teachers are happy to be able to spend these extra funds on supplies—

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: But we're—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Hold on—through me. I want to hear the rest of the answer, please.

Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Just to wrap up, again, it would be the Ministry of Education that made the final decision on this through Supply Ontario. We weren't involved in that, but Supply Ontario ultimately reports to me. But any procurement decision is made by independent procurement professionals.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister, for that response.

New question.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Through the Chair: Minister, your ministry handled almost 32,000 consumer interactions and complaints in 2025, but 97 charges were laid out. This is basically amounting to a couple a week over the course of a year. Some \$30 million goes into this consumer protection program, and yet the result is 97 laid charges. What is, really, the return on money here? It can't possibly be that tens of thousands of people—so few had it right when they made the complaints. Could you explain the cause of this discrepancy, considering the amount of money that's being put into consumer protection, presumably? And yet the small amount of charges—literally, a total of \$318,000 paid out to everyone. So, 68 convictions and \$318,000 after 31,000-plus complaints were levied.

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The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please, Minister.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member for the question.

Consumer protection is something we at the government of Ontario take very seriously. I would not say that those are small amounts. You talk to the people that were involved in those particular circumstances where they were taken advantage of, and those individuals would not share that view with you. I think these are very serious, bad business practices that our ministry helped to help those consumers in those cases. So I wouldn't say it was a small amount.

I think it's also fair to be aware that the fact that we even have consumer protection laws at the forefront for all these different sectors of the economy, for consumers, is critically important. Enforcement is part of the equation, obviously, but ensuring that companies are in compliance is equally important. It's not just going after the bad actors;

it's making sure everybody out there is operating in a safe environment that they feel is trustworthy.

I think our ministry has done a terrific job in terms of enforcement and convictions. This is something we take very seriously.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

You have one minute, 42 seconds left for questions. New question.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you for the answer. I don't believe that 97 out of 31,590 complaints is a number to really brag about, but I will move on to the next question.

The Home Inspection Act, 2017, is not in force. Moving forward, we're several years past this. This means that nearly after a decade this law was passed, anyone can still call themselves a home inspector. How many complaints about home inspectors has the ministry received while this act just sits there unproclaimed? With this information, is this something that the ministry would be planning to enact? And, of course, there would be a dollar figure amount to that.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, sir. You have 58 seconds.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I appreciate the question from the member.

Home construction and home buying—listen, that's critically important. Ontarians often invest their life savings. It's their biggest purchase they ever do in their lifetime, so they want to ensure that they have a safe home that is protected.

We have two organizations that are responsible for the home-building sector specifically, and then there's two, of course, in the condo space. With the homes, we have Tarion, which looks after the warranties of homes. If people have issues, if they have a concern about their builder—for example, if the walls weren't done properly or there are issues with the foundation—they can go through Tarion if they don't get the help they get from their builder specifically.

With respect to builders, we also regulate them through the HCRA, the Home Construction Regulatory Authority, and ensuring—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister. Thank you very much for that response.

Committee members, this concludes the committee's consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

Standing order 69 requires that the Chair put, without further amendment or debate, every question necessary to dispose of the estimates. Are the members ready to vote?

Shall vote 1801, ministry administration, carry? Hands up. All those in favour? Opposed? It's carried.

Shall vote 1809, artificial intelligence, data, archives and privacy, carry? All those in favour? Opposed? It's carried.

Shall vote 1811, enterprise financial and supply chain services, carry? All those in favour? Opposed? It carries.

Shall vote 1814, ServiceOntario, carry? All those in favour? Opposed? It carries.

Shall vote 1816, consumer services, carry? All those in favour? Opposed? It carries.

Shall vote 1818, application and information technology services, carry? All those in favour? Opposed? It carries.

Shall vote 1821, enterprise information technology services, carry? All those in favour? Opposed? It carries.

Shall the Chair report the 2026-27 estimates of the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement to the House? All those in favour? All those opposed? It carries.

This concludes our consideration of this ministry's estimates. I'd like to thank Minister Crawford, his deputy minister, all the staff that are assembled and everyone here today for their participation.

This committee will now recess until 1 p.m. for the Ministry of Francophone Affairs.

The committee recessed from 1205 to 1300.

MINISTRY OF
FRANCOPHONE AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES
FRANCOPHONES

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on Justice Policy will now come to order.

On this afternoon's agenda is the review of the 2026-27 estimates of the Ministry of Francophone Affairs.

As a reminder, the ministry will be considered for two hours, with a 20-minute opening statement from the minister, followed by questions and answers in rotations of 15 minutes for the official opposition members of the committee, 15 minutes for the third party members of the committee and 15 minutes for the government members of the committee for the remainder of the allotted time.

From the ministry, we're joined by the Honourable Natalia Kusendova-Bashta and ministry officials and staff, some of which are at the table and some of which are behind.

As a reminder, please: The ministry is required to monitor the proceedings for any questions or issues that the ministry undertakes to address. I trust that the deputy minister has arranged to have the hearings closely monitored with respect to questions raised so that the ministry can respond accordingly.

Are there any questions from the members before we start? I see none, Mr. Clerk.

I am now required to call vote 1301, which sets the review process in motion.

We will begin with a statement from the minister for up to 20 minutes.

Minister, the floor is yours, please. Thank you very much for being here today.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président. Bon après-midi à tous. Mesdames et messieurs, les membres du comité, bonjour.

Je vous remercie de me donner l'occasion de présenter les prévisions budgétaires de 2026-2027 du ministère des Affaires francophones. Je remercie la sous-ministre, M^{me} Roda Muse, d'être avec nous, et toute l'équipe du MAFO.

Avant de commencer, j'aimerais saluer ma prédécesseure, l'honorable Caroline Mulroney. Elle a dirigé ce ministère de 2018 à 2026. Plusieurs des initiatives dont je vais vous parler aujourd'hui ont été lancées sous sa direction. Je tiens à reconnaître sa contribution et à la remercier pour le travail qu'elle a accompli au service de la francophonie ontarienne.

Le ministère des Affaires francophones a une responsabilité claire. Il veille à ce que les francophones puissent obtenir les services du gouvernement de l'Ontario en français et participer pleinement à la vie sociale, culturelle, économique et démocratique de notre province. Ce travail s'appuie sur la Loi sur les services en français, dont nous soulignons le 40^e anniversaire cette année. C'est l'occasion de reconnaître le chemin parcouru et de rester concentré sur ce qui compte pour les gens : recevoir des services de qualité en français lorsqu'ils en ont besoin.

Permettez-moi, chers collègues, d'insérer une petite anecdote ou réflexion personnelle ici. On parle souvent des nouveaux arrivants francophones au Canada. Moi, je connais bien leur parcours. Je connais bien les défis, la lutte, l'incertitude, le parcours des nouveaux arrivants au Canada. Je le connais bien car je l'ai vécu moi-même. Je suis arrivée au Canada à l'âge de 12 ans en octobre 2000 avec mes parents et mon petit frère. Mes parents étaient attirés par le Canada, par la promesse des bons emplois, des bonnes opportunités économiques et de bon niveau d'éducation pour les enfants, par le rêve canadien.

Ayant laissé tout ce qu'on connaissait derrière—notre appartement, notre voiture, oui, nos jouets, mon vélo rose, nos amis, notre famille, une culture, langue et société qu'on connaissait bien et où on appartenait.

Les premiers mois, mes parents ont passé beaucoup de temps à chercher des emplois dans leurs professions, ma mère comme enseignante et mon père comme médecin, tout en faisant vivre notre famille grâce aux économies de toute une vie.

Moi, pour ma part, j'ai assisté à une école d'immersion française où la moitié de la journée était enseignée en français et l'autre moitié en anglais. Comme je parlais français avant que j'aie appris l'anglais, je comprenais juste une moitié de l'enseignement et je me sentais complètement perdue pendant l'enseignement en anglais. Je me sentais vraiment déplacée.

Parfois, je posais des questions en français à mes camarades en classe, mais l'enseignante anglophone se fâchait avec moi quand elle m'entendait parler français. Mais pour moi, le français est devenu une question de survie—de survie dans un pays étranger, loin de chez moi, loin de mes amis et loin de tout ce que je connaissais.

Une fois, mes parents m'ont demandé ce que j'ai appris pendant l'enseignement en anglais. J'ai dit : « Pas grand-

chose. L'enseignante parle toujours du ketchup. » Je disais : « Les Canadiens doivent vraiment aimer manger le ketchup car elle en parle chaque jour. » Beaucoup plus tard, j'ai compris que l'enseignante disait : « Class, we have to catch up on this. We have to catch up on that. » Bien sûr, elle ne parlait pas du ketchup. Oui, c'est une petite histoire drôle aujourd'hui, mais cela incarne à quel point j'étais confuse et perdue comme une enfant de 12 ans.

Alors, quand les Franco-Ontariens me disent que parler français est une question de survie dans une situation minoritaire et précaire, je sais exactement de ce qu'ils parlent. Je l'ai vécu moi-même, alors je comprends à quel point il est important de défendre les acquis—toutes les avancées, grandes et petites.

Je vois la joie dans les yeux des parents quand on ouvre une nouvelle école francophone, ou le soulagement dans les yeux des aînés quand on a annoncé une nouvelle clinique médicale francophone à Mississauga. Avoir les services en français, ce n'est pas un luxe. Ce n'est pas une question d'identité ou d'appartenance; c'est une question de survie.

La francophonie ontarienne est présente dans toutes les régions de notre province. Selon le recensement de 2021, l'Ontario comptait plus de 652 000 francophones, soit environ 5 % de plus qu'en 2016. Les données du recensement de 2026 nous permettront d'actualiser ce portrait en 2027.

La société franco-ontarienne a des réalités différentes dans chacune de ses communautés. Notre action doit donc avoir une portée provinciale, tout en tenant compte des besoins de chaque région.

Les prévisions que je présente aujourd'hui appuient cet objectif. Elles nous permettent de travailler avec les ministères qui offrent les services, de soutenir les organismes sur le terrain et de développer des liens au-delà de nos frontières. Il s'agit de faire en sorte que les francophones puissent vivre, travailler et participer pleinement à la vie de notre province, en français.

Je présenterai le budget du ministère, les services en français, le développement économique et nos partenariats.

Les prévisions totales du ministère pour 2026-2027 s'élèvent à 13,25 millions de dollars. C'est une hausse de 1,93 million de dollars, ou 17 %, par rapport à l'année précédente.

Ce budget finance le fonctionnement du ministère, ses travaux de coordination et les paiements de transfert aux organismes pour que les services en français soient planifiés et offerts de façon efficace. Les paiements de transfert totalisent 4,1 millions de dollars. Ils comprennent notamment le Programme d'appui à la francophonie ontarienne, les investissements en développement économique francophone et les projets de coopération avec le Québec.

Je veux préciser la portée de ces prévisions. Les services en français sont offerts par l'ensemble du gouvernement. En éducation, en santé ou en soins de longue durée, par exemple, les dépenses liées à ces services figurent, bien-sûr, dans les budgets des ministères responsables. Elles ne sont pas comprises dans les prévisions du ministère des Affaires francophones. Notre budget soutient plutôt

l'administration de la Loi sur les services en français, notre rôle de conseiller auprès des autres ministères, ainsi que les programmes de paiements de transfert relevant de notre mandat.

Cette distinction est importante lorsqu'on examine les crédits. Le budget de mon ministère ne représente pas la totalité de ce que l'Ontario investit dans les services en français. Il représente les moyens dont dispose mon ministère pour exercer son mandat et soutenir les programmes qui lui sont confiés.

Concrètement, mon ministère aide les ministères et les organismes gouvernementaux à remplir leurs obligations linguistiques. Nous les conseillons pour que les besoins des francophones soient pris en compte dès la conception des politiques et des programmes. Nous les appuyons aussi dans la planification des services, la désignation d'organismes et le suivi des résultats.

Cette collaboration est essentielle. Les personnes qui ont besoin de soins, de services éducatifs ou d'un autre service public s'adressent d'abord au ministère ou l'organisme qui le fournit. Notre rôle est d'aider ces partenaires à intégrer les services en français à leur travail et à comprendre les besoins des communautés qu'ils desservent. Ce rôle exige un dialogue constant avec les communautés francophones. Il exige aussi une collaboration avec le commissaire aux services en français. Le commissaire exerce son mandat de façon indépendante au sein du Bureau de l'Ombudsman de l'Ontario.

1310

Pour sa part, le ministère accompagne les institutions du gouvernement de l'Ontario dans l'application de la loi et l'amélioration de leurs pratiques. Enfin, nous représentons l'Ontario auprès des principales instances consacrées à la francophonie, notamment au Conseil des ministres sur la francophonie canadienne et l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, dont l'Ontario est membre observateur.

La stratégie pour les services en français guide les efforts du gouvernement pour améliorer l'accès aux services, leur qualité et la reddition de comptes. Elle repose sur une idée simple : il faut tenir compte des besoins des francophones avant d'arrêter les choix de programmes ou de prestation de services. C'est pourquoi nous accompagnons les ministères dans leur planification et dans l'application de la lentille francophone. Cette approche les aide à prévoir les ressources nécessaires, à offrir activement leurs services en français et à rendre compte de leurs résultats.

L'offre active compte beaucoup. Un service ne devient pas réellement accessible simplement parce qu'il existe sur papier. Les gens doivent savoir qu'ils peuvent le demander en français et pouvoir l'obtenir sans obstacle inutile. C'est le principe qui guide notre travail avec les ministères et les organismes.

Nous poursuivons aussi la mise en oeuvre de la modernisation de la Loi sur les services en français, adoptée en 2021. En 2026, le gouvernement a annoncé l'élargissement de six régions désignées pour tenir compte des limites municipales actuelles. Il s'agit des comtés unis

de Stormont, Dundas et Glengarry, du comté d'Essex, de Hamilton, de Chatham-Kent, du comté de Renfrew et du district de Thunder Bay. Une période de trois ans est prévue pour la mise en oeuvre de ces changements. Une fois celle-ci terminée, plus de 7 000 francophones supplémentaires, sur un territoire additionnel de 6 326 kilomètres carrés additionnels, pourront avoir accès aux services gouvernementaux en français prévus par la loi.

La liste des régions désignées se trouve maintenant dans un règlement plutôt que dans une annexe de la loi. Cette façon de faire rend le cadre plus facile à mettre à jour lorsque les réalités locales évoluent.

Les limites municipales ont changé au fil des années, alors que le cadre de désignation n'avait pas toujours suivi. En rapprochant ce cadre des réalités actuelles, nous donnons aux ministères, aux organismes et au public une meilleure compréhension des endroits où les obligations de la loi s'appliquent.

La désignation d'organismes est un autre moyen d'améliorer l'accès aux services. Deux nouvelles désignations sont entrées en vigueur en janvier 2026, ce qui porte à 258 le nombre d'organismes désignés en Ontario. Depuis janvier 2023, plus de 140 mises à jour ont aussi été apportées au règlement qui les énumère.

Une désignation doit se traduire par un service que les gens peuvent trouver et utiliser. L'identité visuelle conçue pour les organismes désignés aide le public à repérer les endroits où il peut recevoir des services en français. Elle appuie l'offre active : les francophones ne devraient pas avoir à deviner si un service existe dans leur langue.

Les données nous aident également à mieux cibler notre action. Nous examinons les besoins de la population francophone ainsi que les rapports de planification des ministères. Nous pouvons ainsi repérer les écarts, suivre les progrès et conseiller nos partenaires sur les améliorations à apporter. Ce suivi nous aide aussi à poser les bonnes questions : où l'accès aux services demeure-t-il difficile? Quels besoins sont en train de changer? Comment les ministères peuvent-ils mieux planifier leur offre pour y répondre? Les données ne remplacent pas le dialogue avec les communautés, mais elles nous aident à le rendre plus utile.

L'Entente Canada-Ontario relative aux services dans la langue de la minorité vient renforcer ce travail. Les fonds prévus par cette entente appuient la planification et la prestation de services qui répondent aux besoins des francophones. Notre objectif est que l'offre de service en français fasse partie de pratiques habituelles du gouvernement. Une personne ne devrait pas devoir répéter sa préférence linguistique à chaque étape de son parcours pour obtenir un service en français.

Nous faisons notre travail en collaboration avec la communauté. L'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, l'AFO, compte parmi nos partenaires les plus actifs. L'AFO a récemment publié un livre blanc issu des États généraux de la francophonie ontarienne, qu'elle a lancés en 2025. J'accueille ce document avec intérêt et avec tout le sérieux que mérite ce travail de réflexion. Il nous

présente la vision et les priorités que la communauté souhaite mettre de l'avant pour les années à venir.

Au cours des dernières années, notre approche des services en français a évolué. Le ministère des Affaires francophones demeure responsable de l'administration de la loi et de la coordination à l'échelle du gouvernement. Mais chaque ministère a aussi un rôle direct à jouer pour respecter ses propres obligations linguistiques. La modernisation de la loi a renforcé cette responsabilité partagée.

Je ne vous le cache pas : il reste du travail à faire. Je souhaite le poursuivre avec nos partenaires de la francophonie ontarienne en restant attentive aux besoins qu'ils nous expriment. Le livre blanc sera l'une des contributions à cette conversation. Il nous donne l'occasion d'entendre les priorités formulées par la communauté et de réfléchir avec elle aux prochaines étapes. Nous examinerons ces propositions avec attention, tout en poursuivant les travaux déjà engagés pour améliorer les services en français.

Parlons de la Stratégie de développement économique francophone. La francophonie est aussi un atout économique pour l'Ontario. Nos entrepreneurs et notre main-d'oeuvre bilingue contribuent à la croissance des collectivités. Ils aident les entreprises à nouer les liens avec des marchés ailleurs au Canada et dans le monde.

En 2026-2027, le ministère maintient une enveloppe de 800 000 \$ pour la Stratégie de développement économique francophone. Elle sert à renforcer le soutien aux entreprises francophones, à améliorer l'accès des entrepreneurs aux services et à faire connaître les possibilités qu'offre la francophonie à notre économie.

Le Programme d'appui à la francophonie ontarienne, ou le PAFO, est un autre outil important. Son enveloppe est de trois millions de dollars depuis 2024 : deux millions proviennent de l'Ontario et un million du gouvernement fédéral, dans le cadre de l'Entente Canada-Ontario relative aux services dans la langue de la minorité.

Cette année, le programme finance 75 projets. Nous avons reçu 221 demandes, un nombre record. Les projets retenus répondent à des besoins concrets dans les collectivités et renforcent leur vitalité culturelle, sociale ou économique.

Dans le Nord, par exemple, l'Équipe de santé familiale Nord-Aski reçoit 50 000 \$. Elle pourra ainsi renforcer la sensibilisation et le soutien en santé mentale en français dans les régions de Hearst, de Mattice-Val Côté et de Constance Lake.

À London, le centre communautaire régional reçoit environ 50 000 \$ pour créer une plateforme numérique de contenu culturel francophone et organiser une activité de reconnaissance pendant la Semaine de la Francophonie.

Ces exemples montrent pourquoi il est important de pouvoir répondre à ces besoins régionaux différents. Un investissement peut aider un organisme à lancer un service, à réunir des partenaires ou à offrir aux francophones de nouvelles occasions de participer à la vie de leur communauté.

Time, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Two minutes.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Two minutes. Okay.

Le PAFO permet justement aux organismes de proposer des solutions qui partent de leur propre réalité. Les besoins d'une communauté du Nord ne sont pas nécessairement ceux d'un centre urbain du Sud-Est. Les projets que nous soutenons reflètent cette diversité et la capacité des organismes à agir près des gens.

Le ministère travaille aussi avec d'autres ministères et avec les acteurs du développement économique francophone. Ensemble, nous voulons que les entreprises francophones puissent accéder aux services, aux réseaux et aux soutiens nécessaires à leur croissance. Cet appui compte particulièrement pour les petites entreprises, les entreprises sociales et les entrepreneurs qui desservent des marchés francophones ou bilingues.

1320

Nous maintenons également une enveloppe pouvant atteindre 300 000 \$ pour l'entente de coopération et d'échange entre l'Ontario et le Québec relative à la francophonie.

Je suis vraiment honorée d'occuper ce poste de ministre des Affaires francophones. Les trois derniers mois étaient remplis avec de nombreuses conversations avec différents organismes de différents domaines : de l'éducation post-secondaire, santé, soins de longue durée, bien sûr. Alors, j'ai hâte de continuer ce dialogue et poursuivre le travail avec les différentes communautés.

Et j'ai hâte de répondre à vos questions aujourd'hui, chers membres du comité. Merci.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Merci pour votre présentation. Thank you.

We'll now begin the question-and-answer segment in rotations of 15 minutes for the official opposition members, 15 minutes for the third party member and 15 minutes for the government members for the remainder of the allotted time.

As always, please remember to make your comments through the Chair. As the Chair, if a member seeks to reclaim the floor during their rotation while the minister is responding, I will recognize the member and allow them to reclaim the floor to ask a new question.

For the deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, other staff, please state your name and your title the first time that you speak so that we can accurately record in Hansard who we have.

I will start now with the official opposition, with the "députée provinciale" Gélinas, please. Thank you.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, Ministre Kusendova-Bashta, pour votre discours d'ouverture. J'ai bien apprécié.

Vous avez mentionné à plusieurs reprises l'importance de l'éducation. Lorsqu'on vit en milieu minoritaire, on doit s'assurer que les enfants apprennent la langue. Et ça, ça se passe à l'école.

Je vais commencer—parce que je viens de Sudbury, quand même—avec l'Université de Sudbury. L'Université de Sudbury, une université pour, par et avec les francophones, qui reçoit maintenant quelques millions de dollars du gouvernement provincial, qui a recommencé après 100 ans—ça fait 100 ans qu'on a l'Université de Sudbury, une université francophone à Sudbury. Ils ont recommencé à offrir des programmes l'an dernier.

Mais le ministère des Collèges et Universités ne les reconnaît pas, bien qu'ils existent depuis 100 ans. Et ça veut dire que les étudiants n'ont pas droit au régime d'aide financière, aux prêts et bourses pour les étudiants. Donc, c'est très difficile pour les étudiants d'aller à l'université sans avoir accès aux prêts et bourses.

Je me demandais si c'était un dossier sur lequel vous pouvez aider.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Merci beaucoup pour la question.

Aujourd'hui, je pars en tournée et je me rends à Sudbury. Alors, je vais rendre visite aux différents organismes à Sudbury, y compris l'Université de Sudbury, car je pense que c'est une conversation très importante à avoir et aussi pour me familiariser plus avec les défis et les opportunités à ce niveau.

Comme vous le savez, le ministère responsable du programme d'aide financière aux étudiants et étudiantes de l'Ontario, le RAFEO, est le ministère des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité. Alors, je pense que c'est important qu'on poursuive ces conversations avec le ministre Quinn.

On a démontré notre engagement envers l'enseignement postsecondaire en français dans le Nord en annonçant un investissement de 10,8 millions de dollars pour appuyer la relance de 33 programmes en français à l'Université de Sudbury en partenariat avec l'Université d'Ottawa.

Mais je vais demander à notre sous-ministre de nous donner plus de détails.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, if you could just share your full name for Hansard, please, and then respond to the question. Thank you so much.

M^{me} Roda Muse: Bonjour, tout le monde. Bonjour, madame la députée. Mon nom est Roda Muse. Je suis la sous-ministre des Affaires francophones.

Nous poursuivons en ce moment les discussions avec les ministères partenaires—que ça soit celui des collèges et universités, celui de l'éducation aussi, parce qu'il y a quand même des retombées là-dessus—et nous sommes en train d'évaluer toutes les options qui vont permettre la viabilité à long terme du ministère—comment appuyer, comment aller très vite dans ce processus du RAFEO, parce qu'il y a tout un processus pour l'avoir.

Nous avons exploré certaines options, mais nous allons continuer ces options-là pour voir là où ça peut aller le plus vite possible. Donc ce n'est pas quelque chose avec lequel on a fini. Donc j'aimerais vous rassurer là-dessus. Et comme la ministre s'y rend aussi, ça fera partie de ces discussions, et je continuerai la conversation aussi avec mon collègue.

On est vraiment en train de pousser ces dossiers-là, parce que c'est très urgent. Nous avons des investissements là-dedans et nous avons aussi des étudiants qui attendent de commencer le cours.

M^{me} France Gélinas: C'est très, très apprécié. Merci de votre réponse. Les gens de Sudbury vont être vraiment contents. Il faut que ça change. Il faut que les étudiants aient accès aux prêts et bourses. Des étudiants qui ne demeurent pas à Sudbury doivent payer du loyer, payer du

transport, payer tout ça. Ils n'ont pas les argents pour le faire. J'apprécie beaucoup ce que vous faites et continuez de faire. Si je peux vous être utile, vous me laissez savoir, mais merci beaucoup.

Continuant en éducation, encore dans le nord de l'Ontario, il y a une école à Levack—les gens ne connaissent peut-être pas ça, mais le premier ministre, M. Ford, était à Levack il y a deux semaines parce qu'on a on y a ouvert une nouvelle mine, Onaping Depth. Puis toute son équipe était là, le ministre—en tout cas, les gens savent maintenant où c'est, Levack.

Mais je vous dis ça parce que la communauté francophone veut une école francophone à Levack. Et en ce moment, il y a une école anglophone où il n'y a plus assez de jeunes. Donc il y a toute une aile qui n'est pas utilisée dans l'école anglophone, où l'école francophone serait bien contente de s'installer. Le conseil scolaire anglophone est d'accord. Le conseil scolaire francophone est d'accord. Tout le monde est d'accord, mais de faire avancer ce dossier-là, ça va à la vitesse d'une tortue endormie puis somnolente.

Je me demandais si, de votre côté, il y a des choses qu'on peut faire pour s'assurer que les enfants—juste pour vous donner, là : les enfants francophones, en ce moment, doivent prendre l'autobus pour un minimum de 45 minutes pour se rendre à l'école francophone la plus proche. Un enfant de quatre ans dans un autobus pendant 45, 50 minutes, c'est trop difficile. Ils tombent endormis dans l'autobus, ils se font—les autres étudiants rient d'eux autres, etc. C'est juste trop difficile quand on a une demande, quand les conseils sont d'accord, le building est là, mais ça n'avance pas. Je me demandais si vous êtes capable d'aider.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Can we just pause just for a moment? The questions through me, and then the minister can respond, please. Thank you very much.

Minister, to the question. Thank you.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Merci pour la question. Alors, je pense que c'est très important pour les parents francophones et les familles francophones d'avoir les choix véritables quand il s'agit de l'éducation de leurs enfants. Dans ma communauté, à Mississauga, on vient d'ouvrir une nouvelle école francophone catholique secondaire. C'était très bien reçu par la communauté et les parents et les élèves.

Ça, c'est une question vraiment spécifique, et bien sûr, comme vous le savez, c'est le ministre de l'Éducation qui gère ces décisions au niveau de l'ouverture des nouvelles écoles. Je lui en parlerai, mais c'est vraiment sa responsabilité de prendre ces décisions et d'avancer le projet.

1330

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ce qu'on demande, vraiment, c'est d'accélérer les approbations de projets. Les conseils scolaires sont d'accord. Ils ont soumis les demandes, mais ça prend juste trop de temps. Et les gens ont tendance à dire : « Bien, ça prend encore plus longtemps quand c'est une école francophone. » Dans mon comté, il y a beaucoup, beaucoup de vieilles écoles francophones et on a des écoles anglophones toutes neuves. Donc, tu as le choix : tu peux envoyer ton enfant dans une école qui a été bâtie

voilà 60 ans, qui a été rénovée voilà 40 ans, puis qui n'a pas de gymnase, n'a pas de bibliothèque, qui n'a pas—ou tu peux aller dans une école anglophone qui est toute nouvelle.

Donc, ce que la ministre peut faire, monsieur le Président, pour aider serait bien apprécié.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui. Alors, on doit travailler avec nos collègues au ministère de l'Éducation.

Je dirais juste que notre gouvernement a investi beaucoup, beaucoup d'argent dans l'infrastructure, y compris dans l'infrastructure des nouvelles écoles anglophones et même francophones. Même à Vaughan, il y a une nouvelle école francophone. Alors on fait ces bâtiments, ces projets capitaux. Mais bien sûr, je vais parler à M. Calandra à ce sujet.

M^{me} France Gélinas: OK.

Encore dans le système d'éducation, je reçois—et j'imagine que la ministre en reçoit également, monsieur le Président—beaucoup de commentaires face aux enfants et aux élèves du système francophone qui ont des besoins particuliers pour avoir un accès à des services véritables dans leurs écoles.

J'ai l'histoire de l'enfant de la famille Choquette qui a été exclu en 2024, ce qui est la deuxième exclusion en ce moment de l'école parce que l'école n'a pas le personnel pour être capable de s'occuper de l'enfant. Et de plus en plus, on le pointe vers le système anglophone qui, lui, serait capable de s'occuper de son enfant.

Dans le discours de la ministre, elle a mentionné plusieurs fois que l'accès à des services en français est un droit, l'accès à l'école en français est un droit. Mais pour les élèves ayant des besoins particuliers, des besoins spéciaux, là quand je vous dis « deuxième exclusion »—il reçoit une heure de cours en ligne par jour, ne peut pas se rendre à son école. Et on lui dit, « Bien, si tu veux plus que ça, va dans le système anglais. Le système anglophone serait capable de l'accueillir. »

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Merci pour la question.

Une de mes premières visites en tant que ministre des Affaires francophones était au Centre Jules-Léger à Ottawa. Et j'étais vraiment surprise et choquée, mais dans un bon sens de ce mot, de voir comment ils soutiennent les élèves et les étudiants aveugles et sourds—je dis bien, aveugles et sourds?

M^{me} Roda Muse: Oui.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Et ce sont vraiment des gens très passionnés, très spécialisés. Et j'ai appris que la langue des signes française est différente de la langue des signes anglaise. Je ne le savais pas. Je pensais que c'était une langue universelle, mais non. Même le braille en français est différent qu'en anglais. Et même pour avoir les « business cards » imprimées avec le braille français, c'est juste un imprimeur dans tout l'Ontario qui le fait.

Alors, j'étais surprise, mais en même temps, je vois la dévotion de ces professionnels et je vois que, vraiment, on soutient les élèves avec des besoins différents—pas seulement les élèves qui assistent au Centre Jules-Léger, mais

aussi les soutiens pour les enseignants et enseignantes dans toutes les écoles francophones partout en Ontario.

Je pense qu'on a du travail à faire au niveau de soutenir ce Centre Jules-Léger. J'ai parlé déjà à l'ambassadrice de la France et au consul général de Belgique pour voir si on peut avoir des échanges au niveau professionnel, car c'est tellement spécialisé—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Monsieur le Président, pour cet enfant-là, il n'est ni aveugle ni sourd.

Il y a des besoins particuliers surtout en santé mentale. Le recrutement de professionnels en santé mentale, que ce soit en ergothérapie, etc., c'est très difficile dans les milieux francophones. Tu regardes dans les écoles francophones, le nombre d'enseignants et d'enseignantes qui ne sont pas qualifiés, qui ont une lettre d'exception, etc. C'est vraiment dans le système d'éducation francophone, dans son ensemble—l'appui aux enfants qui ont des besoins spéciaux est vraiment en arrière de ce qu'ils sont capables d'offrir du côté anglophone, qui, même du côté anglophone, souvent n'est pas suffisant, mais du côté francophone, c'est encore pire.

J'aimerais savoir si c'est un dossier sur lequel vous travaillez et si on peut s'attendre à des changements positifs.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Je sais qu'on a des projets avec Valoris et le Cap pour élargir la gamme de services offerts aux adolescents et aux enfants avec des défis en santé mentale.

Mais c'est quelque chose à quoi je vais me sensibiliser plus, car c'est encore plus particulier pour les francophones, bien sûr. Alors, je vais parler avec M. Calandra, mais je dois me sensibiliser un peu plus, vraiment, au niveau des besoins des enfants francophones.

M^{me} France Gélinas: OK, c'est apprécié—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

You have one minute and 36 seconds left for questions. Thank you.

M^{me} France Gélinas: OK.

Je suis contente que vous parliez du Cap puis de Valoris.

Je vais commencer ma question, mais je vais la finir la prochaine fois.

Il n'y a pas de milieu d'hébergement thérapeutique francophone destiné aux enfants et aux jeunes ayant des besoins complexes en santé mentale. Le Cap a fait une demande de fonds en décembre 2025. Il n'y a toujours pas de réponse. Il y a des argents qui deviennent disponibles pour faire des réseaux, mais tu dois avoir de l'hébergement inclus.

Du côté francophone, on n'a pas d'hébergement. Comment est-ce qu'on va faire pour avoir accès aux nouveaux fonds? Puis, comment est-ce qu'on va faire pour répondre aux besoins des enfants qui ont des besoins complexes?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Madame la Sous-Ministre?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have 54 seconds for your response. Thank you.

M^{me} Roda Muse: Thank you.

Roda Muse, sous-ministre des Affaires francophones.

Aujourd'hui même, le Cap rencontre la directrice qui s'occupe de ce programme-là pour lui présenter les révisions au niveau de sa demande. Ce que le Cap est en train de faire en ce moment, c'est d'intégrer Valoris et Bien ici pour avoir un modèle innovant pour les francophones pour la région de l'est qui, éventuellement, pourrait être répliqué ailleurs.

Au niveau du MAFO, nous sommes en train de regarder ça, de suivre. Et puis, nous allons aussi travailler avec nos collègues du ministère de la Santé pour pouvoir aussi les appuyer au cas où ils auraient des questions.

Donc, ça ne relève pas de notre ministère. Ça relève des ministères de la Santé et des Services sociaux et communautaires, mais nous sommes au courant de ce dossier. Nous sommes en train de le suivre de très près—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for that response.

Députée provinciale Collard, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I just want to confirm we have two rounds of questions, right?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Yes, you have 15 minutes.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: OK, merci beaucoup.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): And I'll let you know when you've got one minute left.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Of course. Merci.

Madame la Ministre, merci beaucoup pour votre présentation. J'ai beaucoup apprécié votre anecdote.

Moi, je suis arrivée en Ontario à l'âge de 19 ans et je ne parlais pas du tout anglais. Donc, je comprends tout à fait les défis que ça représente. Mes enfants—j'en ai quatre—ils ont été élevés dans un environnement bilingue, alors ils n'ont pas eu cet enjeu-là. Et je me rends compte, vraiment, comment c'est important—surtout pour les nouveaux arrivants—d'être bien appuyé puis d'avoir accès aux services en français.

J'ai quelques questions pour vous en ce qui concerne plus les opérations, peut-être, du ministère des Affaires francophones. Votre budget de fonctionnement a été augmenté d'environ 1,9 million de dollars—vous avez mentionné 1,93 million de dollars—cette année.

Donc, est-ce que vous pourriez partager avec le comité quels sont les nouveaux services ou les résultats concrets que les francophones de l'Ontario peuvent s'attendre à obtenir grâce à ce nouvel investissement-là?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui, merci pour la question.

Alors, on a cette augmentation de 1,9 million de dollars. C'est pour financer deux projets spéciaux.

Un, c'est le soutien pour le recrutement, la formation et la traduction au sein du gouvernement de l'Ontario. Ce projet vise à renforcer durablement la capacité de la fonction publique ontarienne à offrir des services de qualité en français. Il répond à des défis persistants tels que les postes bilingues vacants, les besoins de perfectionnement professionnel des employés bilingues et les demandes croissantes de traduction découlant notamment du règlement sur l'offre active. Alors, c'est pour soutenir notre ministère et les autres ministères aussi, vraiment, à combler les postes

bilingues, car on sait qu'on a beaucoup de postes qui ne sont pas toujours remplis par des professionnels bilingues, par exemple, dans le ministère du Solliciteur général, le ministère du Procureur général, le ministère des Finances, etc.

Puis, l'autre projet qui est intéressant, je pense, c'est pour les soins tenant compte de la réalité culturelle pour les jeunes Noirs francophones, leurs familles et leurs aidants. C'est du ministère de la Santé.

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Ce projet vise à améliorer l'accès à des services de santé mentale et de traitement des dépendances adaptés aux réalités linguistiques et culturelles des jeunes Noirs francophones et répond à des obstacles persistants reliés à la langue, au racisme systémique et à l'accès aux soins, etc.

Alors, ces deux projets spéciaux, c'est ce qui répond à cette augmentation de 1,9 million de dollars dans notre budget.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Parfait. Merci beaucoup.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: On va y arriver.

Oui, en fait, ma prochaine question fait référence au Programme d'appui à la francophonie ontarienne, le PAFO. Vous en avez fait référence pendant votre présentation. Avec les chiffres spécifiques, il y a eu 221 demandes au PAFO cette année, mais il y a seulement 75 projets qui ont été financés.

Alors, on voit une augmentation importante de la demande. Pourquoi est-ce que le budget demeure à 3 millions de dollars si on a beaucoup plus de demande pour ces projets-là?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui. Merci pour la question.

Le budget a commencé à 1 million de dollars en 2018. Aujourd'hui, c'est 3 millions de dollars, alors c'est une hausse de 200 %; c'est beaucoup. Parmi les 75 projets, il y en a une vingtaine dans votre comté, madame.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: C'est beaucoup de francophones chez nous.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Vous êtes très choyée. Mais bien sûr, c'est normal car vous avez beaucoup d'organismes francophones. Alors, je pense que vous avez plus de projets retenus chez vous que tous les membres du gouvernement, mais c'est bon; ce sont les meilleurs projets à qui ont été données les plus grandes notes.

On va continuer d'analyser ce programme et voir comment on peut répondre aux besoins des organismes francophones. Moi, je voudrais voir une lentille santé au futur pour peut-être donner plus de points aux projets qui peuvent soutenir la santé car je pense que c'est prioritaire pour nous.

On en a vu quelque unes. Par exemple, il y a un foyer de soins à longue durée à Hamilton qui a reçu un financement de 50 000 \$ pour avoir une stratégie de recrutement pour un personnel qui parle français. Mais je voudrais voir une plus grande gamme de projets comme ça, car je pense que c'est très, très important. Au moment, c'est 3 000 \$.

On est en train de négocier, aussi, l'entente Canada-Ontario pour les années 2028 jusqu'à 2033. Alors, c'est aussi une opportunité pour l'Ontario à voir une plus grande somme d'argent du gouvernement fédéral. On va continuer ces négociations.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Merci beaucoup. Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Merci. Juste pour comprendre l'ampleur de la demande, est-ce que vous êtes capable de chiffrer la valeur des 221 demandes?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Madame la Sous-Ministre, s'il vous plaît?

M^{me} Roda Muse: Je vais demander à M^{me} la sous-ministre adjointe, qui est une experte en chiffres.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I need your full name for Hansard, please. Thank you.

M^{me} Roxanne Hotte: Roxanne Hotte, sous-ministre adjointe—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I can't hear her.

M^{me} Roxanne Hotte: Roxanne Hotte, sous-ministre adjointe, ministère des Affaires francophones.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I hear it now. Thank you.

M^{me} Roxanne Hotte: Alors, en ce qui a trait aux 221 demandes qui ont été déposées dans le cadre du PAFO, il y a 75 projets qui ont été retenus pour une somme de 3 millions de dollars. Donc, quand on parle de la somme totale que cela pourrait avoir été si on avait le budget total pour pouvoir financer tous les projets, c'est beaucoup plus que ça.

Il va falloir que je regarde dans mes notes pour pouvoir trouver la somme totale, mais ça s'avère à être une somme importante de plusieurs fois le montant d'argent qu'on a. Je peux vous revenir avec la réponse juste.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Oui, bien sûr. Merci beaucoup.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Merci beaucoup. Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Je voudrais parler de l'application de la Loi sur les services en français. Je voudrais que vous nous expliquiez, pour le bénéfice du comité, quels sont les pouvoirs et quels sont les outils à votre disposition qui vous permettent concrètement d'intervenir lorsqu'un ministère ne respecte pas ses obligations en vertu de la Loi sur les services en français? Comment ça fonction dans les faits?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Je pense que l'enjeu le plus important dans l'application de la Loi sur les services en français c'est l'application de l'offre active. Alors ce sont les ministères, oui, mais aussi les organismes désignés sous la Loi sur les services en français qui ont une obligation pour avoir une offre active dès le premier moment de contact d'un intervenant ou de quelqu'un qui veut avoir les services.

Il y a de nombreuses consignes que ces organismes désignés doivent mettre en place. Par exemple, toujours dire « Hello, bonjour », qui signifie au demandeur de services qu'il y a un service disponible en français. On doit aussi avoir des pancartes de bonne visibilité dans les deux langues officielles, anglais et français. S'il s'agit d'un

service au téléphone, on doit avoir les messages en anglais et en français.

Alors, vraiment, cette offre active, ça c'est, je pense, l'enjeu le plus important dans l'application de la Loi sur les services en français.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Je vais peut-être vous permettre, madame la Sous-Ministre, si vous le voulez, parce que c'est une question de suivi de toute façon.

Donc on sait que l'obligation existe pour l'offre active, pour les ministères. Votre mandat, c'est de vérifier que la loi, elle est respectée. Est-ce que les ministères sont tenus de soit soumettre un plan sur la façon dont ils appliquent la loi, et est-ce que vous vérifiez ces plans-là de façon annuelle pour s'assurer de la conformité?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui. Je vais juste dire que, par exemple, au niveau du ministère du Procureur général, on a fait beaucoup d'avancées. On a embauché des juges francophones. On a embauché des greffiers francophones, par exemple, au Palais de justice à Brampton dans ma communauté. Les francophones maintenant peuvent avoir l'accès à la justice en français.

Mais au niveau du ministère, madame la Sous-Ministre, est-ce que vous pouvez nous donner plus de détails?

M^{me} Roda Muse: Oui. Chaque ministère est tenu de présenter un plan. Ils nous demandent conseil. Il y a aussi la lentille—bon, pour le plan, ils vont aussi rapporter là-dessus. Et vous avez pu le voir, nous présentons chaque année au Parlement un rapport annuel. Mais il y a également la lentille francophone.

Généralement, quand les ministres et le ministère développe un programme ou un service ou une politique, ils vont essayer différentes lentilles, dont la lentille francophone. Et nos collègues de « Cabinet Office » souvent, s'il n'y a pas eu cet examen, vont nous demander de regarder cela sous la lentille francophone pour pouvoir identifier les répercussions négatives sur les francophones.

Donc c'est quelque chose sur lequel on travaille tout le temps. Ce n'est pas toujours parfait, mais il y a d'abord une grande sensibilité, une grande conscience de ce qu'il faut faire et puis on travaille dessus. Ici, on rappelle ça tout le temps. Puis ma collègue participe aussi à d'autres, à des réseaux de sous-ministres adjoints en communication; c'est la même chose. Donc on est très présent. On reste dans la face de tout le monde.

Et pour votre question sur le montant, c'est 9,195 millions de dollars.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Merci beaucoup.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Je continue?

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question. Il reste cinq minutes.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Parfait, merci.

Puisque qu'on touche à la lentille francophone—c'était évidemment dans mes questions—j'aimerais un peu plus comprendre quels genres de ressources sont dédiées à l'application de la lentille francophone, comment vous exercez ce contrôle-là ou si vous le faites. Parce qu'on a eu des exemples au niveau de l'éducation où, évidemment,

il y a eu des décisions qui ont été prises par le ministère de l'Éducation qui ne respectent pas du tout la lentille francophone. Et j'ai mis des préoccupations à cet égard-là à de nombreuses reprises, puis même avant que la loi 101 soit adoptée.

Le ministre a conservé le format de la gouvernance scolaire pour les conseils francophones. Puis j'imagine que, peut-être parce qu'il y a eu des discussions avec M^{me} Mulroney ou parce qu'il a été convaincu, parce qu'il y a eu beaucoup de pourparlers qui ont eu lieu à cet effet-là.

Mais malgré tout ça, le ministre a donné un contrat à une plateforme anglophone, la plateforme Edwin, pour des ressources pédagogiques—qui est une plateforme anglophone avec certains contenus traduits. On sait très bien que pour respecter le droit de la gouvernance des francophones, le par et pour en éducation, il faut que les ressources viennent justement des gens qui offrent les services en français. Ça c'est un des exemples.

On l'a vu aussi avec la directive aux conseils scolaires qui affecte les conseillers scolaires, qui ne peuvent plus maintenant faire partie de leur association parce qu'on ne peut plus payer les cotisations, ils ne peuvent plus prendre de formation.

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Donc au niveau de l'éducation, il y a quelques exemples qui démontrent qu'il y a un problème. Alors je me demande comment, effectivement, on intervient de façon assez efficace en amont? Parce que les décisions sont déjà prises, les directives sont envoyées et l'impact, il est réel.

Je veux juste donner un autre petit exemple parce que ça ne concerne pas juste l'éducation. On l'a vu l'année passée, lorsqu'on a célébré le 50^e anniversaire du Festival franco-ontarien, où la demande de financement a été analysée par le ministre de la Culture et du Tourisme de la même façon que les autres projets, ce qui a fait que le Festival franco-ontarien ne qualifiait pour aucun fonds. Donc, il y aurait eu zéro argent si on n'était pas intervenu.

Alors, comment est-ce que vous pouvez vous assurer que cette lentille francophone-là peut effectivement être appliquée en amont avant qu'il n'y ait des décisions dommageables qui soient prises?

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Merci beaucoup, Ministre. Une minute.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Alors, je peux dire qu'au niveau de la fonction publique, on a des sous-ministres adjoints qui sont responsables pour gérer les services en français au sein de leur ministère. Par exemple, moi et M^{me} Jones, on partage un ministre adjoint pour nous aider à vraiment avoir des services en français dans nos deux ministères.

Je sais qu'on a fait des efforts, au MAFO, pour concentrer tous ces fonctionnaires et pour avoir plus de communication entre les ministères. Mais peut-être, madame Muse, vous pourrez compléter.

M^{me} Roda Muse: En fait, d'abord, on a des cours pour sensibiliser. Ça, c'est extrêmement important. Mais non seulement nous avons ça, mais nous avons un réseau des coordinateurs. Vous avez parlé de quelles ressources sont à la disposition des ministères. Donc on a cinq réseaux,

que ça soit en santé, en économie, en développement et en éducation et développement communautaire, et nous travaillons très, très fort avec ces réseaux-là. Nous avons aussi toute une équipe de politiques qui examine cela.

C'est sûr qu'il y a des choses—ça arrive, des fois, qu'il y a des choses, parce que ça vient, il faut accélérer pour que ça passe, mais on finit toujours par attraper et par faire les corrections nécessaires. Vous avez soulevé la question d'Expérience Ontario. Nous avons fait tout un changement sur ce programme-là par la suite. Ça nous échappe, mais on se rattrape.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Merci beaucoup. La question du gouvernement, s'il vous plaît. Le député Sarrazin, s'il vous plaît.

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: Merci, monsieur le Président. Merci, madame la ministre, puis votre équipe, d'être ici aujourd'hui. Je vais en profiter pour vous remercier au nom de tous les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes.

Avant que je sois élu ici à Queen's Park, je n'avais pas réalisé le travail du ministère des Affaires francophones. Peut-être parce que, comme certains de mes collègues, on vient d'une région francophone qui est majoritaire—on avait moins de difficultés à avoir des services. J'avoue que dans Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, dans certains cas, ce sont les anglophones qui ont de la misère à avoir des services. On regarde les conseils municipaux et tout ça. Mais je veux juste dire que j'apprécie le travail que vous faites, parce qu'on sait qu'en pourcentage, il y a beaucoup de francophones dans Ottawa–Vanier, il y a beaucoup de francophones dans Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, mais à travers l'Ontario, il y en a beaucoup plus. Puis on voit qu'ils sont très dispersés, donc merci.

Je dois dire que je veux vous féliciter pour votre rôle en tant que ministre des Affaires francophones. J'ai cru comprendre que les organismes francophones étaient très contents de vous voir arriver au ministère. Je pense que ça démontre votre travail, ce que vous avez fait avec eux pendant que vous étiez adjointe parlementaire à la ministre Mulroney. Je peux le voir que vous étiez très présente, puis que les organismes francophones, tout le monde vous connaît bien et tout le monde est très content de travailler avec vous.

C'est intéressant, aussi, d'entendre parler de votre parcours en tant que nouvelle arrivante, à l'époque, ici en Ontario, puis d'avoir passé à travers le système d'éducation francophone. J'imagine que ça vous donne vraiment la chance de mieux comprendre les défis de nos nouveaux arrivants. Je pense que c'est très intéressant de voir ça.

Je sais que l'Ontario, quand ça vient aux francophones, on parle de 5 % ou 6 % de la population qui est francophone. Mais je pense que ça serait important de comprendre que si l'Ontario veut avoir un bon rôle dans l'économie mondiale, on doit vraiment être là. Parce qu'on sait que les continents qui vont avoir de la plus grosse croissance dans les prochaines années sont des pays souvent francophones. On parle du continent de l'Afrique, qui, probablement dans les prochains 25 ans, va—la population va augmenter de pratiquement 1 milliard de personnes, tandis qu'aux États-Unis on parle de, peut-être, une augmentation dans

les prochains 25 ans de 32 millions; pour le Canada, peut-être de 15 millions. Donc, je pense que mon rôle en tant qu'adjoint du ministère du Développement économique, des petites entreprises et adjoint du ministère des Affaires francophones—je pense que notre gouvernement doit reconnaître l'importance de notre implication auprès des pays francophones. Puis, je vous remercie de travailler sur ce dossier-là aussi.

Je sais que vous avez touché sur le sujet dans votre discours d'ouverture. Souvent on parle du ministère des Affaires francophones qui a un budget de 13,2 millions de dollars. Ça ne semble pas être le plus gros budget de tous les ministères de l'Ontario, mais vous l'avez expliqué, puis je vais vous donner la chance aussi de peut-être élaborer encore plus. Mais ce que je vois, c'est que le ministère des Affaires francophones est un des ministères qui est le plus impliqué avec tous les ministères dans le sens que c'est souvent du travail qui se fait et non pas des programmes. Donc, on rend un peu redevable tous les autres ministères du gouvernement de l'Ontario. Peut-être si vous avez la chance juste d'élaborer un peu là-dessus sur le budget, là.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui, merci beaucoup.

Comme ministre des Affaires francophones, mon budget est de 13,25 millions de dollars. Quand je le compare au budget du ministère des Soins de longue durée, qui est de 9,3 milliards de dollars, c'est une différence énorme. Mais bien sûr, on sait que notre ministère travaille avec les autres ministères en rôle de conseiller pour avoir cette lentille francophone présente dans toutes les politiques gouvernementales et pour sensibiliser tous les ministères de l'importance d'avoir des services en français parmi leurs obligations.

Par exemple, les conseils scolaires francophones recevront 2,35 milliards de dollars cette année du ministère de l'Éducation. Le Centre de planification des services de santé en français reçoit 3,85 millions de dollars par année du ministère de la Santé. Les établissements post-secondaires francophones et bilingues ont reçu environ 909 millions de dollars, presque 1 milliard de dollars, l'année passée. Alors, si on fait l'analyse de tous les services en français qui sont disponibles, je pense que ce chiffre serait assez élevé.

Je ne m'inquiète pas trop à ce niveau, car je sais que mes collègues du Cabinet, les autres ministres, dépensent beaucoup d'argent aussi au niveau des services en français. Pour moi, le véritable objectif est assez simple : les francophones ne devraient pas avoir à comprendre l'organisation interne du gouvernement pour obtenir un service dans leur langue. Alors, c'est vraiment mon rôle au sein du Cabinet du premier ministre Ford de sensibiliser toutes les structures internes gouvernementales, mes collègues ministres, mais aussi en fonction publique, on doit travailler ensemble, comme la sous-ministre a dit, pour attraper les erreurs et les problèmes quand il y en a et de les corriger.

Bien sûr, on est un grand gouvernement; on est une grande province, la plus grande de notre pays. Alors oui,

parfois il y a des erreurs, mais le plus important c'est de les corriger. Et je pense que ça c'est vraiment le rôle du MAFO : pour être sensibilisé aux différents enjeux globaux, oui globaux, dans notre province mais aussi régionaux, c'est important d'avoir ces lignes de communication avec tous les députés pour savoir ce qui se passe localement dans vos communautés et comment on peut vous soutenir pour avoir du financement et pour voir avancer les projets francophones chez vous dans vos comtés, etc.

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: Merci beaucoup.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

MPP Gualtieri, please.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Good day, Minister, and good day to your staff. Unfortunately, my French is not as pristine as it should be, but I do enjoy listening to the French language and I definitely enjoy the French culture and the French love of life. So it is very fitting that this year we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the French Language Services Act.

Minister, what has changed recently to improve access to services, particularly through the updates to designated areas and the designation of service providers?

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Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you very much, MPP Gualtieri. I know you speak Italian, so you probably understand a lot of what is being said. So thank you for that question.

Oui, cette année, nous soulignons le 40^e anniversaire de la Loi sur les services en français. J'étais là quand M^{me} Mulroney a fait cette modernisation de la Loi sur les services en français. C'était un grand, grand travail, après 30 ans, de vraiment voir les besoins des francophones, des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, et voir comment on peut moderniser cette loi pour refléter les réalités de nos communautés.

Alors, l'une des belles avancées qu'on a faites, par exemple, c'est qu'on a mis à jour les régions désignées dans six secteurs de la province, par exemple, Hamilton, Stormont, Dundas et Glengarry, Essex, Chatham-Kent, Renfrew et Thunder Bay. Pendant les années, les frontières municipales ont changé, mais la loi n'a pas avancé avec ces changements de frontières. Alors, après la période de mise en oeuvre prévue, ces changements permettront à plus de 7 700 francophones supplémentaires, sur un territoire additionnel de plus de 6 300 kilomètres carrés, de recevoir des services en français. Ça, c'est un changement significatif.

Une autre chose sur laquelle on travaille, c'est, bien sûr, la mise à jour de notre règlement. C'est un travail un peu compliqué, car on sait que les organismes qui sont désignés dans ce règlement, ils ont peut-être changé de leadership; ils ont changé de partenariat; il y en a qui n'existent plus; il y en a des nouveaux, etc. Alors, on mène ce travail, et on a fait jusqu'à date plus de 140 mises à jour qui ont été effectuées depuis janvier 2023.

Oui, il nous reste encore du travail à faire sur cette mise à jour, mais j'ai lu dans mes notes que notre date limite interne, c'est d'avoir ce travail accompli au printemps

2027. Alors, je le dis publiquement, car je pense que c'est très important de finir ce travail pour qu'on sache vraiment combien d'organismes désignés on a. Je pense qu'on en a 258 en ce moment, mais pour avoir ce règlement vraiment mis à jour—je pense que c'est très important pour les francophones et pour moi, comme ministre des Affaires francophones, d'avoir vraiment une bonne connaissance des organismes qui sont assujettis à la Loi sur les services en français.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Merci beaucoup.

Il reste deux minutes pour poser vos questions.

MPP George Darouze: Merci, monsieur le Président.

Bonjour, madame la Ministre. Merci d'être parmi nous aujourd'hui, et merci pour l'important travail que vous accomplissez en faveur des francophones de tout l'Ontario.

Comme vous le savez, Ottawa et l'est de l'Ontario abritent une importante population francophone et bilingue, et nous apprécions vraiment le travail que vous accomplissez dans notre région.

Le Programme d'appui à la francophonie ontarienne finance 75 projets cette année. Je sais qu'on en a déjà parlé, mais je vous donne un peu plus de temps pour parler à propos de ce programme. Plusieurs organisations bénéficient de ce financement, comme l'Association des communautés francophones d'Ottawa et la Société franco-ontarienne de l'autisme.

La ministre pourrait-elle donner quelques exemples de ce que ce type de projet permet de réaliser à Ottawa et dans tout l'Ontario?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui. Merci pour la question.

Comme j'ai dit, la région d'Ottawa a eu beaucoup de projets retenus pour le financement de PAFO. J'étais à Ottawa il y a peut-être un mois, et j'ai eu une table ronde avec 16 différents intervenants francophones, des organismes. Je sais que la communauté à Ottawa est très vivante. Ils ont beaucoup d'idées très, très passionnées, et j'ai vraiment hâte de travailler avec eux pour poursuivre ce travail.

Comme j'ai dit, le financement de PAFO est de 3 millions de dollars. Ça a augmenté de 2 millions de dollars de l'année 2018. Alors, ça nous donne plus d'opportunités à financer les différents organismes.

C'est ma première année pour voir ces projets et j'ai lu toutes les 75 descriptions des projets partout dans la province. Alors, ce sont des beaux projets, oui, culturels, des projets d'art, mais aussi des projets qui soutiennent, par exemple, les aînés, les élèves, etc. Alors, on a une bonne gamme de différents projets. Je pense que pour l'année prochaine, comme j'ai dit, je veux des projets pour soutenir les organismes au niveau de la santé. Ça serait prioritaire pour moi. J'ai vu quelques-uns qui sont financés cette année, mais je voudrais voir une plus grande gamme pour l'année prochaine.

Je sais que la communauté à Ottawa va être un grand partenaire pour nous aussi car, comme vous le savez peut-être, l'Ontario, le Canada va être hôte pour le Sommet de la Francophonie en 2028. Alors, je pense qu'à ce niveau,

on va avoir aussi une belle collaboration avec la communauté d'Ottawa et avec vous, les députés qui représentent ces régions. C'est vraiment une opportunité pour nous de faire rayonner la francophonie ontarienne, pour dire au reste du monde que les francophones sont aussi au-delà du Québec et de vraiment être fiers de cette identité distincte qu'on a en Ontario et de la faire rayonner. Alors, beaucoup de travail à faire avec la communauté d'Ottawa et j'ai hâte de travailler avec vous tous à ce niveau.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Merci beaucoup. Retour à l'opposition pour les questions, s'il vous plaît. MPP Gélinas.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président. Votre français s'améliore minute par minute.

Ma prochaine question, en rapport aux soins de longue durée, mais c'est vraiment—le focus est sur les services en français. Comme vous le savez, Southbridge à Cornwall est en consultation en ce moment pour fermer la maison de soins de longue durée Pinecrest à Plantagenet, qui a une licence pour 60 lits. En ce moment, les 60 lits sont occupés, 65 personnes sur la liste d'attente. Ils sont à environ 70 kilomètres de Cornwall. Ça prend à peu près une heure en auto. L'autre c'est le Palace, qui est à Alexandria—une licence pour 70 lits de soins de longue durée. Même chose : plusieurs personnes sur la liste d'attente. Eux sont à peu près à 40 minutes, 45 kilomètres, de Cornwall.

Mais ce qui est intéressant c'est que Pinecrest est un organisme désigné sous la Loi sur les services en français, et les gens sont inquiets et voudraient savoir—du côté du ministère des Affaires francophones, monsieur le Président, j'aimerais savoir quelle protection donne la Loi sur les services en français à une maison de soins de longue durée qui est désignée francophone qui, en ce moment, est à risque d'être fermée pour être amalgamée avec les licences d'autres maisons à Cornwall?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Merci pour la question. Je pense que c'est une question très importante, et on a vu un rapport des médias sur ce sujet. Alors, je veux vous mettre à l'aise, car j'ai parlé au PDG de Southbridge ce matin et il m'a rassuré que la désignation va continuer pour les lits francophones dans le Southbridge Cornwall 2, dans le nouveau foyer de soins de longue durée.

Et puis, je veux dire aussi que Southbridge est un bon partenaire pour le ministère des Soins de longue durée, car ils sont en train de bâtir beaucoup de projets partout dans la province, y compris à Ottawa. Et on a des discussions pour avoir des lits désignés dans le nouveau projet aussi à Ottawa. Alors, ils sont ouverts à avoir les lits francophones, les services francophones. Je peux vous confirmer que ces services désignés vont continuer dans le nouveau foyer de soins de longue durée à Cornwall.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mais, est-ce que la loi ne donne—

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci. Est-ce que la loi ne donne pas aux résidents de Plantagenet le droit de continuer d'avoir des services de santé en français de soins de longue durée à Plantagenet? C'est là que la désignation a été faite. C'est cette communauté-là qui a demandé la désignation,

qui a reçu la désignation, puis là, on leur dit : « Non, vous devriez faire une heure d'auto pour avoir les services en français. »

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L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Je dois dire que oui, l'accès aux services en français est très important, mais avoir cet accès local n'est pas toujours possible. Alors, je pense que c'est très important qu'on peut continuer d'avoir ces services en français même si c'est un peu plus loin de la communauté.

Il y a beaucoup de francophones qui se déplacent pour avoir des services. Et ce qui est important, c'est que si on a des fournisseurs de services à Plantagenet qui voudraient faire ce redéveloppement et continuer d'avoir ces services, oui, on peut travailler avec eux. Mais en ce moment, c'est Southbridge qui gère ces projets. Et c'est normal—ce sont trois plus petites maisons—qu'on va avoir une plus grande, car on a des échelles d'économie.

La bonne nouvelle, c'est qu'on va avoir un nouveau foyer de soins de longue durée moderne, à nos standards de 2026, et pas des maisons qui sont de 40, 50 ans, car tous les résidents qui habitent dans les foyers « deserve » d'avoir le même standard de service. Alors, ça c'est la bonne nouvelle et aussi le fait que Southbridge est ouvert à faire le travail. C'est beaucoup de travail; ce n'est pas facile de gérer une maison de soins de longue durée et puis d'avoir du personnel francophone, de l'entraînement, etc. Alors, ce sont des bonnes nouvelles.

Si vous connaissez des intervenants, des personnes qui voudraient avoir un projet francophone dans Plantagenet, nous serons ouverts pour les différentes propositions. On a un budget pour les projets capitaux très élevé. Mais si on n'a pas de personnes qui veulent offrir ces services à ce moment à Plantagenet pour faire le redéveloppement qui est nécessaire à faire—c'est nécessaire de le faire.

Alors, on est chanceux d'avoir ces services qui vont continuer à Cornwall.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Donc est-ce qu'on peut garantir—

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Merci beaucoup.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Est-ce que l'on peut garantir que votre ministère des Affaires francophones—je me rends compte que tu connais le ministère des Soins de longue durée très bien également, là—pourrait arrêter tout ça si Southbridge ne demande pas la désignation?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Je pense que si c'était le cas, on va regarder les autres projets capitaux qu'on a dans la région pour s'assurer qu'il y a un autre intervenant qui peut les offrir.

Je pense qu'on n'est pas—we're not in the business of forcing people to offer services they don't feel competent in doing. So in those cases, we would look for other projects in the area and have those conversations with other potential licensee holders to see whether they would be open to having those designated French-language services.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} France Gélinas: OK.

J'aimais mieux votre première réponse que votre deuxième. La première réponse semblait dire que tu ne pouvais pas fermer une maison de soins de longue durée désignée francophone sans garantir le même nombre de lits désignés francophones à Cornwall. Mais là ce que tu me dis c'est qu'ils pourraient fermer une maison de soins de longue durée désignée francophone à Plantagenet, ouvrir les 360 nouveaux lits à Cornwall et avoir 60 lits désignés en quelque part d'autre.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Je pense que ce sont des « case by case ». Les choses qu'on doit gérer, comme la sous-ministre a dit, sont « case by case ». Je pense que ce qui est primordial, c'est qu'on a des projets francophones partout en Ontario. Dans nos 165 projets capitaux, on a 20 différents organismes qui ont dit : « Oui, on veut avoir des services en français. »

It's not a perfect world, but I think what's really important is that Southbridge is committed to maintaining those francophone services. And I can tell you as well that we have other partners like Sienna, Extendicare, some non-profit homes as well, that want to have francophone services within anglophone homes. So that's the good news.

But if you want more details—madame la Sous-Ministre, est-ce que vous avez plus de détails?

M^{me} Roda Muse: Pour celui-là? Non.

M^{me} France Gélinas: OK.

M^{me} Roda Muse: Vous êtes l'experte.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président.

Des services en français dans une maison anglophone, ce n'est pas la même chose qu'une maison désignée sous la Loi sur les services en français. Ce dont on veut s'assurer c'est—il y a une désignation, il y a 60 lits qui sont désignés sous la Loi sur les services en français. Est-ce que ça peut être tout simplement fermé, ces 60 lits-là?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Alors, non. On va travailler avec les intervenants. S'ils nous indiquent qu'ils ne veulent pas continuer ces services en français, on va travailler avec les autres. On a beaucoup de fournisseurs de soins de longue durée partout en Ontario. Mais ce n'est pas le cas, alors on n'a pas besoin de faire ce travail. Peut-être qu'on peut même accroître le nombre de lits qui vont avoir des services en français dans ce nouveau foyer de soins de longue durée.

Mais s'il y a un foyer qui veut fermer—il y a différentes raisons pourquoi les foyers de soins de longue durée ferment. Dans cette situation, il en y a trois qui vont être redéveloppés dans un. Moi, comme ministre, je ne peux pas forcer d'avoir les lits ouverts avec les fournisseurs de soins qui ne veulent plus avoir ces services. Ce n'est pas le cas ici. C'est une bonne nouvelle. On va avoir ces lits désignés, ces services désignés—peut-être même les accroître. Mais dans le futur, si on va avoir une situation

comme ça, on va travailler avec les différents groupes pour s'assurer que ces services ne sont pas perdus dans la région.

M^{me} France Gélinas: OK. Donc, à Plantagenet—

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président.

À Plantagenet, la maison est désignée. À Alexandria, tous les services sont offerts en français pour les 70 lits, mais eux ne sont pas désignés. Est-ce que vous êtes aussi confortable que ces 70 licences-là, qui vont être transférées à Cornwall, vont continuer d'offrir des services en français 24/7?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui, je suis confortable avec ça, oui.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Oui? Vous avez eu les discussions, et ça va se faire?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui, avec le PDG ce matin, j'ai eu cette discussion et il m'a rassuré que c'est un enjeu prioritaire pour lui. Comme je l'ai dit, ils ont beaucoup, beaucoup de projets capitaux, y compris pour les francophones. Alors, je pense qu'il va faire de son mieux et il m'a assuré qu'il est—he is committed to ensuring that this level of French service will continue, so I don't have to worry about losing that French service in this specific case.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Est-ce que vous allez demander un engagement écrit ou non?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Ces engagements peuvent être dans nos « development agreements ». Quand on va être à cette étape, oui, on peut le demander.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Et deux minutes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Oh non, deux minutes?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Two minutes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: OK.

En ce moment, ils ont jusqu'au 16 pour la consultation publique, etc. Est-ce que c'est quelque chose qui peut être demandé pendant la consultation publique?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Je dois regarder les détails techniques pour voir si c'est quelque chose qu'on peut faire pendant cette période.

Une autre idée que le PDG m'a donnée—et je ne l'ai pas encore même dite à mon équipe; on ne l'a pas explorée—c'est de continuer les services à Plantagenet, et peut-être à Alexandria, avec une licence—pas permanente, mais avec une licence prolongée pour cinq ans, peut-être, pour quand même continuer les services—

Une voix: En transition.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: En transition, exactement. Mais c'est une idée qu'on doit explorer. Je n'ai pas encore parlé à mon équipe, alors c'est quelque chose que peut-être peut se faire, mais je ne suis pas sûre.

M^{me} France Gélinas: OK, merci.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Il me reste combien de temps?

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Deux minutes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai encore deux minutes? OK.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Allez, vous.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je vais aller vite.

J'aimerais parler des recommandations du livre blanc, qui est sorti de l'AFO. Vous en avez parlé un peu. Si on regarde les quatre recommandations directement pour le gouvernement provincial, de laquelle de ces quatre recommandations-là est-ce que vous aimeriez qu'on commence à parler, ou pour laquelle des quatre recommandations vous sentez-vous la plus prête à aller de l'avant—ou si vous voulez qu'on les prenne un, deux, trois, quatre?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Je pense que celle au niveau de l'immigration est très importante, car si on veut avoir des services en français et un futur francophone, franco-ontarien, on doit avoir les cibles pour l'immigration.

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En Ontario, en ce moment, on atteint la cible de 11,4 %. Alors, c'est une bonne cible, mais je pense que—encore une fois, c'est important que les nouveaux arrivants francophones aient accès à des services d'accompagnement, à des services d'emploi, etc.

Alors, venir au Canada—oui, bien sûr—mais aussi d'être employé au niveau de leurs compétences, et pouvoir utiliser et travailler en français ou dans les deux langues officielles, je pense, est très important pour la valorisation des nouveaux arrivants et aussi pour leur dignité.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Est-ce que vous avez une stratégie pour faire du français la langue d'insertion des nouveaux arrivants?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: On a des stratégies au niveau de la main-d'oeuvre bilingue, de recrutement et rétention, mais peut-être, madame la Sous-Ministre, vous pourriez nous dire plus de détails.

M^{me} Roda Muse: Le ministère du Travail, de l'Immigration, des métiers et puis des compétences a tout un financement qui s'adresse aux centres d'établissement, comme les centres francophones. Donc, il y a tout un investissement qui est fait là-dedans. Ces programmes-là permettent, par exemple, de les rendre bilingues s'ils ne le sont pas bilingues et de leur donner aussi des mécanismes d'employabilité.

Il y a pas mal d'outils et d'investissements qui sont faits à ces niveaux-là. Par exemple, il y a le carrefour culturel dans le Nord, à Ottawa on a le CÉSOC, ici on a le centre francophone de Toronto. Donc, c'est—

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Merci beaucoup.

La parole est au troisième parti. Madame Collard, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Madame la Ministre, je vais me tourner vers la question du répertoire des services en français, le répertoire que le commissaire aux services en français avait recommandé dans son rapport annuel de 2023-2024, qui avait été publié le 5 décembre 2024, où il recommandait, justement, la création d'un répertoire numérique complet qui permettrait aux Ontariens et Ontariennes de déterminer facilement quels services sont assujettis à la Loi sur les services en français.

Alors, je sais que M^{me} Mulroney avait indiqué qu'elle y travaillait dans le temps, mais la recommandation deman-

daît également qu'il y ait un rapport sur les progrès du développement de ce répertoire-là aux six mois. Pouvez-vous nous dire où vous en êtes avec le développement de ce répertoire?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui, merci.

On a une très bonne relation avec le commissaire. Quand j'ai été nommée au poste, pendant les deux premières semaines, j'ai fait une rencontre avec lui et il m'a parlé de ses idées, de ses soucis, des plaintes qu'il reçoit des Ontariens et Ontariennes.

C'est une relation très positive et quand on reçoit ces recommandations annuelles, le MAFO fait une analyse et puis on prend des pas pour voir lesquelles on peut mettre en vigueur, etc.

Mais, madame la Sous-Ministre, est-ce que vous pourriez nous donner plus de détails?

M^{me} Roda Muse: Oui, merci. En fait, c'est que quand on a regardé cette recommandation, on s'est dit : « Bien, on ne peut pas se décider tout de suite. Ce qu'on va faire, c'est qu'on va travailler avec nos collègues du ministère des services gouvernementaux. »

Donc, il y a toute une étude de faisabilité, tout un travail de faisabilité qui est en train d'être fait. Et puis, ma collègue qui siège, qui est là à la table, peut donner plus de détails à ces niveaux-là.

M^{me} Roxanne Hotte: Bonjour, est-ce que vous m'entendez bien? Ça va cette fois?

Une voix: Oui.

M^{me} Roxanne Hotte: Le travail s'inscrit dans notre Stratégie ontarienne pour les services en français, qui vise à améliorer la planification, l'accès et la prestation des services en français partout en province. Comme a dit notre sous-ministre, on analyse cette recommandation-là avec sérieux.

Puis, il y a présentement, je vous dis, des travaux qui se font pour évaluer comment y arriver d'une façon efficace et qui a du sens aussi pour la province. Parce que les choses changent souvent et beaucoup quand on parle d'adresse et de désignation. On continue à voir la faisabilité, la portée, les modalités d'un tel répertoire numérique.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: OK, merci.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Je voudrais parler maintenant de la capacité bilingue au sein de la fonction publique. On sait que le développement d'une main-d'oeuvre bilingue qualifiée, c'est un pilier de la stratégie francophone. Mais je pense qu'il faut vraiment distinguer entre les efforts de recrutement et la capacité réelle de fournir les services.

Est-ce que vous avez les données sur combien de postes désignés bilingues existent actuellement dans la fonction publique? Combien sont pourvus? Combien sont vacants?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Je vais commencer juste par dire qu'un de nos projets spéciaux qu'on a financés l'année dernière, c'était pour le soutien pour le recrutement, la formation et la traduction au sein du gouvernement de l'Ontario. Alors, précisément pour répondre à ces besoins, pour avoir des fonctionnaires

formés et pour vraiment accroître nos capacités d'offrir des services de qualité en français au niveau des fonctionnaires.

Mais, madame la Sous-Ministre, est-ce qu'on a des données à ce niveau?

M^{me} Roda Muse: Je ne pense pas qu'on ait des données exactes, étant donné que les employés partent, viennent—donc, il y a des postes vacants qui sont bilingues.

Mais on va essayer de voir ce qu'on peut faire pour avoir de l'information—ma collègue vient de m'en donner.

Donc, depuis janvier 2024, toutes les offres d'emplois destinées au public sont disponibles en français, mais je n'ai pas vraiment de chiffres exacts pour le nombre de personnes. Je vais essayer de voir avec mes collègues du Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor, qui ont un aperçu sur tout l'ensemble. Mais on continue à annoncer les postes dans les deux langues officielles.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Donc, ce que vous me dites, c'est que si vous n'avez pas de données, c'est parce qu'on ne mesure pas la capacité de rendre les services en français. Alors, on ne la mesure pas, à savoir—

M^{me} Roda Muse: Le Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor fait du travail, mais nous, nous n'avons pas beaucoup—je laisse parler ma collègue.

M^{me} Roxanne Hotte: Alors, il y a un rapport annuel sur les postes, puis chaque ministère est responsable aussi d'avoir établi sa cible et d'y arriver avec un certain plan. Donc, il y a une cible que le ministère des Affaires francophones a pour soi-même. On a atteint cette cible; on invite aussi les autres ministères à atteindre cette cible.

Mais comme a dit M^{me} la sous-ministre, chaque ministère est différent par rapport à leurs postes, puis la variété de circonstances fait en sorte que les cibles ne peuvent pas être identiques pour chaque ministère.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: OK—

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Merci, monsieur le Président.

Donc, on a parlé de l'obligation pour les ministères de faire une offre active pour les services en français. Là, on ne mesure pas la capacité de l'offre de services en français.

Est-ce qu'on mesure, d'une façon ou d'une autre, le respect de l'exigence de faire une offre active dans les ministères? Est-ce qu'on le mesure d'une façon—

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Madame la Sous-Ministre?

M^{me} Roda Muse: Quand on parle de mesures, bon, on a—comme le disait ma collègue—les « KPI ». Pour tout ce qui est la planification, on met justement ces niveaux-là.

Et pour ce qui est des mesures par rapport à l'offre active—vous savez que ces services, par exemple, ServiceOntario, regroupent beaucoup, beaucoup de services. Souvent, c'est là qu'ils ont exactement des pourcentages qui expriment la satisfaction. Donc, il y a quand même des indicateurs de rendement pour ce qui est de l'offre active et en général aussi, la capacité, comme vous le dites, du personnel à offrir ces services-là.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: OK.

Je vais passer à autre chose, parce qu'évidemment, si on ne sait pas où sont les lacunes, c'est difficile de les combler. C'était la raison de ma question. C'est important de comprendre où sont nos lacunes.

Je voulais premièrement vous féliciter pour le lancement du Centre de planification des services de santé en français, qui a été lancé l'année dernière. C'est une initiative, je pense, qui a suscité beaucoup d'espoir dans la communauté.

J'aimerais savoir, est-ce qu'on a évalué le succès de ce nouveau centre jusqu'à présent? Est-ce qu'on a une idée, depuis le lancement? Est-ce que ça répond vraiment aux besoins?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Je pense qu'on est quand même au début du travail de ce centre. Je vais rencontrer M^{me} Natalie, la présidente, à Sudbury demain, et on va visiter un des centres communautaires là-bas qui offre des services en français. Alors, je pense que c'est juste le début de notre travail. Comme vous le savez, on avait eu les entités de planification et maintenant on a ce centre de planification.

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Alors, on a une voix unie pour nous aider à gérer les services pour les francophones, mais il y a beaucoup de services. On a les soins à domicile, les soins de longue durée, les soins primaires, les soins hospitaliers, etc. On a beaucoup de partenaires, quand même, à regrouper comme, par exemple, l'Hôpital Montfort, qui est vraiment une institution partenaire pour nous, qui nous donne beaucoup de conseils, et à M^{me} Natalie aussi, du centre de planification, de comment gérer et élargir la gamme de services offerts aux francophones.

Pendant la semaine de la francophonie, le jour des Franco-Ontariens, j'ai annoncé une clinique médicale à Mississauga avec un financement du ministère de la Santé qui va assurer qu'à peu près 5 000 francophones vont avoir accès à un médecin de famille ou à une infirmière praticienne ou un infirmier praticien. Alors, on fait des démarches dans les différentes communautés à travers l'Ontario et je pense que c'est vraiment le travail de M^{me} Natalie à regrouper tous ces différents partenaires et de nous donner plus de conseils et indices sur où sont encore les lacunes.

Je sais que chez vous, dans votre comté, le centre communautaire de Vanier a aussi une demande devant la ministre de la Santé, M^{me} Jones, pour avoir des services de santé primaires. On va soutenir cette demande. On va avoir les conversations avec M^{me} Jones. Mais je ne suis pas au courant partout en Ontario où on peut avoir les projets comme ça. Je vais travailler étroitement avec ce centre de planification pour vraiment pouvoir soutenir les projets quand ils sont devant mes collègues, autres ministres, pour vraiment leur dire que c'est important de financer ce projet francophone.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Ce serait important de savoir si ça fonctionne bien parce que—

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: —ç’était tellement une bonne initiative qui a été bien accueillie, donc il faudrait voir : est-ce que ça répond aux besoins?

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Il reste quatre minutes pour les questions.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Probablement que je n'utiliserai pas tout le temps—mais ça va dépendre plus de vous. Juste une petite question concernant notre carte Santé. En 2018, il y avait eu une motion pour que la variable linguistique soit incluse sur la carte Santé. Où est-ce qu'on en est avec ça? Est-ce qu'on avance?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui, bonne question. Je sais qu'on a maintenant les caractères francophones—

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Oui, les accents.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: —qui peuvent être sur la carte Santé, le permis de conduire, etc. Alors les francophones, s'ils veulent changer leur carte, c'est gratuit. Le service est gratuit pour avoir les caractères francophones.

Au niveau de la carte Santé, pour avoir cette variable linguistique, je pense que maintenant on est au niveau de « RFP » pour avoir quelqu'un qui peut nous donner ce service. Et j'ai déjà parlé aux membres de l'équipe de M^{me} Jones pour s'assurer qu'ils sachent, et ils m'ont dit oui, qu'une exigence du « RFP », c'est que le fournisseur doit avoir la possibilité de fournir cette variable linguistique.

Madame la Sous-Ministre, est-ce que vous avez quelque chose à ajouter?

M^{me} Roda Muse: Oui, ça a été fait lors d'une soumission que nous avons faite—non seulement la variable linguistique, mais il y a aussi la variable ethnique. Donc, c'est très surveillé en ce moment, et puis on rendra compte sur ça et on fera le suivi nécessaire pour que ça se fasse de la façon dont ça a été indiqué dans la minute.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: D'accord.

Dernière question—ça va? Je peux continuer?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Okay, just listening. Yes. Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

I'm getting an echo. That's what's happening sometimes.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: OK, désolée.

Juste pour conclure—on va sûrement se retrouver ici l'année prochaine.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Mais j'espère, en tout cas, pour tout le monde.

J'aimerais ça que vous me disiez quels sont les résultats concrets auxquels on peut s'attendre au niveau de l'amélioration pour les affaires francophones; sur quoi on pourra vous questionner l'année prochaine pour voir s'il y a eu une amélioration au sein des services en français.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Très bonne question.

Je pense qu'au niveau du MAFO, j'espère qu'on peut s'attendre à ce qu'on va compléter cette mise à jour pour notre règlement, pour avoir tous les organismes désignés dans le règlement mis à jour. Alors c'est une chose concrète.

On va bien sûr étudier, comme je l'ai dit, le livre blanc de l'AFO pour voir comment on peut appliquer ses

recommandations. On va travailler avec le commissaire et on va voir le nouveau rapport qu'il va déposer.

On a notre rapport, que je vous ai donné, sur les affaires francophones. Alors bien sûr, l'année prochaine on va avoir un nouveau rapport avec des nouvelles avancées. J'espère qu'on va avoir des avancées concrètes au niveau de la santé et, bien sûr, au niveau des soins de longue durée. Aussi la santé mentale; c'est quelque chose que je pense est hyperimportant. On a des projets en ce moment en considération avec la ministre de la Santé.

Et puis vous savez, avec le dossier francophone, on ne sait pas toujours quels enjeux vont être présentés, alors c'est un peu comme—aujourd'hui, c'est l'éducation post-secondaire; demain, c'est l'éducation. Alors on ne peut pas prévoir tous les enjeux qui vont être transmis pendant l'année prochaine.

Mais ce que je peux dire c'est que je vais toujours être à l'écoute de la communauté, de vous tous, tous les membres de l'Assemblée, et aussi de vraiment essayer de—to problem-solve the issues that come, because oftentimes we have to get in the room and critically think about solutions and see how we can resolve the issues. It's always easier when we do it in partnerships with our associations, with our francophone communities, with members of the opposition, as well. And so that's what I can commit to: that I will always be an ally for the Franco-Ontarian community and I will always try to solve the issues as they come.

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Merci beaucoup.

Au gouvernement pour les questions, s'il vous plaît. MPP Ciriello.

MPP Monica Ciriello: Merci, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today and for your incredible work that you do, criss-crossing this province and ensuring that francophone affairs are front and centre. I know my residents in Hamilton certainly appreciate it, and I know that municipalities across this province do as well. So thank you to you for being here and for your incredible team.

We know that the Ministry of Francophone Affairs has a clear responsibility to help ensure that francophones can receive Ontario government services in French and participate fully in social, cultural, economic and democratic life in our province. With that being said, I know you've also spoken about how francophone economic development and partnerships with other governments are front and centre. How can these efforts create opportunities for Ontario's francophone organizations, entrepreneurs and workers?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you so much for the question, and thank you for your work in Hamilton, as well. I know that, through the "PAFO," we've had a long-term-care home, actually, receive some funding to support recruitment and retention of francophone long-term-care workers in Hamilton. That was very nice to see that other regions outside of Sudbury and Ottawa also apply and have projects for our francophone communities.

I will answer this question in English, just to give my brain a little break.

When we look at the current state of affairs and our economical projections, our Premier has been very clear that we need to be very innovative to ensure that we protect Ontario jobs and protect our economy, our workers and all the services that Ontario's families rely on.

Now is the time, really, to make of our francophone community a huge economic asset. We've done it in the past, as well. My predecessor, Minister Mulroney, worked very hard to establish the "fédération des gens d'affaires," which is an organization that supports francophone businesses and enterprises. I believe we have about 31,000 francophone small businesses and other enterprises. But I think, really, now is the time to look for other partners, with the situation down south, and, I think, is the time to really make shine our international Francophonie.

When I speak with the new ambassador of France or the consul general of Belgium—and of course there are so many African countries as well—this is the time to really strengthen our economic ties with Europe. We know Prime Minister Carney has made some commitments to strengthening our ties with Europe, including a program like Erasmus+, which is a very interesting program of exchange for our young people. So now is the time to do it.

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I think, for us in Ontario, francophones and our francophone economic strategy can serve as a big asset to really open us up to new opportunities, to increase our exchanges with countries like Belgium, France, with African countries etc.

And the fact that we're having this big summit in 2028 in Canada, in Ottawa, really lends itself as a perfect opportunity to invite the world leaders here on an international stage and to not only have this summit, but at the same time sign some concrete agreements, some B2B exchanges. So there is a lot of work that goes on before the summit happens. And I think this is the opportunity to really strengthen those economic ties between Ontario and our francophone partners that are global, around the whole world.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. New question, please.

MPP Allsopp, when you're ready, sir.

M. Tyler Allsopp: Merci, monsieur le Président. Merci beaucoup, madame la Ministre, d'être ici aujourd'hui pour votre discours et de me donner l'occasion de vous poser une question aujourd'hui.

Et la question est au sujet des projets CAN-ON. L'Entente Canada-Ontario relative aux services dans la langue de la minorité, qu'on appelle souvent CAN-ON, permet de financer des projets dans plusieurs ministères.

Madame la Ministre, pouvez-vous nous expliquer comment elle fonctionne concrètement? Quel type de projet peut-elle appuyer, comment les ministères proposent leurs idées et qu'est-ce que les francophones en retirent?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui. Merci pour la question.

Oui, l'entente Canada-Ontario est vraiment un bon exemple de ce qu'on peut accomplir quand on travaille en

bonne collaboration avec le gouvernement fédéral. Comme vous le savez, notre premier ministre, Doug Ford, il veut travailler avec tout le monde en collaboration quand les intérêts des Ontariens et Ontariennes sont mis en avant. Alors avec le premier ministre Carney, on fait des bonnes avancées.

On est en train de négocier la prochaine cohorte de ce programme, car on est maintenant au milieu de cette entente. Ça va finir en 2028. Mais l'entente nous permet de financer différents projets, y compris des projets des différents ministères. Alors, on a une liste de tous les différents projets qui sont financés par ce plan de cinq ans—c'est un plan de cinq ans.

Pour les services en français, le gouvernement fédéral, bien sûr, a aussi une responsabilité de soutenir les langues officielles. Le ministre Miller, il est responsable pour ce dossier. Alors, on a eu une rencontre à Winnipeg cette année avec tous les ministres responsables de la francophonie canadienne et on a eu de beaux échanges au niveau de ce qu'on voudrait voir dans la prochaine entente Canada-Ontario.

Par exemple, quelque chose que moi, j'ai demandé—et les collègues, les autres ministres des autres provinces et territoires, ont dit que oui, c'est une bonne idée—c'est d'avoir un fonds pour l'infrastructure francophone—un fonds désigné fédéral pour l'infrastructure francophone. Car ce qui se passe, et on le voit dans nos ministères, c'est que les projets francophones doivent être en compétition avec les autres projets et parfois, ça nous pose des difficultés. Mais si le gouvernement fédéral avait un fonds dédié spécifiquement pour soutenir les projets d'infrastructure francophones partout dans le pays, je pense que ça serait bien. Alors ça, c'est une de nos idées, de nos propositions pour la prochaine étape de cette entente Canada-Ontario.

L'autre chose c'est qu'on veut s'assurer que l'Ontario reçoit une bonne portion de ce financement. À ce moment, ce n'est pas tout à fait proportionnel à notre poids démographique francophone. Oui, on est la province qui a le plus grand taux de francophones au-delà du Québec. Alors, on veut s'assurer que la prochaine entente fédérale-provinciale reflète ça.

Madame la Sous-Ministre, vous voulez dire quelque chose à ce sujet?

M^{me} Roda Muse: Oui. L'entente Canada-Ontario, c'est une entente de partage des coûts. En général, c'est 4 millions de dollars sur cinq ans, mais souvent les investissements de l'Ontario vont dépasser les 4 millions de dollars par année. Donc, il y a cet élément-là.

L'autre chose c'est que chaque ministère va identifier des besoins. Par exemple, il y en a qui vont demander comment on peut faciliter tel accès aux services, d'autres qui veulent informer, par exemple, les citoyens de leurs droits, et ainsi de suite. Donc, selon le besoin de chaque ministère, le ministère vient nous voir et nous dit : « Voilà ce que je propose comme demande. » Et c'est en fonction de leur demande, de leurs besoins, que nous facilitons. Nous sommes comme un corridor; nous facilitons ces financements-là. C'est nous qui les recevons et nous les transférons.

M. Tyler Allsopp: Merci beaucoup.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question.

MPP Sarrazin, please. Thank you.

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: Je vais commencer par dire que c'est tout le temps intéressant de voir nos collègues députés parler en français puis vraiment faire l'effort. Puis, je dois dire qu'on a quand même souvent les—non, mais souvent les gens ne le savent pas à travers l'Ontario, mais on a beaucoup, beaucoup de députés qui sont des francophiles, puis qui font vraiment un effort pour parler en français.

Peut-être que c'est un peu du côté du caucus conservateur. C'est peut-être vous qui avez commencé ça. Je pense qu'en 2018 puis en 2022, vous faisiez des genres de petites cérémonies où tout le monde avait la chance de parler en français. Je vous félicite pour ça. Peut-être que c'est quelque chose que—vous avez moins le temps. Peut-être que c'est quelque chose que je devrais prendre puis continuer.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui, bonne idée.

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: Mais c'est toujours intéressant. On sait qu'il y en a beaucoup qui prennent des cours en français, puis c'est intéressant.

Mais pour en revenir aux questions, vous avez parlé un peu du Conseil des ministres sur la francophonie canadienne. Puis je sais que cette année on assume la coprésidence du conseil des ministres. Peut-être, pouvez-vous nous expliquer notre rôle là-dedans, puis ce que ça représente pour l'Ontario et pour les Franco-Ontariens, cette occasion de réunir les ministres responsables de la francophonie partout au Canada?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui, merci.

Oui, ça s'appelait « Café français ». C'était une fois par semaine qu'on se rencontrait—les députés de notre caucus—et on pratiquait les lignes du jour. Je pense que c'était une bonne idée et peut-être quelque chose que vous pourriez faire maintenant.

Je me suis rendue à Winnipeg pour le Conseil des ministres sur la francophonie canadienne, et on a échangé beaucoup avec mes collègues, les autres ministres. C'était très intéressant car Winnipeg a un nouveau plan d'action qui s'appelle « faire de Winnipeg une province véritablement bilingue. » Le ministre Simard, il est responsable pour ça là-bas.

Ce que j'ai appris c'est que l'Ontario est vraiment avancé au niveau des services en français. On a cette Loi sur les services en français. Les autres provinces n'ont pas nécessairement des outils comparables, sauf le Nouveau-Brunswick, bien sûr; c'est une province officiellement bilingue.

Le ministre Simard veut venir chez nous pour voir comment on fait les choses en Ontario, pour apprendre de nous. Je pense que c'est un bon signe que l'Ontario est déjà assez avancé.

Mais cette année, comme vous avez dit, monsieur le député, l'Ontario a l'occasion de jouer un rôle encore plus actif en assumant la coprésidence du conseil, et à l'automne 2027, nous accueillerons ses membres à Toronto. Ce sera une occasion de faire connaître la francophonie ontarienne

à nos partenaires, de partager le travail accompli ici et de contribuer aux discussions sur les prochaines priorités communes.

Les Franco-Ontariens font partie d'une francophonie canadienne dynamique et en accueillant cette rencontre, nous voulons que les expériences, les idées et les ambitions aient toutes leur place à la table.

Je pense que c'est très intéressant aussi de voir que oui, on a différentes communautés francophones et acadiennes aussi au Canada, mais les défis sont plus ou moins similaires. On a les choses que l'Ontario fait mieux, on a les choses que le Manitoba fait mieux, l'Alberta, etc., et on peut échanger les idées et apprendre l'un de l'autre.

J'ai vraiment hâte d'accueillir les ministres ici l'année prochaine. Vous serez tous invités, bien sûr, et ça va être une belle occasion pour vraiment faire rayonner notre francophonie ontarienne.

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: Une autre question, monsieur le Président?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Supplementary, please.

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: Je dois dire que moi puis certains collègues on a eu la chance de siéger sur l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, puis on a eu la chance d'aller à Winnipeg cette année—justement, M. Simard puis M. Loiselle étaient là. C'était vraiment intéressant.

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Je pense que c'est le fun de voir que le gouvernement de l'Ontario fait partie de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, qui nous donne l'opportunité de discuter avec des députés d'à peu près partout dans le monde francophone. C'est quelque chose que je crois qui est important, puis qu'on devrait vraiment continuer à travailler là-dessus.

Je dois dire que souvent, ça en vient à l'économie francophone mondiale—vous en avez parlé un peu tantôt, mais notre gouvernement investit beaucoup d'énergie et de temps à diversifier ses partenaires commerciaux. Je ne sais pas si vous aviez quelque chose d'additionnel à mentionner là-dessus, comme le ministère des Affaires francophones contribue à l'effort gouvernemental de diversification des marchés économiques. Vous avez parlé de la fédération des gens d'affaires. Je pense, justement, qu'une mission économique s'en vient prochainement. Donc je pense que c'est vraiment l'opportunité pour la province de l'Ontario de ne pas manquer notre chance à être partenaire dans l'économie francophone mondiale.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Alors, notre volet économique au MAFO, c'est 800 000 \$ qu'on a spécifiquement pour notre stratégie économique francophone. On a 30 000 entreprises francophones et on espère voir ce nombre croître.

Mais on a aussi des partenaires et des entreprises françaises, belges, etc., et ils sont très intéressés dans nos marchés ici en Ontario. Alors, comme je l'ai dit, avoir ces discussions avec les fonctionnaires, les ambassadeurs d'autres pays, je pense que c'est vraiment une belle opportunité pour nous maintenant d'accroître le poids de nos échanges économiques avec différents partenaires

francophones partout au monde. Et je pense que l'Ontario est une province attirante pour les investissements car on a des professionnels de tous différents secteurs—dans le secteur « STEM », minier aussi, bien sûr, dans les mines, etc.—alors, il y a beaucoup de choses qui—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oh, that's it?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Opposition for questions, please. And we have 10 minutes left.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je vais parler très, très vite.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): And we're timing. Nouvelle question, s'il vous plaît.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Lorsque j'ai fini ma dernière ronde de questions, je vous parlais du livre blanc, des quatre recommandations, spécifiquement au gouvernement provincial, de l'AFO. Quand je vous ai demandé votre favorite, vous avez répondu la numéro 2, stratégie interministérielle d'immigration et d'ancrage francophone.

Moi, je viens du Nord, donc je vais vous amener à la recommandation numéro 4, qui parle d'adopter « une stratégie de vitalité francophone pour le Nord, arrimée à la stratégie provinciale et assortie de plans de mise en oeuvre distincts pour le Nord-Est et le Nord-Ouest »—plus précisément, des plans distincts pour le Nord-Est, le Nord-Ouest, des critères d'équité régionale et des ententes pluriannuelles adaptées aux capacités locales.

Le budget, vous avez le PAFO à 3 millions de dollars, du développement économique à 800 000 \$, sans vraiment préciser leur répartition régionale. Comment ces enveloppes et leurs modalités seront adaptées pour répondre aux besoins du Nord qui sont identifiés dans le livre blanc, et notamment les postes permanents, les services mobiles ou hybrides, la coordination régionale?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Oui, alors on est en train d'examiner—on remercie l'AFO pour ce travail, car ça a pris deux ans et ils ont eu beaucoup de rencontres partout en Ontario, y compris dans le Nord. On est en train d'examiner ce livre blanc et les recommandations en détail.

On sait que les communautés dans le Nord ont des besoins distincts, même quand il s'agit des soins de longue durée. On connaît les défis. Ils sont différents que le reste de l'Ontario.

Donnez-nous un peu de temps pour vraiment faire cette analyse pour s'assurer qu'au futur, par exemple, le PAFO peut être plus adapté aux besoins du Nord et pour s'assurer que l'on a beaucoup de projets. On a eu des projets du PAFO pour Sudbury, Nickel Belt, etc. Mais je pense que c'est une belle opportunité d'examiner tous nos différents projets qu'on finance pour s'assurer que cette lentille du Nord est proportionnellement reflétée dans le financement que le MAFO a.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je vous remercie. Ce sont des bonnes nouvelles.

Les deux autres recommandations—la recommandation numéro 1 du livre blanc pour le gouvernement provincial, c'est que le gouvernement de l'Ontario adopte une stratégie interministérielle de vitalité francophone à long horizon.

On parle ici d'un plan sectoriel des responsabilités ministérielles, une reddition de comptes.

Le budget prévoit la poursuite des stratégies de services en français et de développement économique. Comment ces investissements seront-ils mobilisés pour répondre à cette attente d'une stratégie globale coordonnée? Quels moyens sont prévus pour élaborer les volets qui ne sont pas couverts, en ce moment, par les stratégies que vous avez?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Je pense que ça, c'est vraiment le rôle du MAFO, de s'assurer qu'on a des stratégies entre les ministères. Ce n'est pas juste le MAFO, bien sûr, mais tous les ministères qui sont responsabilisés pour avoir les services en français et, bien sûr, répondre à la Loi sur les services en français.

On le fait déjà, mais on a beaucoup plus de travail à faire pour que ça se passe mieux et que cette lentille francophone soit vraiment présente dans toutes les politiques du gouvernement.

M^{me} France Gélinas: OK.

Je saute à la recommandation numéro 3. La recommandation numéro 3 parle de renforcer le cadre d'application de la Loi sur les services en français.

Puis, en ce moment, il y a encore—aujourd'hui, lorsque vous avez parlé, vous avez parlé d'identifier les organismes désignés, mais on ne parle pas de préciser l'accès aux services en français. C'est différent de dire qu'un organisme est désigné versus mesurer si les gens ont vraiment accès à des services en français.

Je comprends que vous allez terminer votre travail d'identifier les organismes désignés au printemps 2027, mais est-ce que vous êtes ouverte à l'idée de pas seulement mesurer le nombre d'organismes désignés, mais l'accès aux services en français pour les gens?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Je pense que le commissaire a fait un peu ce travail, car il répond aux plaintes des francophones dans tous les différents secteurs de services et dans les différentes industries. Le commissaire nous aide beaucoup à faire ce travail.

Je pense que c'est quelque chose à quoi on peut penser au futur pour voir comment on peut mesurer le succès de cette mise à jour de la modernisation de la loi et de cette offre active. Je pense réellement qu'on n'y est pas encore à ce point où le MAFO, un tout petit ministère, puisse faire ce travail, mais je pense que c'est quelque chose à quoi on peut penser au futur.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Donc, ouverte à l'idée que ça soit mesuré, que ça soit par votre ministère ou par une série de ministères qui sont responsables d'organismes désignés?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Madame la Sous-Ministre, vous voulez?

M^{me} Roda Muse: Il y a quand même une imputabilité qui est demandée au ministère.

Et, souvent, comme je le disais tout à l'heure à M^{me} Collard, quand il y a des erreurs, on rattrape, mais on s'assure toujours qu'avant qu'il n'y ait des erreurs qui ne soient commises, qu'on applique la lentille.

En ce qui concerne l'évaluation, c'est sûr que la reddition, par le biais du rapport annuel, nous donne vraiment un

aperçu de ce qui marche. Et puis, souvent, on a des discussions sur ce qui ne marche pas. On vient nous demander des appuis. Les réseaux des coordonnateurs aussi entendent les problématiques. Et puis, on essaie de travailler dessus.

Donc, ce n'est pas quelque chose qu'on met à la lumière du jour, tout ça, mais c'est du travail continu; c'est du travail, vraiment, qui est ardu, mais c'est faisable, et on le fait dès qu'on le peut.

M^{me} France Gélinas: OK, je vous remercie.

J'avais commencé avec l'éducation; je vais revenir à l'éducation.

Il y avait un groupe de travail qui s'est penché sur le manque de professeurs francophones dans nos écoles primaires et secondaires. Ils ont mis un plan d'action de l'avant. Et je voudrais savoir, est-ce qu'on peut s'attendre à ce que le plan d'action aille de l'avant?

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Je pense qu'on a fait des bonnes démarches, des bons avancements à ce niveau.

À l'Université de l'Ontario français, on a commencé par offrir un baccalauréat en éducation, et je pense que maintenant, on a doublé le nombre d'étudiants qui font cette formation. Ce sont des bonnes nouvelles car on a besoin de plus d'enseignantes-enseignants francophones.

Bien sûr, on a d'autres partenaires postsecondaires, comme l'Université d'Ottawa, qui a même un petit campus à Windsor pour former les enseignants-enseignantes francophones. Alors on le fait, mais au niveau de cette demande spécifique, madame la Sous-Ministre, vous avez plus d'informations?

M^{me} Rosa Muse: Oui. Nous travaillons, nous collaborons comme—

Le Président (M. Lorne Coe): Deux minutes.

M^{me} Rosa Muse: Oui, je vais faire vite.

Nous collaborons avec l'UOF et avec l'Université d'Ottawa pour offrir justement la formation en français. Je ne sais pas si vous vous souveniez, mais à l'époque, c'était deux ans pour faire des formations en éducation; là, c'est revenu à un an.

Il y a aussi cette possibilité que l'UOF offre des cours en ligne. Et d'ailleurs, il y a beaucoup des enseignants qui l'ont fait en ligne et qui enseignent à Ottawa en ce moment. Donc ce sont vraiment des avancées au niveau de l'enseignement. Il y a eu une grosse priorité. Une des augmentations, aussi, des étudiants de l'UOF est due justement à cette formation en éducation.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Est-ce que vous demandez de temps à autre combien de professeurs dans nos écoles francophones n'ont pas les qualifications et ont la lettre pour leur permettre d'enseigner sans être qualifiés?

M^{me} Rosa Muse: Ce sont nos collègues du ministère des Collèges et Universités, et de l'Éducation aussi, qui peuvent donner la réponse exacte. Mais pour nous, ce qui est important, c'est que la formation se fasse de façon continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mais vous êtes au courant qu'il y en a beaucoup plus dans les écoles francophones qu'il y en a dans les écoles anglophones?

M^{me} Rosa Muse: Absolument.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Oui, OK. Mais on ne sait pas le numéro?

M^{me} Rosa Muse: Nos collègues—

Des voix.

M^{me} France Gélinas: OK. La dernière chose que je veux vous dire : moi, je viens du Nord, encore. Il y a de grandes distances à parcourir pour les étudiants et étudiantes, même au niveau des tout-petits, et il y a des déficits dans le financement du système de transport.

Donc, d'une communauté, se rendre à une école—ce qui devrait prendre à peu près 30 minutes—va prendre une heure et demie, parce qu'ils doivent arrêter à une autre école, puis échanger des étudiants, puis revenir, puis tu fais un zigzag pour te rendre là où tu as besoin, parce qu'il n'y a pas suffisamment de financement. Ça affecte beaucoup plus les écoles francophones qu'anglophones.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much. That concludes our deliberations today. That will now take us to our voting script.

This concludes the committee's consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Francophone Affairs. Standing order 69 requires that the Chair put, without further amendment or debate, every question necessary to dispose of the estimates. Are the members ready to vote?

Yes, Madame?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Recorded vote.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Absolutely. The Clerk will do and accommodate that.

Shall vote 13—can you please be seated, sir?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. You can take a photo of the minister after we vote.

Shall vote 1301, francophone affairs, carry?

Ayes

Allsopp, Ciriello, Darouze, Gualtieri, Sarrazin.

Nays

Collard, Gélinas.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): It's carried.

Shall the Chair report the 2026-27 estimates of the Ministry of Francophone Affairs to the House? All those in favour, raise your hands. All those opposed, raise your hands.

Interjection: Recorded vote, sir.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): We already did it once? Okay.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, this concludes our consideration of this ministry's estimates. I'd like to thank the minister and everyone here today for their participation.

The committee will now recess until 3:30 p.m. in the same room. We have one more ministry to do: emergency services and preparedness.

This committee is recessed until 3:30.

The committee recessed from 1504 to 1530.

MINISTRY OF EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on Justice Policy will now come to order. On this afternoon's agenda is the review of the 2026-27 estimates of the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response.

As a reminder, the ministry will be considered for two hours, with a 20-minute opening statement from the minister, followed by questions and answers in rotations of 15 minutes for the official opposition members of the committee, 15 minutes for the third party members of the committee and 15 minutes for the government members of the committee for the remainder of the allotted time.

I'd like to take the opportunity to remind everyone that the purpose of considering the estimates is for the members of the Legislature to determine if the government is spending money appropriately, wisely and effectively in the delivery of the services intended. As the Chair, I will allow members to ask a wide range of questions, as I have over the last couple of days, pertaining to the estimates before the committee to ensure they are confident that the ministry will spend those dollars appropriately. In the past, members have asked questions about the delivery of similar programs in previous fiscal years, about the policy framework that supports a ministry approach to a problem or service delivery or about the competence of a ministry to spend the money wisely and efficiently.

However, in the course of those questions being asked, it must be noted that the onus is on the members asking the questions to make sure that the questioning is relevant to the estimates under consideration. If I find that they are outside the scope of what we're considering here today, I will rule the question out of order.

From the ministry, we're joined by the Honourable Jill Dunlop, ministry officials and staff.

As a reminder, the ministry is required to monitor the proceedings for any questions or issues that the ministry undertakes to address. I trust that the deputy minister has arranged to have the hearings closely monitored with respect to questions raised so that the ministry can respond accordingly.

Are there any questions from the members of the committee before we start? I note, Clerk, that no one has raised their hand.

I am now required to call vote 5401, which sets the review process in motion. We will begin with a statement from the Honourable Jill Dunlop, the minister, for up to 20 minutes.

Minister, I'll let you know when you have a minute left in your 20 minutes. And Minister, the floor is yours. Please start, and thank you for being here.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you very much, Chair and committee members. I'm pleased to be here today in my role as the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response alongside my deputy minister, Matthew Pegg.

Last year, we appeared before this committee as a stand-alone ministry for the first time. That historic ap-

pearance reflected this government's promise to protect Ontario and ensure that we are prepared in the event of an emergency.

Since my last appearance before this committee, we have made significant progress building the framework we need to deliver on our mandate. I welcome this opportunity to provide details about several of the initiatives we have worked on since our last appearance.

For 2026-27, my ministry's baseline budget is \$69.9 million. That's a significant amount and is an increase from the 2025-26 budget. I would like to point out that last fiscal year, the ministry spent approximately \$276 million. That's more than four times its printed estimates, the majority of that funding spent on direct supports for evacuees. This shows that we will spare no expense when it comes to protecting the people of Ontario.

It is important to remember that the estimates being discussed today represent an investment in the resilience and safety of all Ontarians. Broadly, these investments are designed to not only ensure that we can respond effectively in times of emergency, but to also empower communities to mitigate future risks by being prepared.

Chair, there is a stark truth facing this province. It is the same one facing communities around the globe, from the devastating flash floods in Nepal to scorching heat waves and wildland fires across Europe. As emergencies become less predictable and more frequent, preparedness must be continuous rather than seasonal. Our ministry, alongside municipal and First Nation partners, is enhancing ongoing readiness, coordination and planning to ensure we are prepared to respond whenever needed. This is placing unique challenges and demands on our ministry and our stakeholders.

Whatever the challenge, addressing them requires preparation across the province, which is exactly what our government is investing in. As we enter our second year as a dedicated ministry, we continue to work toward our ultimate goal of making Ontario safe, practised and prepared before, during and after emergencies.

Today, I'll focus on three major initiatives our ministry is taking on to achieve this goal: the historic establishment and expansion of Ontario Corps, the ongoing success of Community Emergency Preparedness Grants and, finally, the landmark passage of the Emergency Management Modernization Act, 2025.

One of the most significant initiatives we worked on this year was enhancing and expanding Ontario Corps. Launched in 2024, Ontario Corps was created as a direct response to the ever-pressing need to build preparedness and response capacity in communities. The premise is simple: people coming together to support one another in times of need; neighbours helping neighbours.

Ontario Corps has a single powerful mission: to unite our province in times of crisis and protect the people who call it home, no matter what comes our way. Whether our communities are facing a severe flood, storm, wildland fire or any other emergency, we are building a province that is prepared and resilient. Through Ontario Corps, when a municipality submits a request for assistance, the

government can effectively deploy specialized equipment and personnel anywhere across Ontario within 24 to 72 hours to support community response efforts.

Over three rounds of funding, we have now invested a total of \$21.5 million to ensure partners have the equipment and infrastructure they need to mobilize and support Ontario Corps deployments.

This year, we invested \$6.5 million in 13 NGO partners, including GlobalMedic, Team Rubicon, the Salvation Army and 211 Ontario. These investments went toward equipment such as debris removal tools and machinery, flood barriers, drones, food boxes, personal protective equipment and many other supplies. And, Chair, organizations have been reaching out, looking to lend their expertise, their equipment and personnel to support Ontario Corps deployments.

So I'm proud to report that we now have nine additional partners, including private sector partners, industry and professional associations, and even a post-secondary institution. These organizations include the Home Depot Canada; Uber Canada; Ontario Mine Rescue; the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association; and many more.

For example, during emergencies, the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association can call on its members to facilitate access to expertise and construction equipment such as excavators, bulldozers, trucks, snow removal machinery and more. As well, Uber Canada can provide transportation to evacuation and reception centres, medical centres and other critical destinations, and they can deliver essential supplies and help coordinate large shipments of relief supplies to communities in need.

In short, these are the types of partners that have the resources to quickly mobilize specialized equipment and trained personnel to help their communities in a time of need. As we add to our diverse roster of Ontario Corps partners, we are expanding the many ways we provide crucial support to communities facing emergencies.

But the backbone of Ontario Corps is our volunteers. We have attracted volunteers from across the province who will play an important role supporting and helping communities impacted by emergencies. Volunteers are contacted when needed to support emergency response efforts and will be assigned responsibilities based on their skill level, their interest and their availability, and so far, the response has been amazing.

Since launching in December of 2024, we now have more than 33,600 registered volunteers with more than 8,000 of those who have completed their training and are ready to be deployed. This is what a true whole-of-society response to emergency management looks like.

So far, Ontario Corps has been tested through several extreme weather events. For example, at the end of last March, one of Ontario's worst ice storms in a decade created dangerous conditions including power outages, impassable roads and structural damage across many areas of central and eastern Ontario, including in my own hometown and community of Simcoe North. This one storm resulted in 23 municipal declarations of emergency,

and the emergency response from my ministry was quick and effective.

1540

MEPR field officers and Ontario Corps were deployed almost immediately. Ontario Corps partners such as Team Rubicon, GlobalMedic, Ontario Search and Rescue Volunteer Association, the Salvation Army, Feed Ontario, and Attachment and Trauma Treatment Centre for Healing Niagara jumped into action. Chair, I'm proud to say that the response from the government was well coordinated, cohesive and effective. We provided skilled volunteers and equipment to assist with debris removal, hot meals and wellness checks.

The numbers tell the story about the true breadth of this operation: Over 4,100 wellness checks for vulnerable populations were conducted in person or by phone, more than 2,500 personal hygiene items were distributed, over 1,100 blankets and pillows were provided, nine emergency generators were deployed to maintain critical infrastructure in affected areas and over 7,500 people visited warming centres and shelters. This was an all-hands-on-deck operation. All told, Ontario Corps partners provided more than 6,000 combined volunteer hours.

And during last year's wildland fire season, as Ontario successfully worked to evacuate more than 6,000 residents from northern Ontario, Ontario Corps was there, providing more than 200 backup generators to First Nation communities. Some 200 air purifiers, a dozen air scrubbers and 400 N95 masks were also shipped to affected communities. Personal hygiene supplies and food items were also provided to communities who hosted people displaced by wildland fires.

Chair and committee members, these are just a few of the examples of the success Ontario Corps has already achieved, and we are excited to continue building on this momentum.

But true resilience starts by making investments at the local level. That is why we launched the successful and effective Community Emergency Preparedness Grant Program. The government created the CEPG as part of our commitment to strengthen emergency preparedness and capacity in Ontario. It's a valuable program, and I'm happy to have the opportunity to outline it for the committee today.

The Community Emergency Preparedness Grant provides up to \$50,000 in funding to help communities and organizations purchase emergency supplies, equipment like chainsaws, generators and sandbag machines, and services such as training, education, as well as emergency exercise planning and coordination. The application-based program was designed to support municipalities with a population under 100,000 people and First Nations. Funding for this program also flows to local services boards and Indigenous organizations.

I'm happy to report that the program has been an incredible success and we are continuing it. This summer, we opened applications for a fourth round of funding. We are investing an additional \$5 million in the program, which brings our total investment in the CEPG to \$20

million since we launched in 2023. During the first three rounds of funding, we provided \$15 million to 342 recipients to build emergency management capacity and support initiatives that enhance preparedness. Communities are using the funding to invest in the equipment and services they need the most, depending on their unique hazards.

The concept behind the program is illustrative of the government's approach to emergency preparedness. Put simply, it is not a top-down approach where an office far away from the front lines makes crucial decisions about deploying resources. Instead, the government is putting people first by breaking down silos and providing real, targeted support to municipalities, local services boards and First Nations based on what they actually need. After all, who knows what a community needs more than the people in the community itself?

Of course, time won't permit me to give a complete rundown of each recipient, but I would like to highlight a few for the committee today:

The Apitipi Anicinapek Nation, in northeastern Ontario, received \$50,000 in 2024-25 to purchase a generator and communication equipment, including a muster point for the existing radio tower that greatly enhances its emergency services department.

The municipality of Bayham in the southeastern part of the province received \$50,000 in 2024-25 to purchase a trailer equipped with emergency supplies, including chainsaws, signage, spill kits, radios, as well as a sand-bagging machine that will enable the community to better respond to annual flooding in the municipality.

And the Hiawatha First Nation received \$34,125 in 2024-25 that went directly towards purchasing generators and emergency kits. Importantly, the investment also supported the creation of public education materials and supported new emergency management training and exercises for the community.

This is noteworthy because it is an example of the government's view of emergency preparedness as so much more than just equipment and supplies. The CEPG also funds proactive emergency management resources, such as training delivery, education programs, as well as exercise planning and coordination.

I want to assure the committee that the application process is rigorous, and as with all government programs, each recipient's proposal is carefully considered and vetted. Successful applicants were selected based on a community's need, the emergency frequency and impact, location challenges and the ability to sustain the project. The government's aim is to provide the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant to as many communities as possible, so recipients who received previous funding are not eligible to receive the grant again.

Chair, the CEPG has been a particularly useful program that has bolstered emergency preparedness throughout communities across the province. My ministry looks forward to continuing to administer these much-needed funds to deserving communities.

I must also note that round 4 closes tomorrow. So for any municipality who is watching this today, tomorrow is the last day.

The last area I would like to cover today is the Emergency Management Modernization Act, 2025, or EMMA, as we refer to it. EMMA amended the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, or EMCPA, and was the first comprehensive update to the province's emergency management legislative framework in more than 15 years. I'm sure I don't have to tell committee members how much the world has changed since 2010 and the many factors that have made this update absolutely crucial.

As I mentioned, the government's vision of emergency management is based on the concept that communities should be empowered to deal with emergencies at the local level. The amended legislation supports municipal emergency management by recognizing the importance of community-led approaches. Subject to future regulations, amendments will enable expanded flexibility for municipal emergency management programs based on their need and their capacity. In short, the updates protect Ontario by enabling the tailoring of emergency programs and plans to meet local needs.

As well, the amended legislation formally recognizes Ontario Corps as a key provincial function to support communities as they prepare for and respond to emergencies. It is part of the government's plan to protect Ontario and strengthen provincial leadership and coordination by enabling my ministry to be the provincial lead and the one window for coordinating provincial emergency management activities. This is an important aspect of the legislation as it streamlines emergency preparedness and response.

Chair, in a time of crisis, it is absolutely necessary to know who is on first, so to speak. I am here to say that the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response is here to support municipalities when they need it and to coordinate the deployment of provincial resources to keep all Ontarians safe.

Through the passage of this act, we are supporting municipalities in other ways too. Subject to future regulations, the act will allow two or more municipalities to develop joint emergency management programs and plans together. We know that many municipalities are already working together because they face the same hazards and share resources when responding. The act will enable municipalities to formalize these relationships within their emergency management plans and programs and reduce the administrative burden of duplicating nearly identical plans across each municipality. This change will reduce duplication, allow for collaboration and create flexibility for municipalities to address their local needs and realities.

Simply put, these amendments of the EMCPA make emergency management more efficient and effective across Ontario. We know that effective emergency management depends on collaboration and strong relationships. That's why the act was informed by extensive feedback from partners, including municipalities, First Nations, Indigenous service organizations and emergency management professionals. We also incorporated best practices in

emergency management and lessons learned from past emergencies. We gathered stakeholder feedback through 47 engagement sessions and 91 written submissions. Additionally, the amendments were posted publicly, and we received another 20 submissions through that.

1550

Clearly, we've hit the mark. I'm happy to note that many of the partners we consulted publicly supported the act, including the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. I'm proud that we did the work and took the time to get this legislation right. We look forward to continuing to engage with partners to inform next steps on implementation.

As I started off the top, we know that we are living in a time where emergencies and critical incidents are on the rise. We are transforming our ministry and optimizing the delivery of key public services to ensure that we are ready to meet evolving and future challenges. That's why the government established the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response in March of last year. Establishing this new ministry was a direct response to increasing and unpredictable threats, and a clear signal to the people of Ontario that we take their collective safety and security seriously.

This past year has been an incredible time of growth for this ministry. It has been filled with learning and delivering on a comprehensive plan that strives to meet the evolving needs of today while also planning for tomorrow.

Chair, I am grateful for the opportunity to touch on the creation of Ontario Corps, the ongoing success of the CEPG and the landmark passage of EMMA for this committee. While these are three important areas for our ministry, they are by no means exclusive of all the work that we are doing every day to ensure that everyone in the province is safe, practiced and prepared before, during and after emergencies.

The ministry also offers a variety of publications in many languages that can be downloaded from Publications Ontario, covering topics like preparing for weather events and power outages.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have one minute left, Minister. Thank you.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: The ministry hosts a variety of training, educational programs and exercises to ensure we are prepared to respond to any emergency.

As the committee has heard today, we are making great progress. We will continue to improve, adapt and invest to meet the challenges ahead. We know there is much more work to be done, and we look forward to continuing to find new, innovative ways to deliver on our mandate for the people of Ontario.

I want to thank you and all the committee members for the opportunity to outline some of our important work here today. Deputy Minister Pegg and I look forward to answering any questions from the committee.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for your presentation, Minister.

We'll now begin the question-and-answer segment in rotations of 15 minutes for the official opposition members, 15 minutes for the third party member—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I'm not finished yet—and 15 minutes for the government members for the remainder of the allotted time.

As always, please remember to make your comments through the Chair.

As the Chair, if a member seeks to reclaim the floor during a rotation while the minister is responding, I'll recognize the member and allow them to reclaim the floor to ask a new question—but it's a new question.

For the deputy minister, assistant deputy ministers, staff, please state your name and your title the first time that you speak, should you be invited up to the table, so that we can accurately record in Hansard who we have.

MPP Gélinas, you had your finger up. I'm not quite sure what that signalled, whether you wanted to speak or ask a question. Please proceed, and then come back to me for your supplementary questions so that we can move through the process a little more efficiently.

Mme France Gélinas: Thank you for your opening remarks—much appreciated.

I want to talk about the huge flooding that happened in my riding this spring, where the Vermilion River went up like 18 feet. I live off of the Vermilion River. My neighbours were flooded. Everybody was flooded. You had, I think, four people from the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre that came to the riding, that looked at the flooding, that looked at what had happened. They shared information with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing so that the disaster recovery assistance program was provided to pretty much everybody who lived along the Vermilion River, except for a little part in the middle of it.

I can speak for Nina Vendetti, who lives in that little stretch with her husband and her three kids. Their house was completely destroyed, but they did not qualify for the disaster recovery assistance program—I realize it's not your ministry—because the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre didn't seem to have identified that part of the river that flooded just as much as the entire river flooded. The water coming down was scary. It was like 18 feet higher than what it usually is. The noise of it—the whole thing was really scary.

I don't understand how the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre communicates to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to make decisions regarding the disaster recovery assistance program. How does that work?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please. Thank you.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you for the question. That program is through municipal affairs and housing, so the field officers and the PEOC would not have been responsible for identifying the areas that would receive that funding. It would have been municipal affairs and housing that does that. We don't make that assessment. Our officers on the front lines don't do that.

M^{me} France Gélinas: So what were they doing when they were there?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: They would have been there working with the municipality to identify any supports that we could provide such as sandbags or sandbagging machines—that type of equipment. We wouldn't be assessing that situation, whether it was eligible for the program or not. That would be municipal affairs sending people in.

M^{me} France Gélinas: So the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre, the people who come have nothing to do with identifying—but that's what they did. They identified where the flood was, they identified where the sand should be delivered and where the bags should be delivered and all of this. Isn't that what they do?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Yes, that's what they do. But wasn't your question about why that area was not receiving financial support? Isn't that what your question was?

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question was more, what does the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre staff do when they come to a flooded area?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: They would have been contacted through the CEMC in your area. Your area would have been asking for support from the PEOC, and we would have then deployed field officers to the area to assess whatever the needs may be. It could have been the sandbagging, flood barriers, that type of equipment.

But I thought your question was specifically asking about the financial piece with that area.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay, so once the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre is there trying to help out, they have nothing to do with identifying which area should be recommended for disaster recovery?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: No, that would be municipal affairs and housing who would bring in people to assess that situation.

M^{me} France Gélinas: That's kind of weird because you already have people on the ground. They've already seen where the—

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Chair, point of order.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Yes, MPP Allsopp?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: The line of questioning is clearly out of scope, and it's been demonstrated several times by the minister.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

New question, please.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The next question then has to do with a letter you just wrote to me, and I thank you very much. The Timmins 9 fire—I don't know if you remember; last spring, Timmins 9, the smoke was just unbelievable. It came really, really close to Mattagami and Gogama. Mattagami was evacuated through the federal government because they are First Nations. Gogama, the smoke was just horrible. They are a local services board, and the people—again from your ministry—who were there said, "Well, you have to declare evacuation." But if they declare evacuation, they're responsible for paying for that evacuation. There are 200 people that live in Gogama. They do not have a budget to do that kind of stuff, so they will

watch their houses burn down rather than be responsible for paying for the evacuation.

In your letter, you say that those living in communities in unorganized territories would be helped for evacuation expenses by your ministry. But that's not what the people on the ground told the people of Gogama.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I'm not hearing a question. What's your question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The question is, is it people from your ministry who decide if a community needs to be evacuated—if they are non-organized—or is it a local services board who makes that decision?

1600

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please. Thank you.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you for the question. It would not be our ministry who would make that decision. It would be either through MNR or the chief of the board.

M^{me} France Gélinas: By "the chief of the board," you mean the local services board?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Yes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay, so your—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes. In your letter, you say that when an evacuation is required, Ontario works with affected municipalities and emergency management partners to identify needs and coordinate appropriate assistance for evacuees. When you said that, was that your ministry you were talking about in your letter or a different ministry?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: No, that was our ministry.

M^{me} France Gélinas: That was your ministry. How does that work?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to ask my deputy minister to respond.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, your name, please, for the record. Thank you.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: My name is Matthew Pegg. I serve as the Deputy Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response.

Thank you for the question. When emergencies occur, the decision to evacuate a community—those are decisions primarily made by that community. Once the community determines—and if you'll permit me, there are different circumstances. In the case of a First Nation, it is the chief and the leadership team of that First Nation who make the decision that their community is going to evacuate. In the case of municipal and community organizations, it is the emergency management organization in a community or in a municipality who will ultimately make that decision.

Those decisions are informed by a number of sources. They are informed by expertise from the Ministry of Natural Resources and, in the case of municipalities or communities with established emergency services, those decisions are made in collaboration with and based on the expertise and advice provided by the emergency responders locally.

Once the decision to evacuate is made, our team, the field officers you're referring to, are there for a number of

reasons. Number one, they collaborate directly with the community emergency management coordinators, with the local emergency management staff. And one of the principal liaison roles they will play is, they are able to understand what the needs of the community are and feed that in live time back to our Provincial Emergency Operations Centre so that we can best help resource whatever those needs are.

In the case of an evacuation, when the decision is made to evacuate, our Provincial Emergency Operations Centre will then go to work in assisting with and coordinating. There are multiple paths by which that happens. It depends where it is.

A quick example: In the case of a First Nation, when the decision is made by the chief of that First Nation to evacuate, that decision is made by the chief. It is then approved. The funding to support that is approved by Indigenous Services Canada on a federal basis. Once that decision is made, we operate under agreement with Indigenous Services Canada, and then we directly coordinate and manage the evacuation. That includes securing whatever modes of transportation are needed. Often, it's aviation; it can be by road; it can be by boat. We coordinate all of that as well as all of the evacuation hosting and the wraparound supports.

M^{me} France G  linas: How about for local services boards?

Mr. Matthew Pegg: Very same circumstance: When the local services board makes the determination that they are going to evacuate, our field officers are there, and we will begin that support process and work alongside our partners in Ministry of Natural Resources, in the case of a wildfire, for securing and making sure that the resources are in place and the provisions are in place to support the evacuees, including those wraparound supports.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

New question, please.

M^{me} France G  linas: Who pays? Who pays for the buses? Who pays for the accommodations, for all of that?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Is that—sorry—in the case of a First Nation community?

M^{me} France G  linas: No, local services board.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: The local services board.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Do we have a person who can answer that question, please? Thank you.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I think we're going to have to—
Interjection.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: We'll have to get back to you on that one.

M^{me} France G  linas: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): All right. New question—you have four minutes and 42 seconds left. I have MPP Pasma, please, when you're ready. Thank you very much.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you very much for being here, Minister. I'm going to start with asking questions about Ontario Corps. The Canada Day flooding in Ottawa

resulted in more than 7,500 homes being flooded with water and sewage. Many people couldn't live in their homes for weeks. Ottawa residents have spent weeks and months trying to clear out contaminated materials from their homes to make their homes safe to live in again.

One of the roles that Ontario Corps is supposed to play is cleaning up debris. Within days of the flooding in St. Catharines, Rubicon was there, and news stories say very clearly that one of the things that they did was muck out homes, removing furniture, debris, drywall, damaged flooring and addressing mould risk in those homes. Apparently 175 homes were cleaned by Rubicon in St. Catharines.

But none of that ever happened in Ottawa. I spoke to people when I was out on the street in mid-August and late August who were still cleaning out contaminated materials from their homes. Their homes were still not free of water and sewage-contaminated items. This is a serious mould risk. I know, in my own house, we had mould within a week in our basement. This includes seniors with limited mobility, families with young children, people who are working full-time and who had to spend their evenings after work trying to clean their homes out.

You said that Ontario Corps has thousands of volunteers now. You've got 22 partner organizations. Almost half of the funding increase for your ministry this year is for Ontario Corps. The city of Ottawa asked for Ontario Corps to be deployed to Ottawa, but you couldn't find a single volunteer or organization to come to Ottawa and help people in Ottawa clean out their damaged and contaminated homes?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please, thank you.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you for the question. I think the difference here between, unfortunately, the flooding in Ottawa and St. Catharines—my heart goes out to everybody impacted. It sounds like your house was as well. The difference between those two situations was also how the municipality contacted the PEOC. We don't just show up and say, "We're here to clean up." We have to have the request for assistance from the municipality. In the situation in Ottawa, the flooding and the rain happened on July 1. We didn't receive a request for assistance until July 9. In the St. Catharines area, it happened on August 3 and the request came August 5. There is immediate action when we get that request for assistance.

When we did have the request for assistance from Ottawa, we did work with some of our partner organizations. The Salvation Army came in to help procure cleaning supplies for families. There really is that difference. I think municipalities need to understand that.

Now, we have a process in place that when a disaster does happen, I contact the local mayors, the deputy contacts the local CEMCs, just to remind them of the capabilities that we are available to offer to them so that we can have this in a more timely manner so that we're not waiting days or even weeks to be able to support individuals.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

New question, please. Thank you.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Even if the city of Ottawa waited until July 9 to ask for that help, I know that they asked for help with the cleanup. And yet you just said the help that got sent in was the Salvation Army to distribute some kits. There was no help on the ground to clean out these contaminated homes. People were still doing it weeks after July 9. Even if you had sent it in in August, that help would still have been useful to Ottawa.

Why was no help sent to Ottawa, despite the city's request to actually help people clean out their homes and make them safe to live in again?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please, thank you. You have less than one minute left for questions.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: So, yes, we had the Salvation Army, but there were no other requests for support. That was the only Ontario Corps partner that was deployed at that time.

Deputy, do you have anything else to add?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Can I just say, though, those city councillors were calling in individual charities because that's how desperate the city of Ottawa was.

Why was no help sent in for cleanup in Ottawa when St. Catharines apparently qualified for cleanup? Some 7,500 homes needed to be cleaned out. People were cleaning their homes eight weeks later. There was zero help from the province. Why was that?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: It was specifically because of the request that was being made. St. Catharines and Niagara region specifically asked for those types of supports. Ottawa, unfortunately, didn't ask for that and waited quite a bit longer.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: That is not what city councillors or staff are reporting—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much. The time for questions has concluded.

We'll move now to the third party. Questions, please? Thank you.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much for your presentation.

In 2024-25, the ministry budgeted \$63 million and spent only \$38 million, leaving roughly 40% of its emergency budget unspent. In a year of floods and fires and the ice storm and two record wildfire seasons, how much of the 2025-26 estimate was actually spent, and what assurance can the ministry give the committee that the \$66.8 million requested this year will reach communities rather than lapse again?

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The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much, MPP McMahon.

To the question, please, Minister.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you for the question. I'm going to pass that to the deputy. He was going to ask one of our officials to join us.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Yes. Deputy Minister, please invite the staff member up and, for the record, sir,

please identify yourself and, once you're seated, situated and you have done that, please respond to the question from MPP McMahon. Thank you.

Mr. Martin Schlaepfer: Thank you, Chair. Martin Schlaepfer—I'm the chief administrative officer and assistant deputy minister for the ministry.

In 2025-26, our public account actuals were \$276 million, so the vast majority of the funds that were projected at interim were spent in the end.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Supplementary, please. Thank you.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Which specific programs lapsed funds in 2024-25 and 2025-26, and how much was returned to the treasury?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the minister, please, for referral.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Martin, would you like to continue?

Mr. Martin Schlaepfer: Yes, for sure.

In those two years, the main program that was underspent was the Emergency Response Fund, which is a fund that is typically specifically used for one-time circumstances, based on certain emergency situations.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please. Thank you.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So Emergency Management Ontario is the agency the province relies on to coordinate every major disaster, yet this government has never published the staffing levels. How many full-time staff does it have in 2026-27?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the minister, please, for referral, or direct.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: We have 187 FTEs.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: That's 187. How many work in regional field offices?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to pass that to the deputy.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister.

Deputy Minister, to the question, please.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: Thank you. Regional field services staff: There are 28 FTEs deployed in the field across the province.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And are there any positions that are vacant right now?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the minister, please. Thank you.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to pass that to the deputy.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, to the question, please.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: I don't believe so. I have the assistant deputy minister here. I'm happy to bring Tony up.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Please join us at the table, sir, and your name for the record before you respond to the question. Thank you.

Mr. Tony Bavota: I'm Tony Bavota. I'm the assistant deputy minister of the emergency response division.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir. To the question from MPP McMahon.

Mr. Tony Bavota: There are 28 full-time staff assigned to the division; three that are currently being recruited.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And three are being recruited. Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: During the peak of this summer's wildfires, how many staff were on duty in the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre overnight and on weekends?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: That's a very technical question. I'm going to see if the deputy has those very specific numbers.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, to the question, please.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: Thank you. I'm going to start, and I'm going to ask Tony to come back.

There are approximately 40 FTEs that are allocated on a full-time basis into the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre. The normal staffing and deployment model within the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre contemplate full incident management teams staffing on a Monday-to-Friday, daytime basis. There is 24/7, 365 coverage within the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre within what we refer to as the "duty office." So our duty officers are on duty on a 24/7 basis. As an incident escalates and as an incident expands in the demand needs, we will flex our staff and flex our staffing capacity by expanding hours, by managing on overtime and by bringing additional supports.

Tony, you may have more to add.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, sir, please.

Mr. Tony Bavota: Through the Chair: This summer, FIFA ran concurrent to the flood and wildfire season, and for much of the summer we had two incident management teams that were operating within the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: In 2024, the government announced \$110 million over three years for emergency preparedness. Now, two years in, what share of that money has actually been spent, how much is it in these estimates and what measurable improvement in preparedness can the ministry point to?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. To the question, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to ask ADM Martin to come back.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much, Minister.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It's like musical chairs.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): We have your name already, sir. Please, to the question.

Mr. Martin Schlaepfer: Chair, through you, can you repeat the question? I'm just curious about the specific figure.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: In 2024, the government announced \$110 million over three years in emergency preparedness. What share of that money has actually been spent thus far, how much is in the estimates and what measurable improvement in preparedness can this ministry point to?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the minister, please, for referral.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Back to ADM Martin.

Mr. Martin Schlaepfer: Through the Chair: I do not have the specific final spending on that \$110-million announcement.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Will the ministry publish a line-by-line accounting of that \$110 million before the final year of this commitment?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you for the question. That's over three years. It wasn't just for the one year.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: We're two years in, but before we finish the three years—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP McMahon, through me, please.

To the question. Thank you.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: We're two years in. Before the third year is complete, will you publish a line-by-line accountability of where the \$110 million is?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

This year's Emergency Response Fund is just \$9 million, a fraction of what a single ice storm or wildfire season now costs. Is the ministry deliberately under-budgeting for disasters it knows will happen and relying on in-year emergency spending that escapes scrutiny in these estimates?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please, Minister.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: As you've seen, there has been an increase to our budget of 6%. Yes, we overspend based on evacuations, then we are reimbursed through Indigenous Services Canada when it is a First Nation evacuation. So there's an increase to our budget; there's not a cut.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What was the total cost of emergency response across all the ministries in each of the last two years, and how much of it was ever presented to the Legislature in advance?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I do not have that number for the total number of evacuations or emergencies.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Could you get it to me, please?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to ask ADM Martin to come back up and explain that. He's coming back.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Or get it to me later if you don't—do you have it?

Mr. Martin Schlaepfer: Yes, I do.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Can you direct your question to the minister, please? The minister will direct who answers the question.

Please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Martin Schlaepfer: In last year's public accounts, we spent \$227 million on support for evacuees.

Just to clarify your earlier comment about the Emergency Response Fund being \$9 million this year, it's actually \$15 million in our budget.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. I'm going to go to wildfires.

First of all, I received an email back when the wildfires were happening all over. It was from someone from Elite Emergency Management, and they were talking about a huge untapped resource in Alberta and wondering if contract firefighters could be deployed here.

I remember asking this at a briefing and not getting a full answer, but they had 13 fire trucks, one sprinkler trailer and up to 55 firefighters to help us, and apparently, they weren't used. Is there some sort of reason for that, and how can we use them in future?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: That would be a question for the Ministry of Natural Resources. When we're looking at wildland fires, we work on the evacuation side of communities, not on the forest firefighting itself. So that would be a question for that ministry.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. I would hope that you would communicate together to solve that.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please. You have five minutes left for questions.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: We do lots of communication together, but not specifically for that. That would be that ministry.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right.

We had 798 wildfires, as you know; 732,000 hectares burnt. And 12 of the 13 communities evacuated at peak were First Nations, with Collins First Nation wiped off the map at one point.

How many people remain displaced today, and how much in these estimates will be set aside to rebuild destroyed communities and bring the evacuees home?

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The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please. Thank you.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you for the question. I would say virtually all members have been returned to their communities. Some people do stay behind for medical reasons, to be able to do hospital visits while they're here. Some people decide to just stay in the area and not return home. People aren't forced to return once they're able to.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Four years ago, the Auditor General warned that Ontario had no standing contracts with air carriers for emergency evacuations, which left the province negotiating flights in the middle of

a crisis. Were those contracts in place this summer? If not, why is the government still arranging evacuations the same way it was in 2022?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to ask the deputy minister to follow up with that one.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, to the question, please. Thank you.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: We work very closely with our colleagues at Ministry of Natural Resources to secure and ensure that we have access to all of the aviation resources that we require.

In direct response to the question, ma'am, we have direct contracts in place in advance with dedicated air resources available to us for evacuation purposes, managed directly through our colleagues in Ministry of Natural Resources.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I also want to—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Can I add to that too? Sorry. I wanted to add to it that we do a request for assistance from the federal government early on just to be prepared in case we need to ask for their support. That was done this year, and then we did have to reach out, but it's just to help us speed up that process. We have a good working relationship with the federal government.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. Thank you.

How much did the province pay for evacuation flights in 2026, and how does the per-person cost compare with what a standing contract would have cost?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to refer that to the deputy minister.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much. Deputy, to the question, please.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: I'm going to start, and I'm going to ask Martin to come back. We can give you some overarching numbers on the total cost of evacuation supports. It's managed writ large. As you as you correctly pointed out, ma'am, the bulk of the evacuations this year occurred on First Nation. We are the implementation arm for evacuations out of First Nations. It is the funding responsibility of Indigenous Services Canada, so from a provincial standpoint, we operate on a net-zero basis. We incur the expense, we pay those invoices and then it is referred back to Indigenous Services Canada for reimbursement.

The CAO, Martin, can provide the quantum for you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, sir, please.

Mr. Martin Schlaepfer: Yes, and through you, Chair: Last year we spent \$227 million on evacuations. Of that portion, I don't have a specific figure that is tied specifically to the flights. That would include all services that were provided in terms of evacuations, hotel supports, wrap-around supports as well while folks are, you know, outside of their communities.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir, for that response.

New question, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. Thank you.

The Anishinabek Nation's grand council chief said the province failed to deliver promised fire buffers around remote communities. How many remote First Nations and FireSmart buffers or community fire protection plans were completed before this season, and how much is budgeted in 2026-27 to finish the rest before next spring?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please, Minister.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: That's, again, MNR.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

Next question, please. You have 51 seconds.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right, 51 seconds.

Do you agree that for every dollar spent in climate action, there's a \$12 to \$15 savings of cost avoidance?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Point of order.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the point of order.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Point of order: It's out of scope. This ministry does not deal with climate change.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I agree. Thank you.

That concludes your time today.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Do you think—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): There's not any cross debate. Thank you.

Questions from the government, please—MPP Allsopp.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you, Minister, for being here and for your staff being here as well.

Minister, last year you appeared before the committee and informed us about Ontario Corps, a network of partners and skilled volunteers. By now, I'm sure most of you in this room have heard about Ontario Corps. In the time between its creation and now, can you please tell the committee what progress has been made?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you for the great question, MPP Allsopp. I'm proud to give you an update on Ontario Corps.

Launched in 2024 by Premier Doug Ford, Ontario Corps harnesses the goodwill and civic pride of everyday Ontarians to help communities respond to emergencies. Ontario made history by being one of the first in Canada to mobilize a group of partners and volunteers that the province can deploy within 24 to 72 hours to provide on-the-ground assistance to communities before, during and after emergencies. The premise is simple: people coming together to support one another in times of need—neighbours helping neighbours.

Ontario Corps has a single, powerful mission: to unite our province in times of crisis and protect the people who call it home no matter what comes our way. We've attracted volunteers from across the province who will play an important role supporting and helping communities impacted by emergencies. Volunteers are contacted when needed to support emergency response at the community level and will be assigned responsibilities based on their skill level, interest and availability. We now have more than 33,600 registered volunteers with approximately 8,000 of them trained and ready to deploy.

This is what the Ontario spirit looks like. Whether our communities are facing severe floods, storms, wildland fires or any other emergency, we are building a province that is prepared and resilient.

I'd like to spend some time outlining how exactly Ontario Corps helps during emergencies. Through the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre, or the PEOC, as we referred to it here today, the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response is available 24/7, 365 to provide municipalities or First Nations communities with assistance during an emergency. This includes identifying needs and coordinating provincial resources, including potential Ontario Corps deployments. Community emergency management staff can access Ontario Corps by contacting the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response through the PEOC directly.

While Ontario Corps doesn't replace the important role municipalities and First Nations play in local emergency planning and response, it can provide an extra layer of support in times of need. We recognize that the province doesn't have a monopoly on emergency management expertise. That's why we've been working with new organizations as Ontario Corps partners to leverage their expertise, their equipment and personnel. This evolving network includes a broad range of partners that are ready to mobilize and deploy within 24 to 72 hours, depending on the nature and location of the emergency.

The government has invested \$21.5 million in emergency preparedness grants to strengthen the response capabilities of numerous Ontario Corps partners like Attachment and Trauma Treatment Centre for Healing—or ATTCH—Niagara, Feed Ontario, GlobalMedic, Habitat for Humanity, Independent First Nations Alliance, St. John Ambulance and many more. This funding was used to enhance their training in specialized skills and to purchase supplies and equipment to enhance their capabilities so they can be ready to support the province when needed.

Many of our partners have already put their funding to good use. The Salvation Army Canada's newly acquired food truck helped to provide hot meals to impacted residents during last spring's ice storm.

Not all partners require additional capacity funding. Several organizations and associations have volunteered to provide experienced personnel, specialized equipment and professional services to support Ontario Corps deployments. Partners such as Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association are available to be called on during emergencies to leverage their expertise and available construction equipment such as excavators, bulldozers, trucks, snow removal equipment, portable generators and pumps. This equipment could help with flood mitigation, debris cleanup, restoration efforts, transporting supplies and other activities as needed.

We can also call on the CPA Ontario, who will engage its members and regional associations across the province to support the Ontario Corps network. Municipalities have consistently identified the need for individuals with the skill sets of CPAs, including financial planning and risk

management, to assist with emergency response at the local community level.

It's an all-hands-on-deck when emergencies happen to help our communities respond and recover, and we are grateful to our growing roster of 22 Ontario Corps partners for their support during times of need. As our government continues to deliver on its mandate to protect Ontario, we're always identifying new partnerships and opportunities to strengthen our capacity to ensure Ontario is safe, practiced and prepared.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

MPP Pinsonneault, please.

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: Thank you, Minister, for being here, along with your staff. It's been a privilege to be your parliamentary assistant for this time since you've been there.

Watching you grow the team around you has been really nice too. You've really got it going on here. Your hard work and dedication have really grown the portfolio and that is amazing. Watching you grow the Ontario Corps, the volunteers, is right over the top, and I've seen that right from the beginning. You definitely navigated through a very challenging year right across the province through all the different emergencies that you have attended and dealt with.

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So, Minister, thank you for elaborating on the great work the Ontario Corps is doing across the province to help during emergencies. We all know that our province saw some record-breaking emergencies. Can you give us some examples of the work that the volunteers and partners have done during the spring and the wildfire season?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Well, thank you, PA Pinsonneault, and thank you for being part of our incredible team. It has been a pleasure to work with you as well.

It's an unfortunate reality that extreme weather events are on the rise across the globe and Ontario is no exception. I take pride in highlighting the important work that is being done by Ontario Corps partners and volunteers.

So far, Ontario Corps has been tested through several extreme weather events. For example, at the end of last March 2025, one of Ontario's worst ice storms in a decade created dangerous conditions, including power outages, impassable roads and structural damage across many areas of central and eastern Ontario, and as I said, including in my own hometown.

This one storm resulted in 23 municipal declarations of emergency, and the emergency response from this ministry was quick and effective. MEPR field officers and Ontario Corps were deployed almost immediately. And I can tell you, when I showed up at the fire hall on day one, they were all there ready to go.

Ontario Corps partners such as Team Rubicon Canada, GlobalMedic, Ontario Search and Rescue Volunteer Association, the Salvation Army Canada, Feed Ontario and Attachment and Trauma Treatment Centre for Healing Niagara jumped into action. The response from the government was well coordinated, cohesive and effective.

We provided skilled volunteers and equipment to assist with debris removal, hot meals and wellness checks.

The numbers tell the story about the true breadth of this operation: Over 4,100 wellness checks for vulnerable populations were conducted in person or by phone.

More than 2,500 personal hygiene items were distributed. Over 1,100 blankets and pillows were provided. Nine emergency generators were deployed to maintain critical infrastructure in the affected areas. And over 7,500 people visited warming centres and shelters. This was an all-hands-on-deck operation. All told, Ontario Corps partners provided more than 6,000 combined volunteer hours.

During last year's wildland fire season, as Ontario worked successfully to evacuate more than 6,000 residents from northern Ontario, Ontario Corps was there, providing more than 200 backup generators to First Nation communities. Two hundred air purifiers, a dozen air scrubbers and 400 N95 masks were also shipped to affected communities. Personal hygiene supplies and food items were also provided to communities who hosted people displaced by wildland fires.

These are just a few of the examples of the success Ontario Corps has already achieved, and we are excited to continue building on this momentum.

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: Thank you, Minister. You did have a very challenging year. You took it head-on. You did an amazing job. You never know what Mother Nature is going to throw our way, and I guess that's why we get prepared and we practise these things for when they do happen. So, thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please. MPP Darouze. Thank you.

MPP George Darouze: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon, Minister. Thank you very much for you and your team being here this afternoon for this estimate.

I know that there are so many events that happened that you cannot control yourself. That's why we call it an emergency preparedness ministry. We're very happy that you've been doing a great job on the ground. And I'm also pleased to be part of a government that has taken the necessary steps to ensuring that communities across Ontario remain safe, practised and prepared in the event of any emergency.

Prior to the government taking action, Ontario emergency management legislation had not been comprehensively updated in more than 15 years. This left municipalities, First Nation communities and emergency responders navigating increasingly complex emergencies, from flooding to severe storms, without a modern coordinated framework.

Now that the government has passed the Emergency Management Modernization Act, 2025, Minister, can you please provide the committee with more details about this legislation and how it will modernize Ontario's emergency management system across the province?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, and to the question please, Minister.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Well, thank you for the question, MPP Darouze. I'm very proud to say that on December 3, 2025, our government passed the Emergency Management Modernization Act, 2025, that we refer to as EMMA, which amended the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. This reflects the first comprehensive update to Ontario's emergency management legislative framework in more than 15 years.

This legislation was informed by feedback from partners, including municipalities, First Nation communities, Indigenous service organizations and emergency management organizations; best practices in emergency management; and lessons learned from past experiences. It enables a more effective, coordinated and comprehensive approach to emergency management across the province.

EMMA modernizes Ontario's emergency management legislative framework to ensure that Ontario is prepared before, during and after emergencies. It strengthens provincial leadership, increases local flexibility, reduces regulatory burden and clarifies the role of municipalities and the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response. This means that municipalities and First Nation communities now have a single, clear point of contact for requests to provincial assistance—one organization that works across ministries, partners and sectors to coordinate the efficient, effective deployment of resources and personnel when communities need them most—because during times of crisis, the last thing Ontarians need is confusion about where to turn.

This means that during emergencies, the province can quickly provide support to communities with critical resources such as flood mitigation equipment, pumps, debris removal, wellness checks, shelter supports and the delivery of important supplies. It also means that communities can request assistance without unnecessary barriers, ensuring support is timely, practical and tailored to the unique needs of each community.

The act also aims to enhance clarity and accountability by clearly defining roles and responsibilities across the emergency management system, including processes around municipal emergency declarations and requests for assistance.

In addition, the legislation formally establishes Ontario Corps as a key provincial resource and capability. Ontario Corps brings together trained volunteers, partners, organizations and specialized equipment that can be deployed rapidly to support communities on the ground, whether it's assisting with flood response, supporting evacuations or helping communities recover after an event.

We all know that emergency management starts at the local level, but it cannot end there. That is why this legislation strengthens the connection between local response and provincial coordination, ensuring that no community is left to face emergencies alone.

In 2025, Ontario saw 107 significant incidents, 50 local emergency declarations and 204 staff deployments for a total of 1,068 deployment days. In only the first eight months of 2026, we've had 86 significant incidents, 45 community emergency declarations and 170 staff deploy-

ments, totalling 981 deployment days. But these numbers don't tell the whole story. While 2025 was a record-breaking year, 2026 has broken records again. Emergencies have continued to become more complex.

Since January 8, 2026, the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre has continuously been engaged to coordinate the provincial response to sustained, complex and concurrent emergencies. This means staff being deployed for longer, partnerships and resources being leveraged in new ways and innovative solutions being implemented to help protect Ontarians.

This is the reality of the growing demands on our emergency management system, and it underscores the need for a modernized framework. That is exactly why this legislation delivers. It represents a clear, coordinated and forward-looking approach that reflects best practices, lessons learned and the input of municipalities, First Nation partners and emergency management partners across Ontario. Most importantly, it ensures that our province is safe, practised and prepared now and into the future.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much, Minister. That concludes the time for government questions for this round.

We'll now move over to the official opposition. MPP Pasma, when you're ready. Thank you.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I want to return, Minister, to the deployment of Ontario Corps. You said that the city of Ottawa never asked for support with cleanup. That's not what I've heard from city councillors. That is not the reason that I heard from city councillors that the province gave to them why no support with cleanup was ever sent.

But let's just say, for argument's sake, no ask came from Ottawa. Why does the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre need an official ask to send in help? If the whole point of having Ontario Corps is that you have thousands of volunteers—in this case, more than tens of thousands of volunteers—ready to spring into action in 24 to 48 hours' notice, why wouldn't you just mobilize them as soon as the emergency happens? Why do you have to wait for the red tape of a municipality asking when people are desperate for immediate help?

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The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please, Minister. Thank you.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you for the question, MPP Pasma. Before I pass it to my deputy, I'm going to answer a part of that.

There has to be a request for assistance. We don't just show up at the door. First of all, volunteers showing up is uncoordinated; it would be a mass chaos. We don't know what they're showing up for, what the specific needs are.

When there's a request made and we can put that request out to our Ontario Corps volunteers—for example, I'll back it up to the flooding that happened in Minden in the spring. We put out an email, and within three hours, we had 400 people who called. They were interested in helping, to be deployed.

So we have to work with the local community to understand what those needs are before we just randomly send

volunteers into a situation that could be unsafe. These are volunteers. Think of it: neighbours helping neighbours. Do you send your neighbour into an unsafe situation?

But I'll pass it to Deputy Pegg, just to answer a little bit more then, specifically.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Did you make an offer to the city of Ottawa that you would send in help to clean up?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Absolutely. So when I called—

Ms. Chandra Pasma: And your argument is that the city of Ottawa said, "No, we do not need help with cleanup"?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I contacted the mayor immediately—as did the Premier, as did Minister Flack—to ensure that they were well aware of the supports that our ministry can offer.

But it's working with the CEMCs, the community emergency management coordinators—I'm going to ask Deputy Pegg to talk further about that, so we can better understand.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy, please. Thank you.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: The circumstance that you're drawing, ma'am, draws—we need to understand the way that every single emergency incident is managed in the province, and this is—

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Chair, I'm going to reclaim my time because I'm not asking about how every single emergency is managed in the province; I'm asking why no offer came from the province of Ontario to the city of Ottawa. Even if you didn't know in the 48 hours afterwards that there were so many people who were affected, who needed help for cleanup, that need was very clear in the weeks that followed. That need was very clear in August.

I can tell you, for the people in my riding, in Crystal Beach and Qualicum, who were sitting in contaminated homes seven weeks later, it is no consolation to hear from the provincial government, "We didn't help because we weren't asked."

So, did you ever offer the city of Ottawa that you could send in help with cleanup?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you for the question. Absolutely. I reached out to the mayor myself. I spoke with him. The Premier reached out to the mayor and Minister Flack talked to him about the financial supports available.

The request has to come from the municipality. Each municipality has their own emergency management plan. They reach out to us when they have reached that capacity and need additional support.

We don't just show up and say, "We're here to help." We have to have that request from the municipality, and from there, then we would deploy our field officers who would then help assess the situation to find out what the needs of the community are going to be, whether it is debris cleanup in basements, whether it's cleaning up trees, flood barriers, whatever it may be. There has to be that coordination. We can't just randomly send people out there or people just show up at the doors.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Two follow-up questions from that: Did you ever reach out after—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP Pasma, can I get your attention just for a moment, please? Thank you.

I mentioned at the beginning that I was willing to do what you just did: reclaim your time. But the context of that was for you to ask a new question and a question tied to the estimates, right? Your question has been put twice. It has been answered twice. I want to hear a new question, please.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Okay, I'll ask a new question, but I will disagree that my question was answered.

I'm going to move on to flood kits. This falls under funding for supplies and equipment from your ministry, which has a budget of \$407,000 for equipment. You did say that the city of Ottawa asked for supplies.

So, 23 days after Ottawa residents had their homes filled with water and sewage, your government did send flood kits to Ottawa residents, supposedly to assist with cleanup. And I'm going to read you a list of what the kits contained: a bucket, a pair of gloves, a broom, a couple of brushes, a squeegee, one mop, three garbage bags, a couple of sponges, one face mask and one bottle of disinfectant.

Residents were cleaning up after multiple feet of water and sewage in their homes. Some people had their entire basements filled. They're displaced from their homes for weeks. Their lawns and garbage dumpsters were filled with garbage. I don't know who on earth thought it was a bright idea to send in one bucket and three garbage bags, but I can tell you that that was completely insufficient three weeks after the flooding when people were dealing with mould and other hazards in their homes.

I can tell you personally, we had two feet of sewage in the house. It was four weeks for my husband, my in-laws, my 13-year-old twins and a restoration company to have our home clean and sanitized—multiple garbage dumpsters. So, I'm not sure you understand what a slap in the face this was to Ottawa residents.

My question is, how much money did your ministry spend on these kits that got sent to Ottawa?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to ask the deputy if he has that number and maybe to talk about the deployment of the supports.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy, to the question while you're waiting for your colleague to join you, please. I think you can speak to the deployment part, please.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: I can. Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're searching for the specific number.

I'll be very succinct: What you're describing is a standard cleaning kit. Those are deployed. They are assembled cleaning kits. They are designed to assist.

Ontario Corps does not and will not ever replace the responsibilities of private homeowner insurance and the process that happens there, and Ontario Corps will never be self-deployed. I can tell you, as a more than 30-year

emergency responder and incident commander, the self-deployment of resources into an area is dangerous. Self-deploying absent of the request for specific assistance immediately overwhelms an incident command system. That's why we don't do it. When the request for assistance comes in, the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre very carefully considers specifically what is being asked. We deliver to the very best of our capability and the best of our ability to meet those needs, to match that demand and that request with resources available through our partner network and Ontario Corps, which is precisely what happened in response to the request received from the city of Ottawa.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: And I can tell you, as someone who represents thousands of people who were affected by this flooding, your standard flood kits are not sufficient for dealing with flooding.

You were speaking about assessments on the ground. Were people from the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre ever deployed to Ottawa to make assessments about what was needed on the ground?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the minister, please, first, for a referral.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to refer that to the deputy.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy, please, to the question. Thank you.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: In accordance with our normal operating procedure, there is direct contact between deployed field officers that work, in this case, with the community emergency management coordinator in the city of Ottawa. Emergency response in any municipality is the responsibility of the municipality first. Our team, our field officers, respond. They connect with the community emergency management coordinator. There is a direct point of liaison. One of their functions there is to be able to understand what that community needs, and then we can go to work to support and add the resources.

But we do not, our team does not and Ontario Corps does not replace or take over for a municipal response. We do not assume command of an incident. We do not take action that the municipality is not taking. We support the emergency response efforts that are being managed by the community, by whomever the incident commander may be. Our role is to support, not to take over, not to supersede.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

MPP Pasma asked for a figure as part of her earlier question. Through you, Minister, is that figure available?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Yes, sorry. ADM Martin Schlaepfer is joining us.

Mr. Martin Schlaepfer: Through you, Chair: These kits are partner-provided, so we don't have a specific figure for how much it costs us because we didn't pay for them.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): All right, thank you for responding to that.

New question, please. Thank you.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Could you provide in writing, then, what was provided to the partner to cover those kits?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, Minister, through you.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Sorry, can you repeat the question?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Could you provide in writing, then, to the committee how much funding was provided to that partner to provide the kits?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Specifically, for the kits, we wouldn't—we fund them—for other expenses, so I don't have specifically what the expense of the kits would be.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Okay. Do you have a quantity that got sent to Ottawa?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: We do. It was 300 of the kits, and there were also 500 air scrubbers sent as well.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: So 300 kits for 7,500 homes flooded? Okay. Thank you.

To come back to this question of assessments on the ground: I know that city staff requested that ministry officials attend, that ministry officials participate in the community meetings with the public. Minister, I extended multiple personal invitations to you to come to Ottawa, to see the damage first-hand, to speak to residents who had experienced the flooding and hear their stories.

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You've got a travel and communication budget in this year's estimates of \$872,300 and yet no one ever came. Why, with a budget of nearly a million dollars, does Ottawa not merit somebody coming to see and experience what we have gone through?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I was in direct contact with the mayor, as were, as I said, the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We spoke. The CEMC was in contact with the PEOC, so we had ongoing discussions.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: No phone call can replace the experience of speaking with residents first-hand, Minister. You've got a budget of \$800,000, and you wouldn't even come for a day. You were in St. Catharines within five days of the flooding—multiple requests and invitations to come to Ottawa, and you couldn't come once.

Chair, I'm going to turn it over to MPP Bourgouin.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have three minutes left. MPP Bourgouin, please.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for being with us today.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Oh, a pleasure.

My questions are for forest fires. I thank the deputy minister, because you did answer some of my questions in the process. But then explain to me what happened to Collins and Whitesand. Why didn't they get evacuated? They had to self-evacuate. Can you explain that to me? What happened?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I will have the deputy refer to that in general, but it is a responsibility of Ministry of Natural

Resources. So he can speak a little bit to our side of things with that—

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: But your ministry is called emergency response and prevention. Yet we're talking about evacuees that were—we've seen the devastation. I've never seen fires like this, honestly—record fires. It was scary, just to see people evacuate by boats, never mind the train.

I want to know what happened. Where did we drop the ball? Because you work closely with MNR. You work closely because you work together; you have to. So who dropped the ball?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Well, thank you for the question. I agree; it was a very scary situation, and fortunately everybody was able to be evacuated. We supported with an evacuation centre in Thunder Bay that was also supported by Ontario Corps for the evacuees to join.

I'll ask the deputy to talk a little bit about—I know you said that's our ministry name, but yes, our response is not the actual fire but the responding of the evacuation. So I'll ask the deputy to—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, to the first question.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: Sir, I'll echo your comments. What we've observed this summer in wildfire behaviour was terrifying, quite frankly.

It would be inappropriate of me to try to provide an explanation that falls under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Natural Resources, but I will say this: We work in direct and daily coordination. All the way through the wildfire emergencies, there was not a day when our two teams were not directly connected.

But our scope of responsibility and what we are directly responsible for is the conduct of evacuations. When the decision is made to evacuate, we mobilized the evacuation effort. That is our responsibility.

With respect to your question about the origin of that fire, the spread and what they encountered, I would have to defer, sir, to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

You have one minute left for your question.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: When did your ministry find out that they were evacuating?

Mr. Matthew Pegg: I don't know that I have a date here.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, through the minister, please.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: They were self-evacuating, I should say.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Yes. They were self-evacuated.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: When did you find out?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'll ask the deputy.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, please.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: Mr. Chair, I don't know that I have dates with me for that, sir.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): All right, sir.

New question, please.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Where can we get these dates? If you were working with MNR, you knew that they were

self-evacuating. Your ministry is part of the evacuation process, so you knew this. Did you offer to help them to evacuate? Since you knew they were evacuating—ministry knew, MNR knew, your ministry knew. Did you offer to send them boats? Did you offer planes? Did you offer any help?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Well, at that time, I think it was happening quite quickly. We set up an evacuation centre in Thunder Bay for those residents—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for that response. Your time has elapsed.

We now go to the third party, please. MPP—I can't read that from here—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: McMahon.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): McMahon. Sorry; it's on an angle.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes. I'd think you'd know it by now, but anyway, thank you.

So, Minister, you mentioned something at the beginning about translation of your materials in several different languages. Do you have the number? How many languages?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Twenty-four languages.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Twenty-four? Okay. Thank you.

Okay, I'm going to ask about flooding right now. We know it's Ontario's most frequent and costliest public emergency, and we know basement floods cost around \$43,000, minimum. Probably people in this room have had a basement flood, and it's not only a financial burden; it's like a mental, physical burden as well. Yet this ministry's budget doesn't identify a single line dedicated to flood preparedness.

How much of the \$66.8 million is actually directed to flood risk in 2026-27?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please. Thank you.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: There are a couple of answers here. You talk about preparation for flooding. You could look to the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant that we provide to municipalities. Based on what their needs are, some municipalities are more likely to deal with spring flooding, or even, in this situation this summer, with summertime flooding. There could be flood mitigation equipment in those cases.

That grant I mentioned earlier was \$50,000. We have so far worked with 342 municipalities. So, some may have used that money for flood mitigation, some may have used it for others.

Deputy, did you have anything else? Okay, that's the information we have.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay, and how many declared or provincially supported flood emergencies has the ministry responded to in the last two years?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: We responded to 12 declarations of emergency and 24 requests for assistance due to flooding.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay.

So, right now, we're merging—or you're merging, because I disagree—the 36 conservation authorities into nine

regional bodies, and the agencies that issue flood warnings are in upheaval. What specific safeguards has this ministry put in place for 2026-27 so a warning is not delayed or missed during the transition, and who is accountable for that warning?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: That would be Ministry of the Environment; that's not within our purview. But as I said, the work that is being done through municipalities—those that may deal with flooding have used that funding for flood mitigation efforts in their communities.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP McMahon, can you please make sure that the questions that you're putting are within the scope of the estimates of this ministry? There have been two or three questions just—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, and I think it's confusing—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I'm speaking now. You—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sure.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I'm speaking now, please.

So we've already had questions that have strayed into natural resources, twice. We've had a question now stray into the Ministry of the Environment. You're outside the scope of the estimates.

Question, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you. I would argue the scope is emergency preparedness and entails all three of those. So maybe in the future all three come here at once. I'll tell you, the average Ontarian doesn't see them in silos.

All right, let's go with—in 2022, the Auditor General found that 16 of the 25 districts had not updated the hazard and risk assessment since 2018 and Ontario has significantly lagged behind provinces in flood mapping. Four years later, how many assessments are current and how many communities are still relying on flood maps that are decades old?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, please, to the question.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Point of order: This is, again, under MNR. It's again not within the scope of estimates.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I agree.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I agree, too.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, flooding is an emergency, but okay.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: So, we deal with the impacts of a flood, not necessarily the flood mitigation, as you're referring to. That would be either with natural resources or Ministry of the Environment.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right. Thank you.

There is a terrific private member's bill before the Legislature called Fewer Floods, Safer Ontario Act which proposes measures and costs almost nothing in preparedness. It's a flood preparedness website, an annual awareness week and flood information going out in property tax bills. Do you agree that that is a simple measure for flood education and mitigation?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Again, that is with MNR, Ministry of Natural Resources.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Oh my gosh, okay. 1700

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. New question, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right. When St. Catharines was flooded twice in one week, the province's response was to offer the Ontario Corps volunteers. How many Ontario Corps volunteers were deployed to flooded communities this summer? What did they do, and what did it cost?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: So, specifically to Niagara region: The city of St. Catharines had a request for assistance on July 29 and declared an emergency on August 3. As part of the efforts from Ontario Corps, we had:

—Team Rubicon and the Salvation Army were engaged to procure and supply the dehumidifiers and cleaning kits;

—ATTCH Niagara, one of our partners, also provided virtual and in-person mental health supports; and

—Ontario Corps volunteers assisted with call centres and wellness checks.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister, for that response.

New question, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Climate experts warn that rainfall like this summer's is becoming more frequent—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Point of order, please.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Again, this question refers to climate change, which is not under the purview of this ministry and not a question for—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What about provincial hazard identification?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I agree. It's outside of the scope of estimates.

New question, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Will you answer a question about provincial Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment and when it was last updated?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I will refer that to the deputy minister.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, please, to the question.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: I'm very happy to inform that we have recently released an updated and new—it's called a HIRA—Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment tool. A new tool has been released. It is provided to municipalities and community emergency management coordinators and provides the opportunity, on an updated and accurate basis, for municipalities to identify their risk, to score and understand those risks, and then, as a tool, it gives them the ability or provides assistance to them in creating not only their own HIRAs but their emergency response plans against those risks.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir, for that response.

New question, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. So do you now rank extreme rainfall and the urban flooding as a top provincial emergency risk?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Yes, flooding would be considered one of our top risks.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

Are you prepared to answer questions about extreme heat?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Depending on where you go with it though, because we respond to part of that, but—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm telling you, Ontarians will not be happy about this. But we know that the difference with flooding and heat waves is fatalities. We know the heat dome in BC and the deaths there. There is modelling for a heat dome effect in southern Ontario at some point, and we had better be prepared.

We know they kill more Canadians than any other natural disaster. Which ministry is responsible for a province-wide heat emergency, and how much of the ministry's 2026-27 budget is dedicated to it?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, to the question please. Thank you.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: For heat emergencies, we would deal with the subsequent results of—I think to things like helping a community with a cooling centre, which you see happen quite frequently in the summer. That's something that we could work with the municipality to deploy Ontario Corps in that situation. Sometimes, during extreme heat events, you can also deal with power outages, so we would also help in those sorts of situations. If there were maybe backup generators needed to be brought in—any kind of our equipment that could be deployed.

Deputy, do you have anything to add to that?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, please, to the question.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have ADM Lisa Priest here. If I can ask Lisa to come up, I'll just start.

I'm very pleased to advise that there was a provincial priority exercise that was conducted and run here in Ontario in 2024. The subject matter for that provincial priority exercise was in fact a heat wave. There were a number of municipalities and ministries involved. Lisa will be happy to explain.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, and welcome to the committee. If you could, just please share your name for Hansard before you respond.

Ms. Lisa Priest: My name is Lisa Priest. I'm assistant deputy minister of emergency preparedness.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. To the question, please.

Ms. Lisa Priest: Ontario has done a lot of work on heat waves in terms of trying to prepare people. We had a provincial priority exercise—six municipalities and 12

ministries involved, and also non-governmental agencies. The purpose of it is really to build that interconnectedness, making sure you have those relationships and those friendships before you need them.

We've really focused as well on our public education materials that, as you heard, we have in many different languages—up to 24 for some of them. Some of them are also downloadable online. We make sure that whenever we go to conferences and public education events we give those out. A lot of them are targeted for different audiences and in different languages, in particular for seniors.

Heat waves were seen as such a critical threat that we exercised it provincially. We only do those provincial priority exercises every two years, so that was critical that that was selected for that time.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Could you explain to me what your educational flyer looks like? What does it say in there? What does it cover?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the minister for referral, please. Thank you.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to refer to the ADM, but then I actually want to come back to the deputy to talk about another heat wave event that we were a part of.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the ADM to begin, please.

Ms. Lisa Priest: Excellent. Thank you for your question.

The public education material really tells the individual living in their home or apartment or wherever they are, basically, tips on how to protect themselves, about staying out of the heat. They're simple things, like maybe not using the oven on a really hot day, trying not to have the burners on—really practical things you can do to help yourself—and not stressing yourself in terms of staying out too long. They're really practical things that are reminders for people.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

Minister?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Can I bring that back to the deputy minister as well to talk about the work that was done in preparation for FIFA? We had a heat exercise as well.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that.

Deputy Minister, please. Thank you.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: Two key points for committee: First, in Ontario, we have what is known as the Severe Weather Emergency Response Plan. That is an all-hazards weather plan that integrates in and sets up the opportunity for us to leverage our Ontario Incident Management System in response to severe weather. Certainly, heat emergencies are a component of that Severe Weather Emergency Response Plan.

Secondly, as the minister indicated, during our planning efforts in response to FIFA 2026, one of the significant planning efforts that was undertaken in collaboration with the city of Toronto was in fact a heat emergency. That resulted in cross-ministerial exercises that were conducted here in Ontario as well as multi-jurisdictional and cross-

jurisdictional planning exercises that included external partners, notably the city of Toronto.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for that response.

MPP McMahon, you've got one minute and 44 seconds. Thank you.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Back to the cooling centres—can I ask about that? In addition to your backup generators, are you working on education, location hunting and helping municipalities with creating more cooling centres? Also, are you looking at innovative ideas in addition to that, like swimmable cities, teaching people about water access, and tree planting and maintenance for cooling measures?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'll just talk about the cooling centres. It would be at the request of the municipality, and from there, we could then help deploy Ontario Corps volunteers to work at a cooling centre in that situation.

I'm going to ask the deputy minister to continue.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister.

Deputy, you've got 43 seconds, sir, to respond. Thank you.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: Every municipality in the province of Ontario is required to produce and maintain an emergency response plan in accordance with and in response to their hazards. Those plans appropriately consider things like emergency cooling centres in response to heat emergencies, and the reference may be made to the cities. Specifically in the city context, those planning exercises are predominantly the responsibility of the emergency management responsibilities within the community.

As the minister indicated, in the event of a major emergency, if something were to happen, supports and assistance can be requested through our ministry, and we can deploy additional resources through Ontario Corps.

1710

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Deputy Minister. That concludes the time for the third party.

We're on to the government. MPP Gualtieri, please.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Good afternoon, Minister, and good afternoon to your capable staff and your approach to emergency management.

Minister, this government has taken the necessary steps to ensure Ontario remains safe, practised and prepared. I understand that late last year, your ministry announced the exciting new steps to build the province's new emergency preparedness and response headquarters. Can you please share with the committee why the new headquarters is a pivotal part of the plan to modernize emergency management in Ontario?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for that question.

Minister, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to MPP Gualtieri for the question.

Ontario's approach to emergency management must meet the challenges of a rapidly changing and increasingly complex risk environment. As emergencies continue to grow in both frequency and intensity, it is clear that

Ontario needs new tools to prepare for and respond to all types of emergencies.

A key part of that is ensuring we have the right infrastructure in place, and that is why a new purpose-built headquarters is required. The new headquarters will bring together critical functions to improve coordination and enable faster decision-making during emergencies while having the added advantage of reducing the use of leased office space. It will ensure continuity of operations and strengthen Ontario's ability to respond effectively to a wide range of hazards. The facility will be designed to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year and will be built to withstand all types of hazards, purposely built to post-disaster standards. To support this work, the ministry has been consulting with stakeholders, industry experts and Ontario Corps partners to inform the design and construction.

The new headquarters will also serve as the central hub and future home of Ontario Corps. Ontario Corps is a province-wide network of skilled professionals and trained volunteers who can be mobilized quickly to support communities during emergencies. The new facility will provide the space and infrastructure needed to coordinate, train and deploy this network effectively.

More broadly, the new headquarters is a scalable facility that will support a wide range of users and purposes. It will serve ministry staff, including front-line staff who are responsible for coordinating the provincial emergency response and supporting communities impacted by emergencies. It will also support government partners who play a critical role in emergency management and provide space for emergency management training programs and participants.

This facility will include a new state-of-the-art Provincial Emergency Operations Centre, which will have 25% more capacity than the current location and which will leverage the latest technologies. There will be dedicated space allocations for partner ministries, agencies, emergency response organizations and Ontario Corps partners, and the new facility will bring the full Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response team together under one roof. The headquarters will be strategically located on unused government-owned land near Toronto Pearson International Airport and major transportation routes including Highways 400, 401 and 409. This allows for rapid deployment of personnel and resources across the province.

Ultimately, this new headquarters is a necessary step to strengthen and modernize Ontario's emergency management system. It will enhance integration across emergency management areas, improve operational efficiency and future-proof the province's response capabilities.

I thank you for your question.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question. MPP Sarrazin.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: I'm really looking forward to going to visit that centre.

Minister, for the fourth year in a row, the government has invited submissions for the Community Emergency

Preparedness Grant, which is a critical source of funding for communities across Ontario to help them prepare, plan, mitigate, respond or recover for any emergency. Over the past three years, I believe 342 communities have received critical support for their emergency preparedness.

With more on the way, can you please tell us about this program and how it boosts emergency preparedness and response across Ontario? I would say, I was really happy to join you in receiving one of these grants in my riding—or maybe a couple. I want to hear more about it.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you, MPP Sarrazin, for the question. It was a privilege to join you in your riding, as I have in many ridings with municipalities under 100,000.

As you said, so far we have worked with 342 municipalities who have received that funding and more to come as our next round is launched. So I'm pleased to speak about the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant, or CEPG, and the important role this program is playing in helping communities across Ontario strengthen their emergency readiness and resilience.

For the fourth consecutive year, our government has opened applications for CEPG because we know communities across Ontario are facing more frequent and more severe emergencies, whether it's flooding, like we've talked about today, ice storms, wildland fires, prolonged power outages or other extreme weather events. These emergencies place real pressures on municipalities, Indigenous communities, local responders and community organizations.

CEPG was created to help address those challenges by providing practical, targeted funding that communities can use to strengthen local emergency preparedness before disasters happen. This is an important point. Emergency preparedness is not something that begins during a crisis. It requires planning, coordination, training, equipment and investments ahead of time, and this is exactly what this program supports.

Through CEPG, our ministry provides grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 to support front-line emergency preparedness needs identified directly by the communities themselves. This includes investments in things like generators, radios, drones, water pumps, emergency trailers, communications equipment, chainsaws, sandbagging machines and emergency shelter supplies. The program also supports emergency management training exercises, planning services and public awareness initiatives.

Importantly, this funding is targeted towards communities that often face the greatest challenges responding to emergencies, including small and medium-sized municipalities with populations under 100,000 people, Indigenous communities and organizations, local services boards and fire services in territories without municipal organizations. Funding decisions are based on community-identified risks and reviewed through a competitive application process to ensure that projects deliver meaningful preparedness outcomes, and the demand for CEPG demonstrates how valuable the program is to communities across this province.

In the first round of funding, 113 recipients received support following more than 400 applications. In round 2, 114 recipients received funding through more than 370 applications. And, in round 3, 115 successful recipients received funding from more than 219 applications. Altogether, 342 recipients have received a combined \$15 million through CEPG. Funding has been awarded to 263 municipalities, 37 First Nation communities, 17 Indigenous organizations, nine local services boards and 16 non-governmental organizations.

These investments are delivering measurable and practical results, and, from a financial perspective, investments in preparedness help reduce costs and disruptions during emergencies. Helping communities strengthen local readiness before disasters occur can reduce recovery costs, improve response times and help protect critical infrastructure and public safety. This is about ensuring our communities have the resources they need in place before an emergency happens.

Over the past year, I've had the opportunity to visit many of the grant recipients and see first-hand how this funding is being used. Through the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant, our government is making targeted, practical investments that help municipalities and First Nation communities respond to real and immediate risks. For example, in the Peterborough–Kawartha region, funding supported upgraded emergency communications and backup power following lessons learned from the March 2025 ice storm, ensuring communications remain connected and shelters stay open during outages. In Northumberland-Peterborough, the CEPG Grant funding helped municipalities and Hiawatha First Nation acquire generators, drones and emergency kits and also supported training and public education to strengthen local readiness. And in the county of Brant, funding for a sandbagging machine and river-level-monitoring equipment is directly improving flood response capacity.

These examples demonstrate how CEPG delivers flexible, locally driven solutions that improve preparedness, protect residents and support first responders when emergencies occur.

One of the strengths of CEPG is that it supports both equipment and training, because effective emergency management depends on both. Having the right equipment matters but so does ensuring emergency personnel and local officials are properly trained and prepared to respond under pressure. That is why the program also supports emergency exercises, training initiatives and preparedness planning activities that strengthen local long-term capacity.

1720

We have all seen how important emergency preparedness has become. As this past summer has shown us, we are unfortunately in a time of more frequent climate-related emergencies such as flooding and wildland fires. The wildland fire seasons continue to affect communities across Canada, forcing evacuations and placing tremendous pressure on emergency response systems. Flooding and extreme weather events are affecting communities

more frequently and with greater intensity. These realities reinforce why investments in emergency preparedness are so important.

Our government created a stand-alone ministry dedicated to emergency preparedness and response because we recognize that protecting Ontario requires strong coordination, strong partnerships and proactive planning.

Our vision is clear: to build a safe, practised and prepared Ontario. My ministry is delivering on that vision by ensuring that municipalities, Indigenous communities, emergency responders and local organizations have the right tools, the training and resources they need to respond effectively during emergencies.

CEPG is helping communities become more resilient, more prepared and better equipped to protect residents when emergencies occur. This is practical, front-line support that communities have told us that they need. For the fourth consecutive year, our government is proud to continue supporting communities across Ontario through investments that strengthen emergency preparedness, improve local response capabilities and help keep Ontarians and First Nations safe.

I was pleased to visit the township of Adjala-Tosorontio in August to announce how our government is expanding local support for emergency readiness by launching a fourth round of applications for the CEPG. This township received a \$50,000 grant as part of our third round. And while I was there I was able to see first-hand how the grant strengthened the fire department's resources. With the funding, they were able to purchase two portable pumps, a wildland forestry hose, chainsaws, portable radios and other equipment, which they had actually already used in their community. This is critical equipment that can be put towards protecting the people and places of Ontario.

Here are a few other examples of communities across the province which received the grant and the impact they had on bolstering their emergency preparedness: Northumberland county received \$50,000 to purchase generators and supportive equipment for the county works yard.

Hiawatha First Nation also received just over \$34,000 to purchase generators and emergency kits. Funding was also used to create public education materials and conduct emergency management training and exercises to better prepare for emergencies.

Additionally, North Kawartha received \$50,000 to modernize emergency communications and operations, including radios, upgraded systems, a backup generator and chainsaws to support faster, safer disaster response.

This additional \$5 million we're investing through this fourth round brings the total investment in the CEPG to \$20 million over four years. That's \$20 million being invested in local emergency preparedness and response.

Applications for the fourth round are being accepted until tomorrow, October 7, after which my ministry will undertake a rigorous review process and select the recipients in due course.

I'm very proud to see how this grant is making a difference in our communities, as I've had the opportunity to see in many of your communities and, after the

municipal election, will continue to get out there to see some of the other communities as well.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister.

We have one minute and six seconds for a quick question from the government, please. Yes, MPP Pinsonneault.

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: I'm not sure that I have enough time here—but my question on municipal engagements: We know the emergency management landscape is rapidly evolving as we face new challenges like cyber threats and extreme weather events. I'm excited to see the work that your ministry is doing to ensure that we evolve to meet the challenges of tomorrow. We want to have the right tools, partnerships and resources in place to hit the ground running when an emergency strikes.

Can you please share with the committee how the ministry is supporting municipalities across the province to deliver critical local services and build strong, resilient communities?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Well, thank you for the question, to my PA. I think I only have a couple of seconds left.

I think it's really important to recognize that the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act had not been updated in 15 years, so ensuring that we were working to update this legislation—the Emergency Management Modernization Act—is so important. It ensures that this ministry is the one-window approach for emergencies across the province, so it really helps to reduce that red tape and for municipalities to—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister. That concludes the time that is available to answer the question.

We'll now move to the official opposition. MPP Bourgouin, please, when you're ready, sir.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I want to go back to my question. Once you knew that Collins and Whitesand were evacuating, did you send any help—assistance, boats, planes—to help them evacuate?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to refer that to the deputy minister.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, can you respond to that question and broaden your response to provide the context, please?

Mr. Matthew Pegg: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In the case of Collins, as you referenced before, sir, that community self-evacuated. Self-evacuations are normal. They are important, and it is always the first line of defence in the face of an imminent risk. That is true anywhere, whether it is a remote community, whether it is an urban centre, whether it's in this room. If a fire broke out in this room, we have a—

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Do you mind, Chair? I'm just reclaiming a bit.

I'm aware of self-evacuation. I just want to know, was there any help sent to assist them? Because we know the situation was completely different than self-evacuation for water contamination. So was there any help sent, yes or no?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: As the deputy minister said, they self-evacuated.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: So no help was sent?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: There was no help sent.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Okay. What date and time did your ministry first become aware that a wildfire posed a potential threat to Collins and Whitesand?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Point of order, please.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Point of order: It's out of scope, and it has nothing to do with the estimates.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I agree.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I asked for the ministry.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): It's out of scope here. We're talking about another ministry. We're talking—

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: No, we're not.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Listen to me.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Okay, so I'll ask another question.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I just ruled on it.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Oh, I didn't know you ruled—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Another question, please. Thank you.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Minister, I'm going to ask another question, then. What date did your ministry first communicate directly with the community regarding the threat? Did you communicate at all with both Collins and Whitesand regarding the threat of wildfire?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to refer that to the deputy minister, but as you said, they were self-evacuated, so we were finding out in real time, as everyone else was. But I'll ask the deputy to further respond.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy, can you respond to the question, please?

Mr. Matthew Pegg: Mr. Chair, again, I'm going back in time, but the information I have in front of me indicates a number of points of contact with Collins and a significant number of other First Nations on a daily basis between July 13 and July 16.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: July 15 and July 16?

Mr. Matthew Pegg: Between July 13 and July 16, there were a number of points of contact.

I'll echo; my recollection is as the minister described. Collins self-evacuated. We first had contact with Collins following that self-evacuation.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much.

New question, please.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Did at any time Collins or Whitesand request assistance for evacuation through PEOC or your ministry?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'll refer that to the deputy minister.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, please.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: To my knowledge, no. Collins was self-evacuated. We were first contacted while that self-evacuation was under way.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

New question, please.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: So why were the chiefs saying that they were in communication, but they never got any response or help from any ministry?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the minister, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I mean, we were in contact with them after the self-evacuation, and as I said, we set up an evacuation centre in Thunder Bay for those residents to attend to, if required.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Did you meet with the chief and council of both of these communities after the self-evacuation? Because they didn't get any help from any ministry.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Yes. There was—

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Did you meet with them in Thunder Bay, with chief and council of these, and explain the situation and why they never got any help?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I did not personally meet with those chiefs. There were coordination calls with the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre and those other ministries involved in the situation.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Will your ministry support the First Nations and opposition who are asking for a public inquiry? This will identify the failures so we do not repeat in 2027 the same mistakes we've seen, to find solutions—

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Point of order.

1730

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Point of order, please.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Point of order: This is also out of scope, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): It's out of scope, sir. We're talking about the estimates. You're talking about something different.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I'm asking the ministry issues about this particular issue. You can rule. I know that you don't want the answer.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: It's a hypothetical future question. It's out of scope.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: So let me go again for a different question.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Move on, please.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Yes, I will.

Before 2026 wildfire season began, your ministry provided Alert Ready training or formal guidance to every First Nation identified of being at elevated wildfire risks. Did these communities get the training, did they request training or did your ministry give training to these First Nations?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to refer that to the deputy minister, who may refer it to an ADM.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, please, to the question.

Mr. Matthew Pegg: Yes. Mr. Chair, I'm not sure that I have information with me or available here with respect to what was requested relating to Alert Ready training. I apologize.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: But did you give any training to First Nations about Alert Ready training for forest fires and how to proceed?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Point of order, please.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Yes. It's out of scope. It's an MNR issue and a federal government issue.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: No, it comes from their—it's a program from their ministry.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): It's a point of order. I agree with the point of order. Move on.

Minister?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm going to make a comment though, for the member. We don't do Alert Ready training. So if there was an issue, the municipality or the First Nation community would contact the Provincial Emergency Operation Centre, and then we would send out the Alert Ready. We don't specifically do training with any community on the Alert Ready system.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have 42 seconds.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: No. I understand that. And breathing down my neck doesn't help that, Chair.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: But we don't just allow everybody to use the system, right? It has to come through a central point.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: No. I understand that, Minister. I understand your response.

So my question is then, because you've testified—well, not testified, but you said that you work with MNR, you work with the parties to make sure that when evacuations happen, emergencies happen—yet when it's time to deliver, both of your ministries failed these First Nations. Both of you failed. That's why my first question was, "Where did we drop the ball?" And you gave me the answers—and by doing point of orders like you're doing, it does not help the situation that First Nations—it could have been lives lost. There could have been lives lost, and you don't even recognize that—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. Your time is over. It's over.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Let's just leave it, please. Thank you.

Members of committee, this concludes the committee's consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response.

Standing order 69 requires that the Chair put, without further amendment or debate, every question necessary to dispose of the estimates. Are the members ready to vote? Shall vote 5401—

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Recorded votes.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Yes. Noted. Thank you. I'll start again. Okay.

Shall vote 5401, Emergency Management Ontario, carry?

Ayes

Allsopp, Darouze, Gualtieri, Pinsonneault, Sarrazin.

Nays

Bourgouin, McMahon, Pasma.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Vote 5401 is carried.

Shall the Chair report the 2026-27 estimates of the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response to the House?

Ayes

Allsopp, Darouze, Gualtieri, Pinsonneault, Sarrazin.

Nays

Bourgouin, McMahon, Pasma.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Mr. Clerk, it's carried.

This concludes our consideration of this ministry's estimates. I'd like to thank the minister and everyone here today for their participation.

The committee will now adjourn until Wednesday, October 7, 2026, at 1 p.m. in committee room 2. Thank you, everyone.

The committee adjourned at 1735.

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