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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 November 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 novembre 2026

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECT ONTARIO FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES FAMILLES ET LES COLLECTIVITÉS EN ONTARIO

Mr. Parsa moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act to enact the Intimate Images Protection Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 148, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 sur la protection des images intimes et modifiant diverses lois.

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

Hon. Michael Parsa: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Thank you very much, colleagues.

It's a real privilege to rise this morning and speak on second reading of Bill 148, the Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act, 2026. Today, Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with parliamentary assistant George Darouze, Minister Michael Tibollo and Minister Quinn.

Bill 148 is another important step in our ongoing work to build a stronger, more responsive social service system to better support the people of this province. If passed, this legislation will strengthen child and family services, enhance protections against intimate partner violence and modernize Ontario's health and long-term-care systems.

As the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the proposed measures that we're taking. We're taking measures to strengthen governance, oversight and accountability of children's aid societies; increase protections for vulnerable people receiving ministry services; improve accountability for social service workers and social workers; and enhance our response to intimate partner violence.

Our government will never waver from its commitment to strengthen the child welfare system. We've been clear from the very start, when we formed government, that every child deserves to feel safe, supported and valued. That's why we focused on delivering high-quality services that prioritize the safety and well-being of those receiving care. And this commitment is backed by action.

We enacted the Supporting Children's Futures Act to set a clear standard for what care should look like through the child and youth services sector. We made changes to provide new and enhanced enforcement tools for licensed out-of-home care, which came into effect July 1, 2025.

Changes were also made to enhance privacy protections for children in care. These changes protect the privacy of individuals while enabling them to speak freely about their experiences.

And in 2023, we launched the Ready, Set, Go Program, a $170-million investment to help youth transition from the child welfare system into adulthood. Through this program, young people can access supports in key areas such as financial assistance, education, employment, housing, health and life skills. In fact, the ministry recently renewed its investment in Ready, Set, Go for an additional three years, bringing our total investment to nearly $315 million.

As I said earlier, our commitment to improving outcomes for children and youth is backed by action.

This year, our government is investing over $2 billion in child welfare, supporting 50 children aid's societies across the province.

And since 2024, we've been helping child welfare organizations manage the rising operational costs, which includes an additional $41.7 million in ongoing support.

In winter 2024, our government commissioned a comprehensive review of Ontario's non-Indigenous children's aid societies to identify opportunities that improve long-term sustainability and better service delivery. The third-party review, alongside our internal reviews and inspections, found several pressures, including the need for stronger oversight and accountability of children's aid societies in Ontario. It also found that some societies faced financial difficulties despite a consistent increase in provincial funding and a decrease of more than 20% in the number of children in care. In response to these findings, we're proposing numerous changes to strengthen accountability, improve child safety, and ensure vulnerable children and families receive the care and support they need.

I'd now like to walk the House through a few of those changes, beginning with our proposal to increase awareness of alternative dispute resolution—ADR for short. ADR is a successful way of bringing together a child's family, extended family and their community to support collaborative decision-making in child protection disputes. This approach stresses prevention, early intervention and can help avoid or minimize court involvement.

ADR is a great resource; however, because there's no requirement to inform families about ADR, many remain unaware and therefore miss the path to resolving disputes. Bill 148 will change that. If passed, children's aid societies will be required to inform families and children of ADR at specific points. We want everyone to know the benefits of ADR, including the positive outcome it can deliver to children and families, and its ability to resolve disputes in a less adversarial way.

We're also proposing changes to better support children and families through the adoption process. This includes amending the Child, Youth and Family Services Act—CYFSA—to allow the ministry to convert eligible international, simple adoptions into full adoptions under Ontario law. For context, a full adoption terminates the pre-existing legal parent-child relationship and creates a new legal parent-child relationship. While a simple adoption completed creates a new legal parent-child relationship, it does not terminate the pre-existing legal parent-child relationship. By allowing simple adoptions to be converted into full adoptions, more children who are adopted internationally can obtain full legal recognition of their adoption and permanent residence right here in Canada. This amendment would also align our province with provinces like Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta.

We're also building on existing privacy protections and information-sharing practices to better support children in care. Often, when children transition from receiving services from societies to child welfare authorities, personal information doesn't always follow the child, which can negatively impact the planning and delivery of services. Our measures will make it possible for case information to follow each child as they transition to receiving child and family services from child welfare authorities.

Our work doesn't stop there. Our government is also looking at ways to strengthen the supports children receive while in kinship placements. We intend to develop regulatory amendments that would require societies to visit children in kinship placements at least once every 30 days after the initial visit at seven days and 30 days. This new regulation will triple ongoing kinship visits, helping make sure children are safe and well supported. The changes will also provide clearer expectations for caregivers and promote stable, high-quality placements.

0910

We're also proposing changes to support stronger financial management practices and oversight across the child welfare sector. We intend to develop regulatory amendments that would require society boards to include at least one member with financial expertise.

Speaker, the ministry also received feedback expressing concerns about society board governance and the need for greater accountability and transparency. And in response, we're proposing a regulation that would require societies to post their board meeting minutes online within seven days of board approval. This will enhance public trust and encourage good governance practices.

We're also taking steps to strengthen financial oversight to ensure societies are making responsible financial decisions. Under the proposed changes, societies would need to operate within their approved budget through a dedicated approval process.

As minister, I'm proud of the work that we've done to improve the child welfare system, putting the best interests of children, youth and families at the centre of everything we do. We'll continue working with sector partners to build a stronger child welfare system to help ensure better outcomes for young people right across the province.

We're also taking action to protect children and youth from sex trafficking. The measures proposed will require child welfare workers to be trained and utilize the sexual exploitation youth risk assessment tool—the SEY tool—so that they are better equipped to identify children who are being, or are at risk of being, sexually exploited. This will ensure standardized anti-human trafficking training for direct staff at all children's aid societies in Ontario. Speaker, by mandating this consistent approach, our government will help more staff recognize warning signs, identify risks earlier and enable timely interventions so that more children experiencing exploitation can get the services and supports that they need.

We're also taking measures to better protect people receiving services from organizations regulated by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. In fact, earlier this year, the address of a shelter for survivors of violence was publicly disclosed, creating safety concerns for clients who require protection from people who could harm them. I'm referring to people who are at higher risk of exploitation, such as survivors of gender-based violence and human trafficking, children and youth living in certain licensed out-of-home care settings, and young people living in youth justice open custody facilities. While incidents like this are thankfully rare, we can take further steps to protect vulnerable people by providing an added layer of protection for the facilities that they depend on.

To remedy this, we're proposing amendments that will establish a new provincial offence, including a fine for anyone who publicly posts the location of a protected facility. Our goal is to protect those in care, and this measure will provide an additional safeguard to do exactly that.

I'd now like to turn to another important part of this legislation: strengthening our response to discuss intimate partner violence. We recognize Woman Abuse Prevention Month this November. It's important to reiterate that our government has zero tolerance for intimate partner and gender-based violence. Our goal is to build a province where all women, all girls are safe, valued and empowered to pursue their dreams.

Earlier this year, the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler released a report on intimate partner violence highlighting opportunities for our province to strengthen its response to this profoundly harmful issue. It's why we're making historic investments to help support victims and survivors, raise public awareness and hold offenders accountable.

Speaker, we have an action plan, Ontario-STANDS, to address and combat violence against women. Ontario-STANDS is supported by over $1.4 billion in targeted investments and delivered in collaboration with communities and front-line agencies right across the province.

Some of the key investments under Ontario-STANDS include approximately $98 million over three years to support 85 new community-based projects that focus on preventing gender-based violence and building safer communities. We have expanded funding for emergency shelters across the province by an additional $15.7 million, supporting over 300 more shelter spaces in over 65 shelters, including those serving Indigenous, rural, and remote communities.

And through the Women's Economic Security Program, we're providing up to $26.7 million over three years to support 25 programs that provide training and specialized support for women who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing gender-based violence.

Speaker, gender-based violence is a complex issue. It takes many forms and has many overlapping root causes. It's why, in addition to Ontario-STANDS, our government is taking further steps to address specific forms of violence against women.

In May 2026, we renewed the Pathways to Safety strategy for an additional five-year term, to address the root causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls. This strategy responds to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It's focused on delivering meaningful, practical solutions so that future generations of Indigenous girls, women and families can live free from violence.

This year, we're investing $136 million in the Indigenous Healing and Wellness Strategy, which supports programs that address family violence and violence against Indigenous women and children.

Additionally, our annual investment of over $35 million in the Family Well-Being Program supports children, youth and families healing from the impacts of intergenerational violence and trauma.

We're also working to end human trafficking through Ontario's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy. This five-year strategy is supported by investments of more than $345 million from 2025 to 2030, which represents the largest single investment in anti-human trafficking supports anywhere in Canada.

As part of Bill 148, we're furthering our response to intimate partner violence by introducing stronger legislative protections for victims of intimate image abuse, which my colleague Minister Tibollo will say more about later on. The proposals from the Attorney General and Associate Attorney General respond directly to the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and represent another important step in strengthening protections for victims and survivors.

Speaker, there is one more important aspect that I'd like to address, which is greater accountability among social workers and social service workers. Across Ontario, more than 34,000 social workers play a key role in protecting individuals, families and communities. As such, it's equally important that they uphold the highest standards of professional and ethical conduct in their interactions with clients. The majority of complaints and reports to the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers involve allegations of sexual misconduct. Yet, when sexual abuse is found to have occurred, the college is not required to impose a mandatory revocation or suspension of the registration. Our proposal would introduce mandatory disciplinary action of social workers, including a suspension or revocation of their professional registration following findings of sexual abuse. Our goal is to reduce the likelihood of sexual abuse, increase accountability, and achieve higher professional standards in the sector.

Bill 148, if passed, along with the related proposed regulations and government initiatives, represents decisive action that our government is taking to ensure survivors, children and people at risk can access the supports and services they need to heal, rebuild and thrive. The proposed legislation, along with the measures I've outlined today, represent a significant step in our government's plan to protect Ontario.

We will continue strengthening services and deliver better support to improve outcomes for children, for families and for communities right across our great province.

It's with that objective in mind that I respectfully ask all members of this House to support the passage of Bill 148, the Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act, 2026.

Before I turn it over to my colleague parliamentary assistant George Darouze, I want to take this opportunity to thank so many of our partners who have contributed to this bill. We have amazing partners in this ministry. More than 97% of the budget of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services is rendered through partnerships with community organizations and agencies across the province. We value their partnership. They're amazing partners in delivering these essential supports and services to people who rely on them.

0920

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the amazing people at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, including our deputy, all of the assistant deputy ministers, and all of the directors, the managers and the staff on the ground. I want to thank my chief of staff and all of my MO staff who are here and hard at work every single day to improve the lives of people who depend on us.

Speaker, I've said this many times before, and I'll say it again: When it comes to protecting the children and youth in this province, our government will do whatever it takes to make sure that happens—make sure we back that by record investments. This year, we've increased our investment in the child welfare sector to more than $2 billion—a record investment. And we're not done. We'll continue looking at ways and leave no stone unturned to

make sure that every child and every youth in this province is supported and protected.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank parliamentary assistant George Darouze, who has been an amazing partner at our ministry throughout this entire process. And I thank, of course, Minister Tibollo, Minister Doug Downey, Minster Jones, Minister Natalia Kusendova-Bashta, Minister Raymond Cho, Minister Nolan Quinn—all of the partners and all of the ministers who have contributed to this bill.

Once again, I ask all my colleagues in this House to look at this bill and, hopefully, support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): I recognize the member for Carleton.

MPP George Darouze: I'm pleased to join my colleague the Honourable Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, to speak on behalf of Bill 148, the Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act, 2026. I also would like to thank the minister for his strong leadership to support some of the most vulnerable in Ontario. I appreciate working alongside him as his PA.

Speaker, through Bill 148, the government is protecting Ontario by strengthening child and family services, enhancing the province's response to intimate partner violence and improving access to health care, and connecting people with the services and supports they need.

I would like to first speak about how we are enhancing our response to intimate partner violence. Through Bill 148, we are introducing stronger legislative protections for victims of intimate image abuse. The proposals from the Attorney General respond to the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy's intimate partner violence report.

The harm caused by intimate image abuse is very time-sensitive. The longer an image remains online, the higher the chance it could be copied, shared and become more difficult to remove.

The proposed changes would also create a fast-track court process to help victims seek the removal of intimate images from online platforms more quickly. These changes would empower victims to regain control of their images, protect their privacy and seek remedies for the harm they have experienced.

More broadly, our government remains committed to stronger protections and improving outcomes for children and youth across Ontario.

As you know, we have been working to improve the child welfare system. If passed, the proposed measures in this bill, along with other changes, would enhance the governance, accountability and long-term sustainability of children's aid societies to help ensure children and families continue to receive the services and supports they need. We are focusing on supporting service providers in providing high-quality services that prioritize safety and protection and are responsive to the cultural and social needs of all children, youth and families.

Our work to improve the child welfare system has three priorities:

—to provide enhanced early intervention supports that help strengthen family and communities;

—to improve the service experience for people who need protection services from societies and out-of-home care providers; and

—lastly, to address over-representation of certain populations in the child welfare system and the inequities they face.

Every year since the plan to improve the child welfare system was released in July 2020, we've introduced gradual changes and improvements. I would like to highlight some of the early work that laid the foundation of our more recent changes.

In July 2020, our government released the quality standards framework to support service providers in delivering high-quality out-of-home care.

Jumping ahead a couple of years to April 2022, the Adoption Council of Ontario launched a centralized adoption intake service with funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. The service helps parents who want to adopt, learn more about adoption and decide whether it is right for them. The service includes a website that offers clear information to help people make informed choices.

This provides the perfect introduction into today's proposals and measures that are part of Bill 148.

Speaker, as Minister Parsa mentioned, our proposal, if passed, will also support child permanency by allowing for the conversion of a simple intercountry adoption completed in a foreign country into a full adoption in Ontario. A full adoption in Ontario creates a new legal parent-child relationship and terminates the pre-existing legal parent-child relationship. While a simple adoption that is completed in certain countries creates a new legal parent-child relationship, it does not end the pre-existing legal parent-child relationship. Allowing for the conversion of a simple adoption into a full adoption would support Ontario's residents seeking to adopt children from countries that complete simple adoptions, such as Thailand. The proposed changes would enable them to bring their adopted child into Canada to reside permanently with them—because every child deserves a loving family and a permanent and stable home.

And we're not stopping there. The government also intends to develop regulatory amendments that would enhance the existing visit requirements for the future adoptive home by requiring more frequent in-person visits until an adoption is final. For example, this proposal would require a visit in person in the home of future adoptive parents within the first seven days of placement, and then 30 days after the child is placed for adoption; after that, visits every 30 days thereafter, until the adoption is finalized. This would help promote better outcomes for families and children.

We are also proposing to develop regulatory amendments that would support birth parents to receive consistent access to high-quality counselling as they consider

whether to place their child for adoption. Private adoption licensees would be required to make referrals to birth parent counsellors who are members in good standing as either a registered social worker or of a regulated health profession whose scope of practice includes counselling and who possess adoption-related expertise.

Speaker, as Bill 119, the Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act, is now passed, the government also intends to develop regulatory amendments that would align the Intercountry Adoption Act, or IAA for short, with requirements for compliance orders for service providers under the Child, Youth and Family Services Act. As part of this proposed change, we would require summaries of compliance orders issued to licensees under the IAA to be published on the ministry website for a specified period, to help increase transparency and uphold the integrity of Ontario's intercountry adoption system.

Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ontario's private adoption licensees and adoption practitioners for finding children loving homes and for supporting families throughout the private adoption process.

I also want to recognize birth parents who have chosen voluntary private adoption for their child. Deciding to place your child for adoption is one of the most difficult decisions a parent can make. This choice is made with a child's best interests at heart.

Finally, I want to thank adoptive parents. Your commitment to providing a nurturing and stable home offers children lifelong security, family and belonging.

Every child and youth deserves to have a safe, loving and stable home.

0930

Speaker, our priority is the safety and security of children and youth in Ontario. That's why we are also introducing a legislative proposal to increase awareness of alternative dispute resolution, or ADR for short, among families involved with children's aid societies. I would like to echo Minister Parsa's support of this very important proposal. ADR is a successful way of bringing together a child's family, extended family and their community to support child-focused, collaborative decision-making in child protection disputes. This approach stresses prevention and early intervention by encouraging alternatives to court. ADR can also support in streamlining court processes to minimize lengthy court involvement.

ADR has many benefits for the children and youth who are involved in child protection matters. One of the most important benefits is that it can result in lasting solutions that participants are invested in achieving. ADR can help families resolve issues, reducing the time children spend wondering about where they will live and who will care for them. It also tends to have more meaningful family participation by allowing families, kin and community members to participate in developing collaborative plans. This can mean tailored solutions that reflect the child's unique needs and circumstances and more consideration of cultural connections.

Speaker, at the heart of ADR and its success are child-centred solutions. ADR allows parties to tailor agreements to the child's specific needs, which means plans can be customized around education, health care, cultural identity and sibling relationships. ADR is also completely voluntary and tends to be less expensive and confrontational.

As you can see, ADR is a beneficial and important resolution tool, but it is often overlooked since families do not know that it exists. The bill, if passed, would require children's aid societies to inform families and children of ADR at specific points in time.

Speaker, I want to make it very clear that our government is putting children and youth at the forefront of the care that they deserve.

For that reason, our government plans to develop regulatory amendments that would help ensure timely, informed and consistent decision-making for children in care. These proposed measures would be supported through clear requirements for supervisor involvement, supporting increased oversight and consistency.

Currently, there are limited requirements for society supervisor involvement in key decisions for children in society care. There are also no minimum expectations for routine supervisor involvement in case planning and decision-making.

In contrast, other child welfare mandated services delivered by societies, like child protection services and kinship services, have established and defined roles for supervisors at key decision points.

The proposed measures would help strengthen the quality of safety, service and permanency planning and would be enhanced through supervisor involvement in key decisions, supporting better outcomes for children in care.

Speaker, we're also proposing work to strengthen oversight and accountability in kinship service. Kinship service refers to situations where a society has determined that a child is in need of protection and can no longer reside with their parent or caregiver. The child is placed with a relative or member of the child's extended family or community.

The evidence is clear: Children in kinship service tend to experience better outcomes than children placed in traditional foster care. They demonstrate greater stability and permanency, are more likely to be reunited with their families, and often experience stronger behavioural, emotional and mental health outcomes. They also tend to experience better behavioural development, mental health functioning and family stability. Kinship service provides children with the opportunity to remain connected to the people and communities that matter most to them while achieving the safety, stability and permanency they need to thrive.

The ministry is proposing regulatory amendments that would require societies to complete visits with children in their kinship service placement every 30 days after the first seven-day and 30-day visits. If approved, the amendments would increase visits to children in kinship service placements and introduce new service plan requirements that are clear and support youth voices and kinship caregivers and promote safe, consistent, high-quality placements. The proposed measures would strengthen family-

based care and support the use of early intervention and prevention measures.

Speaker, to help children receive timely access to child and family services, we are also moving to improve information-sharing in the child welfare and protection system. Often, when children transition from receiving service from societies to child welfare authorities in Ontario, personal information is not consistently following the child. This can negatively impact the planning and delivery of child and family services. Through the proposed legislative changes, our goal is to provide societies with clear authority to share personal information when children transition from receiving services from societies to child welfare authorities in Ontario. And we'll make it possible for case file information to follow each child as they transition to receiving child and family services from child welfare authorities.

Speaker, we want an Ontario where every child, youth, and family has the opportunity to be safe, supported and successful. That includes children and families receiving child welfare services, who deserve the stability, connection and support they need to thrive in their communities. And I believe we are making meaningful progress as we strengthen and improve the child welfare system.

Over the past 10 years, the average number of children and youth in care has decreased by about 20%, and the average number of ongoing open protection cases has decreased by about 47%. More families are being supported earlier, so more children and youth can stay with their parents whenever it's possible.

That said, we recognize that more work needs to be done. But we can't do it alone. We will continue to work closely with community partners, including municipalities, service agencies and advocacy groups so that all Ontarians can access the support they need when they need it, and we will continue to do so to keep the momentum of this important progress ongoing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): I recognize the Associate Attorney General.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'm pleased to rise in the House for second reading debate on the Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act, a bill that would, if passed, help make life safer for the people of Ontario.

I want to begin by thanking the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services for sharing his time with me today, and I'd also like to thank the member from Carleton and the Minister of Colleges and Universities, who are both joining me in speaking about this bill. I also want to say a special thank you to my minister's office and to the dedicated people working behind the scenes at the Ministry of the Attorney General. It has been a tremendous team effort, and I'm grateful to everyone who worked so hard to help bring this new legislation forward.

Let me be clear: The proposed new measures that I will discuss today are just the latest step in our government's ongoing work to help protect victims and keep communities safe.

Speaker, intimate image abuse is a horrific violation of privacy and personal dignity. It can involve the creation of an intimate image without consent. It can involve the distribution of an intimate image without consent. And it can involve threats to distribute those images as a means of intimidation, coercion or control.

While technology has created new opportunities for communication and connection, it has also created new opportunities for harm. The effects can be devastating. Victims may experience emotional or psychological harm, their relationships may be damaged, and they may face impacts at work, at school and in their communities.

Like many other forms of abuse, the damage does not necessarily end with the original act. Once an image is shared online, it can be copied, reposted and redistributed countless times. The longer it remains online, the greater the risk that it will continue to spread and the harder it may become to remove.

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For many victims, there can be a constant fear that a family member, a co-worker, a classmate or a future employer will see an image that was never meant to be shared. That fear can affect nearly every aspect of a person's life. It can damage confidence, it can impact mental health, and it can make victims feel as though they have lost control over their identity and personal information.

That's why intimate image abuse is not simply a private issue; it is an issue of personal safety, dignity and autonomy. Our government believes victims should have meaningful options when this occurs. That is why this legislation proposes a new framework to help victims seek relief through the civil justice system.

Before I speak about the specific measures in the bill, I think it is worth taking a moment to explain an important legal concept that sits at the centre of these changes. That concept is a tort. Put simply, a tort is a type of civil wrong. It is often conduct that causes harm to another person and for which the law may provide civil remedy. When most people hear the word "law," they often think about criminal offences. But our civil justice system also plays an important role in addressing harm and helping people obtain remedies, including compensation. Some torts are recognized by the courts through judicial decisions that have developed over many years. These are known as common law torts. Others are created directly through legislation passed by Legislatures. These are known as statutory torts. Legislatures may choose to create statutory torts when they determine that a clear, specific and accessible civil remedy is needed to address a particular harm.

With this bill, we are proposing to create statutory torts that address a specific form of harm that is affecting victims across our province, and we are doing so in a way that provides greater clarity and certainty within the law.

Some members may ask why civil remedies are needed when criminal offences relating to intimate image abuse already exist. The answer is that criminal law and civil law serve different purposes. Our criminal justice system plays an essential role in promoting accountability and protecting the public. But civil remedies can respond directly to the needs of individual victims, regardless of whether a

criminal prosecution proceeds. For example, a victim of intimate image abuse may wish to seek compensation. That victim may also wish to have intimate images removed promptly or to obtain an order preventing further distribution of these images without having to engage in criminal court processes. This legislation recognizes that victims are often best served when they have access to multiple legal tools.

The measures we're proposing are consistent with the broader principle that has guided much of our work at the Ministry of the Attorney General: the recognition that civil remedies can play an important role alongside criminal law. Criminal remedies will remain available to victims of intimate image abuse. This legislation would add civil remedies, which would provide victims with additional tools to seek justice and prevent further harm. Together, criminal and civil remedies would create a stronger framework for addressing intimate image abuse and provide a clearer path to resolution.

The measures before the House would establish three new statutory torts aimed at addressing different forms of intimate image abuse. The first would address the non-consensual creation of intimate images, the second would address the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, and the third would address threats to distribute intimate images.

Each of these actions can have life-altering consequences for victims. That's particularly true in cases involving threats.

Even when an image has not yet been shared, the threat itself can be used as a tool of intimidation and control. Victims may feel trapped, they may feel powerless, and they may alter their behaviour out of fear that an image will be distributed.

This bill recognizes these dangers and proposes more effective ways to respond. It recognizes that threats themselves can be harmful and that victims should have options before distribution occurs, not only after the damage has already been done.

Speaker, the bill has also been drafted with emerging technologies in mind. Everyone here today is aware of the growing use of artificial intelligence and image generation technologies against people in this province. Today, individuals can create realistic intimate images using only digital tools, without the need for an original image. The technology may be new; the harm is not. Victims can still experience humiliation, distress and lasting consequences. Their reputations can be affected. Their relationships can suffer. That's why the proposed measures would apply regardless of how an image was created, and including cases where artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies are involved.

This bill is not only about recognizing harm; it's about providing practical tools that help victims respond to that harm. In many cases, time matters. This bill proposes a new expedited court process that would allow victims to apply for court orders designed to address the immediate consequences of intimate image abuse. The court could order the removal of content and the destruction of images quickly to respond to the time-sensitive harm posed by distribution of intimate images without consent, particularly on the Internet and social media.

The court could also order steps to prevent further distribution and provide other forms of relief that help address ongoing harm. For many victims, obtaining relief quickly may be every bit as important as obtaining the relief itself. Our proposed measures recognize this important reality.

The proposed measures in this bill also include important privacy protections. Victims should not be forced to choose between seeking justice and protecting their privacy. That's why the proposed bill provides victims with the option to protect their identities and prevents intimate images from becoming part of the public court record. The goal is simple: Make it easier for victims to come forward.

Speaker, I would like to speak more broadly for a moment about some of the other measures my ministry has taken to support victims, because access to justice is about more than having rights on paper. People also need access to information, advice and support. They need help navigating what can often be a difficult and overwhelming situation.

That's why our government recently expanded the independent legal advice program administered by the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, to support victims of intimate partner violence, human trafficking and other sexual offences, including the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. This program provides free legal advice to eligible victims and survivors, as well as safety planning and referrals to a range of community supports that can help people as they move forward. Last year alone, the program provided legal advice to over 2,300 victims, including 1,429 individuals who accessed the program for the first time.

Our Civil Remedies Grant Program also provides meaningful support to victims. Through this program, we reinvest cash and proceeds seized through asset forfeiture to support local initiatives that strengthen public safety and support victims of human trafficking, gun and gang violence, and intimate partner and family violence. Some of the funded initiatives include activities that promote digital safety awareness, education and support. Just this year, we have reinvested nearly $5 million to support 26 grant recipients from not-for-profit groups, law enforcement agencies and community and Indigenous organizations across Ontario.

Taken together, these initiatives and the measures proposed in this bill move us closer to a justice system that is responsive, accessible and focused on the needs of victims.

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Speaker, no one should have to live with the fear that an intimate image will be used as a weapon against them. No one should have to watch harmful content spread online without meaningful options for relief. And no one should be left without access to justice because existing remedies are difficult to navigate or too slow to respond.

If passed, the measures in this legislation would provide stronger civil protections. They would provide clearer remedies. They would provide faster access to relief. And they would help victims regain control over their images, protect their privacy and address the harm they have experienced.

I look forward to engaging further with the people of Ontario and our valued partners on this very important legislation.

I'd now like to turn over things to the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): I recognize the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Thank you, Speaker. It's great to see you in that chair, and I think you have my title better than I do myself.

Good morning, everyone. I'm happy to rise today and speak to the Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act. Within this legislation, our government is proposing a suite of measures to strengthen oversight at private post-secondary institutions and protect the integrity of the Ontario Student Assistance Program, because every OSAP dollar should be used as intended, to support students pursuing an education and preparing them for rewarding careers.

When our government was elected for a historic third term, we made a promise to the people of this province that in the face of global economic uncertainty, we would protect Ontario jobs and Ontario's economy. Ontario's post-secondary sector is critical to that work. It's where students gain the knowledge and skills to build their futures, where employers find the talent they need, and where we prepare the workforce that will keep Ontario's economy strong.

Since becoming Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security, I've had the privilege of visiting institutions and speaking with students, faculty, employers and community leaders across this beautiful province. I've seen first-hand the talent and dedication of Ontario's students and graduates. These students deserve an education that prepares them for the careers they've worked hard to pursue. And taxpayers deserve confidence that their dollars that are being invested to support education are being used as intended.

As you are aware, over the last two years, our government has led targeted investigations into the misuse of OSAP at private post-secondary institutions. We also removed OSAP grant eligibility from students at career colleges and issued notices of non-renewal to six campuses earlier this year. As we uncovered evidence that pointed to widespread, systemic issues of OSAP usage in the private system, we brought in KPMG to audit the entire sector and paused all OSAP payments to students at private institutions until the audit concludes. The matter has also been referred to the Ontario Provincial Police, and the Auditor General has been notified.

Speaker, what we've uncovered is truly disturbing. To name a few examples, we found third parties completing coursework for students; entire courses completed in a single day; final exams completed in as little as six minutes; and students who could not identify their school, their program or the course they were supposed to be taking.

Let me be very clear: The allegations point to coordinated, sophisticated efforts to take advantage of students and taxpayers for personal gain, and they demand action. This behaviour is unacceptable, and it must be stopped.

That is why our government is introducing a suite of measures in the Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act that would restore the integrity of OSAP and strengthen compliance within the private institution sector.

First, if passed, this legislation would restore OSAP integrity at private post-secondary institutions. Specifically, with this legislation, we would establish:

—stronger requirements for institutions to receive and retain OSAP eligibility, such as graduation and employment rates;

—enhanced student identity verification, meaning institutions would need to prove their students are legitimate students who are personally attending class and completing coursework; and

—a minimum threshold for irregularities that would automatically trigger an audit at a private institution.

We would also place caps on OSAP-funded enrolment at private institutions and remove OSAP eligibility from predominantly online programs.

Together, these measures would give us stronger tools to prevent misuse, identify concerns earlier and take action to ensure every OSAP dollar is being used as intended.

The second key objective of this legislation is to strengthen oversight and enforcement powers at private institutions. This includes:

—giving the province the authority to recover OSAP funding from private institutions by holding them liable for misuse;

—requiring career colleges to disclose their third-party relationships, including agreements with immigration firms and recruitment firms; and

—prohibiting career colleges from operating unrelated businesses on their campuses.

Our proposed legislation would also give the Superintendent of Career Colleges the authority to impose conditions on a program at any given time, meaning we can intervene faster when an institution is not delivering a program in a way that meets the standards students deserve.

We would require all career colleges to have a physical campus location so that students know where to go for support and government can conduct regular inspections.

Career colleges would also be required to publish their student complaint procedures on their websites and at their physical campus locations, and they would have to make enforcement actions taken against them clear and accessible to students and the general public.

We are also proposing stronger financial protections for students. Career colleges would be required to maintain a higher level of financial security to operate. Institutions

with a higher financial risk rating would contribute higher premiums, providing greater protection for students if a college closes unexpectedly. Finally, every violation or contravention of the act by an institution would be subject to a financial penalty.

Taken together, these measures would give the province stronger tools to address problems earlier, hold institutions accountable and ultimately protect students.

Speaker, when students invest their time and hard-earned money in an education, they deserve an institution that is solely focused on their success. That should be true whether they attend a public college, a public university, an Indigenous institute or a private institution. Students deserve to know that the education they receive will prepare them for the careers they are working towards. Families deserve confidence in the institutions their loved ones attend. And taxpayers deserve confidence that public dollars are being used for their intended purpose. But due to the malicious actions of wrongdoers, that has not been happening recently.

I want to take a moment to speak to the legitimate, hard-working students and institutions who have become victims of the bad actors that have taken advantage of our post-secondary education system. I share your frustration and disappointment. Rest assured, we are working as quickly as possible to hold those who have taken advantage of the system accountable to the fullest extent of the law and to get the genuine actors like yourselves back into the OSAP system. And this legislation marks a major step in that work.

If passed, this legislation would give us stronger tools to prevent the misuse of OSAP, strengthen oversight and hold institutions accountable. It would also strengthen protections for students so they can focus on their education and futures they are working towards. Whether graduates go on to care for loved ones, build our communities or move essential goods across Ontario, they keep our province strong, and our post-secondary sector must be just as strong to keep our workforce one of the most competitive in the G7.

I urge all members of this House to support this legislation and join us in protecting students, safeguarding taxpayer dollars and restoring the integrity of OSAP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: My question is for the minister of MCCSS.

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I don't see anything in this bill to support people with developmental disabilities at the highest level of need. Because support doesn't exist for people in this group, they wind up in hospital, sedated and tied down; in jail; or living on the street. The Ombudsman's report is clear: This gap in services is tragic and cruel.

What is the government's plan to create equitable, sustainable, long-term solutions for individuals with developmental disabilities at the highest level of need so they can live the lives they deserve?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Thank you for the question. It's actually a very important question.

Mr. Speaker, our government, since forming government in 2018, has increased investments in the developmental services sector to now $4 billion, an increase of $1.6 billion since we formed government. We've increased funding in supportive housing to more than $800 million annually—supports that didn't exist before. We're working with partners on a vision, Journey to Belonging, to make sure that every individual truly belongs in their communities and has the supports they need.

To the member's reference about support, when you look at programs that we've brought in, there's the complex special needs funding that we increased to better support people with more extensive needs, and the ENS, which is the extensive needs service program that we brought in, which is a multidisciplinary team supporting families so they don't have to go through multiple fronts to get support for their families and their children and youth.

So we're working across government to make sure we provide better services to families across the province, and especially those with developmental disabilities across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'll ask this to the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Private career colleges, when this government took over in 2018, were receiving $179 million in OSAP funding; two years ago, it hit $500 million, and then last year, it hit a billion dollars. So it hit a billion dollars before this government realized that taxpayers in this province were being defrauded of hundreds of millions of dollars through this OSAP scandal. Your Premier, instead of going after them, has attacked innocent students. He has accused them of taking basket-weaving courses. Last week, he said that students should give their head a shake when they talk about OSAP.

Do you not think, as the Minister of Colleges and Universities who allowed this scandal to hit a billion dollars before you took action, that you should give your head a shake and that maybe you should step down from your position as the Minister of Colleges and Universities and put somebody in place who will actually watch out for taxpayer dollars?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I fundamentally disagree with the premise of that question. We have been taking action for over two years, doing individual investigations and inspections into those private institutions, those malicious actors that have been acting. Speaker, we've done over 3,200 individual OSAP inspections since 2020 as well. So to say we've taken no action—that member is far off from the actual mark.

We're bringing forward this legislation to add the appropriate guardrails to the private institutions. We're going to have stricter identity verification of students, with key performance indicators being increased, whether those are graduation rates or employment rates. We're also including a threshold for audits that are going to be included. We're imposing caps on OSAP enrolment at

private institutions and excluding predominantly online courses.

That member opposite really does need to understand the time frames and understand that we've been taking action on every single tip. We've been doing numerous investigations. That's why we've gotten to the point of pausing OSAP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): The member for Thornhill.

Ms. Laura Smith: Speaker, I want to thank the minister and all of the speakers on Bill 148.

I used to work under the child protection act. I walked into homes involving kin care, and I understand the value of so much that's happening right now and the work.

I also used to see the beneficial implications of ADR, alternative dispute resolution, which makes a huge difference when we're talking about the children and doing what's best for them in care.

I'm just wondering if the minister would talk about increased awareness of ADR options among families in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): The member for Carleton.

MPP George Darouze: I want to thank the member from Thornhill for the question. I know you've done an amazing job in our public sector. Thank you very much for your service.

Alternative dispute resolution allows families and children's aid societies to work through concerns together, with the support of processes such as mediation and family group conferencing, rather than relying solely on formal court proceedings.

That's why we are proposing changes that would require children's aid societies to inform families and children about alternative dispute resolution at key decision points throughout their involvement with the child welfare system. By making families more aware of these options, we are creating more opportunities for open conversations, collaborative problem solving and meaningful family participation. This is a part of our broader commitment to strengthening prevention and early intervention, supporting families, and ensuring the best interests of children and youth remain at the centre of every decision.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I was listening carefully to the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security speak about the government's need for what he stated were stronger tools, which is in itself a tacit admission that the minister and ministry do have tools at their disposal to weed out the bad actors.

My question is for the minister. Private career colleges are required to provide a performance bond, a surety and security. Why has the ministry not seized those in the case of these so-called—to the minister's own words—bad actors? Have they not fulfilled their responsibilities? And why haven't current students enrolled within those bad-acting private career colleges been given priority admission to another reputable career college so they can complete their education on time?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

We do have the Training Completion Assurance Fund, when a school does cease operations, so that the students are given available supports to be able to land at another private institution or one of our publicly assisted institutions.

I'll remind the member opposite of some of the things we found and the reason why we needed to take action. We saw numerous applications from the same IP address—some from outside of Canada, some from the same geographic location in the GTA. We saw third parties completing the coursework in a day. We saw exams done in less than six minutes. And we saw students who didn't even know the name of their school, the name of the program they were attending.

That is why—the importance of this legislation moving forward. We're going to add further fines for misrepresentation. We're going to remove the relationships between immigration firms and the institutions themselves. And, I think most importantly, we're going to ensure that the students are well aware of any fines or misrepresentation of the schools. That is going to be clearly articulated on our website as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): The member for Ottawa–Vanier.

Mme. Lucille Collard: This House passed a bill to protect kids online. It's a private member's bill that I co-sponsored with my colleague from Orléans. Of course, it's a very important bill, because we need to protect not only kids but people, with the online dangers.

I find it interesting, the measures that you're proposing regarding the intimate images protection. Of course, that's a part of the problem that exists. What I'm wondering, though, is about how enforceable that is going to be. Is there going to be legal assistance available to victims? And how efficiently can you actually enforce a removal order, as is mentioned in this bill?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that question.

At the end of the day, we're creating a suite of legislation that is going to help us in these situations.

Barbra Schlifer—I mentioned that commemorative centre, the programs that are run from there, the supports that are provided, the legal aid supports. The system is being set up to be able to provide not just the criminal sanctions that are available against the individuals, but the civil as well.

And the one thing about the civil system is, it does move faster. It is easier to move it forward, and it is something that we're going to focus on, creating the channel to make sure that the system works quickly, so that images that may be threatened or that have been put up can be taken down quickly—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Further debate?

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Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is always an honour to rise in this House and participate in debate. Today I rise, as the Ontario NDP shadow minister for colleges and universities,

to speak to Bill 148, and I will be sharing my time today with the member for Parkdale–High Park.

Speaker, we are starting to see a pattern here, because, once again, what we have with Bill 148 is an omnibus bill. It is a thick bill; it has 18 schedules, and it's 57 pages long. It was introduced less than 24 hours ago, and yet it is being debated right now, right here, this morning.

There are a wide range of important public policy issues that are addressed in this bill, from children's aid society reforms, preventing intimate partner violence online, long-term care, retirement homes, health workers' scopes of practice, and more. Each of these issues deserves significant attention and review and opportunity for debate in this place, but because they have been all packaged together into a single omnibus bill, none of them is going to get the attention that they deserve.

Last week, we heard the Minister of Colleges and Universities make an announcement about the new career college legislation that the government would be bringing forward to help put out the fire that they have ignited with OSAP and the private career colleges. And naturally, listening to the minister at that media conference, we expected that he would be introducing separate legislation to deal with private career colleges and that he would take responsibility for what was in the bill. Instead, I would say he did something actually kind of cowardly: He slipped those changes in with multiple unrelated measures into this single omnibus bill, hoping to deflect attention away from his abysmal failure to have done his job over a period of years in this province.

There are two schedules in Bill 148 that speak directly to this government's attempts to try to strengthen oversight in the private career college sector, and I will say there are two things that I would like to highlight about these two schedules.

The first is that the main focus of these changes seems to be protecting the minister, protecting the ministry from any legal action that could be taken against them for their mishandling, their mismanagement of the OSAP program. These changes indemnify the government, not just going forward, but retroactively, from being taken to court over what they have done to students in this province because of their incompetence when it comes to OSAP. Interestingly enough, that change—the indemnification of the government—was not one of the measures that the minister announced last week.

The second thing I would say about the new changes that are included in this bill is that there is absolutely nothing—nothing—to restore OSAP loans to the career college students who were promised that they would get funding in August, who made significant life decisions on the basis of—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member. Unfortunately, we are out of time, but I'm sure you will be able to continue.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CENTRE 76

Hon. Steve Clark: I rise to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Centre 76 arena in Athens. Since opening in 1976, it has been the heart of life in the village. For generations, Centre 76 is where friendships were formed and proud parents watched their children learn to skate. It also brought the community together for special events and to cheer on their beloved Athens Aeros. The story of Centre 76 is so familiar in rural communities like Athens. A group of dedicated volunteers saw a need, rolled up their sleeves and made it happen.

I spoke to Athens mayor Anne Marie Dancy ahead of last Saturday's anniversary celebration. She thanked her fellow anniversary organizing committee members Marsha McNair, Tom Fenn, Erin Heffernan and Todd Evans.

Mayor Dancy also shared this: "For 50 years, this facility has been so much more than an arena. It has been a gathering place, a place for friendships, families, recreation and countless memories."

I look forward to families making new memories when I host my Christmas Skate with Santa at Centre 76 on Sunday, December 13 at 1 p.m.

Congratulations to everyone who helped Centre 76 reach this remarkable milestone. Here's to 50 more years of great times.

LOCKERBY COMPOSITE SCHOOL

MPP Jamie West: I want to tell you about some high school kids at Lockerby—that's my high school. I went to their civics class last Friday. I met with a large group from the STEP program—students from Ms. Kirkham's class, Mr. Swartz's class, Mr. Coulas's class, Mr. Campeau's class, Mr. Patrie's class and Ms. Hockley's class. Their assignment was to identify a civic issue that mattered to them and develop a concrete action plan to help make a positive difference.

Let me tell you some of their concerns. They talked about health care—the nurse layoffs, the hallway medicine, the long wait times, and health care burnout in general. They talked about the high cost of tuition and how mandatory exams might not be the best and most effective way to evaluate students. They talked about employment—how do you get your first job if you don't have experience and everybody wants you to have experience? They talked about just generally improving their community—about AI and Internet safety, especially for teens; about creating student snow removal teams; and helping to collect and distribute winter clothing for other people.

Their next step now is brainstorming with me about different ways to move forward on this. They're going to do some research about what already exists. And they're going to work with non-profits. They're building petitions—some will be presented here in the house—and getting testimonies so they can explain why this is needed.

That's not the only thing that makes Lockerby great. I know I only have a few seconds, but I want to talk about the Lockerby Vikings' annual Kids Caring for Kids cancer drive. They do this every year, in the name of Laura Cotesta. In 1995, she lost her battle with cancer. This year alone, the Vikings raised over $51,000, making the total just over $1 million since this started. It makes me proud to be a Viking.

Go Vikings!

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm happy to brag about Marca College, an incredibly innovative private career college in beautiful Beaches–East York. Specializing in training for hair and aesthetics, this highly respected institution has been developing talented tradespeople for over 40 years. An anchor tenant in Danforth Village BIA, Marca College's presence brings reliability, familiarity and bustling business to the Danforth. Marca College is a staple of our community, creating steady jobs and providing skilful services, while keeping it all local.

Ensuring quality training in our province is an essential part of the Buy Ontario mindset.

Despite the college doing everything right, OSAP was paused, throwing students into uncertainty and fear for their futures. Forfeiting a year or a semester for the 350 students would not only derail careers but leave a massive hole in our community. Recognizing this travesty, Marca College acted fast and with the benevolence and forward-thinking that we need from this government. The college ensured students continue their education without requiring immediate tuition payment.

Not all private colleges can provide this generous offer. I met with constituents studying to be PSWs and ECEs—jobs Ontario needs—at Computek College.

The OSAP freeze jeopardizes youth, seniors, and our most vulnerable.

Marca College and other private colleges are investing in a capable and caring Ontario; they deserve a government that will do the same.

PARAMEDIC SERVICES

MPP Monica Ciriello: I rise today to welcome the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs and the Ontario Paramedic Association, who are joining us here today at Queen's Park.

Paramedics are the first to arrive when someone in our community is having the worst day of their life. They're the calm in an emergency and the reassurance in a moment of fear. They are the heroes in our community, and we don't always take the time to recognize the incredible responsibility that they carry.

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I see this commitment first-hand in Hamilton, where Chief Crocker and his entire Hamilton Paramedic Service team works tirelessly every day to keep our Hamilton community safe. And that same commitment is reflected by paramedics in communities right across Ontario.

Today, they're here at Queen's Park to showcase their life-saving skills, demonstrate their equipment and connect with all of us. I encourage all members of this House to join the paramedics from across the province on the south lawn this afternoon. Enjoy a hot chocolate with them and see first-hand the life-saving skills they use every day to protect Ontario.

Thank you to all of Ontario's paramedics. Thank you for answering the call and being there for the ones in our community when it matters the most.

FIRE SAFETY

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I rise today to call on the government to protect Ontarians from fires caused by exploding e-bikes and lithium-ion batteries. Toronto Fire Services has called lithium-ion batteries the largest growing fire safety risk in the city. This year alone, Toronto Fire Services has responded to 124 lithium battery fires and counting. This is a record; it's up more than 200% since 2022.

In my riding of Toronto Centre, it took one exploding e-bike battery at 275 Bleecker to injure 19 people and put everyone's housing at risk. At 140 Carlton, as soon as temperatures dropped below zero, another e-bike battery exploded. Tenants have called me to say there was "no enforcement, no inspection, no follow-up and no accountability."

Last week, with my new city councillor, Curran Stikuts, Toronto Fire Services, Toronto Community Housing, RentSafeTO and municipal licensing services held a fire safety town hall to explain the dangers of modified e-bikes and lithium-ion batteries, and the room was full. Neighbours came with one message: They are done waiting for government action.

This month, the Solicitor General promised to ban e-bikes in hallways and ban battery tampering. That's a first step. His words were, "The details are being worked out," with no date and no timeline.

Speaker, I tabled motion 44 on November 20, 2025, calling on the government to take emergency action to stop these battery fires. A year later, the regulations are exactly the same.

Please do the best thing that you can, which is to move and adopt NDP motion 44. Let's save lives. Let's act today.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Lorne Coe: Families across Whitby and Durham region deserve to know that the health care services they rely on are there when they need them.

That's why I'm pleased to highlight Ontario's more than $22.5-million investment to strengthen health care across the town of Whitby and other parts of the region of Durham. This funding includes more than $19 million for Lakeridge Health, more than $3.2 million for Ontario

Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences, and additional funding for critical infrastructure improvements at Lakeridge Health and Durham Community Health Centre.

These investments are part of our government's broader commitment to protecting Ontario's health care system and making sure people can access quality care closer to their home. Investments like those in Whitby are helping strengthen our hospitals, support our front-line teams and improve access to care for hard-working families across the region of Durham.

Speaker, our government will continue working to ensure Durham residents have access to the care they need, when they need it, close to their home.

COST OF LIVING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, this government is not protecting Ontarians. People are struggling to afford the basic necessities, and yet this government continues to make decisions that make life harder.

The Salvation Army's 2026 poverty and socio-economic analysis report paints a troubling picture: Nearly one in three Ontarians skip meals or reduce portions because they cannot afford groceries, and 15% of Canadians access food banks and community meal programs.

Yet this government voted down our bill to remove the HST from food and beverages.

They have cut OSAP grants from up to 85% to just 25%, leaving students with significantly more debt.

They did this while 40% of Canadians are already taking on debt or relying on credit to cover their basic needs.

Burdening low-income students with debt to get an education only traps them in the cycle of poverty.

The report notes that half of Canadians aren't confident that they will afford alternative housing, yet this government removed rent controls on new buildings and rolled back tenant protections.

Speaker, Ontarians are working hard, paying their taxes and doing everything they can to get ahead. They shouldn't have to choose between putting food on the table, pursuing an education or keeping a roof over their heads. They deserve a government that makes life more affordable, protects renters and gives young people a fair shot at a better future.

Ontario taxpayers have never paid so much and received so little.

When will this government start putting people first?

SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Ms. Jess Dixon: Like many places, Cambridge can sometimes grumble a little bit about a change, but we had one recently that I think was a resounding success, which was the move of the Cambridge Santa Claus Parade from Hespeler Road to King Street in Preston—incredible success.

Every time I talk about the parade, I feel like it's just a list of how blessed I am in life. Those who know—I do dress up as a snow queen. My float was made perfectly by my mother and my aunt. As I've said before, I think I'm much more of a burden now to my mother, as an adult, than I ever was as a child.

I also have to say a huge thank you—I decided that this year it needed a flat-pack sled, and I asked my handyman, Jim, three weeks before the parade if he could come up with that. I don't know how, but somehow or other, he managed to come up with a flat-pack sled design. Amazing job, Jim.

I also want to shout-out George Hollinger at Telos Manufacturing, who didn't blink an eye when I came in with two 4 by 8 sheets of plywood and told him I needed a sled cut out on a random CNC design that I'd found on a Reddit post. He just ran with it, which was amazing.

Congratulations to Corey Kimpson as well. She's the ward councillor for Preston. She was up on a ladder doing tinsel and did an incredible job, as did the Preston BIA.

And thank you again, of course, to my Auntie Deb, my dad, Jenn Kerr, Bonita, Gerry, Michael and Logan. Very successful—thank you again.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: As the festive season is fast approaching, there's plenty to look forward to: good food, holiday parties and time with family and friends. And as we make those plans, let's make sure a safe ride home is a part of them.

November is Community Safety Month in Brampton. And just last week, Peel Regional Police and MADD Canada launched this year's Festive RIDE Campaign, with roadside checks across Brampton and Mississauga continuing through December 31. The message is simple: Enjoy the celebration, but never drive impaired. If you plan to drink or use cannabis, leave the keys at home and choose a designated driver, call a taxi, take transit, or get a rideshare. And if you're planning on hosting, make sure your guests have a safe trip home as well. A little bit of planning before a night out can make all the difference.

Thank you to Peel Regional Police, MADD Canada, and everybody working to keep our roads safe.

And to everybody in Brampton East, enjoy the season, look out for one another, and plan your ride home before you celebrate. Stay safe and enjoy.

EDUCATION

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: This week, education workers across Ontario are casting their votes on whether or not they support strike action. Some 98% of OECTA members have already voted in favour of a strike. ETFO, OSSTF, CUPE and AEFO will tell us this week what they're willing to sacrifice to protect public education in Ontario.

This isn't a game. It's about investing in environments, staff and schools so that all of our kids, especially those with disabilities and special needs, have a right to quality public education in Ontario, every day.

Let me be clear: The kids are not okay. Schools are seeing an unprecedented increase in mental health and learning challenges, and education workers have been raising the alarm for years now. But this government has no plan to address the root causes, no strategy to deal with the fallout—only $6.5 billion in cuts. So our schools are like emergency rooms: overcrowded and full of kids with unmet needs—a symptom of a government's underfunding, demanding more of our front-line workers than ever before.

This weekend, I chatted with a friend who said she had voted yes for the first time because something has to give. She has students with complex needs in her class, and there is no support to help them. We all know what she says—that we're heading toward a bigger crisis. Staff are keeping the system together with love and duct tape, but the duct tape isn't holding anymore.

From the bottom of my heart, as a mom and former school social worker, thank you for all you do to stand up for our kids and to stand up for public education in Ontario each and every day.

1030

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for two minutes to be allotted to the independent members as a group to respond to the Minister of Long-Term Care's ministerial statement today.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent for two minutes to be allotted to the independent members as a group to respond to the Minister of Long-Term Care's ministerial statement today. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, we have with us in the Speaker's gallery today Ms. Ana Luísa Riquito, the consul general of Portugal in Toronto. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guest to the Legislature.

Applause.

Hon. Kevin Holland: Joining us from Thunder Bay today is the chief of Superior North EMS, Shane Muir, as well as Janine Chiasson from Thunder Bay Field Naturalists, and Dr. Julee Boan from Natural Resources Defense Council and Environment North. Welcome.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce Ontario Pork and Jolanda Vandenbroek, a constituent of mine and board member for zone 4.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I'm very pleased today to introduce good friends and former colleagues Sandy Berg and John Pyke.

Thank you for being here today.

Ms. Marit Stiles: This morning, it's my pleasure to introduce the president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation and members of the executive board of OSSTF as well.

Welcome to Martha Hradowy and everyone else who's here with us today.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I'm very pleased to introduce Cameron Casey, a page who's here from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and the page captain for today, and to also welcome his parents: Liam Casey, who is a member of the press gallery, and his wife, Shannon Casey.

Welcome to your House.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I'm pleased to introduce Greg Sage, chief and director of paramedic services at Halton region, who's here today with the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am delighted to welcome many representatives from student organizations: OUSA, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance; College Student Alliance; as well as Ontario Student Voices.

In particular, I want to recognize three constituents from London West who are here today with OUSA: Steve Xia, president at Western USC; Timna Habta, vice-president at Laurier Students' Union; and Ayo Osunade, vice-president at Brock students' union.

There are many representatives from Brock University here today, including the president, Dr. Lesley Rigg, and Dr. Arja Vainio-Mattila, who is the provost and VP.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I just wanted to mention that Brock University had a reception this morning.

I'd like to welcome Arja Vainio-Mattila, Scott Johnstone and Daniel Grubb, as well as senior leadership from the university.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: We have a number of guests here from Niagara West, including, of course, a number of folks from Brock, as was mentioned.

Also, Ontario Pork is here. They're holding a great reception. Come stop by and say hi to some local pork farmers.

MPP George Darouze: I'd like to welcome Darryl Wilton, president of the Ontario Paramedic Association, as well as all the representatives here today, to Queen's Park. I look forward to seeing you all later. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Ted Hsu: A warm welcome to Professor Allison Petrozziello and her students from Toronto Metropolitan University's graduate program in public policy and administration, including Olivia Andre from Kingston; and also, Sandy Berg and John Pyke from Kingston; the Chicken Farmers of Ontario; the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario; and Ontario Pork. Welcome to your House.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I too would like to welcome Ontario Pork to the House. We have with us Chair Tara Terpstra, Vice-Chair TJ Murray and, from the board of directors, Karen Sanders, Tanya Terpstra, Charlie Illick, Bruce Hudson, Philip Van Raay, Cassie Van Engelen and Jolanda Vandenbroek.

Mr. Lorne Coe: The chief of paramedic services for the region of Durham, Troy Cheseboro, is joining us today.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to welcome local paramedic Jessica Park with the paramedic chiefs here at Queen's Park. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'd like to recognize Ercole Perrone who is here today, as well as Kristine Galvan from Ignite, the Humber student union, and Ed Steel.

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to welcome the chief of York region paramedics, Chris Spearen. Thank you for coming out today. I'm looking forward to the hot chocolate on the front lawn.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to wish Mike Fisher and Charlotte LeFrank, Friends of Ojibway Prairie board of directors members, a warm welcome here to Queen's Park—as well as Justin Lammers, the chief of Essex-Windsor EMS.

Mme France Gélinas: I'd like to welcome Richard Eberhardt, the proud dad of our page Reese Eberhardt, who was there a second ago and just disappeared.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to also welcome members from OUSA: Hishram Clifford from Niagara College; and from Niagara, Ms. Khan, Ali Hadwan, Caleb Noble and Christian Evangelista. Thank you for the meeting this morning.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have a whole crew of people here from Toronto Eglinton Rotary Club: Walter Jedrzejek president-elect; Yvonne Lee, first vice-President; and Walter Psotka, past president.

Everyone from Ontario Nature—I love green people being in this beautiful chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Just a reminder, members: You can introduce your guests if you return at 3 o'clock today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): It is now time to introduce our pages. Please assemble before me.

From Parkdale–High Park, Amira Broderick; from Spadina–Fort York, Maeve Butler-McPhee; from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Cameron Casey; all the way from Mushkegowuk–James Bay, a 10-hour drive, we have Arthur Dubosq; from Nickel Belt, also in the north, Reese Eberhardt; from Milton, Nathan Hung Wan Luk; from Toronto Centre, Eva Kempler; from Mississauga–Lakeshore, Humza Khan; from Markham–Thornhill, Matthew Ko; from Thornhill, Chelsea Lam; from Waterloo, Ryan Lee; from Toronto–Danforth, Léa Lemoine-Wang; from Richmond Hill, Maximilian Li; from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Jate Lilley; from Beaches–East York, Daniel Lowas; from Wellington–Halton Hills, Georgia Marsella; from Kitchener Centre, Hera Patel; from Kitchener South–Hespeler, Yuvki Patel; from Brampton South, Melchi Phirose Philip; from Hamilton Centre, Leo Rochwerg; from Etobicoke Centre, Emily Schabas; and from Ajax, Seher Sharma.

Welcome our new pages.

Applause.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier.

There are a lot of post-secondary students here in the room today fighting back against this government's cuts to OSAP. The minister has said that OSAP became unsustainable, but we know that it became unsustainable because this government left the door wide open for fraud. The result: unknown millions lost to fraudulent institutions, mountains of debt for students, and zero accountability from this government.

Can the Premier tell us exactly how much money went to these fraudulent institutions under his watch?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Speaker, two full years of investigations into these institutions—I'm not too sure how that member can say we've ignored it—two full years before we brought in the Ontario Provincial Police. Bad actors with serious allegations of criminal fraud against the Ontario taxpayer—we take those very seriously, and we investigate every single tip that comes in. We've done over 3,200 OSAP investigations since 2020, so to say we've been sitting on our hands is the furthest thing from the truth.

1040

We've done over 1,700 inspections into career colleges as well. We've been actively investigating it, but once we understood how widespread it was, we needed to put a pause on OSAP payments to the private career college sector to ensure that we have confidence back into the OSAP system.

That's why we're working with KPMG—to bring back confidence into the OSAP system to ensure that every single dollar is being used as intended.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: So the minister doesn't know or he doesn't care to know. I don't know. Either way, this minister is not fit for this job. This is public money that was meant to support students, not PC donors running diploma mills.

In this latest bill, instead of making students whole and fixing the OSAP mess, the minister's solution is just to protect his own behind with indemnity clauses.

Why is this minister's priority protecting scam colleges and himself from legal action and not protecting the future of Ontario's students?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: We're holding these institutions accountable, and that is why we're bringing forward legislation—that they are going to be liable for misuse of OSAP across the private career college system. Speaker, we're bringing forward stricter regulations when it comes to identity verification. We're bringing forward enhanced KPIs—so ensuring graduation rates are where they're at, employment rates are where they're at. We're also remov-

ing any relationship between the career colleges themselves and the immigration and recruitment firms.

Again, I'll remind the member opposite what we have uncovered. We've uncovered the same IP address being used thousands of times—we've seen some from outside of Canada. We've also seen third parties completing the coursework in a day. We've seen exams done in less than six minutes and students who did not know the institution they attended or the course they took.

These are very serious criminal allegations, and that is why we had to put a pause, because one dollar going out towards fraudulent uses is one dollar too many and we cannot stand for that.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: He didn't do his job, and now they're trying to pass legislation to protect themselves from lawsuits, and it's retroactive.

Shame on you.

To all of the students and the families who are watching this today, let me tell you: This government cares more about protecting themselves in court over a mess that they made than they do about your future. That is the truth.

The minister should be ashamed of himself. He doesn't know how many millions went out from the public purse. He can't give us a number of how many millions went out to those scam colleges. He doesn't have a plan to make students whole. He doesn't have a plan to fix OSAP. But he sure has a plan to protect himself from legal action.

When will this minister take some accountability and finally resign?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Speaker, they want to make it about me, but ultimately, this is about serious allegations against malicious actors in the system. That is why we brought forward legislation yesterday. We need to add the appropriate guardrails. Bad actors have taken advantage of the system. We brought forward KPMG, we referred it to the Ontario Provincial Police, and we're going to ensure that taxpayer dollars for OSAP are used for their intended uses.

Ultimately, these are very serious allegations. Career Colleges Ontario has suspended another two dozen campuses, and they have another 33 that are backdating applications because we have changed the grant-to-loan ratio. The opposition can't have it both ways. These are very serious allegations, and that's why Career Colleges Ontario is suspending their own members right now while the Ontario Provincial Police are looking into these serious allegations.

We will not rest until we ensure that taxpayer dollars are being utilized for—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

EDUCATION ISSUES

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier.

This government is failing the next generation, and nowhere is that clearer than in our classrooms. I hear from parents everywhere I go. They are worried about their kids. They are worried about our teachers and our educational assistants who are being stretched so thin by this government.

While this Premier is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on private jet flights and planning new casinos that apparently nobody actually wants, even in his own government, our classrooms are falling apart.

Why won't the Premier make our children's education a priority for his government?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, that's what we've been doing since 2018. It's not just about the billions of dollars in extra funding that we've been pouring into the classrooms; we have been focused on student achievement. I know that it's a difficult concept for the opposition to appreciate. What we're doing is putting more resources into the classrooms. We respect our teachers. That's why we're providing them with a homeroom fund of over $750 so that they can buy the additional resources for kids.

Ultimately, what we're seeing year over year, the changes in investments that we're making—unlike when the Liberals were in charge of education, year over year over year, student achievement was declining, whether it was in math, whether it was in literacy. But since this government took office in 2018, just the reverse has happened.

In fact, in the member's own riding, the Toronto District School Board has highlighted the fact that their EQAO results are the highest that they have been in 25 years, since this government assumed supervision of that board.

And that is what we're going to continue on—real results for our students, by supporting teachers.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: This minister is delusional if he thinks that kids are not struggling right now in our classrooms across this province.

I met an EA in Windsor just last week who had seven special-needs students assigned to her—one EA, seven children, across five classrooms. Imagine that. I know the minister would rip his hair out if he ever had to work that hard.

It's the kids who need a little extra help who fall through the cracks most often, because of this government's neglect. Students in Ontario are not reaching their full potential because this government doesn't care.

Instead of investing in the things that matter, the Premier is running the highest deficit in this province's history so he can build more casinos and more spas.

Why is the future of our children nowhere to be found in this government's agenda?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, it will come as no surprise to the Leader of the Opposition that I completely disagree with that.

The reality is that we've poured billions of dollars into education. We've put over a billion dollars into special education. We've hired over 10,000 additional support

staff to help and ensure that we have better outcomes in special education. But what we've said is that it is not enough. We have to ensure that the money and the investments that are made are matching the outcome that parents expect. Our teachers are working very, very hard. And our teachers and support staff, our ECEs are telling us that sometimes the system doesn't match the investments that are being made. That is why, when it comes to special education, we're reviewing how we deliver special education. But it's not just about money. If it was just about money, Ontario would be the best at everything, because there are very few jurisdictions worldwide that spend more on education than does the province of Ontario—over $43 billion.

I don't think it's too much to expect that we focus on student outcomes by supporting those who give our kids the—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: This minister is positively delusional if he thinks that a 98% strike vote is a badge of honour—honestly.

The first thing on this Premier's agenda when he came into power in 2018 was to attack teachers and students. We remember. He has cut $1,500 per student since they came into office. Think about that. He attacked education workers when all they wanted was more resources for our kids. He's cutting from our classrooms, and he is throwing measly gift cards at teachers to funnel money to American companies like Staples.

Back to the Premier: When is this Premier going to stop attacking our children's future and start investing in our children's classrooms?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): A moment, Minister.

I would just like to caution our members on the language that we are using when we are directing it at other members.

I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You see the level of debate that comes from the opposition, frankly.

This is an opposition that for a number of years held the balance of power, and they get up in this House and they say, "Oh, why didn't you do this? Why didn't you do that?"

Well, I guess the question is, when you held the balance of power, when you were working with the Liberal Party that was systematically seeing year over year over year our students failing—each year, under the Liberals and under the NDP, our students were failing, every single year.

Under our government, we're making investments, yes—record levels of investment, a 48% increase in education funding.

1050

But I really don't think parents care when the minister gets up and says, "Wow, we've got a 48% increase." They don't care about the 10,000 more support staff. What they care about is: "Are my children going to succeed in the future? Are they having everything they need, all of the help that they need so that they can succeed?"

I think that we're going in the right direction because year after year, under our Conservative government, we're seeing those results increase. But that doesn't mean that the job is done; it means that the job has just started. Every single September, the job starts over again.

That's why we're focused on not only more resources, but ensuring the resources match outcomes for our students.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response. The minister was the Minister of Colleges and Universities when this whole OSAP scandal started. In 2021, the Auditor General warned the minister of the big risks with career colleges and OSAP. The minister ignored that report, and then months later held a $150,000 fundraiser for the PC Party.

My question is simple: Did the minister ignore the Auditor General's report in order to host that $150,000 fundraiser?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I appreciate the opportunity to explain the time frames again to that member.

In late 2024, we had a growing concern with the amount of applications that we were receiving for private career colleges.

In January 2025, Career Colleges Ontario, a third-party agency, came to my ministry with the same concerns that we had with the growing number of applications at career colleges.

In May 2025, we had the federal government complete their investigation, provide us the results of that investigation, which we utilized to do targeted and enhanced inspections of those institutions. That summer, we went out and did those inspections at the institutions.

And then this spring, we removed eligibility from those specific institutions because of the individual inspections that took place over two years.

Two years of individual inspections brought us to a period that we realized it was more widespread than we initially thought, and that's why we paused OSAP this summer and put in KPMG to bring back—

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

Mr. John Fraser: That wasn't an answer to the question, but let's go on.

The minister will also remember that her chief of staff, Ari Laskin, left to become the CEO of Career Colleges Ontario, and the government continued to fundraise from career colleges. And then they made online asynchronous learning OSAP-eligible in 2023—something the colleges had been asking for. So let's say what that's all about: No classroom, no instructor, no set time—despite the Auditor General's warnings. And the minister and the party continued to fundraise from career colleges.

Speaker, taxpayers are out hundreds of millions of dollars, if not billions of dollars. Will the PC Party repay all the monies they raised from career colleges?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: As I've mentioned many times in this House, these are very serious criminal allegations that we are taking very seriously.

We investigate every single individual tip that we receive. We received over 3,200 investigations into OSAP, 1,700 inspections into our career colleges. We're continually investigating bad actors across the system.

But let's talk about what we have done for the system. We've invested $1.7 billion to fund 70,000 more seats across labour market-driven programs at our publicly assisted colleges—40,000 of those seats are in STEM programs, because that's what our students are driving towards. We also have 16,000 seats towards the health care programs, 7,900 seats in education programs because there's a need there, 3,800 seats in skilled trades programs, as well as 3,000 other seats in high-priority programs for the local labour markets they serve. Over two years, we've added over 100,000 seats to our publicly assisted college and university system.

We'll continue to be there for the system—

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

Mr. John Fraser: I can understand why the former minister doesn't want to answer these questions.

There are thousands and thousands of honest, hard-working people who have been hurt by this government in this scandal.

If you look at the history of this government, every scandal starts with fundraising—the greenbelt, fundraising; skills development, fundraising; MZOs, fundraising. It's no different here.

The PC Party and the minister and this whole government were more focused on fundraising than on protecting the taxpayer dollars and honest, hard-working Ontarians.

Has anyone over there thought about stopping donations from career colleges? I don't think so. As long as the money is rolling in, everything is good, folks, right? The problem is, you're hurting people.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, why is this government so focused on opportunities to fundraise and not opportunities for honest, hard-working Ontarians?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: We're focused on this legislation to add the appropriate guardrails so we can re-release OSAP to the students who need it. We're working with urgency because we understand the priority for these students. But these are serious allegations; we had to take these very seriously. We had to put a pause across the OSAP system when it came to private institutions, because ultimately one dollar not used for its intended use is one dollar too many.

Speaker, we need to ensure that we bring back the confidence that's needed. That's why we've brought forward KPMG, a third-party auditor. Their forensic audit team is bringing back the confidence we need.

They can laugh all they want on the other side, but Career Colleges Ontario sent us a letter that they've suspended two dozen campuses just recently because they understand the impact this is having and the serious nature of these allegations. They also have another 33 additional campuses—because we changed the grant-to-loan ratio—that were backdating all the applications for the students. These are serious concerns.

You can keep trivializing this and making it about me, but we're going to continue—

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. John Fraser: Just for clarification, I'm not laughing at the situation; I'm laughing at the minister's preposterous answers day after day after day.

My question is for the Minister of Education.

Yesterday, at public accounts committee, we began the study on the report on special education.

We know that three years ago, school boards were spending $400 million more than they were given by the government, and they still weren't meeting the needs. The gap has continued to grow year after year, and students are not getting what they need.

Speaker, my question to the Minister of Education is simple: When is he going to stop starving special education?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The reality was—and the member opposite would know this very well because he was, of course, part of a government for 15 years that did just that. They starved not only special education but the education system as a whole, which led us, in 2018, when we were elected, to have to move quickly to not only restore funding but increase funding into the special education system.

We've increased special education funding by I think over 35%, to almost $4 billion—35%. Imagine that, Madam Speaker. They were so underfunding special education, under the previous Liberal government, that we've had to increase funding by 35% across the system. What has that meant? That has meant more than 10,600 additional education staff, 4,600 educational assistants and 1,400 professionals and paraprofessionals within the system.

But do you know what the reality is? There is still more work that needs to be done. That allows us to get ourselves back up into a situation where we're meeting the needs of kids, but there's more work to be done, because as you talk to teachers—

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

Mr. John Fraser: So much so that the people who help kids in special education, their EAs, had to be out on the street a number of years ago—Bill 124. That's the kind of respect that they're giving our educators.

Our schools are not safe places to learn or work. Class sizes are too big. There's a mental health crisis that's not being addressed. And special education is being starved.

Every member in this House knows of a story where a child is excluded from their classroom because there's nobody there to help them. We all know those stories. And we all know the stories of a child who's waiting for an assessment—all of us. We've heard it. A year is a long time when you're just a little kid—a long time in your learning.

Speaker, when a child's needs are unmet, every child in the classroom is affected, and every person who is trying to help them is affected.

So when are this minister and this government going to stop starving special education?

1100

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think the member opposite has a very short memory. I recall Bill 115, which was a landmark Liberal piece of legislation that forced our teachers out on strike. This is unbelievable coming from a Liberal Party that went all the way to the Supreme Court to take away the rights of teachers under Bill 115. Now he's getting up here and lecturing the entire House.

But do you know who supported them? The NDP. That's right. Who held the balance of power, colleagues? The NDP. Who was there to help the Liberals when they were taking away rights from teachers? The NDP. Who was there to help the Liberals when they were starving special education? The NDP. But that doesn't absolve the Liberals of the disgusting actions that they took when they were in office: starving educators, ensuring our students weren't achieving their full potential.

We have reversed that, and I'm very proud—

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

Mr. John Fraser: Bill 115—I remember asking this government, when Bill 124 came up, why didn't you learn from our mistake? How come you didn't learn—if you want to throw it back at me.

Every day, in this province, a classroom is evacuated. Every day, a teacher is hurt. Every day, a child is excluded. Every day, somebody is not getting what they need in school. It's not a joke, and it's not funny. It's happening right now, and it's happening because we're not spending enough money, doing enough for children with exceptional needs.

I'll ask once again: When will this government stop starving special education?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I can assure the member opposite that we learned from his mistakes and the mistakes of the Liberal Party. We absolutely learned from that. Do you know who learned? The people of the province of Ontario, who, in 2018 and then again in 2022 and then again in the last election, put a Progressive Conservative government back in office. Do you know why? Because we are focusing on the things that matter to the people of the province of Ontario, whether it's education, whether it's health care, whether it's building an economy that can actually give us the resources to make record investments in education, to make record investments in our health care system.

This is a man and a party that literally starved the people of the province of Ontario. They had to decide between heating or eating. And he gets up to lecture anybody? The only ones who supported them were the NDP, because they wanted a stretch goal in auto insurance. They didn't want to accomplish anything. They just wanted a stretch goal.

What we're going to continue to do is learn the lessons of Liberal failures and ensure that our kids have the opportunities to succeed and Ontarians have the opportunity—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This spring, the Auditor General raised concerns about children waiting more than a year for assessments by psychologists and speech therapists in schools. Last week, an OSBCU report revealed why the waits are so long. Thanks to this government's cuts to education funding, 64% of boards now have worse staff-to-student ratios for psychologists than in 2018, while 45% have fewer speech and language professionals per student. It's basic math: Fewer experts and more students equal long wait times.

Will the Premier get back to basics and fund more staff to meet the level of student needs?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I was actually watching committee yesterday, when the member raised this question. The member didn't like the answer because what the member heard was that, in fact, we have increased funding to special education. The member said there's not enough money for special education, and the deputy minister highlighted the fact that there was actually a significant increase. The member said, "Well, it's about staffing," and then they were told, "Well, we've actually increased staffing by 10,000." They said, "Okay, it's not about staffing; it's really about the specialized." Then they said, "Well, if you go down and you drill down even further, the specialized staffing has increased significantly, by over 16%."

We've done one, two and three, but what we want to make sure that happens is that the outcomes match the investments. I'm not going to do what the opposition want us to do and simply pour more money into a system if it isn't giving us the outcomes that we want.

When I talk to teachers and educators in the special education system, they are saying, "Take a look at the inclusion model. Is it working for everybody? Can it be made better? And are we supporting enough?" And that's what we're going to continue to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Ottawa West–Nepean.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I guess when you don't have an answer, you give alternative histories and alternative facts.

There's a pretty simple pattern from this government: If you say something that they don't like, they will try to shut you down. They've muzzled trustees, banned live-streams, killed the school climate survey, and rejected the Auditor General's recommendation for a parent survey.

And now they're doing it to students too. Student trustees in Ontario are losing their collective voice because the minister took away their funding and told them he was too busy to even meet with them.

Why is this government punishing students for daring to advocate for a system that meets the needs of every child in Ontario?

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's pretty obvious, Madam Speaker, what I want. I want money that is meant for the classroom to be spent in the classroom. That's the key component of an education system.

I don't want my school boards putting money into trustee associations so that they can go to casinos. I don't want that. I want them focused on what matters: putting more money into the education system.

That is why, when we updated the education system under Bill 33 or Bill 101—I can't remember which one; they're two great pieces of legislation, frankly, reducing the power of trustees so that we eliminate some of the conflict in the system. And what are the results of it? In Toronto, we are seeing the highest EQAO results that we have seen in over 25 years—in Peel region, similar results on EQAO. Do you know why? Not just because we've taken away the power of trustees to create division within the system, but because we're refocusing the education system on what matters: giving teachers the resources that they need so that students can succeed.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: When I asked the health minister about Alex Shved, a 37-year-old father battling stage 4 melanoma, who was denied life-saving treatment, the minister replied, "I'm frankly shocked that ... your caucus" does "not understand how important it is that these" decisions "need to be made by medical experts, not by political operatives...."

But, Speaker, it was that politician who decided to ignore the medical experts who recommended the treatment. It was that politician who decided to fight Mr. Shved in court, who decided to defy the court order, and who decided to change the law when the court ruled against the government.

Speaker, will the government finally, truly put the political games aside and give Mr. Shved the life-saving treatment he needs?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You might want to start by stopping exploiting people at their most challenging time.

I've said it many times and I will say it again: These are not political decisions. They are made for a reason within the Ministry of Health, using experts. We have never used political interference in out-of-country, US-based treatments.

What we are doing is focusing on making sure that we have made-in-Ontario clinical trials—5,000 clinical trials that are happening in the province of Ontario today, because we are encouraging people to be in Ontario, to be part of an Ontario health care system that is for all Ontario residents. That's what we'll continue to do, and that's what the Ministry of Health is focused on.

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

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Speaker, it's true; this should not be about politics. This should be about basic human compassion. But this government's absurd spending priorities make it political.

This government spent $49 million to remove bike lanes in Toronto, against the wishes of the city; $112 million in advertising that benefited nobody but this government; and hundreds of millions of dollars on a parking garage for a luxury spa. They are throwing money away left, right and centre on vanity projects but decided not to commit a fraction of that spending that could save hundreds of lives.

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Will the government do the right thing, put politics aside, and reverse this heartless decision?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, 5,000 clinical trials that are happening in the province today—leading the country. Why? Because we have innovative medicines and we have pharmaceuticals—that want to be part of the Ontario solution.

We have a life sciences strategy led by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Economic Development that is encouraging organizations and manufacturing to set up here in the province of Ontario so that they are a made-in-Ontario, made-in-Canada solution funded by the province of Ontario, funded by OHIP, and available to all Ontario residents. It's a health innovation pathway that has ensured a FAST program, that has meant we have nine new cancer drug treatments that are available for all Ontario residents faster, by over a year.

That's the innovation that we want to encourage and happen here in Ontario. We're going to keep doing that.

And they're going to keep politicizing a process that really, truly should never have been politicized.

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Minister of Sport.

Speaker, in my riding of Peterborough–Kawartha, we know just how important sport and recreation facilities are for bringing people together and building stronger communities.

That's why I was incredibly proud to see our government invest more than $6.3 million to build a new multi-season arena in Curve Lake First Nation. This new facility will provide year-round opportunities for residents to enjoy hockey, lacrosse, figure skating and ball hockey, while also serving as a gathering place for community events and cultural activities.

Can the Minister of Sport share how our government is building on investments like this one to improve sport and recreation infrastructure across Ontario?

Hon. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the member from Peterborough–Kawartha for his unwavering commit-

ment to his constituents—and a special congratulations to the member's favourite OHL team, on celebrating their 70th anniversary this year.

Speaker, our investment in Curve Lake First Nation is a powerful example of how our government's plan to protect Ontario is delivering real results for local communities. We're delivering these same opportunities right across the province.

Through our 2026 budget, we're investing an additional $300 million in the Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund, bringing our total investment to an historic $500 million. I want to remind every member of this House that applications for the next intake are open till December 22. So please get out there and encourage your municipalities and interest groups to apply.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member from Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you to the minister for that response.

Speaker, I want to echo the minister's message to every member of this House: Get the word out about this incredible program.

I've seen first-hand just what our investment in the new arena means to Curve Lake First Nation, and the excitement and positive response from the community has been tremendous. I also want to share that Deputy Chief Jacobs has challenged our own Legiskaters hockey team to a charity game at that arena.

I'd encourage every member to speak with their local municipalities, Indigenous communities and sport organizations to make sure they know about this opportunity to bring similar investments to their own community.

Can the minister please share what our government is doing to support Indigenous participation in sport and ensure more Indigenous communities can benefit from the opportunities that sport provides?

Hon. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the member for the question.

Our government believes that every child in Ontario deserves a chance to participate in sport.

That's why we're investing more than $20 million in eight Indigenous-led projects through our Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund. And we're investing in more than bricks and mortar. We announced a $5.2-million investment to expand sport and recreation opportunities in Indigenous communities across the province. This builds on nearly $50 million invested since 2018, helping almost 180,000 participants, including 70,000 through youth cultural camps and 67,000 through our Community Aboriginal Recreation Activator Program. These programs build on the important work being done by the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, with the support of our Premier.

Our government is ensuring that every child across this province has the opportunity to participate in sport.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

MPP Alexa Gilmour: The Premier insisted that there were nightmare stories of children's aid societies abusing taxpayer dollars. We finally got the report, and what it exposes is a system where children struggle alone for months with mental health, with disability, with complex trauma, while treatment options and foster placements dwindle. Serious harm, even deaths, in care are on the rise, and so too are the number of capable, loving parents giving up their special-needs children in desperation, hoping that CAS will help. The abused children are being warehoused on futons in offices and in sheds and roadside motels. And this government tinkers with board governance.

Speaker, through you: I want to know what section of Bill 148 gets a single child out of a shed and into a home.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Thank you for the question.

We've said this from day one when we formed government: We want every child to be supported, protected and cared for regardless of their circumstances.

Madam Speaker, the work that we're doing isn't just now—and of course the member knows full well that elected officials, politicians don't direct placements; it's caring professionals like social workers, social service workers, experts on the ground who do the placements. We want to make sure that because of our record investments this year—$2 billion in the children's aid societies across the province—those placements are safe, and so that every child is cared for in those settings. What does that mean with that $2-billion investment? The work that we've done, the previous government didn't—and as the Minister of Education alluded to earlier, they held the balance of power. They could have demanded these changes to be made, but they didn't do it. It took this government to come in to hire more inspectors on the ground, increase the number of unannounced inspections, increase monetary fines to—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: For crown wards, this government is the parent of last resort. I cannot believe that this government's members would treat their own children the way CAS children are being treated.

Every time the Premier talks about the crisis facing children's aid, we keep hearing that he's blaming management—and we heard the minister do it again.

In reality, two thirds of societies are in financial distress, caring for complex cases as the cost of housing rises. The review tells us that they need more help than this government is willing to provide.

Children want a home. They want a family. They want a chance at life. They are children. They want to live and they want to not be subjected to violence.

Through you, Speaker: This bill is a shocking abdication of the government's responsibility. Where is the plan to keep more children in care from dying?

Hon. Michael Parsa: In fact, I'll just remind the member and all members of this House that of course it was this government that, when we formed government in 2018, said that the way that the care was being provided at that time was not good enough. We want to make sure that every child and every youth in this province has the opportunity to succeed and thrive.

Madam Speaker, while we're making record investment in the sector, the number of children and youth has decreased by 20%; the number of open protection cases has decreased by 47%. And what we said is, "We're never going to leave any stone unturned," which is why we conducted the third-party review, in addition to the reviews that we conduct regularly.

We're not going to look the other way. We're going to work with partners to make sure that every child and every youth in this province is supported and cared for.

Unlike the opposition, we're not pitting parties against one another. We want—

Interjections.

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

And just a reminder: When I stand, your mike is cut.

I recognize the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

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EDUCATION ISSUES

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Speaker, I believe that an investment in our kids' education is an investment in them, in their future, and in our economic prosperity too. It's connected. That is not what I see from this Conservative government. They aren't interested in ensuring the right mix of educators, and our class sizes are too large.

Yesterday, we had a public hearing on special education after a failing grade from the Auditor General. Kids aren't being assessed soon enough for the support that they need. This government doesn't think it's important to replace an education assistant when they're off sick, but instead calls the parent and asks that the child not come to school.

This government has been obsessed with undermining local decision-making by school trustees and now is preparing for a fight with educators instead of being laser-focused on our kids.

Speaker, to the Premier: Do you not believe that kids are our future?

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

Interjection.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know; it sounds like a Whitney Houston song.

Let me just say this: It is really strange coming from the Liberals—I actually watched the committee hearing yesterday that the members are talking about, and when they would raise these questions and when they were given facts, they didn't actually like the facts, so they went on to other things.

The reality is that we've had to increase special education funding in the province from day one, because they literally starved it. Imagine, Madam Speaker, we've increased funding by over 35% from the historic lows that the Liberals left in the system. We've hired over 4,600 educational assistants and 1,400 professionals and paraprofessionals in the system.

And what we heard yesterday from teachers in that committee was that we don't wait for reports to tell us if a child needs help in the education system; a teacher knows almost immediately and begins providing the help that a student needs. That's what I expect from our educators. That's what we're doing, and we'll continue to support them.

So while they wait for paper, we want results immediately. And I trust that our teachers can give our students the help that they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: That's really interesting, because the facts are the facts and kids are waiting to get the assessments that they need. So, frankly, it's just not good enough, what's happening right now.

I've been all across Ontario to all 124 ridings recently, and nowhere—nowhere—do parents or grandparents feel like their kids' education is better. Like them, as a mom of teenage boys, I have seen it get worse over the last eight years. Educators showed up at events with me to ask for help. They care about our kids. They want a government that cares too—and to be creative in how we develop our curriculum and get to the right balance of digital learning, to ensure that courses where kids discover their talent and stay healthy, like the arts and phys ed, aren't the first cancelled when an educator calls in sick. It takes leadership that wants something better for our kids.

Speaker, to the Premier: When will kids, parents and grandparents be able to trust that education is a priority again?

Hon. Paul Calandra: We began that process in 2018, when they threw the Liberals to the corner. Every single year, under a Liberal government, we saw student results on the decline—whether it was math, whether it was literacy—because they chose what? Politics over people. That's what the Liberals do, right? They chose politics over people. So we began with the previous Ministers of Education—they began putting in place a back-to-basics curriculum, one that focused on achievement.

What we're seeing year over year under Conservatives—those student results are on the uprise again. We're putting billions of dollars more into education. Every single thing that she highlighted in her question, that parents want, are the things that we are actually delivering.

The challenge that we had, of course, was that after 15 years, the Liberals delivered nothing. And what did all of those members do, whether it was on health, education or the economy? They sat on their hands and said nothing, because they know politics, but they don't know people.

That's why the people put their faith in a Progressive Conservative majority government.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier.

Overcrowded classrooms, crumbling school buildings, no support for kids with special needs—your government is breaking our education system. Our kids deserve properly funded schools. But the cupboards are bare, and the budget deficit is massive because the super-rich do not pay their fair share. Every hour, billionaires pocket more wealth than the average worker earns in a year, and our kids are paying the price.

Speaker, will the Premier support a tax on wealth over $100 million so we have the money needed to properly fund our schools without increasing the already massive provincial budget deficit?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, the answer is no, Madam Speaker. I think we've made it quite clear that we don't raise taxes. The last thing that the people of the province of Ontario need is an increase in taxes. We've gone in just the opposite direction.

We have looked at what the Liberals left the province of Ontario: a record deficit. They left us with untold red tape, jobs leaving and fleeing the province, and an overtaxed, overregulated jurisdiction that did not meet the needs of the people of the province of Ontario.

So, quite clearly, no, we're not going to increase taxes on the people of the province of Ontario. That's what the NDP and the Liberals do very well, and I know that the Green Party would overachieve on that as well.

Let me be clear: We're going to continue to cut taxes. We're going to continue to invest in an economy that builds opportunity for the people of Ontario. And what are the results of that? Billions of dollars of investments, and job creation in the province of Ontario that exceeds almost every other jurisdiction.

We are an economy that is growing; an economy that, despite being attacked by the United States to hollow out our manufacturing sector, is exceeding. We are going to continue building that type of an economy.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, let's be clear: At least the education minister is being honest. He just said no to students and parents—no to properly funding their classrooms. Do you know what else he said no to? He said no to average workers, who are paying more in taxes than the super-wealthy.

We know who this government works for: the super-rich. They can't even ask for people with wealth over $100 million to pay their fair share so we can have properly funded schools. Over 1,800 schools in this province are on the repair backlog. Over 1,000 classrooms in grades 4 to 8 are jam-packed with over 30 students. The Auditor General's report is saying that special-ed students are having unmet needs. And yet this government won't ask people with over $100 million to pay their fair share.

Here's this government's chance. Will they tax the super-rich so we can properly fund schools?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member opposite knows that we are funding schools at their highest level. I'll take no lessons from this gentleman, Madam Speaker.

I've said this a million times: My parents came to this country with literally next to nothing. Do you know what they did? They busted their backsides every single day and they worked hard and hard and hard, and they developed wealth. They gave us—me and my brothers and sisters—the opportunity to succeed.

Members like that—do you know what they want to do? They want to put their hands in the pockets of hard-working people who come here to build wealth. There's nothing wrong with building wealth. There's nothing wrong with hard work. There's nothing wrong with succeeding. Only the Liberals and NDP and now the Greens would tax those people who work hard. Do you know what we're going to continue to do? We're going to keep our hands out of their pockets. We're going to continue to encourage them to build wealth. That's what builds a strong Ontario. That's what builds a strong Canada. They would rather see the poor poorer as long as the rich are less rich.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is for the Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

As we continue to face threats from Washington, workers and businesses in my riding are concerned. The chaos and the uncertainty fuelled by the White House means Ontario cannot afford needless delays and more bureaucracy. We must move faster by removing unnecessary red tape and regulatory delays that get in the way of attracting new investment, advancing technologies and creating good-paying jobs.

Can the minister please explain what we are doing to cut red tape, empower faster decisions, and secure our position as the most competitive economy in the G7?

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The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Markham–Thornhill.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I want to thank the member from Thornhill for that wonderful question. Her riding is Thornhill, and my riding is Markham–Thornhill; I know her hard work.

Our government has reduced Ontario's red tape reduction burden by nearly 6%. We have the lowest regulatory burden per capita in the nation. We are delivering more than $1.3 billion in annual savings and 1.9 million hours in reduced administrative burden for people and businesses across Ontario.

Speaker, we are making it easier for health care professionals to bring their skills to Ontario through mutual recognition of professional credentials.

This is our plan to protect Ontario in action so we can keep building the most competitive economy in the G7 nations.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I'd like to thank the parliamentary assistant for his response and always being a great neighbour in Thornhill.

Now is not the time for lengthy delays. Our government must continue to cut red tape to accelerate approvals and support new investments, fortify our industrial base and secure our supply chains. We have to act. At a time of global economic uncertainty, we cannot allow red tape to get in the way of our progress. Unnecessary permitting delays and outdated regulations make it harder to build the critical infrastructure we all rely upon.

Could the parliamentary assistant please explain how our government's review of business-facing permits is helping attract investment, strengthen our economic infrastructure and protect Ontario's competitive advantage?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member for that supplementary question.

Tariffs remain a threat, but our government has a plan, and it's working. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we introduced Bill 140, the Building Ontario Faster Act, 2026. This is our plan to protect Ontario in action. It proposes measures to speed up permitting timelines, reducing delays for businesses looking to invest and create jobs. If the bill is passed, it will eliminate nearly 220,000 permit processing days. This will open up more opportunity for businesses to invest right here in Ontario and get projects moving faster. Madam Speaker, that is how we protect Ontario's competitive advantage, strengthen our economic infrastructure and build the most competitive, investment-ready economy in the G7.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I recently met with the Kapuskasing family health team, and their message was clear: They're struggling with inadequate base funding, rising operating costs and salaries that cannot compete with other health care sectors.

Speaker, you cannot strengthen primary care by expanding services while neglecting the workforce holding it together.

How does this minister expect family health teams to retain qualified professionals and maintain essential services when their base funding isn't keeping pace with the cost of delivering care?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, $3.4 billion in expanded primary care in the province of Ontario—an application-based program that ensures individual organizations can submit what they want and how much they need, and we make an assessment and we fund them. As a result, we've seen over 500,000 people in the province of Ontario connect to a primary care provider. Again, I will say—$3.4-billion investment in our primary care providers.

We know that when we invest in our primary care providers—and we are doing it with retention as well—we know that we have clinicians who step up and do the work. Primary care providers—doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants. They're all there, and they're all getting funded through a primary care action team.

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I see you're not listening to us, and you're definitely not listening to your family health teams.

During the government's own pre-budget consultations back in January, family health teams across the province warned of the severe staffing shortages and a persistent 15% to 30% wage gap with other agencies.

When will this minister provide adequate, flexible base funding so family health teams can retain their staff and sustain the services our communities depend on?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: That is exactly what we do. In fact, we made some changes with the primary care teams to make sure that those executive directors and those leaders can actually decide where the highest priority is for their community and shift some of the funds to ensure that, whether they want a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, a respiratory therapist, a dietitian, a speech-language pathologist, a social worker or a mental health worker, they have the flexibility at the local level. Of course, I am very excited that we are now in the next phase of the expansion, and we are getting those applications in to make sure that as they want to expand their primary care, as they want to ensure that they can attach more patients across Ontario, we're getting it done with a $3.4-billion investment.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is again for the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response, and I would appreciate an answer to the question.

In 2021, the Auditor General warned this minister. And then, later, this minister approved online asynchronous learning. Those are the two things that have generated this scandal. This is the birth of this scandal—this minister's decisions.

Will the minister respond to my question? Why did she ignore the Auditor General's report and approve online asynchronous learning?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health just reminded me, we were in the middle of a global pandemic.

We've taken every single tip very seriously. We've done over 3,200 individual investigations into OSAP.

In late 2024, as I've already told that member many times, we understood there was a growing concern with the amount of applications going into career colleges. Career Colleges Ontario had the same concern we did in January 2025.

Now that member wants me to ignore the concerns that Career Colleges Ontario just addressed last week with my ministry—that they've suspended over two dozen campuses, with 13 others being reviewed, and another 33 that are backdating applications. If that member is okay flowing taxpayer dollars when even a third-party agency has concerns, that's on him.

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

Mr. John Fraser: There's a lot of blame to go around—the Minister of Finance, the Premier, people on Treasury Board—but this was the minister who made two decisions which set this whole thing in motion, and what this whole thing is, is hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars going out the door. But more importantly, it has hurt thousands and thousands of honest, hard-working people who are just trying to get ahead.

I haven't heard a response from the minister, and I've asked the current minister to resign.

Will the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response resign for her role in this OSAP scandal?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: These are very serious criminal allegations. That's why we've brought forward legislation this session, which I know that member will definitely support, because he understands the urgency of what we're working with right now. One dollar that flows to fraudulent purposes is one dollar too many. The legislation we're bringing forward is going to have stronger identity verification, enhanced KPIs—that's graduation rates, employment rates—as well as removing the relationship between immigration and recruitment firms and the institutions themselves.

We take every single tip very seriously. That is why we have brought it forward to the Ontario Provincial Police.

BIRTH OF MEMBER'S GRANDCHILD

Mr. Brian Riddell: I have the pleasure today of introducing my first grandchild, Jackson Henry Riddell, to the world.

ALAN DICKSON

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, before we break for lunch, I do want to draw your attention to the members' gallery. We have joining us today a local sledge hockey standout, Alan Dickson, who has been inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame—also deemed Esso's "Most Dedicated."

Welcome to Queen's Park.

There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CELEBRATING VARIOUS AFRICAN COMMUNITIES ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 CÉLÉBRANT DIVERSES COMMUNAUTÉS AFRICAINES

MPP Firin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to proclaim various heritage months / Projet de loi 151, Loi proclamant divers mois du patrimoine.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

MPP Mohamed Firin: Yes, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

The bill proclaims the following:

—the month of June in each year as Congolese Heritage Month, DRC;

—the month of September in each year as Eritrean Heritage Month;

—the month of August in each year as Gambian Heritage Month;

—the month of September in each year as Ghanaian Heritage month;

—the month of June in each year as Kenyan Heritage Month;

—the month of November in each year as Moroccan Heritage Month; and

—the month of October in each year as Nigerian Heritage Month.

WATERLOO MORAINE CONSERVATION ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 SUR LA CONSERVATION DE LA MORAINE DE WATERLOO

Ms. Clancy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act to conserve the Waterloo Moraine by prohibiting development and the operation of new pits and quarries in the Waterloo Moraine Protected Area / Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à conserver la moraine de Waterloo en interdisant l'aménagement de terrains et l'exploitation de nouveaux puits d'extraction et de nouvelles carrières dans la zone protégée de la moraine de Waterloo.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Would you like to briefly explain the bill?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Definitely. The Waterloo moraine is an area in the Waterloo region, as my neighbour knows, where our water comes from. Some 80% of the water we rely on in the Waterloo region is from the ground. We don't have pipes to lakes, so it's important that we protect

these spaces. We create economic chaos when we don't protect our groundwater.

This past year, our region faced a moratorium on any development and building. The member from Waterloo and myself have been outspoken in protecting the groundwater to make sure that we don't have to relive this economic crisis.

These water protections would ensure that groundwater in the Waterloo region that is relied upon for 300,000 residents is protected in perpetuity. We believe that water is for people, it's for farms, it's for families, and it will help us maintain a healthy economy and prosperous future. Without these protections, we know that not only will the Waterloo region be compromised, but all of the tributaries that come from the Waterloo moraine.

This bill is a model for all the other moraines in the province where these protections should also be in place.

1647359 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2026

Mr. Coe moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr65, An Act to revive 1647359 Ontario Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

POLISH INDEPENDENCE DAY

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I am honoured to rise in the House today to recognize the anniversary of Poland's national independence. However, Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not mention the terrible tragedy that occurred in Poland on November 7, when a mass shooter opened fire in Krakow's historic Main Market Square, leaving 10 people dead and 16 more injured. Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Poland, the victims and their families.

Last week, on November 11, we recognized Remembrance Day as we paid tribute to the sacrifices of the brave Canadian men and women who gave their lives in defence of our country, who fought for our freedom and paid the ultimate sacrifice to preserve peace, democracy and the rule of law.

For Canadians of Polish heritage, November 11 has added significance: It is also Polish Independence Day. This year marks the 108th anniversary of national independence, also known as Narodowe Święto Niepodległości. We salute the brave men and women who fought and died courageously to preserve Poland's sovereignty.

We reflect on the struggles the Polish people endured over the last centuries, including 123 years of occupation and partition, being wiped out from the map of Europe, the devastation of the two World Wars and the hardships endured at the hands of the communist regime.

Through all the hardships, the spirit of the Polish people and our fight for freedom and self-governance could not be crushed. As Winston Churchill said, "The soul of Poland is indestructible, and she will rise again like a rock, which may for a spell be submerged by a tidal wave, but which remains a rock."

Here in Canada, Polish Canadians make up an essential part of our national character. With over one million people of Polish heritage in Canada and nearly half a million in Ontario, we are home to one of the largest Polish diasporas in the world. In my own community of Mississauga, where Polish is the fifth most common mother tongue in the city, I was proud to join members of the Polish community and the Canadian Polish Congress to recognize this day at the John Paul II Polish Cultural Centre and St. Maximilian Kolbe Polish Roman Catholic Church. Their contributions to the economic, social and cultural fabric of our country are immeasurable.

Speaker, sovereignty and independence are central values to both Canada and Poland. This is why Polish Independence Day signifies personal pride for me. As an immigrant, I am proud of my Polish heritage. I am proud of my homeland, its people and our fight to stand up for our values, our heritage and our freedom.

Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła.

Long live Poland. Long live Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Responses?

MPP Fatima Shaban: It is always an honour to rise in this House as the member for Scarborough Southwest and shadow minister for citizenship and multiculturalism, anti-racism and equity.

I want to thank the Minister of Long-Term Care for her remarks and for recognizing Polish Independence Day.

November 11 carries an important meaning for Canadians as we come together to remember the Canadians who served our great country and honour their sacrifices. For Polish people around the world and Polish Ontarians, it is also a day to celebrate the return of Poland's independence.

That independence came after a long struggle. Poland's land was divided—Russia, Prussia and Austria—in the late 18th century. Polish people persisted in their resistance over the years that followed. Even though it was challenging or sometimes dangerous, they were committed to preserving their language, history and culture.

1510

An opportunity was created by the First World War. Poland's partitioning nations were weaker and opposing each other in war. Polish leaders and soldiers pushed for an independent state, and on November 11, 1918, Poland was freed.

Polish Canadians have created vibrant communities and made significant contributions to all aspects of life in Ontario. They run local businesses, raise families, help their neighbours and support community groups. Their stories are part of Ontario's story.

I represent Scarborough Southwest, where people with roots in many parts of the world live alongside one another. I see how much it means when families can share

their history and traditions with the people around them. It helps neighbours get to know each other and it gives younger generations a chance to understand the experiences that shape their families.

The fact that Polish Independence Day and Remembrance Day fall on the same date gives us something to think about. Both occasions ask us to remember the cost of conflict and the people who endured it. They also ask us to think about what it takes to protect peace, freedom and the right of people to shape their own future.

As the shadow minister for multiculturalism, I am happy to recognize this day in this House. Celebrating our different cultures matters, but so does making sure people feel welcome and included in their daily lives. That means respecting the histories people bring with them and supporting the community groups that help keep those histories alive.

To everyone in the Polish community who celebrated Polish Independence Day, I hope you had a meaningful day with family and friends. I want to recognize the families who have carried Polish traditions across generations and the community organizations that continue to share them with the people across Ontario.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Speaker, I want to thank the minister for her statement on Polish Independence Day. On behalf of the entire Liberal caucus, we welcome the remarks celebrating independence day and the contributions of Polish Canadians in Ontario, including the minister's.

Looking at the history of Poland in the years leading up to and following independence, the word "perseverance" comes to mind. Moral leaders who never gave up on Poland's freedom became beacons of hope around the world, including Pope St. John Paul and solidarity leader Lech Walesa.

Today we remember that for well over a century Polish lands were governed by foreign powers. But after the dust began to settle post-World War I, Poland re-emerged as an independent state on November 11, 1918. Unfortunately, that independence was short-lived due to both Nazi occupation during World War II and Communist rule following the end of the war. However, despite the Communist government's attempt to remove November 11 as Poland's independence day from the national calendar, it continued to be celebrated by freedom-loving Poles until the emergence of a free Poland in 1989, when November 11 was once again re-established as the national holiday of the nation.

Speaker, I've spoken in this House before about the importance of immigrants, the importance they've had in shaping our province and the strength our multicultural values bring to Ontario. The role Polish immigrants have played is no different. Polish Canadians have made significant contributions in our culture, civic life, politics and business, all while displaying the same resilience their ancestors have shown in maintaining strong connections to their culture, traditions, history and language. To everyone, happy Polish Independence Day.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm proud to rise today on behalf of the people of Kitchener Centre and to speak in celebration of the local Polish community, the Polish community across Ontario and here, in our own chamber, MPP Kusendova-Bashta.

Yes, the Polish community has contributed so much. I really appreciate their efforts to maintain their language, to teach their young people about their history and spread that pride across our great province. In Kitchener Centre they've made lasting contributions to culture and arts and to our economy.

I appreciate all of our veterans. Independence day comes on the same day as Remembrance Day, and it's a moment when we can pause and thank the veterans of Polish descent for their fight for sovereignty through World War I, World War II and against Communism. We wouldn't be where we are today without the valiant efforts of our veterans and the courage of the Polish people to push back against tyranny and oppression.

I have to give a special shout-out to my local Branch 412. It's a Polish Legion, and it's become a beacon of community and food and celebration for the whole Polish community and beyond. I recently got fed there twice in one week. I had the joy of eating some wonderful cabbage rolls and some Polish sauerkraut and, of course, Polish sausage. It just means that we have these third spaces for our young people, for our seniors, for people to celebrate their culture, to speak their native language, to get a healthy meal and come together.

And of course, our Sacred Heart Church is a centre for all people who want to maintain their traditions and their faith and pass that on to the next generation.

Thanks to all of our Polish leaders in the local community. Thank you to our MPP for Mississauga Centre for all you do to share that pride far and wide and bring the spirit of Poland here to Ontario. Dziękuję.

PETITIONS

DIABETES TREATMENT

M^me^ France Gélinas: Speaker, I would like to wish you a happy world diabetes month. I have a petition that was sent to me by parents of children with type 1 diabetes—Alana Diening; Emily Drmay; Jamie and Neal Iles, as well as their daughter Ellie—and type-1 diabetic, Olympic athlete and founder of the non-profit I Challenge Diabetes, Chris Jarvis.

The petition is quite straightforward. There are 2.4 million people living with diabetes, many of them children, who need consistent, safe and equitable care in every school across Ontario. That has to include the administration of insulin, glucagon, as well as the monitoring. Right now, depending on which school you go to, some schools do it very well, some schools do it fragmented and some schools do it not at all. So parents are left to navigate a

patchwork of systems with no guarantee that their child will receive the necessary care during school.

Think about it: At least 25% of a child's day is spent in school or in the bus to go to and from school. That's a big amount of time. The burden falls on the families. Provinces like Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and British Columbia have already mandated provincial standards that align with Diabetes Canada guidelines for the care of students living with diabetes in school.

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urgently implement a mandatory standard of care for students living with diabetes that aligns with the guideline for the care of students living with diabetes in school.

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Ted Hsu: This petition is entitled "Petition: To Raise Social Assistance Rates." It's been presented before, but the signatures keep coming in. It calls on the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Deepak Anand: This petition is actually a request and a suggestion saying that the government of Ontario modernize and improve Ontario's natural and cultural heritage framework. Why? Because they're saying we need the housing, and there are unnecessary delays to the housing infrastructure and economic development projects.

But it's not saying, "Just close your eyes and do anything and everything." No, it's saying to be balanced. We need a regulatory system that protects important heritage resources while supporting timely construction. Further, it gives data saying that under the current framework, approval can take up to 64 months—imagine, Speaker, by the time the child is already in school if it's born yesterday—or 29 months for many medium-risk projects. Approximately 98% ultimately support development and infrastructure projects. Some 80% involve low and medium risk.

1520

Looking at this, I absolutely agree with this. We need to have a balanced approach. We have to make sure that the government of Ontario should modernize and improve Ontario's natural and cultural heritage framework through risk-based approvals, streamlined assessments, enhanced digital tools and clear, timely decision-making.

Speaker, timely decision-making is something this petition is talking about, and it's very important that we protect significant heritage, which I said earlier, while reducing unnecessary delays so that we can build houses, infrastructure and economic development projects. As I always say, everything relates to one thing: We want to make a bigger, better, stronger Ontario.

I absolutely agree with this petition, and I'm going to give it to Yuvki.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

MPP Jamie West: I have several petitions that were collected from the Canadian Federation of Students. I'm going to start with the stack that came in from Laurentian University, because that's my university.

I know many people have petitions, so rather than drag it out, it's called "No to OSAP Cuts! No to Tuition Hikes!" They have three asks:

(1) Grants, not loans, and remove interest on OSAP loans—we're in affordability crisis, this would actually make sense.

(2) Stop the tuition hikes—you could probably solve that by actually funding the schools properly so that Ontario is not dead last and way, way at the bottom.

(3) Halt government interference on admissions, research security plans and student fees.

I obviously support this petition, I will affix my signature and provide it to page Leo for the table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

M^me^ Lucille Collard: I have a petition here to raise social assistance rates. The petition is from Dr. Sally Palmer, and I want to thank her for her continued and relentless advocacy on this issue. I think that this petition must have a record time of being tabled here in this House, but I think it's an important issue.

What the petition asks is for Legislative Assembly to double the rates of OW and ODSP, and it outlines a few reasons for this, including the fact that the current rates are well below Canada's official Market Basket Measure poverty line.

One interesting fact is that one of the signatories on the petition indicated "shelter" under the address block, so there you go.

It also describes how small increases to ODSP have still been insufficient to lift people above the poverty line, particularly given the rate of inflation in recent years and the rising cost of food and rent. However, the reality is that even doubling the rate wouldn't be sufficient by today's cost of living.

This petition, like I said, has been tabled again and again in this Legislature for years now, and yet there's nothing happening on adjusting these rates to reflect any kind of recognition of the affordability crisis affecting everyone, including people who have to rely on OW and ODSP just to make a living.

I totally agree with this petition, will once again sign my name to it and give it to page Daniel to bring to the table.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a petition here, and it's talking about tariffs. This is a petition which speaks to the

fact that Canadians keep millions of Americans working at their job every day because Canadians purchase American products. It talks about how Trump's tariffs hurt cross-border trade not only for Canadians but for Americans as well. It talks about how the U.S. Supreme Court has struck down those tariffs as being illegal, and it talks about the fact that both the senators and the representatives in the House of Representatives in the United States have voted against those tariffs. Finally, it calls upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce regulations that would govern procurement and favour Ontario-made services when considering public-sector procurement.

This was submitted by Warren Scott and Nicolle Scott, who live on Boblo Island. I fully support this petition. I will sign it and give it to this fine page Max to deliver to the Clerks' table.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm rising on behalf of the residents of Ottawa West–Nepean to table a petition entitled "Protect Our Children From Lead Exposure in Schools and Child Care Centres."

We know—the World Health Organization has been clear—there is no safe level of lead. It can lead to negative health impacts that cover the whole body and can last a whole lifetime. We don't want anybody to be exposed to lead in drinking water, but certainly not our most vulnerable citizens, yet this government has refused to adopt the federal standard for safe drinking water, despite the fact that the science is the same for both levels of government. And just recently, we learned the reason why, thanks to an FOI: A briefing note to the minister said that they don't want to pay for it. So we are exposing our children to lead in schools because this government doesn't want to pay to protect them, and I think that may be in no small part because there's already a $16.8-billion school repair backlog that they are refusing to address. But my constituents believe, and I agree, that we should be doing everything we can to protect our kids.

So the petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to adopt the federal guidelines for lead, immediately create a lead remediation plan for Ontario schools with proper funding and eliminate the school repair backlog.

I wholeheartedly endorse this petition, will add my name to it and send it to the table with page Jate.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Ted Hsu: I have a petition entitled "Fix OSAP ASAP" from my constituents in Kingston and the Islands and also elsewhere. It has the same title as a previous petition, but with the developing OSAP issue, a new petition with new requests has come in, and they continue to come in.

They are asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour OSAP funding commitments by protecting students who applied for or were assessed for or were approved for funding from the OSAP program before it was suspended for private institutions.

They are asking us to restore OSAP eligibility at compliant private career colleges that are not under investigation nor have been found to be engaged in any kind of wrongdoing.

They're also asking us, amongst other things, to reverse cuts to OSAP grants for students at public colleges and universities.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition here from many residents of Coleman township, and it's regarding the Cobalt refinery site. That's a derelict refinery where they refined a lot of things over the years. It still has a licence. They asked the ministry to take the licence away—it still has a licence.

The ministry has acknowledged that there is arsenic and other heavy metals migrating off the site. But in a letter, the Minister of the Environment stated that although it is migrating off the site, there are no ill health effects. Well, they would like to see the actual documentation of that.

Actually, what they really would like and what really needs to happen is that site needs to be remediated. We always hear in northern Ontario how mining creates all these jobs—and it does—but mining wasn't as safe years ago, and we are left with the remnants, and that needs to be fixed.

Thank you, Speaker. I fully support this petition, and I'll hand it to page Melchi.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms. Catherine Fife: Speaker, I don't know how much more nurses can take in Ontario. This is a petition from the Ontario Nurses' Association. They are asking the government to stop the privatization and redirecting of public dollars into private health care. They're asking the government to support safe staffing ratios.

We know that nurses are under great duress in our system these days. A nurse in my riding was just beaten. She will never work in the system again. Four other nurses came to her support. They were also injured.

The staffing ratio right now, nurse to patient, is unsafe. It is not working. It is not creating healthy working conditions, and it's compromising the quality of health care.

So we're asking the government to consider putting in safe patient-to-nursing ratios so that we can have a system that we can rely on and that is safe for nurses in the province of Ontario.

HIGHWAY 69

MPP Jamie West: I want to thank Lisa Aho.

This petition is called "Stop Putting Lives at Risk—Four-Lane Highway 69 Now."

She was at the farmers' market getting signatures and collected more than 350 signatures in less than five hours. People were lining up to protect lives on Highway 69.

This has to do with the two-lane portion of Highway 69, which has had recent deaths. I know my colleagues have petitions to table as well. The Premier said himself that if you're off by two inches, you're gone.

1530

People have been dying on this highway, Speaker. We've had two fatalities, a mother and a young infant child two weeks ago, and then a truck fatality recently on Saturday.

I support this petition. We need to do something immediately to protect lives before the four-laning, and we need to get the four-laning completed. I'll affix my signature and provide it to Amira for the table.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

M^me^ France Gélinas: I would like to thank Melanie Griffin from Chelmsford in my riding for these petitions. They were written by the Ontario Nurses' Association, and they ask for nurse-to-patient ratio laws to be brought into Ontario.

We have a crisis in our health care system where not only people have to wait a long time to gain access to care, to then be sick enough to be admitted into a hospital, but there are no beds. They're admitted into a hallway, a TV room, a bathroom—anything but a hospital room.

The workload on nurses is really difficult right now. The amount of violence against nurses, the amount of nurses burning out, the amount of nurses crying at the end of their shifts because they know they did not have the time to provide the quality care that they know how to provide to their patients is just too much.

They're asking the government to do like they've done in British Columbia, like they are doing in Manitoba, like they've done in many states: to implement nurse-to-patient ratios for different patient care levels in hospitals. We will have the opportunity to debate a bill on this next week.

I hope everybody will do like the people did on this petition and sign in favour. I'm fully in favour of implementing nurse-to-patient ratios. I will sign and support this petition and ask page Matthew to bring it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECT ONTARIO FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES FAMILLES ET LES COLLECTIVITÉS EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 17, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act to enact the Intimate Images Protection Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 148, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 sur la protection des images intimes et modifiant diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am privileged to be able to rise to speak to this bill on behalf of the many career college students across Ontario who have reached out to me and my colleagues, and I'm sure members on the other side as well, in addition to thousands and thousands of students who attend our public colleges and universities who had the rug pulled out from under them when the government suddenly announced the changes to OSAP grants, the gutting of OSAP grants back in February.

But today, we're talking about Bill 148, an omnibus bill, 18 schedules—a wide range of issues, including critical reforms needed to the children's aid society that should be receiving significant debate and discussion in this place, but we're not able to do that because everything is all packaged together into this single piece of legislation. But I'm going to focus my remarks on two schedules, schedules 13 and 14 in this bill, that speak specifically to private career colleges and OSAP.

We had heard, last week, the minister make an announcement about the legislation that he was going to be bringing forward, and he identified a number of measures that were going to be included in the legislation. There was one thing he did not mention that we were very surprised to see in the legislation before us today, and that is the legislative protections for this government to indemnify this government from any legal action being taken against them, going forward and retroactively, regarding their mishandling of OSAP.

This indemnity protection is pretty broad, Speaker. The legislation provides protections not just for the minister, but for any current or former member of the executive council, the deputy minister, an inspector, an employee, an officer, an agent of the crown or adviser to the crown. All of that group of people are protected, and they are protected from a number of activities that this government could have taken.

They are protected from any legal claims that arise from fraud investigations, from revocations of OSAP approval, from regulatory changes, from alterations to student loan interest or repayment terms. They are protected from any legal claims arising from fraud investigations, enforcement actions, administration of the Training Completion Assurance Fund, or TCAF. They are protected from any restrictions on institutional program and campus approval.

So that is a pretty thick armour that this government has created around themselves. It does make you wonder, how many lawsuits is this government either already facing or anticipating from, perhaps, career college students who have lost their homes because they weren't able to pay their mortgages because of the sudden suspension of OSAP by this government?

Perhaps they're facing lawsuits from career colleges that have had to shut down because they don't have the revenue coming in from student tuition. They've had to lay off staff. We already know of several colleges in this

province that have had to shut down completely as a result of this government's OSAP fiasco.

Maybe they're anticipating claims from students against the Training Completion Assurance Fund, which reimburses students and provides some financial support if they have paid tuition and the private career college that they were attending shuts down.

So this government knows the mess that they made in this sector, and they have implemented these very thick legal protections—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Point of order.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: I understand the member trying to get back to the topic at hand for Bill 148, but I also question if there's implied motive with some of her comments. There has been a slew of maybes and a different implied motive with what the intent of the legislation is and what she's implying.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): I'll remind the member from London West to try to stay on topic. Thank you. Proceed.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm reading directly from the bill about who is protected by these new indemnification clauses and what they are protected from. But this does raise significant concerns, Speaker.

The second issue that I will be focusing my comments around is that there is absolutely nothing in the bill to restore OSAP funding for the career college students who applied for OSAP, who were approved for OSAP, who decided to enrol in programs on the basis of receiving OSAP, and they've had their lives upended when the government arbitrarily decided that that OSAP was not going to come.

These students are very, very concerned about how they are going to feed their family, how they are going to pay their rent, how they are going to pay their mortgage if they had one and how they are going to manage. Some of them have significant tuition bills owing to the institution. They're worried about what's going to happen to their credit rating if they don't pay the bills. Some have been told that they have to pay the bill or they're going to be liable for the unpaid tuition. The government has completely thrown these students' lives into turmoil because of their incompetence, negligence and malfeasance.

I did want to review a little bit about what has happened to bring us to this point. I want to recognize the journalists who have really shed some light on what has happened with this government and their mishandling of OSAP.

1540

In particular, I do want to acknowledge Allison Jones of the Canadian Press. It takes a lot of time and effort to comb through the court documents that have been submitted in the law cases, to pore over the data that they are getting through FOI requests. The information that the media are sharing has been very helpful to understand how deep this scandal goes and how carelessly taxpayer dollars have been squandered by this government, with students now paying the price.

Last week, we got some new details from the Canadian Press that showed just how badly this minister has bungled the program. The Canadian Press reported a 6,000% increase in the number of students who were receiving OSAP at a single campus of the Canadian College of Business, Science and Technology over a three-year period. The number of students rose from 74 to 4,500. There was an 8,000% increase in the amount of OSAP grant money that was going to that one campus—it increased to $39 million—but no one in the ministry seemed to notice. In fact, OSAP funding was approved for that campus in the 2024-25 year. So either the government was not aware of these extraordinary and shocking numbers showing this significant increase or they were not concerned, because, as I said, OSAP was approved.

We've heard the minister often say how he swung into action; he banned six career colleges from OSAP back in May. But that particular school, the Canadian College of Business, Science and Technology, was not included in the ban. There is lots to be learned from court documents, there's lots to be learned from freedom-of-information requests, and I'm sure we're going to learn more in the weeks and months ahead.

But there's also lots to be learned from Progressive Conservative Party donor records. We do know at this point that more than $150,000 has been donated to the Ontario PC Party by private career colleges since 2018. It does make you wonder if there is any connection.

But instead of this minister taking accountability for his disastrous lack of oversight and failures to act, he wants us to believe, Speaker, that his hands were tied and that he was unable to deal with this evidence of fraud because he did not have the legislative tools.

Now he wants us to believe, oh, he's tough on fraud. But we know from that media reporting and other revelations that have come out that there were actually at least three years when this should have been on the government's radar and they refused to act. It wasn't the lack of legislation that allowed fraud to go unchecked; it was the minister's failure to do his job. The result? A billion dollars of public money through the OSAP program was shovelled out the door to a handful of bad actor career colleges.

Do we need stronger oversight of OSAP at private career colleges? Yes, yes, we do. We need stronger oversight of any program that involves the expenditure of taxpayer dollars, whether it's OSAP or, say, the Skills Development Fund, especially when those programs help to funnel public dollars to the private sector.

But the most shameful thing about this whole scandal is that students are being blamed and punished for it. The government knew that their own lack of oversight had caused OSAP fraud to run rampant and yet blamed students for misusing OSAP to buy fancy watches and cologne or to study basket-weaving courses. I have to say, Speaker, that comment really reveals the Premier's contempt for arts and culture and his ignorance of the economic impact of cultural workers in this province.

The government knew that OSAP costs were rising because there was explosive growth within a handful of private career colleges. But they chose to punish all students by slashing OSAP grants and forcing young people to take on a mountain of debt to go to college or university at a time when we are seeing unprecedented levels of youth unemployment. We are seeing affordability pressures, cost-of-living increases that have never been greater and a more uncertain economy than we have ever had, I think, in Ontario, with the existential threat of tariffs hanging over us.

The government knew that this handful of bad-actor career colleges was taking advantage of the system. But they chose to punish every single student at every single private career college by suspending the loans that they were promised when all they were doing was trying to get a better job so that they could support their families.

And when students pushed back earlier this month, Doug Ford called them naive—the Premier called them naive. He called them sheep. He said they should be grateful that the government was spending any money at all on post-secondary education. But students are not naive. They see through the spin that the government is trying to put on its own incompetence and mismanagement, using their own negligence as an excuse to gut student aid. We heard that in February, when the OSAP grants were slashed. The government said the cuts were necessary to ensure the sustainability of OSAP, but, as I said, the reason OSAP costs were rising was almost entirely due to private career colleges. There was a 2,700% increase in the number of career-college students receiving grants between 2021-25. I don't want to suggest that individual students were defrauding the government or engaged in attempts to defraud. What we have learned is that this was a sophisticated scheme, in many cases with made-up students, to enable this handful of institutions to benefit from the complete lack of oversight from this government.

We saw, in one year, 2023-24, OSAP grants increased by almost half a billion dollars. Now, you'd think that would have been kind of a red flag for this government: They see half a billion dollars more going out the door for OSAP. If they had bothered to look more closely, they would have seen that 95% of that grant money went not just to private career colleges in general but to a very small group of colleges: $385 million went to just seven schools. Last year, almost a billion dollars of OSAP grants went to private career colleges, which is more than the total amount of OSAP grants for students at all public colleges and universities combined.

This is quite a difference from when this government came to office in 2018; only 8% of OSAP grants went to students at private institutions. We saw that gradually rise: 12% in 2019; 14% in 2021; all of a sudden, 28% in 2023. In 2024, 40% of OSAP funding went to private colleges, and that was the first time that there was a larger share of OSAP grants for private career college students than for university students or public college students.

So the only thing that was making OSAP unsustainable was the money that was being shovelled out the door by this government to private career colleges. We all recall that at the time that the minister made this announcement about the gutting of OSAP grants, he also boasted about his government's historic $6.4-billion investment in post-secondary education funding.

Speaker, there was no question that our post-secondary sector desperately needed investment. We had seen decades of underfunding from the Liberals and then the Conservatives that had resulted in Ontario students paying the highest tuition in Canada but receiving the lowest per-student funding from the government.

1550

Under the Conservatives, this just got worse and worse. That's when we started to see the aggressive recruitment of international students, who brought in significant revenues because of their high tuition fees, and the government was only too happy to watch that happen.

But then there was this blue-ribbon panel, appointed by the government, which said, "What the sector needs is an immediate investment of $2.5 billion." The government responded with half of that amount.

In 2021, there was a change in policy by the federal government to end the exploitation of international students as cash cows effectively subsidizing post-secondary education. The fiscal pressures just got worse: programs closing, campuses shutting down, more than 10,000 jobs lost. It was only in February 2026 that the government finally announced this lifeline of $6.4 billion over four years. But that was much less than the blue-ribbon panel had recommended.

It did absolutely nothing to lift Ontario out of bottom place in terms of per-student funding. We're not even close to the second-lowest province. We have $9,500 per college student in Ontario compared to $15,000 nationally and $10,500 per university student compared to the national average of $17,500.

Speaker, when you do the math on this historic investment and understand that it was implemented at the same time that OSAP shifted from grants to loans, you understand that what the government was doing was reducing overall spending. The so-called "new" dollars that have been allocated to post-secondary are not actually new: 69% of this new historic investment is accounted for by the changes to OSAP, by the shift from grants to loans.

Funding for post-secondary education has been taken directly out of the pockets of low- and moderate-income students to subsidize our colleges and universities, forcing students who are in financial need to take on a mountain of debt to go to college or university and to repay those loans with interest. This shell game will have lasting consequences for the young people, who will graduate with thousands of dollars of debt and will have to carry that debt burden forward into their adult life—young people, who are now feeling that they can't risk taking on that debt burden, and therefore they are deciding not to go to post-secondary education at all. Many of those young people already face barriers: They have disabilities; they are

racialized; they are Indigenous; they are first-generation PSE.

We compromise our collective well-being if we do not enable every person in this province to reach their full potential. Our economic prosperity, our well-being depends upon our harnessing the talent we that we have in this province. Our number one asset as a place for companies to invest is our well-educated workforce. If we give that up at this time of economic uncertainty, we are going to be in a very bad place.

The government's announcement in February, as I have said, really had nothing to do with the sustainability of OSAP. They were using this $1-billion OSAP fraud that was being perpetrated by this handful of bad-actor career colleges to justify denying students the financial students that they need to get ahead. When the government made their February announcement, I will acknowledge that they did reference the increased pressure on OSAP from private career colleges, but what they did not share was that the rising cost of OSAP for private career colleges was due to fraud.

Why didn't they come public with that at the time, Speaker? Because they knew that they were culpable in allowing the fraud to happen. They had been told by the Auditor General in 2021 that there was insufficient oversight of private career colleges, that only a quarter to maybe 30% of private career colleges were being inspected at the schedule that they should have. They were told that they did not have proper processes in place to inspect and oversee the programming that these private career colleges offered, and they failed to take corrective action, creating a vulnerability within the sector that these bad-actor private career colleges certainly took advantage of.

So the government had opened the door to enabling bad actors to take advantage of the system and then stood by as OSAP dollars were siphoned away. They refused to act on multiple red flags and warnings that they had received from Career Colleges Ontario, the federal government, their own tip lines and also investigation results.

Speaker, despite the government's efforts to have us believe that they're taking strong action to improve the oversight of private career colleges, we know that they could have implemented controls and checks and balances all along. They did not need new legislative tools to act on the suspicious activity that they knew was taking place.

What is needed most of all, Speaker, right now is immediate relief for those thousands of career college students in this province whose lives have been upended by this government's colossal failure to manage the OSAP program.

This morning, Speaker, I had said I would be sharing my time with the member for Parkdale–High Park, and I am going to do that now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): I recognize the member for Parkdale–High Park.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to thank my colleague.

Speaker, I rise today on behalf of Ontario's children to speak to Bill 148, the protecting Ontario families and children act. This bill includes measures that the government says are intended to address the serious financial difficulties faced by non-Indigenous children's aid societies across our province, difficulties which were supposed to be eliminated by a sector-wide audit the government finally released yesterday after sitting on it for nearly a year.

Before I turn to those measures, I would like to say a few words in my capacity as the official opposition shadow minister for women's social and economic opportunities because Bill 148 is a true omnibus bill in the fashion that this government is so loving to throw at us. And among the wide range of sector issues it touches on, from colleges and universities to health care to long-term care, it does touch and introduce important legal protections for victims of intimate image abuse that will make it easier for them to remove harmful content and prevent its spread and uphold the perpetrators by holding them accountable. And this includes the deepfakes, the AI-generated images, which we know are increasingly being used to harass women and girls, in particular, online.

Speaker, just yesterday, students from High School Too, working with Possibility Seeds, presented research here in the Legislature showing that one in five women aged 15 to 24 and about one in seven young men were subjected to unwanted sexual behaviour online and in person in the past year at high schools. The creation and dissemination of AI-generated images and deepfakes is unfortunately a core part of this behaviour.

Last year in Alberta, we saw police bringing charges against two 14-year-olds—14-year-olds—accused of using AI to create sexualized images of their female classmates, and we are being told that this is an increasingly pervasive concern.

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As we approach the 16 days of action to end gender-based violence starting next week on November 25, I want to take an opportunity to commend the government, the minister and the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity for taking action to protect survivors and victims of intimate image abuse, and for creating this pathway for them to seek justice. This is a part of the bill that I can support.

But Speaker, for the rest of my time this afternoon, I would like to devote my comments to the disappointingly small portion of this act pertaining to the children's aid societies, because I believe that the vulnerable children of this province who have been neglected and abused deserve more than a footnote in the government's omnibus bill.

Let's recall that this government launched its sector-wide audit of Ontario's 37 non-Indigenous children's aid societies following a series of horrific reports showing agencies at the brink of financial collapse, children being warehoused in office spaces, motel rooms, Airbnbs, and children dying—more than one every three days, according to the government's own internal data. And it has only gotten worse in the two years since that audit was initiated—so bad, in fact, that the ministry stopped collecting the data on the number of children dying in care and

reporting it publicly after the FOI showed that the number was continuing to rise.

The minister tells us that this bill will fix things, but I have to say, Speaker, on first read, it feels to me like a bad joke is being played on the vulnerable children and families of this province who were so desperately awaiting their help. There's nothing objectionable per se in this part of the bill, in this schedule, but nor is there anything consequential when what is at stake is of the greatest consequence imaginable: the lives of Ontario's children.

Schedule 2 of the bill requires children's aid societies to provide information about methods for alternative dispute resolution within 30 days of bringing a child into a place of safety. Prior to this, it was discretionary. The bill brings Ontario in line with existing international covenants around international adoption—in this case, setting out terms for simple adoption to be recognized as full adoption.

It strengthens accountability for social workers who sexually abuse children, and it sets provisions for punishments for the transgressors by their college. This is very important. Of course, it's supportable.

It requires every children's aid society board to include at least one member with financial expertise—as is generally already the practice with any board I've ever seen—and it requires agencies to obtain ministry approval before entering into certain financial arrangements, such as purchasing property or signing the lease.

This is all fine as far as it goes, Speaker. I can support this part, but it doesn't go far enough. When we look at the scale of the crisis across Ontario's children's aid—two thirds of societies in deficit, staff in crisis from layoffs and burnouts, story after story of children living in sheds, children dying of neglect, abuse happening right here in Ontario—this bill is embarrassingly inadequate. It leaves me aghast.

The ministry has had access to this completed audit for nearly a year, Speaker, and this is the response? Tinkering around the edges of a system in collapse when children's lives are literally at stake?

My friend the former provincial child and youth advocate Irwin Elman sent a note to me, saying, "The system is on fire, and the government is bringing a water pistol to put the fire out."

Speaker, I want to know: What in this bill would have prevented the boy in Milton from being murdered by his adoptive parents? How would it support parents and children like the teen in the Star last week to prevent him from being placed in a shed for 17 months? How would it support the 80,000 children on the autism wait-list and their parents to ensure that they do not need to relinquish custody of their children to get them the help that they need? How would this bill in any way have supported and protected the children in care at the Sudbury CAS who the government said were in harm's way? How would this bill make any meaningful difference in any of these cases? You would be hard-pressed to find an answer.

Speaker, Bill 148 does nothing to address what the audit found to be the primary cost drivers for agencies, which are rising boarding costs and the increasing complexity of needs among the children in care. And I have to say, we did not need this audit to tell us any of this because the workers in this sector have been screaming this from the rooftops for years. What a colossal waste of time that could have been spent fixing the system. Not to mention, it is another waste of taxpayers' money from the government that brought you the $2-billion Therme spa, the $9-million fantasy tunnel survey and so much more.

In other words, Speaker, this government wasted a year on a sector-wide audit sitting there. It sat on the results. And now, when the results have confirmed what was already widely known about the financial crisis in this sector—a crisis that has led, let's be very clear, to the loss of children's lives—this is the government's response: a few minor provisions in an omnibus bill that doesn't even begin to address the root causes of this problem.

Front-line workers and agencies are telling us what they need and have been for years. Just today, Speaker, CUPE, representing over 4,000 front-line workers at 26 children's aid societies across Ontario, has released an open letter to the minister calling on him to restore funding to CAS agencies, to address the staffing crisis, to increase funding to keep up with the population's needs, to approve new licences to increase placements for vulnerable children who need care now—now, not tomorrow—and to reverse the decision to no longer track deaths of children who have interacted with the care network. What kind of a government hides the numbers of children dying?

But instead, the government has chosen in this bill to tinker with the composition of the agencies' boards. It's infuriating, Speaker. Quite frankly, it would be unbelievable if it didn't perfectly track with this government's approach to CAS from the moment it came into power.

Let's not forget, Speaker, that one of this government's first actions on forming government in 2018 was to eliminate the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, the independent watchdog whose very job it was to investigate ill treatment of children in the welfare system, to review government policy and practice around services for those children. This was eliminated by this Conservative government as one of their first priorities. The callousness was hard to fathom.

But then 2019 came, and in their second budget the Conservatives slashed funding to children's aid societies province-wide. And this trend has continued. Despite the minister repeatedly touting record investments of $2 billion to the sector, the reality is that the government has overseen a 20.3% real per capita funding cut to children's aid—to children's aid, to children who are abused and neglected—since 2018, at a time when communities in need of CAS resources are growing and the number of children requiring care has skyrocketed.

I need to go a little further back in time, if you'll indulge me, Speaker, because it's illuminating regarding the shortfalls of this particular bill. In 2020, the government seemed to be changing course, and children and families were holding their breath with hope when the government announced an overhaul of the children's welfare system to

focus on prevention and early intervention, to seek more permanent homes for children and youth who couldn't stay with their families or communities, which we know is desperately needed. And these were such admirable goals shared with the public, but those who were playing close attention at the time noted that the announcement didn't include any funding or legislative changes. Now, wouldn't you expect that if this had been a serious commitment?

1610

I have to say, six years on, if there's been any overhaul, it's been in the wrong direction. And soon after this announcement, in short order, we started getting reports of striking workers, of layoffs, of slashed programs, of insurmountable deficits at children's aid societies province-wide—in Lanark, in Leeds and Grenville, in Sudbury and Manitoulin in the north, in Windsor, Ottawa, Toronto. Across Ontario the system meant to protect the most vulnerable was breaking down.

Staff reductions undertaken in response to deficits have led to serious burnout among the remaining workers and have affected agencies' ability to provide adequate care for children. CUPE has seen a 17% cut across their bargaining units, amounting to over 800 lost positions in the CAS between 2019 and 2025. If the minister's $2-billion investments were adequate, we wouldn't be seeing 50 staff lost at the Catholic CAS of Hamilton, 75 full-time and 13 part-time staff positions cut at the Catholic CAS of Toronto, 47 staff cuts at the CAS of London and Middlesex, 25 staff cuts at the Kawartha-Haliburton CAS, and the list goes on, Speaker. And every time a child protection worker is not replaced, between 15 and 25 families, between 15 and 25 children, are left to be supported by the remaining workers who already have their own caseloads.

For years we've heard heartbreaking stories about the toll that this has taken on workers: managers reporting that they have staff who cry every day—every day—because they just can't keep up; front-line workers reporting juggling upwards of 25 files while routinely having to take on new cases that require immediate, and often emergency, attention. This is unsustainable. Speaker, it is compounding the problems children are already facing in these unlicensed settings, and yet this bill does nothing to address the staffing or the caseload despite the tragic outcomes for children in care.

Speaker, I know this first-hand. When we first moved into the adoption process in CAS, our worker, so overloaded, said to me that she felt entirely hopeless for us. One of our CAS workers didn't even last a year with our family before the burden of the weight of carrying all of these children caused her to quit. And when we adopted in 2017, there was money needed for our children's special needs. Our last child came home with a more complex diagnosis than any of the other three, and we were told there was no additional money for their therapeutic interventions. This is life for CAS crown wards under this government.

Perhaps this is all we can expect from a government whose Premier has blamed children's aid societies for the consequences of his own underfunding. When he called for the audit, he fantasized that agency staff were "working in Taj Mahals." He said managers were "giving themselves a bonus," anything to deflect from his own government's abandonment of vulnerable children.

But guess what, Speaker? Not every organization operates like this Conservative government, rewarding themselves with lobster dinners and luxury hotels on the taxpayer's dime. The audit found exactly what any of us paying attention already knew: Staffing costs were in line with inflation, administrative costs were stable and executive compensation is not materially driving the pressures at the agencies.

When the Premier announced his audit, unions representing CAS workers said that it was a smokescreen for the government's failure to undertake its announced overhaul six years ago that would have perhaps adequately addressed the complex needs of children in care. In 2020, the government pledged to seek more permanent homes for children and youth who couldn't stay with their families, but today, placements are ever more difficult to secure. It is the primary driver of CAS deficits.

CUPE put it very clearly in their letter when they said, "As staff are being cut, costs are increasing as boarding costs for children in care rise. The ministry has been very slow to approve new licences, and there is a lack of placements for children who need care .... This has resulted in CAS agencies sending more children out of their home communities to expensive, unlicensed placements, such as hotels. Not only does this situation risk the safety of children in care but it is worsening the financial crisis for CAS agencies."

Speaker, I wish this government could tell me what in today's bill is meant to address this. How does requiring a CAS to gain ministry approval before signing a lease stop children from languishing in unlivable spaces like sheds and office buildings and get them into proper homes? I can see how it addresses the problem imagined by the Premier that managers were "working in Taj Mahals," but how does it actually protect children? How would it have saved the life of young Jade, who spent a year prior to her death living in a roadside motel under the care of children's aid?

Does this government even care, Speaker? It's a horrible question to have to ask, but the government's actions from 2018 to the present day do not show care for Ontario's most vulnerable children. A government who cared would not cut the office of the children and youth advocate, would not slash funding for children's aid societies and then accuse workers of financial mismanagement, would not stop tracking the numbers of children dying under their watch, would not waste time and money on an audit fishing for issues instead of fixing the problems that we already know exist and would not pretend that a few irrelevant measures in an omnibus bill are an adequate response for the scale of this crisis. That is not what a government that cares about Ontario's children would do.

But this is part of the larger pattern. This government has repeatedly tried to find the source of a problem only to

find that the problem is much closer to home. Everyone knows that when the Conservative government starts punching down, blaming front-line organizations for fiscal mismanagement, it's a sure sign of underfunding and derelict of duty.

Look at education: This government has starved the system while at the same time accusing school boards of fiscal mismanagement. Ontario schools have seen an accumulated shortfall of a whopping $6.5 billion since 2018, when this government took office.

Or we can look at mental health: A 2025 report from the Auditor General found that the annual base for funding for community-based child and youth mental health programs is out of date and doesn't fully reflect the needs of children and youth.

And now we have this audit report of children's aid societies, which, contrary to what the government hoped it would say, shows no mismanagement from children's aid societies.

Speaker, this is a government that loves to cry wolf on fiscal mismanagement, but if you are truly looking for an apex predator, they need only look in the mirror. Our province has had record-high deficits with this government, the highest debt in our history—over $17 billion being paid out in interest on debt alone—and instead of funding things like education, health care and, yes, children's aid societies, they are being investigated for spending money on their friends and family.

Scandal after scandal tells the same story of government partying at five-star luxury hotels, charging taxpayers; buying and selling private jets within a week; and exchanging favours with insiders to cash in while Jade dies in a roadside motel, while other children live in sheds, while Neveah is found in a dumpster, while L.L. is found in a basement.

But to truly understand this government's propensity, we have to continue to look at its spending. I mentioned only a couple weeks ago that never has a government spent so much and delivered so little to the people of Ontario, yet I have to hope that this is the moment where we will finally put to rest that a Conservative government is a prudent steward of public money.

When I look at the government's record here, I want to quickly touch on one of the aspects of the audit, and that is that we learned that outside purchased resources, or OPRs, represent the largest, fastest-growing share of expenditures for societies. Yet all of these hotels, these motels, these Airbnbs are expensive. We know this, but it's also a double whammy, Speaker, because these settings not only cost more, they are not appropriate places for children to stay.

1620

This government read the same stories that we read and somehow decided not to prohibit these kinds of placements. They've decided not to establish placement standards or to implement a timeline to move away from these horrific conditions.

This bill could have invested in alternatives, like more foster homes, but instead, it leaves CAS agencies, who are already struggling on their own, to figure out what to do. And now, with the added disadvantage of having to go through the government to set up any new agency-operated homes, it's more cumbersome. So instead of making it easier to do their work, this government just made it more difficult.

Now, this bill does appear to respond to a small number of findings from the audit in an attempt to approve things that are important, like reporting, supervision, kinship oversight, anti-human-trafficking practices and governance transparency. But Speaker, where is the focus on outcomes for abused children in care and for their families?

Focusing solely on governance, on process, on boards, on reporting, on administrative accountability utterly fails to address the crisis that families under the care umbrella are facing. It does not address children dying under the care umbrella. It does not address the shortage of foster home placements. It does not address the growth in unlicensed settings. It does not address the staffing shortages and burnout. It doesn't address the resources needed to care for children with complex needs or the underinvestment in prevention and family-based care.

The government has been talking about redesigning the CAS system for six years now. And after all this time, what are the outcomes? A sanitized—no, sorry, edited—report that they have been sitting on for a year, and a few lines in this omnibus bill tabled on less than 24 hours' notice. Speaker, children in our care deserve so much better than this. To be tucked into this bill where OSAP will suck the oxygen out of the room, to be tucked in this bill between dentures and long-term care, to be tucked into this bill as an add-on is so disrespectful.

This government seems so obsessed with money—where and how it's being spent; that's the review this audit speaks of—but they don't seem very interested to know whether it's actually helping children to live safe, healthy, happy lives. This government may have budgeted and spent more money than any other, to date, on our children's aid, but there's no proof that spending all this money has been adequate to the scale of need. In fact, it's just the opposite.

Speaker, I also want to share a lesson with the minister who keeps talking about record investments. When I was a kid, a movie ticket cost me about $5. Now, I could give my child $5 today and I could say to you that I'm making record investments in movie allowance, but they still couldn't get a seat at the Cineplex. This government is failing budget 101, which says that inflation is part of the cost of doing business.

When introducing this bill, the minister repeatedly touted record investments but refused to answer how his government would ensure kids in care got what they needed or whether the money would actually make a difference for kids with complex needs. The minister talked about making kids feel supported, but you can't just throw money at the problem and hope it's taking care of itself. These kids need and deserve more from this government than that.

And while this bill focuses on administration, on financial oversight, children in care are dying. They are suffering. They are hurting. I'm going to repeat this stat again, because it should be the one stat that is guiding this government forward: One child connected to care died every three days between 2020 and 2022, and in 2023, that number grew to 134 children in one year.

I talked to an emergency doc who used to work with Médecins Sans Frontières. He said children don't die, not usually, not in these kinds of numbers. That year, 2023, was the highest number reported since tracking began. They didn't have the courage to face the problem; instead, they hid it. When those numbers first came to light, we called for legislation here in the NDP that would establish a child death review mechanism. We called for the requirement of public reporting of child deaths, creating new child safety investigators, restoring the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. The government didn't listen. It's not listening now. The bill that we are discussing ignores every one of those suggestions.

The NDP has been sounding the alarm for years; so have CAS staff, leaders, advocates, the children themselves. Now even this redacted report is doing that. This bill is a shocking abdication of this government's responsibility.

Speaker, I want to end with just a little bit of housekeeping. When the government takes a 21-week summer break, introducing bills and giving less than 24 hours to prepare for debate, combines multiple important and pressing items into a Frankenstein-like omnibus bill and it has a habit of closing up shop early, how, I ask you, is democracy supposed to function? How are we, the elected representatives of the people of Ontario, expected to fulfill our duty when all our efforts are curtailed at every turn?

It feels like a broken record that can't shift the needle, but it bears repeating again today: The actions of this government are eroding our democracy, and our children are paying the price. The Premier's goal might be to have his government accountable only to him, but let me tell you, Ontario belongs to all of us, and it especially belongs to the children. It especially belongs to the children.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Questions?

M^me^ Lucille Collard: This bill contains so many schedules on so many different subjects. I don't know how the government picked a title for this bill, given the variety of all these topics—actually, no, I know: What they did is they picked a title that would sound good to the public and that would make it look like they're actually solving some problems. But we know that it's not. They're not doing that at all. They could have done so much more to help students for real, to help children and youth and families, and to help our social service workers meet the demand because there is too much demand for the people that are trying to serve them.

My question, to any of you, is, what were you expecting in this bill when you saw the title that is not there, and what could the government have done better?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to thank my colleague for the question. I've been here now just over a year and a half. To be honest, the answer to your question, what was I expecting from this bill that said "protecting Ontario's families"? I was expecting nothing, not from this government. After a year and a half of seeing where this government puts its money, I was not expecting it to be protecting families. I was not expecting it to be looking after children. There are solutions out there, but this government is not interested in them.

It is a very cynical place to be, but I am grateful to be in the official opposition, where we can stand up for the people of Parkdale–High Park, for the people of Ontario, and insist that this government do better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the member from London West.

1630

Speaker, you'll know that OSAP is there to support students working hard to build a better future, not those looking to abuse the system for personal gain. Over the past two years, our government's investigations have uncovered serious allegations, including third parties completing coursework, final exams being finished in as little as six minutes and students who could not identify their school or their program. That's why we're proposing legislation that we're debating tonight to strengthen oversight, protect students and taxpayers and hold bad actors accountable.

My question to the member from London West is: Will you support strong safeguards to protect OSAP, or will you vote against action to hold those who abuse the system accountable?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the question from the government member.

Listen, Speaker: It was in January 2023 that Career Colleges Ontario first met with this government and raised concerns about suspicious activity that was happening within private career colleges. They met multiple times, actually, throughout 2023. When the government failed to act, Career Colleges Ontario sent a letter in January 2025. There were multiple occasions when this government could have intervened. They already had the legislative tools.

The only people who are being protected by this legislation is this government. The new indemnification clauses are going to create a shield around this government to prevent anyone who has been harmed by this government's mismanagement of OSAP to take legal action.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): The member for Nickel Belt.

M^me^ France Gélinas: I wanted to ask: Did you see anything in this bill to solve a huge problem with the children's aid in northern Ontario? There is no overnight care being offered in northern Ontario for children with complex needs, so right now, three of them are in Manitoba and about seven of them are in the Toronto area, costing the Sudbury children's aid thousands of dollars a day for each one of those children. Do you see anything in this bill that will make sure that children with complex high needs get the care that they need to be able to thrive in their community?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I thank my colleague from Nickel Belt for the question. My heart breaks for the children in your riding that have to travel to Manitoba and to other places to get their needs met.

This is a bill that does not meet the moment. We have seen over and over again that the CAS workers have told us what they need, that families have told us what they need. There are solutions out there, and yet this government has decided to tinker with the governance boards of CASs, to talk about financial oversight of certain CASs, but nothing to address the rising cost of children with complex needs, the rising cost of housing and the reality that we live in a different world now where there are fewer foster homes available. We need to meet those children's moments.

We see in this own review that children are sometimes being placed in 10 different placements or more. This is utterly shameful, and this bill does not meet the moment or help those children. But it could have, and we really want to stress that it should have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): The member for Carleton.

MPP George Darouze: I will defend the title of that bill, Bill 148, because it's really protecting families navigating the child welfare system who deserve to have their voices heard and to be meaningfully involved in decisions that affect their children. Yet too often, families are left navigating complicated processes without fully understanding the options available to them to resolve disagreements.

Our government is proposing legislation to increase awareness of alternative dispute resolution and help families resolve concerns in a more collaborative and constructive way. Can the member explain why they would oppose giving families more opportunities to have their voices heard and resolve disputes outside of lengthy and stressful formal proceedings?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I thank my colleague for the question. I very clearly stated in my speech that I am not opposed to that piece. I am in support of alternative dispute resolutions. But what I want to raise up is that there are families like mine crying every day, trying to navigate the complexity of our children's needs with no help.

There was a social worker that I called once. I said to her, "I think we're drowning," and her answer to me was, "I feel so hopeless for you." There was a social worker that came to my house for months on end and then said to me, "I'm sorry. I know I just got hired as a social worker less than a year ago, but I can't do it anymore," and she quit.

So this bill does not nearly go far enough in addressing the complex needs of our families, of our children, of those who are struggling at this moment, who are vulnerable, who are alone, who are hurting, who are neglected, who are abused, who are searching desperately for this government, who—by the way, in some cases, when it is a crown ward, this is the parent of last resort, and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): The member from Sudbury.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleagues for the debate on this bill. It's hard for me to determine what the worst part of the bill is on this—all these families devastated by the frozen OSAP and having those institutions frozen, including Sophia Lisi in my riding, who paid her tuition up front but can't go to school, so out-of-pocket 10 grand but can't go to school because the minister couldn't get his act together.

I think, though, Speaker, the worst part of this bill is that there was a report on children and that it was suppressed by the government for one year. One of the quotes that the member from Parkdale–High Park talked about was that a child died every three days, that for one year there was a child living in a shed, that every three days a child was dying in this community without oversight and without care. And they suppressed the report for a year, a report that had no details and no recommendations.

To my colleague: What does that say about the heart of this government?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: This is a government that could have spent its money asking how to fix the system. Instead, it went on this wild goose chase to punch down on the managers at CAS who are crying daily because they can't support children.

This is a government who could have used its money to ensure that children had a bed, to ensure that parents who are thinking about giving up their child with special needs could get the needs met at home. They could have focused on prevention. This is a government who, if they had led with their heart, would have written a very different bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Further debate?

MPP Tyler Watt: I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa South and the member from Kanata–Carleton.

So, another omnibus bill. I'm starting to get used to these, although this was just tabled yesterday, so we've only had about 24 hours to go through this.

After eight years in government, the Premier is giving himself more power, protecting his government from accountability and leaving ordinary people to deal with the consequences of his failures. This omnibus bill—and for those watching at home, this is a very large bill with a lot of different schedules that are not necessarily related to each other—covers 18 schedules spanning a wide range of unrelated policy areas. Speaker, what do dentures, international adoptions, OSAP student loans, dementia care, public health boards, optometrists and intimate image abuse all have in common? Apparently, according to this government, they all belong in the same omnibus bill.

These are serious issues that are affecting people's lives, and each deserves proper scrutiny, not to be bundled together in one massive piece of legislation. And you know, the sad thing is, there is some good stuff in this piece of legislation. There's some stuff that I'm concerned about, that deserves scrutiny, that I want more information on in order to make an informed vote, and I want to get the feedback of folks in my riding in Nepean about what they think.

1640

Putting this into one gigantic bill and ramming it through the House is just not the way to go. It's anti-democratic. Do you think I'm joking? Here's a list of the different topics that are covered under this one bill:

—they're going to change speech language pathology scope of practice;

—child welfare and adoptions; chiropractors;

—dental hygienists;

—dentures and denturists;

—some long-term-care stuff;

—X-rays;

—changes to OHIP with physician billing claims and health insurance appeals;

—major changes to public health—which I will get into later;

—intimate image abuse—this is some great piece of legislation in there about intimate image abuse; it's sad that it has been tucked away in this bill;

—lots of changes to social services;

—health care appeals;

—OSAP—how did that get in there? We know this was talked about last week; it was announced by the minister. I guess they were able to slip it in this one at least;

—some stuff on private career colleges;

—optometrists;

—patient privacy—another one that's extremely important and very much deserves scrutiny;

—some stuff on retirement homes; and

—social workers.

That's 18 different things, not all of it is related, and we're expected to debate this over the next few hours and bring it to a vote. And like I said, there's some good stuff in here that I would love to support. There's a lot of stuff that I have a number of questions about. But this goes into a pattern with this government. This isn't the first omnibus bill we've seen. We've seen omnibus bills in history. I can't remember one being this long and detached in the last year and a half that we've been here.

Why the rush and why do it this way? Why wasn't there a separate piece on OSAP? I get that the government is claiming they want to take swift action after sleeping on it for three years. There's some legislation in here regarding OSAP and the private career college loopholes created by this government that need to be shut down—need to be addressed, most certainly. But there's nothing in there for students. There's a lot of stuff that I would love to include in OSAP legislation for itself.

The scope of practice for all those different health care providers, I'd love to see in its own piece of legislation. We have a great private member's bill that's going to be introduced later on by my wonderful colleague that is all about health care workers and how we can actually support them. I'm looking forward to debating that later.

But we should be debating that separately. That should be its own bill. We should be debating OSAP separately. We should be debating the changes to social services separately.

So how are we supposed to support something when there's just so much detached legislation involved in this? I've got to wonder, honestly, how that OSAP stuff got in there. We've kept the heat on this government over the last couple of weeks—and major shout-out to the media and the Canadian press for all the awesome work they're doing with exposing this story. The government has been scrambling to figure out how to clean up their mess. They set the house on fire, let it go for years and years, and now they're coming with the fire extinguishers, but putting it into a bill that's also dealing with dentures. It goes to show you how serious this government is.

But a recurring theme that I see from this government over and over and over again: More power for this government and less accountability for its decisions. What's up with this obsession with blanket immunity all the time? The Premier promised that he would be accountable and transparent with Ontario taxpayers, but actions speak louder than words, and all we've seen is this constant legislation to protect the Premier, to protect the cabinet ministers, with no accountability—more power to them, more power to this government. And I thought that Conservatives were all about small government; that's what I hear anyway, at the door. But this government—one of the largest cabinet sizes in history, the largest Premier's office in history—is changing almost every single ministry and file and sector to hand the minister just blanket power to basically do whatever they want. We've seen this in education. We've seen this in post-secondary. We're seeing this now in health care.

So if this government wants to put all the power into their hands, they need to be more accountable because, at the end of the day, it's their decisions. Instead of fixing the problems that people are experiencing, this government just gives itself new power. They're not doing anything positive with that power.

I'm going to start off by talking about OSAP. I know we have been talking about this quite a bit over the last several weeks, with the goal here ultimately being justice for students. I see none of that in the OSAP section of this omnibus bill; some much-needed changes in this legislation—three years too late, but needed changes nonetheless—but where's the justice? Where's the restitution for these students?

Remember, these students are victims of this government's decisions. The government, in 2020, opened up OSAP for online-only courses. I get that. We were at the start of a horrible pandemic. We wanted to make sure that people still had access to their post-secondary education.

In 2022, the government made it permanent. Many other provinces closed that loophole. As the world started to come back to normal, they closed that loophole.

So with this loophole in Ontario, you had a handful of bad actors—as far as we know, anyway—that were abusing the system. We've seen countless posts online of recruiters and how they were scamming the system, scamming the taxpayer for these private career colleges, these private institutions, some of which have now been referred to the OPP.

But why did it get to this point of crisis in the first place? Career Colleges Ontario warned this government in 2023; warned them again in 2024; said, "You're being robbed. Call the police"; warned them again in 2025; warned them again in 2026. I've seen the letter. I don't understand why that was ignored. I'm having a hard time believing it was just incompetence.

Fast-forward to October 2026: During estimates, I asked the minister of post-secondary, why is it that—

Interjection.

MPP Tyler Watt: Sorry, I was thrown off by the switch in Speaker there.

I asked the minister why so much money was going towards private colleges through OSAP grants. It was a shocking number, and the minister said to me that they've been changed to loans, and that was pretty much the only answer I could get out of him. I can't remember if it was late September or maybe the very beginning of October. It was a Thursday. That day, the story comes out from Allison Jones in the Canadian Press; at least, this was the first story about this major scandal, about how these private career colleges were defrauding the government.

On Monday, I held a press conference along with students from post-secondary, colleges and universities for them to share their stories about what the changes to OSAP have done for them, but also to shine a light on this egregious story.

This government has had a lot of scandals: the greenbelt, skills development—I could go on and on. Ron Taverner—I don't know why that one just popped in my mind. But this one, the extent, the consequences of this scandal—it's hurting people, actively hurting people.

That was Monday we held that press conference. Tuesday, the government holds an emergency caucus meeting. I think it was that day; maybe it was the next day. The minister announces they've cut off all private colleges to OSAP and they have referred the case to the OPP. What changed from Thursday to Tuesday? They got caught.

1650

So this government allowed this to happen. Under their watch, they knew. They were warned multiple times over years. And I want to remind everyone that it was just last spring that this government announced that they were cutting the OSAP grants for students at public colleges and universities, citing the program was unsustainable. The Premier famously said, "Well, they're spending their money on fancy watches and cologne. They're taking basket-weaving courses. OSAP is unsustainable."

I didn't believe it then, but we certainly know now that OSAP was unsustainable because this government broke it. They kept this loophole open, allowing hundreds of millions of dollars annually, mind you—and we don't even know how much money was sent to these bad actors in 2025-26. We still don't know. I'm sure we'll find out one day, but right now the minister doesn't want to answer that question.

This government broke it. They scapegoated students—no justice for students in the public sector. They're not asking for the world, Speaker. They're just asking for an opportunity. And when you tell young people who are just trying to pursue post-secondary education and training so they can get maybe the job of their dreams if they're so lucky, enter the workforce where we desperately need them—whether that be engineering, nursing, you name it—they now have to take into consideration that they're going to take on a massive amount of student debt to pursue that education—no justice for those students.

And I want to share, again, part of the reason why I'm standing here today was because of that first sledgehammer to OSAP back in 2019. I am so grateful that I was a part of the free tuition program for low-income students so I could pursue my nursing degree. That was the reason I went back. I already went to Trent University for biology when I was younger, and I couldn't really do much with that. I was at that age where I was just told, "Go to university. All is good." Millennials can relate to that promise. Well, that wasn't so true.

So when I went back to nursing school, under the agreement—what I thought was an agreement anyways—with the support from the provincial government, the Liberals at the time, I didn't feel like I was having to take on that extreme debt in order to pursue nursing and enter the health care profession where we desperately needed nurses.

Then this government was elected in 2018. They cut—what was it—$600 million to OSAP, eliminated the free tuition program, slapped on interest on loans. It was severe. I had to depend on credit cards just to pay bills and maybe for food once in a while. It was rough. I don't want that for students today.

And it's way worse now. I graduated in 2020. It's 2026, almost 2027 now, and life has become so much more unaffordable. The cost of living has skyrocketed, and OSAP certainly has not kept up with that. So you can see, Speaker, how it's a slap in the face to students when they're being told, "Nah, you've got to take on more debt if you want to pursue that." Meanwhile, they were starving post-secondary for nearly a decade. Colleges are laying off staff—10,000 staff, I believe, were laid off around Ontario, hundreds of programs cut. So it wasn't even as if they necessarily had the access to a program that they wanted to pursue.

This is where it links to what has been going on to the private career colleges. I'm thinking of a constituent in my riding who shared with me that she was a paralegal student at Algonquin College, a public college. Guess what? That program got cut due to the chronic underfunding by this government. She then went to a private college in Ottawa to pursue that paralegal program. Well, she was promised OSAP in the summer. She was enrolled and then abandoned by this government seven weeks into her program.

We are now in mid-November with still no answers or solutions to what we're going to do for the few students that remain there today. So many have already dropped out—they had no choice—and now they will have to pay back whatever loan or debt they've accumulated up until this point before being able to graduate.

So I'm glad that we're shutting down some loopholes here, but it is totally failing to address what you've been

hearing from us, what you've been hearing from students, from parents. It's not addressing their immediate need at all. They need that OSAP loan reinstated, if they're still in the program—we don't even know.

There's nothing about restitution for those that, through no fault of their own, are losing this school year, those that had to drop out of their lab tech program, their paralegal program, all those PSWs that are not being trained right now. Did you know that nearly 80% of new PSWs in this province are trained at private career colleges? They're not being trained right now. That is a whole generation of new PSWs that will not be entering the workforce this year because of a decision by this government.

So the dramatic action of suspending OSAP across the private sector, just totally disregarding innocent students—and it really begs the question, what was going on with oversight from this minister and this ministry? Inspections were happening; we know this. Were they not good enough? Why are all these colleges that have passed recent inspections—as recent as this past summer—cut off as well? The issue with this whole OSAP debacle is that there are a thousand questions that need to be answered. And unfortunately, all we get every single day is just spin and the same key messages, which I think I have memorized at this point.

Students were promised that funding, and it was taken away. They're forced now to take on private debt, and how is that making their life more affordable? That's what I hear all the time. That's what I see in the Protect Ontario ads, by the way. I see them all the time, how this government is making your life more affordable. I don't see how forcing debt onto students or ripping their education and OSAP away is making their life more affordable. They're losing semesters, delaying graduation or dropping out—the future workforce here, by the way: students at legitimate institutions punished for the actions of bad actors that was allowed by this minister for years.

I've got to ask again—and I'm going to repeat this as many times as the minister repeats his same old talking points: Why did it take three years of warnings for the government to act? We're now seeing legislation trying to address this, but again, 2023—remember that—is when the government was first warned about this fraud—2023. Why did it take until now for them to act? So much for respect for the taxpayer dollars, so much for accountability, so much for transparency. What stopped the minister from using existing inspection powers?

By the way, he didn't need legislation to freeze the OSAP, but he needs legislation now to attempt to close some loopholes and fix it? Why is the government protecting itself from lawsuits instead of protecting students? Where is the restitution for students who have already suffered?

I implore this government to seriously listen to these students, listen to these families, read those emails. I know that you're getting it yourself. My constituency office is still receiving dozens of emails every day. I've lost count as to how many we have—direct messages on social media, heartbreaking stories. It is our job, it is the job of the government to listen to the people and improve their lives, not make them worse. That's what this government has done. They have significantly made these people's lives worse.

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All right, I'm moving on to some concerning health care things here. This should not be in this omnibus bill. These are too serious of changes that require scrutiny, questions, probable amendments that this government always votes down anyway, but nonetheless. It shouldn't be in this omnibus bill.

Under schedule 9, the minister can issue binding directives to local boards of health. The minister can appoint supervisors when they consider it in the public interest—sound familiar? We've seen that one. Supervisors may also assume all the powers of local boards—broad ministry direction without a fixed maximum appointment term.

My question here is, what's the point? Like, what is the government trying to achieve with this? If we're going to take these drastic measures and weaken local independence, I want to know what the purpose is apart from it just being a complete power grab.

This risks political interference in public health decisions. We all know and believe that decisions that are happening in Thunder Bay, health issues that are happening in Thunder Bay are not the same, necessarily, as what we're seeing here in Toronto. But again, everything is being centralized to the minister here. We've seen this in other ministries and sectors. If they want all this power, that accountability had better come with it. But we never see that with this government.

I want to understand why and what problem the Minister of Health is trying to address with this. Local communities have different needs. So why are these sweeping powers necessary? What is the issue here that the Minister of Health is trying to address?

Unfortunately, we're not going to have the opportunity to really ask her about that. The minister certainly won't give you a real answer in question period—never does. But this should be its own separate bill, should go to committee, be scrutinized and perhaps pass, but the thing is, we just don't know enough.

Schedule 16, patient privacy: I want everyone to remember just how important trust is to the public when it comes to health care. I'm a registered nurse, and the importance of protecting one's health information is critical, and rightfully so. Your health information is deeply personal. This schedule expands the agency's ability to collect personal health information for health system administration, additional uses of electronic health records and certain uses permitted despite patient consent directives, subject to restrictions.

Again, I want to know what the purpose of this is. What is the goal here? Listen, a lot of our health care system is archaic. At the hospital, I still use a fax machine—a fax machine. I get that we have to modernize our health care system. I'm for that. But when it comes to someone's

private information, I have a lot of questions that I want answered.

I want to make sure that proper safeguards are in place. Look at what's been happening in the world the last couple of days. Microsoft shut down one day, Apple today. Flights are being grounded. We're all worried and freaked out about AI. And now we're going to be moving forward with some changes to people's health privacy without much information about what's actually going to be happening there.

Like I said before, trust is fundamental to a patient-provider relationship. When I walk into a patient's room for the first time, it's critical that I establish a therapeutic nurse-patient relationship with them, and that comes with trust. Because without trust, we can't provide quality care to that patient. Patients deserve to know who has access to their information and why. We know in this day and age that data is gold, and under my watch, people's health information will never be used for corporate companies' financial gain. Expanded collection must come with strong, enforceable safeguards with the clear objective of why that private information is being collected in the first place. A patient's medical record is not just another government database.

In my last two and a half minutes here—and thanks for all of you who've had to listen through me talking for half an hour. As I mentioned, there's some good stuff in here. The intimate-image-protection legislation—that provides important new civil remedies for victims, something that we're seeing more and more of, especially as AI is progressing, as deepfakes are becoming more and more common.

The dementia care requirements in the long-term-care bit—a major positive step. Expanding nurse practitioners' leadership roles is more than welcome. Expanded scopes of practice can certainly improve access to care and quality of care. And we all know that stronger career college oversight is long overdue and needed.

But good legislation should be able to stand on its own merits, and it shouldn't be used to shield bad legislation from scrutiny. But that's always the goal with this government and these omnibus bills. It's built in a way that they can point to the opposition and say, "You voted against this. You voted against funding hospitals." Well, when that is attached to something that is bad legislation—egregious, like the FOI changes or hiding the Premier's cellphone records—of course I'm going to vote against that. That's what the people of my riding want. I listen to them when I vote. I can't wait to hear their feedback on this bill.

It's unfortunate, though. This government had an opportunity to actually be accountable for this OSAP mess. Nothing in there about actually investigating what happened so it doesn't happen again, finding out who was complicit in this, why this was allowed to happen for years. Nothing for students, no justice for them, no restitution.

A government that doesn't listen to people, that's what this bill is. It's an assortment of very random policies thrown together. But do you know what? They're going to point and say, "You voted against closing the gap in OSAP. You voted against it." That's what they do.

I expect better. Our democracy expects better. People in my riding of Nepean expect better. So I'm tired of these omnibus bills. There's some good legislation in here that should be on its own. There's some legislation in here that could be good but warrants scrutiny, and I have lots of questions about it. And it's about time that this government actually starts listening and actually starts collaborating with members who have been elected by the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): I recognize the member from Ottawa South.

M. John Fraser: Je vais parler de l'éléphant dans la pièce. I'm going to talk about the elephant in the room. And the elephant—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you to the member from Whitby very much for that round of encouragement, because he knows about the elephant in the room. The elephant in the room today was that the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response—the minister at the core of this scandal—couldn't respond. So why is that?

Quite frankly, I'll give the Minister of Colleges and Universities credit: His answers are woefully inadequate and not based in reality, but he stands up every day. He stands up. He stands up, but nobody else here does. The Premier does every once in a while, and when he does stand up, behind the dais, they say, "Don't do that again, because when you stand up, you make mistakes."

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But nobody else is standing up and defending what has happened with OSAP and this government, and now you have this bill. What is the key feature of this bill for OSAP? Does anybody know? Guess what? The government is indemnifying themselves so they can't be sued by the thousands and thousands of honest, hard-working Ontarians who they've hurt, who they cut off at the knees, who they said to in the beginning, "We're going to give you a loan so you can go back and get a skill so you can get a better job or get a job to replace the one you just lost. So we'll back your loan"—not a grant, a loan. Seven weeks in, they go, "You're not getting your money. We had your back. We don't have your back anymore."

All these folks, a lot of them are older. They have kids. We all heard about the paramedic in Sault Ste. Marie: lost his job at Algoma Steel, wanted to go back to school, wanted to be a paramedic, got into the course. Seven weeks in, he can't pay the property taxes, has to go to a food bank, can't pay the grocery bill, can't pay for the kids' clothes. I don't know what else he can't pay, but the government's saying to him, "Wait. Wait for this bill, and after this bill passes, we can make it all whole." That's just a load of malarkey.

The reality is this government isn't putting anything into this bill, other than the indemnifying piece, that they couldn't do already. If you can take away the money that you took away from those thousands and thousands of

honest, hard-working Ontarians the way that you did, you can do what you're doing in this bill without having to do legislation. "Window dressing" is the most polite way I can describe this bill. Actually, it's window dressing with a poison pill.

The government again indemnifying itself—it seems like every time there's something controversial or they might get sued or someone has a real grievance against them, like in long-term care or—I'm trying to remember the other time they've indemnified themselves, but there's been a series of it. Right now, they know they're vulnerable because they did a number on these thousands and thousands of honest, hard-working people. They said, "We've got your back," and then you let them down. What's happening right now is their lives are changed. They're not able to complete their course. They can't pay their bills. Their families are struggling even more, and it's like the Silence of the Lambs over there. The only person who gets up and speaks is the minister, every day, and the minister who bears a lot of responsibility in it—not currently the minister—couldn't get up once today and repeat the very bad answers that the current minister gives.

Let's not kid ourselves. The only reason the OSAP piece is in this legislation is to cover yourselves, to protect your backside, to make sure that you can't get sued. It's not to help people. It's not to get the money any faster—because you could have done that last week. It's not exactly rocket science to try to figure out who should get that money and who shouldn't.

It's like the Premier and this government couldn't organize a two-car parade. It is unbelievable, what's happening to these people, and then you bury it in this bill—not bury it. You're covering this bill with stuff for HARP, stuff for HPPA, stuff for retirement homes. It's another omnibus bill, with 16 schedules—like, honestly.

Then you have Bill 105 that's not perfect. It's been sitting on the docket. It's ready for third reading. It went through committee. There's some stuff that shouldn't be in the bill, but you're holding back. You're holding back on making good for workers, making sure they get that bump in WSIB for injured workers, right?

Actually, the other piece in the bill, which is something I've been working on for about 10 years, is WSIB for retirement home workers, care home workers. The Premier promised that—not coming. But instead, you're putting through this piece of legislation to indemnify yourself, saying, "You can't sue us. We did you wrong; too bad. Sucks to be you." That's what you're saying. It is unbelievable the lengths that this government goes to to cover their asses.

I withdraw. I'm just going to say it out loud. That's the way it's said. That's what this is all about.

And it's even going further by doing that in the courts, retroactively. Isn't that great? There's no retroactive money for these folks, these loans that you didn't make good on, but you can be retroactive for yourself. It's shameful. Honest, hard-working people—people with families, people with kids, people with mortgages, people with rent, people with bills to pay, people who just want to make their lives better—you made them a promise, and you broke the promise, and you won't make good on it.

And then the minister—and the government, for that matter—has the temerity to say, "We can get it maybe by January if you pass this bill." It has nothing to do with passing this bill—nothing. You're just relying on the fact that so many people are so busy that it's hard for them to understand what's happened here.

And here's what has happened: The government starves public colleges. We fired 10,000 workers, lost hundreds of courses at dozens of colleges. Then these private colleges move in to fill a space. They've always been there, but you're putting more burden on them. You're driving people in that direction, and you're fundraising at the same time.

The Auditor General says to you, "Be careful. There's a whole bunch of risk out there. You've got these problems. Be careful." The minister ignores it, but does—as is always the case in these scandals—a $150,000 fundraiser for the PC Party. And the money keeps coming in.

And then the minister—not the current minister; the former minister—says, "It's okay to have asynchronous online learning." And what does that mean? Essentially, no classroom, no teacher, no schedule. They make it permanent. And what happens? You get seven campuses of private career colleges getting $385 million—that's a lot of money—in one year. It's more money than every student at a public college got in grants. These are all grants. OSAP to people at private career colleges went from $500 million one year to almost a billion dollars. Was nobody paying attention over there? Nobody? That's a gigantic red flag.

And then if you look at the growth in enrolment—6,000%, 8,000%, 4,000% at some of these strip mall storefront colleges—no classrooms, barely any offices, but 17,000 students—wow. How could that happen?

Your legislation isn't solving any of that. You could have stopped this years ago. You don't need what's in this legislation to stop it. You can do it. You could have done it three years ago. You could have done it two years ago. You could have last year. You could have done it anywhere along the line, but you didn't, because the money was flowing into the party coffers.

And then, finally, after all this stuff happened—the minister's chief of staff becomes the head of Career Colleges Ontario; a former minister's partner succeeds him later on—it's just too much inside baseball, too many people connected and too much money out the door with nothing to show for it.

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And then, when it comes to light because Allison Jones from CP gets an FOI—which is super hard to get anymore—and then finds out this is happening, then all of a sudden, the government goes, "Oh, we've been discovered. We've been found out. This gigantic mess that we've made is visible to everybody. It's coming apart. What are we going to do? What are we going to do?" I can see them in the Premier's office right now, hunkering down with the minister: "What are we going to do? Well, let's cut off all

those honest, hard-working people who we promised a loan to. Let's not worry about if they're okay or the place they were going to is okay. Let's just say everybody is bad even though only seven colleges got $385 million in one year. Let's make everybody bad. Let's cut everybody off. It will look like we're really doing something. It will look like we're a government that takes action." Give me a break.

This whole thing was three and four years in the making. So to do what you did, to make those honest, hard-working people pay, to say, "You're on your own. I'm not worried about your bills. Take care of it yourself. I messed up, we messed up, but you're going to pay the price," and then to say that you're actually doing something in this bill to address that when you can do it without going to the trouble of doing this, but actually trying to cover the fact that you're indemnifying yourself from your responsibility legally in the eyes of the court for what you've done to people—that's shameful. These are just regular, everyday people.

And here's the other piece: On the other side of the aisle, I know you're good people. I know there's people who think over there. I know there's people who care; I do. It may not sound like that all the time, but I do. There's a whole bunch of you who understand that the foundation of Ontario's economy is our schools—our primary schools, our secondary schools, our colleges, our universities, our career colleges. They're the foundation of our economy. A casino in Niagara is not the foundation of our economy.

So I don't know how the Premier of this province can't be seized with this problem, which is—what's going to happen now that you cut all these people off is that we're not going to have the early childhood educators we need, or the PSWs, or the paramedics, or the lab techs, or the pharmacy technicians or the cardiology techs. You're not going to notice it right now. In about a year's time, eight months' time, we're going to notice that in our economy.

What is the most important thing in a modern economy? Highly trained, highly skilled, healthy people; highly skilled, highly educated, healthy people—that's what's important. And this Premier and this government are dropping the ball on this.

We should be making it easier for people to get educated, to build skills, to find a new career. The world is changing, and what we need is highly skilled, highly educated people. And what's happened is this government, by starving our public colleges and losing all these courses and 10,000 workers, and then literally putting a knife into those other training programs that we need for our economy—it's like you don't care. What is it James Carville said in 1992? "It's the economy, stupid." And what he meant was, that's the thing that's important to people. What drives our economy? People. What kind of people? Highly educated, healthy, highly skilled, employed people. The government is going in the opposite direction.

Now, there are a lot of schedules in this bill—

M^me^ Lucille Collard: Eighteen.

Mr. John Fraser: Is it 18? I thought it was 16. I got it wrong, eh?

I'm leaving some time for my colleague here. I could eat it all up and keep you all here to 9 o'clock and not actually breathe.

There's a piece in there on the Health Information Protection Act. I'm concerned that the privacy commissioner has not actually been asked about this legislation before it being put forward. And I have a great concern about people's health information because we know that information and data is currency in the new world. Data is currency. It has value. And we do know that people outside of government want to get that value: people who want to get that data because they want to be able to use that data.

My concern is, I haven't got an opinion on this—which I think would have been kind of handy; maybe we'll hear it in debate—from the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Maybe it's good. Maybe it's all fine. But you're burying it in this bill, like everything but the kitchen sink, folks. "And by the way, you can't sue us"—really?

Anyway, Speaker, I want to thank you for your time and my colleagues for their time. I know it's 5 o'clock in the afternoon. I was trying to get at least a little bit of rise out of one of you, but apparently it's not working this afternoon, although the member from—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: There we go. Thank you very much. The member from Whitby did give me some great encouragement at the beginning, and now you're doing a good job. That's all I wanted. I'm just looking for a response.

The House leader—somebody nudge him there. I think I've put him to sleep.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'm wide awake. I'm wide awake.

Mr. John Fraser: I don't know. You guys over there—you're like Statler and Waldorf over there.

Anyway, thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to debate, and I'll yield the floor to my colleague from Kanata.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): I recognize the member from Kanata–Carleton.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: The Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security has stood in this place day after day saying how badly he feels for students who can't afford their training, who can't afford to put food on the table and who, quite frankly, were unjustly punished by this minister and this government. And he promised action. I thought, "Ooh, here we've got a bill coming up. This will do something for students."

And we are all familiar with the government's response about how, after having been warned for eight years, now they are acting with extreme urgency. But Speaker, the fact that the government—he was serious about wanting to help students, so they created an 18-schedule omnibus bill and stuck protecting students in schedule 13.

So how does this schedule of this bill lead off? Let me quote. Section 1 of schedule 13 reads that "No cause of action arises against any current or former member of the

executive council"—the government—"deputy minister, inspector, employee, officer or agent of the crown or advisor to the crown" when "acting in good faith in the exercise or performance ... of ... powers, duties or functions under this act...."

Did you get that? This is the real reason why they brought forward this legislation—not to help students, because there's no help for students in this bill; there is nothing—not to help make students' lives more affordable, but to protect themselves.

They didn't need legislation to cut funding to thousands of struggling students. They didn't need legislation to stop funding to bad actors. No legislation is required to do that. But they want legislation to protect themselves, and that is what schedule 13 of this bill is all about.

You can see that they care so much about the students that the very first line of this bill contains language on how this government and this minister can protect themselves—the first line. We should all now clearly understand why exactly they felt the need to hide the cellphone records even after the court had ordered them released.

1730

Let's go through just a bit of a timeline. We'll go all the way back to November 2018. The Auditor General identified OSAP oversight weaknesses. His value-for-money audit identified inadequate verification of different information and insufficient monitoring of private career colleges. Yes, you guessed it—all the way back to 2018.

Then, in 2020, the Auditor General's follow-up report found that the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities had not fully addressed important financial oversight weaknesses identified in its original 2018 audit.

Do you know what else happened in 2020 after the Auditor General had told them that they didn't have proper safeguards in place? This government went ahead and allowed online-only programs, including asynchronous programs without live instruction, to qualify for OSAP. That might have made sense during the COVID years, but that provision was never amended to withdraw that permission, and it's what has led to today's scandal.

Then, in 2021, the Auditor General's report identified private college regulatory weaknesses in enforcement and financial oversight. Three years in a row he mentioned it: 2018, 2020, 2021. So we all know it's a problem.

Then, in 2023, Career Colleges Ontario warned the government that there were indicators consistent with suspicious activities and then went on to warn the government three times in 2023—three times: in January, in May and then again in November. And this was five years after the Auditor General's warnings. These warnings concerned the potential misuse of student financial assistance at certain institutions.

So five years after being warned by the Auditor General in 2018, and then again being warned three times by Career Colleges Ontario that there was suspicious activity going on, this government did nothing—nothing.

Again, in April 2024, Career Colleges Ontario discovered more anomalies. This wasn't the government doing due diligence, but they asked the government to refer certain concerns to law enforcement. The ministry reportedly contacted police, but the nature of the concerns and what subsequently happened remain unclear because parts of the correspondence were redacted, so we're not going to know exactly what happened.

But then, in January 2025, once again, Career Colleges Ontario warned the government and formally identified 10 institutions with anomalous OSAP application growth, and two of them were the Academy of Learning on Bay Street and in Brampton. It's obvious the government did not take these warnings seriously because actual in-person inspections did not begin until July and August 2025, approximately nine to 10 months after first being warned by Career Colleges Ontario.

Let's consider the facts. This is just shocking: The average growth at 10 flagged schools was 855% over two years. In fact, one school's applications rose from 107 to 2,992 applications in two years.

And then, in May 2025, the federal government also warned Ontario about concerns about several private career colleges, including the two Academy of Learning colleges. These included unusually rapid growth and evidence described as "systemic irregularities." The ministry finally began in-person inspections in July and August of 2025.

So, in summary, Career Colleges Ontario warned the government about funding the Academy of Learning in Brampton. The federal government warned them again in May of 2025. And they were still given money in August of 2025. Does this make any sense? The September inspection report for the Bay Street location alleged third parties may have completed the students' coursework—sometimes entire courses in one day—and that some students could not identify their school or their program.

After seven years of repeated warning, finally the Ontario government's forensic investigation team was put on the task. Then in February 2026, Career Colleges Ontario requested inspections of 14 campuses displaying possible suspicious activity. Again, it wasn't the ministry that noticed this. Is it suspicious when things go up 855%? No. But the ministry did deny OSAP eligibility for some of those students.

In August of 2026, they sent KPMG to investigate. But they still—again, in August of 2026, these same institutions that were under active investigation—sent them money. Would you not have waited until the investigations came back and cleared these institutions before you sent them more money? I don't understand it.

Eight years of warnings ignored—until, thankfully, Allison Jones actually wrote an article and brought it back to the top of the pile again. That's eight years of warnings, hundreds of millions, maybe even a billion dollars stolen from the people of Ontario due to the negligence of this government, and a schedule that doesn't do anything for students and only serves to protect this government from being held accountable.

Is everyone familiar with the movie All the President's Men? There's a famous line from that movie: "Follow the money." Look at who has pumped tens of thousands of

dollars into this government's fundraising. Any guesses? You've got it: career colleges. And I suspect more fraud will come to light in the coming days.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the member from Nepean. In his introduction to his remarks, he spoke about the opportunity that he had taken to review all the schedules within the legislation. One that stands out, Speaker, is gender-based violence, because behind every statistic on gender-based violence is a survivor whose safety, dignity and future depends on having access to support.

Our government is proposing a renewed Ontario-STANDS for another five years, building on more than $1.4 billion in provincial investments over the current four-year action plan going forward.

Can the member from Nepean explain why they would oppose continuing this important work and standing with survivors—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Thank you.

The member from Nepean.

MPP Tyler Watt: I mean, this was what I was talking about in my debate. Of course I stand with those victims and I support them. But if you're taking it so seriously, why are you putting it in an omnibus bill that's dealing with dentures and OSAP and a million other things? If the member was taking this seriously, he wouldn't be using it to weaponize it against me. I said right here that they did this on purpose so that they can point to the opposition and say, "Look, they voted against it." You put it in an omnibus bill with 18 different schedules in there. You should take it seriously.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Questions?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thanks to my colleagues for your remarks.

Since we've been back, all we hear is OSAP and the corruption all around OSAP. Yet this government—we've been saying you need to make these students whole, you need to protect them, we need to make sure that they don't lose their year, and on and on and on. Every day we ask—we do it, you do it, the Greens do it, everybody does it on this side of the House; radio silence on that side of the House.

But yet we also see that in this omnibus bill, which is not the first time they do that—they put language in there to protect themselves from litigation. It's not the first time. It seems to keep coming. So can you answer why we are still seeing that and why we haven't seen them making sure that the students are made whole?

Mr. John Fraser: It's just like when they did Bill 124. They knew what they did was wrong; they didn't want to be liable for it. You made a decision, you hurt people. You didn't need to. They didn't need to—not at all. It would have been easy enough to figure it out if you took the time, if you took a week or two weeks. If the minister had done the right thing and stepped down, and the government had actually said, "Yes, there's these 20% of career colleges, we've got to take a harder look at them. So it's too bad for those folks there, but we're going to go there"—and the other 80%, right? You made good on your promise to give them a loan. You promised to give them a loan. You made a commitment, you made a promise, and you broke the promise. And now you're saying, "I didn't break a promise, and you can't hold me to that promise."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Questions?

Ms. Laura Smith: As somebody who worked under the child protection act, I have to say that I really enjoyed looking at not just the progress that's made, but the work that's being done.

And I should throw in, very selfishly, this bill does include dementia care delivery, and as many of you in the House know, I brought the first private member's bill, the first look at dementia in this House in over a decade—yes, I did. So this is a good day for me when I can talk about the things that are happening.

And you know what? In the last decade, the number of children in care—and as somebody who worked under the child protection act—has declined by more than 20%, and the government is proposing legislation that will tighten so much of the work being done with more inspections.

This is positive work, and will the members opposite not step up with us and vote to affirm this bill in the next few minutes?

Mr. John Fraser: I appreciate the member's response. Yes, a decade ago, I do remember—and it's taken you eight and a half years to get back to it, so I'm not going to do a cartwheel. I think it's important. Look, I have cared for two people with dementia. I think it's important, but let's not pat each other on the back by saying it's taken us eight and a half years to get there.

As far as child protection goes, if this government isn't ashamed of the fact that children across this province were housed in hotels and in inappropriate situations because the government was not providing enough resources, and then the Premier had the temerity to talk about children's aid societies being Taj Mahals and the problem being children's aid societies—-get off your high horse.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Questions?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to my colleagues from Ottawa for their comments on this incredibly bad bill.

You spoke a lot about OSAP, and I want to give you the opportunity to speak more about another damaging part of this bill that we see, which is that we know that children are dying in care across the province. As the shadow minister for education, I'm seeing, on a daily basis, how this government is failing kids with disabilities and special needs, especially those with complex needs. The Ontario Autism Program is broken. We're not providing any kinds of supports at school. And then when children have complex needs that their families aren't able to meet, there's no supports there to provide what might help that child stay within their family. And then children who are being relinquished to the children's aid society because their parents can't care for them are being warehoused in hotels where they're not even being kept safe.

Do you see any plan in this legislation to actually ensure that children in the care of the government are being kept alive?

Mr. John Fraser: There's no plan to do that in this bill. There's no plan to do that, and it's more than just this minister's responsibility to take care of it. Our schools have to be safe places for kids to learn, especially kids with exceptional needs. They need those needs met.

Families struggle—and we all know these families. We all have these families in communities that we talk to, that we know, that have an adult child or an older child at home that's living with a developmental disability or a physical disability or a dual diagnosis. For years and years, they do everything right. They don't ask for much. And then when they need us—and this is across governments of different stripes—we're not there for them. And what's in this bill doesn't address this stuff. This bill is a lot of window dressing.

I want to agree with our member from Nepean: There are poison pills in this, which is ridiculous given what we're talking about today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I invite the Liberal members who spoke to turn their attention to schedule 10 so they can familiarize themselves with it.

Our government is introducing something called the Intimate Images Protection Act, and what that does is establish a right to privacy. If somebody comes into possession of an image of you, which is an intimate image, you have a right to privacy with regard to that image. I think that's very important, and I think it's very important that the government has introduced this legislation. If somebody violates your right to privacy, then you can sue that person in a courtroom, and I think that's very important.

I think this is important legislation introduced by the government, especially in this age of artificial intelligence and social media. I invite any of the speakers to speak to that matter.

MPP Tyler Watt: Listen, I totally agree with the member. I said this in my debate. There's some good stuff in this omnibus bill. It's just so unfortunate that it's crammed in there with 18 other schedules about dentures and OSAP. It should stand on its own. All the health care stuff, put it in its own bill. This is extremely important legislation you're talking about. We desperately need these types of protections, especially with AI, which is getting totally out of control. Put that in its own bill, and I'll support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): Further debate?

Ms. Jess Dixon: It's not trite I think to say, in this case, that it is such an incredible honour to be able to rise and speak to this bill. I'm going to focus all of my comments on the Intimate Images Protection Act portion of this bill, and I'm going to tell a little story.

Back in August or September 2015, I was assigned to plea court as a crown. Plea court tends to be really fast-paced with a giant stack of files that you're trying to get through. A lot of the time the sentence may have been determined already between crown and defence; it's not usually where you have really, really long, drawn-out sentencing submissions. You do your best to be prepared for your court but, all day long, things are getting referred from other courts. You may be doing a plea on something that you're opening at the time that you're doing the plea.

1750

This case came in, and it was an extortion charge. I opened it and I started reading. It was set for a plea. The victim was a young woman who had had a very brief relationship with a man, had ended that relationship and didn't want to have anything further to do with him. About a month after she ended that relationship, he got in touch with her and told her very bluntly that if she didn't have sex with him again, that he was in possession of a compromising video of her and himself, and that he was going to make a copy of it and send it to her father. He then gave her father's name and address in that message to make sure that she knew that he was serious.

It had been screened for 15 to 18 months custody, but the defence counsel position—I'm sorry, I'm going to sound like a crown right now—was that it was completely reasonable that it be a suspended sentence with absolutely no custody. Now, the judge in plea court that day was a nice man, but perhaps with a limited sphere of experience. When I read in the facts and indicated what my position was on sentence, he basically said at that point in time that my position was so unreasonable and so high and so unrealistic and so unfair to this man that he didn't even need to hear submissions from defence counsel because he believed defence counsel's position of a suspended sentence without any custody was so fair.

I remember being extremely upset about this, and I basically pleaded with him to say, "Well, if that's your current decision, then I'm going to ask for this to be adjourned for a month for me to have the opportunity to do more sentencing research on this and present again." Luckily, he agreed.

The challenge was, when I went to do the sentencing research, there really wasn't any. This wasn't a situation that courts were engaging with. The only one I'd been able to find was in BC, and it was a youth who had actually shared it. That case was very much just a slap on the wrist. So when we came back to court, I was in the position where I didn't have any case law to present that supported my position.

What I ended up doing was—I knew this judge and how his mind worked quite well. He's a real family man, and so I threw myself on the argument of making him feel how he would feel if he was in the role of her father, if he had received this video and the damage that it would do to his relationship with his daughter.

In many ways, it was a good day and a good result. I still have a very clear memory of it because after I finished my submissions on that point, he turned to defence counsel and told defence counsel that he was very sorry to have told defence counsel that he didn't need to present any submissions because he would now have to present submissions to counter why my position of 15 to 18 months' custody was not eminently reasonable in the circum-

stances. All this to say, he was back then sentenced to 15 months in jail, which is a good result.

But the thing is, what this sort of shows you—now, this was before the federal government had proceeded on making sharing intimate images or threatening to share intimate images—it was long before it was ever a criminal offence. What I was facing in that courtroom wasn't just the fact that there was no case law to illustrate my position; it was that I literally had to be in a position where the only way that I was able to convince the judge that this was serious conduct was by getting him to put himself in the position of somebody other than the victim and how that would compromise their relationship. It wasn't on the basis that what that man was proposing to do was inherently wrong and abhorrent and disgraceful.

That is why this Intimate Images Protection Act and creating a statutory tort of intimate image abuse is so incredibly important, because it's not just about the legal vehicle for it, it's also about what actually doing this says to the public at large about this type of conduct.

Now, torts are an old, funny area of law. When I was working on the IPV report, of which this was a recommendation, I actually did pull out my old torts textbook to go through, see if any of the other common law torts would apply to this, and they didn't. It had me thinking about my torts professor way back, John Currie, and how he taught us back in torts 101, which I honestly did not think was going to be relevant again.

But quite recently, the Supreme Court commented extensively on the role of tort law in this area in the Ahluwalia case, where the SCC found a common law tort of intimate partner violence. At that point, Justice Karakatsanis said that creating a new tort is about vindicating the "plaintiff's rights, deterring possible wrongdoers, and educating the public about what conduct is and is not acceptable."

Like I said, back in 2015, the law was really only beginning to say that, and Parliament has said it more clearly since. And what I want to drive home is, with this bill, Ontario is doing that as well.

The satisfaction of being able to see this coming out of the IPV report is immense. We listened to so many experts and so many academics on this. I want to shout out Dr. Kaitlynn Mendes and Dr. Suzie Dunn, who testified at the committee about technological abuse and technological violence. At the time that they were making their submissions, they were even only talking about the fact that images had to be real, and we have now gone beyond that as well to look at the increasing scourge that is AI image generation or deepfakes. We heard a story that was presented to us in committee about a young girl who had had classmates make AI deepfake videos of her. She came from a very religious family, and the deepfakes were so realistic looking that part of her trauma was that her family didn't actually believe that the images had been faked, initially, and you can just imagine the trauma of that.

So again, with a tort versus the criminal law—in criminal law, the victim is technically just still a witness. They have offended against the state. In a tort claim, in a civil claim like this, it is the victim's own cause of action, and they are enabled to pursue remedies and damages that are absolutely not available in a criminal context.

One of the things that is so impressive about this legislation is—and it's actually gone farther than the other provinces have now—as far as enabling takedown injunctions and interlocutory orders. Because, while I believe that the damages component of this is important from a deterrence perspective, for victims and survivors of this offence, one of the most important things that you can do is to get that image removed as quickly as possible.

In this tort, we talk about how the victim doesn't—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): I apologize. It being 6 o'clock, it is now time for private members' public business.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

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Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Hon. / L'hon. Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaban, Fatima (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smyth, Stephanie (LIB)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Artificial Intelligence Adoption / Ministre associé de l'Adoption de l'intelligence artificielle
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Tsao, Jonathan (LIB)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	