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Tuesday
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Mardi
27 octobre 2026

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Clerk: Trevor Day

Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly
Greffier : Trevor Day

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 27 October 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 27 octobre 2026

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

TRAGEDY IN WAINWRIGHT, ALBERTA

Hon. Doug Ford: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to have a moment of silence for those who lost their lives to the tragedy that took place at Canadian Forces Base Wainwright in Alberta.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Premier is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence to recognize the deaths in Wainwright, Alberta. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that vacancies have occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of the Honourable Caroline Mulroney as the member for the electoral district of York–Simcoe, effective June 5, 2026, and the resignation of the Honourable Neil Lumsden as the member for the electoral district of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, effective August 4, 2026. Accordingly, I issued my warrants to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of writs for by-elections.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that, during the adjournment, the following documents were tabled:

From the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario:

—the 2025-26 annual report;

From the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario:

—the 2025 annual report and statistical report;

From the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario:

—the 2025-26 annual report;

—a report entitled Catching Up on Fairness: Investigation into the Experience of Custodial Parents and Guardians Who Were Denied Benefit Payments Under the Ministry of Education's Direct Payment Programs between January 2020 and March 2023;

—a report of the French Language Services Commissioner entitled In Search of Services in French: Investigation into Services in French at ServiceOntario Locations;

From the Office of the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario:

—a report entitled Ontario Economic Monitor: October 2025 to March 2026;

—a report entitled Expenditure Monitor 2025-26: Q4;

—the 2025-26 annual report;

—a report entitled Ontario Economic Monitor: January to June 2026;

—a report entitled An Update on Homelessness Programs in Ontario;

—a report entitled Economic and Budget Outlook, Summer 2026;

—a report entitled Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services: 2026 Spending Plan Review;

—a report entitled Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security: 2026 Spending Plan Review;

—a report entitled Ministry of Education: 2026 Spending Plan Review;

—a report entitled Ontario Health Sector: 2026 Spending Plan Review; and

—a report entitled An Update on Homelessness Programs in Ontario, received October 2, 2026, with addendum.

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REQUESTS TO INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I also beg to inform the House that, during the adjournment, I received and laid upon the table a request by the member for Davenport, Marit Stiles, to the Integrity Commissioner for an opinion pursuant to section 30 of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, on whether the member for Brampton East, Hardeep Singh Grewal, has contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention, and a request by the member for Davenport, Marit Stiles, to the Integrity Commissioner for an opinion pursuant to section 30 of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, on whether the member for Kenora–Rainy River, the Honourable Greg Rickford, has contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that the late show scheduled for this evening, standing in the name of the member for Orléans, has been withdrawn.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Hon. Steve Clark: I rise to congratulate all the mayors and council members elected in yesterday's municipal elections across the 13 municipalities in Leeds-Grenville.

I also want to commend every candidate who put their name forward in this election and engaged voters on the important issues in their communities. In my riding, two mayors were re-elected for another four-year term: Corinna Smith-Gatcke in Leeds and the Thousand Islands and Gauri Shankar in Prescott.

Seven mayors were newly elected to lead their councils: Anne Marie Dancy in Athens, Cameron Wales in Brockville, Henry Oosterhof in Elizabethtown-Kitley, Kirby Perkins in Front of Yonge, Colin Brown in Gananoque, Anne Barr in Merrickville-Wolford and John Fenik in Rideau Lakes.

I also want to recognize the four mayors that were acclaimed: Jeff Shaver in Augusta, Tory Deschamps in Edwardsburgh/Cardinal, Nancy Peckford in North Grenville and Joe Aragona in Westport.

To those mayors and councillors who did not seek re-election or were unsuccessful, I extend my sincere appreciation for your dedicated service to your communities and collaboration with me over the last four years.

Speaker, to all the incoming councils, congratulations, and I look forward to working together on the priorities that matter to our residents that we represent.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Last week, Ontario marked Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Education Appreciation Day, but appreciation alone is not enough.

Today, I stand here to share the reality of a first-year early childhood educator. She entered the profession eagerly to make a difference in children's lives. Every day, ECEs lift children, sit on floors, change diapers, prepare activities, support learning and comfort children through difficult emotions. They carry the responsibility of keeping our children safe, supporting development, helping them feel valued and loved through their formative years, yet the compensation does not reflect the demands of this important work.

This educator has post-secondary education and plays an essential role in supporting our economy, yet her former classmates who love working with children are leaving the profession because they struggle to afford basic living expenses, and many are not receiving benefits for their physically demanding labour—a painful reminder that passion alone doesn't pay the bills.

I call on this government to revisit the bill I introduced in 2024, Bill 191, Childcare and Early Years Workforce Strategy Advisory Committee Act, to develop recommendations to better support ECEs and the broader child care workforce. We cannot deliver high-quality, accessible child care without investing in the people that provide it.

TRAGEDY IN WAINWRIGHT, ALBERTA

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'm so deeply saddened by the tragedy that happened at CFB Wainwright that claimed the lives of four Canadian soldiers and left 39 others injured, and I thank the Premier for his moment of silence.

Further, we here in this chamber honour and remember Sergeant Morgan Wong, Private Shaun Farrell, Private Aidan Goulding and Private Hayden Lykkemark. These brave Canadians stepped forward to serve their country. They dedicated themselves to defending Canada, and they and their families deserve our deepest respect, gratitude and unwavering support, because behind every soldier stands a family that shares that commitment and that sacrifice.

Private Goulding's mother said he quit a steady job as a mechanic to join the Canadian military, declaring that he had but one life to live and wanted to dedicate it to protecting his country.

We extend our sympathies and heartfelt condolences to their families, friends and fellow soldiers. We must ensure that everyone affected receives the care, compassion and support they need, not just today, but throughout the difficult days, weeks and months ahead.

I ask all Canadians to keep these families in their hearts and in their thoughts and prayers.

They stepped forward for Canada and now it's our turn to stand together for them.

Lest we forget.

Applause.

EVENTS IN HAMILTON MOUNTAIN

MPP Monica Ciriello: From community spirit to historic investments, Hamilton Mountain had a season worth celebrating.

On Concession Street, our BIA hosted Sidewalk Sounds on Fridays; we celebrated neighbours turning over a century; we welcomed new businesses and Special Olympians to Gretzky Pickleball; and we filled the streets with Italian fest. At the Tim Hortons on Upper Ottawa, we set another Camp Day record; and I hosted a first free self-defence course, welcoming more than 200 women and girls to our Mountain YMCA.

We also delivered results: $572 million was announced in Hamilton for infrastructure—the single-largest investment in our city's history. This funding will benefit Hamilton Mountain by widening Rymal Road.

We announced an expanded emergency room; $24,000 for seniors at Neighbour to Neighbour; and expanded primary care to connect more than 2,700 Hamiltonians to family care.

And who could forget about our Hamilton Cardinals who play right here at Bernie Arbour Stadium? This season, the birds went all the way to the finals for the first time since 2002.

From Concession Street to Rymal Road, Hamilton Mountain showed up all season long, and I've never been more proud to represent such an incredible community.

YOUTH CLIMATE JOBS

Ms. Jessica Bell: "Give young people the opportunity, and we're ready to get to work." That's Jaden Smith. He joined myself, labour and environmental leaders to call for the creation of an Ontario youth climate jobs program to employ up to 10,000 young people a year to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, prepare for extreme weather and respond to climate emergencies. Electricians, carpenters, arborists, researchers, planners, firefighters and educators would all have a role to play. And unlike the Ontario program that the government has set up, these youth would be paid.

This is so important right now because the Conservative government has abandoned its moral and economic responsibility to reduce emissions and prepare for extreme weather. The Conservatives have no good plan or serious plan to address anything from extreme heat or flooding or wildfire.

A youth climate jobs program would help Ontario build the workforce needed to address these challenges, while giving young people something equally important: a job.

I want to end by quoting Jaden Smith again: "Gen Z is bursting with creativity, passion, an incredible diversity of skills and a determination to make a difference.... Imagine what we could accomplish if we harnessed that potential, putting young people's talents to work for our communities, our climate and our future."

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Lorne Coe: Lakeridge Health, Durham Regional Police Service, the Ontario Provincial Police and the region of Durham paramedic services have established the Durham region police-hospital committee, bringing local health care and first responder partners together to strengthen how people experiencing mental health and addictions-related crises are supported when accessing emergency care.

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The committee will focus on the transition of care that occurs when police bring a person to a Lakeridge Health emergency department for mental health assessment and treatment. Through regular collaboration, the partners will work to promote clear, consistent and person-centred processes that support safety, privacy, dignity, human rights and compliance with applicable legislation.

Speaker, the partner organizations are reinforcing, as they should, their shared commitment to improving the experience of people in crisis, strengthening access to appropriate care and, importantly, supporting the health, safety and well-being of hard-working families in Whitby and other parts of the region of Durham.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
ÉLECTIONS MUNICIPALES

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Today I want to recognize everyone who put their name forward in Ontario's municipal elections. It takes courage, dedication and a genuine commitment to public service to represent our communities. Congratulations to all newly elected and returning municipal leaders and thank you to every candidate who stepped forward. As elected officials, it is our duty to serve with dignity, honesty and utmost respect. True leadership means listening, inspiring and putting our communities first.

In northern Ontario our realities are unique and our challenges are many. While our political views may differ, we must never let those differences stand in the way of working together, for all of us share one common goal: building stronger, more prosperous communities.

I wish you all great success in your roles and look forward to working alongside you to build a better future for our communities.

Aujourd'hui, je tiens à souligner l'engagement de toutes les personnes qui ont posé leur candidature aux élections municipales. Félicitations aux élus et merci à tous les candidats. Être élu, c'est servir avec honnêteté, dignité et respect. Un bon leader sait écouter, rassembler et inspirer.

Dans le Nord, nos défis sont uniques, mais notre force réside dans notre solidarité. Au-delà de nos différences politiques, nous partageons le même objectif : assurer la vitalité et l'avenir de nos communautés.

Je vous souhaite à tous beaucoup de succès dans vos fonctions, et j'ai bien hâte de travailler à vos côtés pour bâtir un avenir meilleur pour nos communautés.

FALL FESTIVAL
MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms. Jess Dixon: October 17 marked my fourth annual Fall Festival at beautiful Steckle historic farm in Kitchener South–Hespeler—I can't believe that's already the fourth annual. It's always a fun day but it was an especially fun day to realize how many people I'm recognizing that have come back year after year, especially families and kids that come.

As always, my dog, George, is the main star of the show and I'm really only there to manage his fan base. I have to give a shout-out to him. I've never seen a dog be so tolerant of so many kids that want to meet him.

A huge thank you to my staff—to Bonita, to all of my staff and all the volunteers that came and made it such a successful day, as well as our face painters, our crafters and our food trucks. We've had Leen's Shop, Fo' Cheezy grilled cheese and BeaverTails coming back year after year, and every single year has been a resounding success. My dad has relaxed slightly on the pumpkin monitoring duty. It was originally one pumpkin per family and he took it very, very seriously—so he has relaxed slightly.

I also just want to give a huge congratulations—we all know how difficult politics can be and how important it is as a woman to have women supporting women in politics, so I want to give a huge congratulations to two of my very close friends, Corey Kimpson and Sheri Roberts, who were re-elected as city councillors in Cambridge last night.

Congratulations, ladies. I'm looking forward to continuing to work with you.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Last Saturday, I stood on the lawn of Queen's Park with students, teachers, education workers, union leaders and allies, all of us speaking up in support of public education in Ontario.

We heard stories, like the ones we hear in our constituency offices all the time, about the realities in our classrooms. We heard from parents whose kids have special needs who aren't supported because of staffing cuts, parents of kids who are being kept home because their needs are too great and help is not on the way.

Let me be clear: Every child in Ontario, regardless of their needs, has a right to education all day and every day. But that's not what's happening in Ontario, so teachers and education workers are faced with the harmful impact of mental health challenges and developmental issues on kids due to screen addiction, learning challenges, poverty. Staff are burnt out and sick, but there is not enough money for sick days, there is not enough money for support staff and not enough to make the work sustainable. Worst of all, we're faced with a government that has no plan.

I challenge any MPP in this place to spend a day in their shoes. If we did that, we would fund special education, we would protect kids from online harms, we would make sure that front-line staff and students have what they need in schools and we would show a willingness to proudly defend public education. Our kids deserve it.

Hats off to ETFO, OSSTF, OECTA, AEFO, EAA, CUPE, OPSEU, parents and students for making this day happen. We are truly stronger together.

RIDING OF BRAMPTON EAST

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: After a summer of more than 500 events, countless conversations and plenty of community barbecues, I'm proud to be back in the House representing Brampton East. The best part was the people. I met families celebrating milestones, entrepreneurs opening their doors and volunteers who found time to help everyone around them. I also listened to the peoples' concerns, the challenges they're facing and what they expect from us. Thank you for sharing those concerns, and I'll be bringing your priorities back to Queen's Park.

I also would like to take a minute to congratulate Mayor Patrick Brown on his re-election, along with Brampton East councillors Harkirat Singh, Sukhman Sangha, Rod Power and Taran Chahal. I'd also like to thank all those that put their name forward to run for municipal elections. It takes real courage and pride to come out and support your community and run for public office.

Speaker, with Halloween approaching just around the corner this Saturday, I hope our youngest residents have their costumes ready and their candy routes planned. Drivers, please slow down and watch for the little ones. Kids, stay visible, stay safe and stick together. And remember, your parents checking your candy is very important work. A few pieces may go missing. Happy Halloween, Brampton East.

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS FOR HAMILTON EAST–STONEY CREEK, YORK–SIMCOE AND SCARBOROUGH SOUTHWEST

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Electoral Officer and laid upon the table certificates of the by-elections in the electoral districts of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, York–Simcoe and Scarborough Southwest.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): I've received three letters dated September 16, 2026, addressed to the Clerk of the Assembly, that read as follows:

"Dear Mr. Day:

"A writ of election, dated the 5th day of August, 2026, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Catherine A. Cousins, returning officer for the electoral district of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Neil Lumsden who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, has resigned.

"This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on the 3rd day of September, 2026, Jeff Beattie has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 8th day of September, 2026, which is now lodged of record in my office."

The second letter reads as follows:

"Dear Mr. Day:

"A writ of election, dated the 5th day of August, 2026, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Tina Basso, returning officer for the electoral district of York–Simcoe, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of York–Simcoe in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Caroline Mulroney who, since her election as representative of the said electoral district of York–Simcoe, has resigned.

"This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in York–Simcoe on the 3rd day of September, 2026, Susan Lahey has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 5th day of September, 2026, which is now lodged of record in my office."

The third letter reads as follows:

"Dear Mr. Day:

"A writ of election, dated the 5th day of August, 2026, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Eddy Gasparotto, returning officer for the electoral district of Scarborough Southwest, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Scarborough Southwest in the

Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Doly Begum who, since her election as representative of the said electoral district of Scarborough Southwest, has resigned.

"This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Scarborough Southwest on the 3rd day of September, 2026, Fatima Shaban has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 5th day of September, 2026, which is now lodged of record in my office."

All three letters are signed by the Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa.

1040

Mr. Beattie was escorted into the House by Mr. Ford and Mr. Clark.

Hon. Doug Ford: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Jeff Beattie, member for the electoral district of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Let the honourable member take his seat.

MPP Lahey was escorted into the House by Mr. Ford and Mr. Clark.

Hon. Doug Ford: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Susan Lahey, member for the electoral district of York–Simcoe, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take her seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Let the honourable member take her seat.

Ms. Shaban was escorted into the House by Ms. Stiles and Mr. Vanthof.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Fatima Shaban, member for the electoral district of Scarborough Southwest, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take her seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Let the honourable member take her seat.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): If you look to the gallery, you may see the Speaker of the 42nd and 43rd Parliaments, and also the member for Wellington–Halton Hills in the 39th to 43rd Parliaments; Waterloo–Wellington, 37th and 38th Parliaments; and Wellington, 35th ands 36th Parliament: the Honourable Ted Arnott.

MPP Monica Ciriello: I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome my husband, Greg, to Queen's Park.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Speaker, and welcome back.

This morning, we are so pleased to be joined by nurse practitioners from all across the province with NPAO, as well as dozens of community and social service workers represented by OPSEU, including some from my own riding of Davenport. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Adil Shamji: I'd like to introduce the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario, including Dr. Michelle Acorn and Alicia Moonesar, a delegate from Don Valley East.

I would also like to welcome and introduce the Alliance for Healthier Communities, which includes Jen Quinlan, CEO of Flemingdon Health Centre. Welcome.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I am pleased to welcome the members from the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario here today and also to highlight my constituent, Dr. Michelle Acorn, the CEO of NPAO and also the recipient of the 2026 Nursing Leadership Award.

MPP George Darouze: I'm pleased to rise today to welcome Mr. Kenny Tuff, a proud constituent from Metcalfe, in Carleton, and a successful local entrepreneur helping showcase the innovation and craftsmanship found in rural Ontario. Kenny represents the very best of our community. Welcome to your House, Kenny.

M^me^ France Gélinas: It's a pleasure to recognize people from the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario: their CEO, Dr. Michelle Acorn; president, Marie Greer-King; president-elect, Kevin Zizzo; as well as nurse practitioner Jodi Colwill and a nurse practitioner from the Sudbury nurse practitioner-led clinic, Jana Blackburn. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Ontario Kinesiology Association is also here. I would like to recognize John Armstrong, Ben Matthie, Agata Kozlowska and Tanya Cho, representing kinesiologists. Welcome to Queen's Park.

And the Alliance for Healthier Communities: their CEO and their teams are here—always close to my heart.

Welcome to Queen's Park, everybody.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'd like to welcome Laura Diemert and Krysta Cameron, amazing nurse practitioners from the Waterloo Region Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic. Thanks for the work you do.

Congrats to Mayor Vrbanovic and all councillors on their wins last night. I look forward to working with you.

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to welcome Dr. Khazal al-Majidi, Mr. Mazin Lawrence, Mr. Dhafir Petros and Mr. Ohan Ohanessian to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Welcome to your House.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to introduce my long-suffering husband, who is here in the gallery. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I would like to welcome a family friend, Alessio Cannella, who is visiting with his school today.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to welcome to the House my predecessor, former MPP Rosario Marchese, to the Legislature.

1050

MEMBER'S MARRIAGE

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I would like to congratulate our newest newlywed, the Attorney General. Congratulations.

ANNIVERSARY OF LEGISLATIVE BROADCASTING

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Since we have a few seconds—which is rare—on the clock, I just want to

bring to the attention of members—I will be mentioning this as well—that today is the 40th anniversary of broadcast out of this building. I think that's pretty cool. Thank you to our broadcast team for all you do, and those amazing Question Period Rewind segments. We can all learn from that, right?

LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Also in the Speaker's gallery today, we have with us our new cohort of the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme, better known as OLIP. OLIP is a non-partisan program that hires 10 recent university graduates each year to gain practical experience in the daily workings of our Legislature. The interns are meeting with members this week to determine placements, but there is still time to submit an application. I would encourage all members who are eligible to participate in this exceptional program.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

OPPOSITION DAYS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I would like to take a moment to address the House on the allocation of opposition days, as I did on April 29 and October 20, 2025.

As a result of the order of the House dated June 2, 2026, revising the parliamentary calendar, it will not be possible for the House to conduct the five opposition day debates prescribed by standing order 45(a) during this fall meeting period. In accordance with the scheduling and notice provisions contained in standing orders 45(b) and (c), there may be up to three opposition day motions debated this fall.

In keeping with my previous approach, as well as standing order 45(b)(iii), the allocation of the available opposition day debates will be determined on the basis of the membership of the caucuses relative to each other. Accordingly, two opposition days will be allocated to the official opposition and one to the third party.

SPONSORS OF PRIVATE BILLS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I would also like to draw members' attention to a change on today's Orders and Notices paper. As a result of recent appointments to cabinet, certain members are no longer eligible to sponsor private legislation.

Accordingly, Bill Pr53, An Act to revive J.C.C. Corp., which was introduced by the member for Eglinton–Lawrence, and Bill Pr55, An Act to revive London Hydro Holdings Inc., introduced by the member for Perth–Wellington, currently stand on the Orders and Notices paper without sponsors. These bills may not proceed any further in the legislative process unless the House agrees to assign new sponsors to them.

Thank you for your attention.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 119

Hon. Steve Clark: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent that notwithstanding standing order 82(b), the order for third reading of Bill 119, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend various other Acts, may be called during orders of the day this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent that notwithstanding standing order 82(b), the order for third reading of Bill 119, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend various other Acts, may be called during orders of the day this afternoon. Agreed? Agreed.

APPOINTMENT OF HOUSE OFFICERS

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the appointment of presiding officers.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the presiding officers. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Steve Clark: I move that the order of the House dated April 16, 2025, regarding the appointment of presiding officers, be rescinded, and

That Ric Bresee, member for the electoral district of Hastings–Lennox and Addington, be appointed Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House;

That Jennifer K. French, member for the electoral district of Oshawa, be appointed First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House;

That John Jordan, member for the electoral district of Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston, be appointed Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House; and

That Andrea Hazell, member for the electoral district of Scarborough–Guildwood, be appointed Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent that the order of the House dated April 16, 2025, regarding the appointment of presiding officers, be rescinded and

That Ric Bresee, member for the electoral district of Hastings–Lennox and Addington, be appointed Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House;

That Jennifer K. French, member for the electoral district of Oshawa, be appointed First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House;

That John Jordan, member for the electoral district of Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston, be appointed Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House; and

That Andrea Hazell, member for the electoral district of Scarborough–Guildwood, be appointed Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House.

Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

APPOINTMENT OF OMBUDSMAN

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the appointment of the new Ombudsman of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the appointment of the new Ombudsman of Ontario. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, I move that, in accordance with subsections 2(2) and (3) of the Ombudsman Act, R.S.O. 1990 c. O.6, Robert Delaney be appointed Ombudsman of Ontario for a term of five years, commencing on December 2, 2026.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent that, in accordance with subsections 2(2) and (3) of the Ombudsman Act, R.S.O. 1990 c. O.6, Robert Delaney be appointed Ombudsman of Ontario for a term of five years, commencing on December 2, 2026.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

CONSIDERATION OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

Hon. Steve Clark: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent that, in the case of Bill Pr53, An Act to revive J.C.C. Corp., the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound be added to the bill as the sponsor as of September 10, 2026; and that in the case of Bill Pr55, An Act to revive London Hydro Holdings Inc., the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex be added to the bill as the sponsor as of September 10, 2026.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent that, in the case of Bill Pr53, An Act to revive J.C.C. Corp., the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound be added to the bill as the sponsor as of September 10, 2026; and that in the case of Bill Pr55, An Act to revive London Hydro Holdings Inc., the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex be added to the bill as the sponsor as of September 10, 2026.

Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 23(c), the member for Kingston and the Islands has provided me with written notice of his intention to raise a question of privilege relating to remarks made by the Premier during the adjournment of the House.

I'm now prepared to hear the member's submission. I recognize the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege because I believe that public statements made by the Premier about the request that we be recalled to deal with an escalation of the tariff crisis amount to a prima facie case for a breach of privilege and contempt of this House. It is based on how the Premier characterized the proposed exercise of this Legislative Assembly's function.

I begin with the transcript of the press conference in Hamilton on August 24, 2026, as recorded by CPAC on YouTube, where the Premier was responding to the Trump tariff escalation. He was asked, "The NDP is calling on you to immediately recall the Legislature to pass emergency relief for Ontario workers. Do you plan to recall the Legislature?" The Premier responded, "No. I find that real ironic to start doing gutter politics in this time that they want us to call the Legislature back that they actually voted against every single thing we've done for the last year to protect Ontario. Every recommendation they gave they voted against. So I find it pretty hypocritical."

1100

Minutes later a reporter asked, "What would be the harm in kind of calling the Legislature back in the midst of this kind of five-month break"? The Premier responded: "You know something, I've been in this game a long time. They want to play gutter politics. They voted against every single item that we did for the last year to protect Ontario. I am swamped right now. It's an 18-hour-a-day job with myself and my ministers. If they have suggestions, call me up. Everyone else calls me up."

Both times, the Premier was asked specifically about recalling the Legislative Assembly so that members could meet and address a critical matter of public policy. His dismissive statements were widely reported by Global News, CTV, CBC, the Trillium and Acadia Broadcasting and remain on the public record. Twice he called the request to recall members and allow us to perform our functions "gutter politics". More significantly, when the Premier was asked what harm there would be in recalling the Legislature, he said that he and his ministers were busy and offered as the alternative: "If they have suggestions, call me up. Everyone else calls me up."

Speaker, I believe that those statements, considered together, diminish the authority and dignity of this House and its proceedings. The Legislative Assembly is not simply another means by which members may communicate suggestions to the Premier. It is the institution which holds the government to account, in which members question ministers, introduce and debate legislation, propose amendments, place their positions on the public record and vote. Politics is messy, but it's necessary when people disagree and must still make decisions together.

It is an affront to the privileges and dignity of this House for the head of the executive, when specifically asked why the assembly should not be convened for a matter of grave importance, and when reminded that there had already been a prolonged adjournment, to characterize the request to convene as "gutter politics"—and importantly, to then suggest private telephone calls to himself as an adequate or even superior alternative.

I would like to cite Speaker Carr's ruling of May 8, 2003, concerning the presentation of the budget outside the Legislature before it was presented here. According to the

government of the day, the purpose was to have a "direct conversation with the people of Ontario." Speaker Carr found a prima facie case of contempt of Parliament. His ruling recognized that circumventing this House, while suggesting it was preferrable to communicate the budget directly to Ontarians, amounted to words and actions reflecting upon the House and its proceedings in a matter that tended to diminish the respect due to the House and lower its authority."

Speaker Carr explained the importance of that principle most elegantly when he said, "I can well appreciate that parliamentary proceedings can be animated and often emotional, and they can be cumbersome. It may not be the most efficient of political systems, but it is a process that reflects the reality that members, like the people of Ontario, may not be of one mind on matters of public policy. A mature parliamentary democracy is not a docile, esoteric or one-way communications vehicle; it is a dynamic, interactive and representative institution that allows the government of the day to propose and defend its policies—financial and otherwise. It also allows the opposition to scrutinize and hold the government to account for those policies. It is an open, working and relevant system of scrutiny and accountability."

Madam Speaker, I also draw your attention to Speaker Stockwell's ruling of January 22, 1997. He found a prima facie case of contempt, saying that government communications "convey the impression ... that the assembly and the Legislature had a pro forma, tangential, even inferior role in the legislative and lawmaking process, and in doing so, they appear to diminish the respect that is due to this House."

For Speaker Stockwell, it was enough that the reader of a government pamphlet in question "could be left with an incorrect impression about how parliamentary democracy works in Ontario, an impression that undermines respect for our parliamentary institutions."

I submit that the Premier went well beyond conveying an impression. I believe that the Premier undermined the public's respect for this House and their desire to have us do our work.

Speaker Carr was also concerned about the precedent set when challenges to the authority of the House go unanswered. He wrote, "If left unchallenged, will this incident not embolden future governments to create parallel, extra-parliamentary processes for other kinds of events that traditionally occur in the House?" That concern is directly relevant here. The Premier effectively suggested replacing the institution of Parliament with his cellphone. By telling members to "call me up" when asked why the Legislature should not be recalled, he presented private communication with the Premier as an alternative to the public proceedings of this assembly.

I submit that there is at least a serious question as to whether those remarks diminish the role of this House and present its proceedings as unnecessary or inferior. In the words of Speaker Carr, "There is a danger that the representative role of each and every member of this House is undermined, that respect for the institution is diminished and that Parliament is rendered irrelevant."

Speaker, I want to leave you and this House with a quote from Speaker Stockwell's ruling, in which he cited then-Speaker of the House of Commons, John Fraser: "We are a parliamentary democracy, not a so-called executive democracy, nor a so-called administrative democracy."

Madam Speaker, I believe the evidence before you establishes a prima facie case for the House to consider whether the Premier's statements constitute a breach of privilege and a contempt of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On the same question of privilege, I recognize the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: On this very serious issue, I would just like to reserve the right to give a written response. It was the official opposition who called to return the House on an unprecedented attack on our economy and our people, and to say that that was "gutter politics" was quite shocking, but that is not the parliamentary argument we want to make. But this is a worthy discussion, and we reserve the right to put forward a written response.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'm not going to belabour—it's the government's intention to respond in writing to you directly, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I would like to thank the member for Kingston and the Islands as well as the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane and the government House leader, and I'm going to reserve my ruling on this matter and will deliver it at a future date. I ask that the members provide their written submissions to me by 5 p.m. today.

It is now time for question period.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Before I begin, Speaker, I do want to congratulate and thank every single person who put their name forward in our municipal and our school board elections yesterday. Thank you. It was a big day for local democracy.

Welcome back, Speaker. All this time away from the Legislature has had one benefit: I got to spend that time travelling around the province, from communities and doorsteps in Scarborough and Ottawa to Thunder Bay. I'm talking to steelworkers and small business owners, teachers and health care workers. And all across the province, I'm hearing the same thing: "Times are really tough, and the government has no solutions, just scandal after scandal." They say to me, "This is a Premier who said he was going to fight for the little guy, and now he's flying around on private jets."

Premier, on behalf of the people of this province, have you forgotten the people that you promised to fight for?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Madam Speaker, first of all, thank you for the question. What were we doing? I was at 500 meetings, tens of thousands of kilometres, spreading the message about coming to invest in Ontario, because we've created that climate and the conditions to create over a million jobs.

Last year, we saw over a billion dollars of investment. Alongside the federal government, we just launched a new action plan with investments of over $9 billion; $9 billion to support the steel sector, the auto sector.

We also accelerated the expansion of Highway 69, and I know everyone going up Highway 69 towards Sudbury—my friends over there in Sudbury, I know you're talking. You'll be doing cartwheels because now we're going to make a safe, safe highway, and I know you endorse safety on the highways. We've also expanded Highway 413, the largest infrastructure procurement in the history of Ontario.

I'll follow up on the second—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, he could try answering the actual question. Because if you ask anyone who voted for this Premier in 2018, they're going to tell you this is not the same guy they voted for. Whatever happened to hallway health care? I mean, what happened to buck-a-beer, for goodness' sake?

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I'll tell you what happened. This Premier and his ministers got a taste of the sweet life: box seats at Leafs games with lobbyists; private jets and luxury hotel rooms on the taxpayers' dime. Why do Ontarians have to keep paying the price for this Premier's scandals and backroom deals?

Hon. Doug Ford: It's funny you say that. I think in the last poll, we were at 43%; you're at 18% and they're at 27%.

People really look at what we're doing: protecting communities, protecting jobs, fighting against that tyrant, President Trump. I think I told him to kiss my backside and that I had more integrity in my baby toe and brains than he had in his whole body. I will continue to fight against President Trump to make sure we have a viable, thriving, prosperous—

Interjections.

Hon. Doug Ford: What I did do: I went up to Webequie First Nation to make sure we broke ground on the road to the Ring of Fire, the Webequie supply road—

Interjections.

Hon. Doug Ford: —creating 70,000 jobs, $22 billion to our GDP.

I also made sure that I went up to Marten Falls and met with their community, who were as happy as anything that they're going to see prosperity and jobs.

And then we broke ground—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: You know what it really is? The Premier has sold out. And the people of Ontario, they know it. He sold out Ontario Place for a luxury spa. He sold out the greenbelt to his developer friends.

Developers, lobbyists, backroom deals—that is just money out of the pockets of the people of this province and into the pocket of the Premier's rich friends and insiders. They see it. They know what he's doing. I want to ask the Premier again, why is he selling out Ontario to the highest bidder?

Hon. Doug Ford: That's the best you've got? Oh, my goodness.

We broke ground and announced major construction under way on four GO stations, expanding the largest expansion of transit in North America.

We started a historic refurbishment on the Pickering nuclear station that the NDP and the Liberals were closing down. Tell those 4,000 employees: If they ever got elected, they're closing Pickering down.

We're expanding nuclear under the great leadership of Minister Lecce: creating 150,000 jobs, $800 billion; the largest nuclear expansion in North America, leading the world when it comes to SMRs or small modular reactors.

We announced funding—and this is important—for nearly 86,000 college seats to connect more students to good-paying, in-demand jobs.

We signed three MOUs.

We broke ground on three new emergency departments and one brand new emergency department.

We put more money back into communities, awarding more than $43 million through the Building Faster Fund.

We opened 35 new and expanded schools, adding 18,300 new spaces—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to tell you about some of the people that I've met over the last 21 weeks: people who are losing their jobs in important sectors in our economy, people who are wondering how they're going to put food on the table or pay for diapers or formula. Meanwhile, MPPs across the aisle enjoyed taxpayer-funded pay bumps and rewards for their scandals.

The MPP for Willowdale spent tens of thousands of tax dollars partying it up in five-star luxury hotels. How did the Premier punish him? With a $22,000 pay bump—can you believe it? I want the Premier to get up in his place and explain why he gave the member from Willowdale a promotion.

Hon. Doug Ford: Madam Speaker, as I travel around the province, the country and North America, you know what I hear? "Keep going." That is the number one comment. "Keep moving forward." That's exactly what we're doing.

We opened up 35 new and expanded schools, adding 18,300 new students to 1,130 licensed child care providers; connected more than 37,000 children and youth to sport and recreation programs; expanded student and family support offices to all 72 school boards; launched

new emergency department action teams to get people better care faster; lowered WSIB premiums, saving employers $160 million; and, as well, we signed another agreement on top of the close to $9 billion we did, a previous agreement to get rid of the HST development charges.

And I know the opposition loves taxes. We hate them—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: The Premier is defending the indefensible, as always. When it comes to taking off the tax on groceries or hiring health care workers—or fixing OSAP, for goodness' sake—this government tells Ontarians it is time to tighten your belts. But somehow, there's always money to reward their own people.

Speaker, the member from Willowdale resigned from cabinet in disgrace only four short months ago. He spent the summer hiding out from the people, only to come back and find that the Premier is giving him a promotion. Wow. He spent the summer hiding and he gets a promotion.

I'm going to ask the Premier again: Can he explain why this member is getting a promotion after he ripped off the people of this province?

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

Interjections.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, colleagues, and welcome. Congratulations to the new members who are in this House.

Madam Speaker, do you know what the people of Ontario care about? They care about a government who cares about them and puts in their pockets. Every time you go to the pumps, you're paying less for gas. The gas tax cut which we did four years ago and we made permanent: Guess who advocated for the federal government to do that? This Premier and this government said, "You've got to help us. You've got to help the people of Ontario." And guess what? They cut the gas tax.

But mind you, it's temporary; it ends in January. So we're going to continue advocating for the hard-working people of Ontario, make that gas tax cut permanent, put more money back in the pockets of people and put money back in the pockets of businesses, which helps keep food prices down.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Spoken like somebody who just—look, this is the prudent fiscal manager who tells everybody to tighten his belts. Are you kidding me? This is a government who can't stop spending taxpayer dollars on themselves, for goodness' sake.

Speaker, this Premier always said he wanted to run the province like a business, and I guess he meant the business that he ran into the ground. He sells himself as a business guy, but here he is giving C-suite raises after he catches his own members with their hands in the till. This is not just any raise, Speaker; this is a $22,000 raise.

So, Speaker, Ontarians trusted this government. They told them that they were going to be prudent fiscal managers, and instead they are treating taxpayers like an ATM.

Back to the Premier: When is he going to own up to his own mistake and fire this member from his new role?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, she mentioned taxes. Do you know what they did when they were in power? They increased taxes. So did the Liberals; they increased taxes. And guess what happened? They got downgraded—credit rating downgrades.

Madam Speaker, who was the party that cut the gas tax? Who was the party that cut the HST? Who was the party that cut the small business tax? Who was the party that cut the corporate tax so that companies can invest capital and create new jobs? Who is the party that continues to make life more affordable for people, individuals, families? Who's the party that makes cuts to help businesses invest in their people across the province? It's this party. It's this government. They should join us.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. I really missed you, Premier.

You know, it's almost trick-or-treat time, but for the last five months, it has only been trick for the people of Ontario, no treat. That's because every day, thousands and thousands more families are farther and farther behind: families that can't get the health care that they need or get it on time, or families whose kids aren't getting exactly what they need in school, and more people who are trying to build a better life, get a better job and have been abandoned by this government's colossal mismanagement of the OSAP file.

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So, Speaker, simple question, through you to the Premier: How does the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security still have his job?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Madam Speaker—and, yes, I've taken probably more calls than all of you combined on this. Do you know who I feel terrible for? These honest students that got trapped in the private college system that a couple of bad apples—there's some good operators there, but got caught with the bad apples, a bunch of fraudsters—that is now making sure that KPMG is auditing each and every one of them. We've called the OPP in, and I hope to God these bad actors are going to jail. We'll make sure they sit in jail, because the innocent people didn't do anything.

You have to have a little trust when you give out grants or OSAP that people are going to be honest. Well, we have a bunch of bad apples, and they're going to jail.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Only in the Ford government can you blow a billion dollars, turn thousands and thousands of people's lives upside down and still keep your job. Think about that. The government has known about suspicious activity in OSAP since 2023—Auditor General,

colleges, ministry staff. And you're all acting, Premier—you're acting like you're surprised: "Oh, there are some bad actors. We just found out. Oh, my gosh; golly gee. And I took action right away. I take all of these calls." But you do nothing about the problems that everyday people are having.

Speaker, let's start here. Why don't we do this? Ask the Minister of Colleges and Universities to step down and start supporting those people who you have abandoned who are trying to get a better life.

Hon. Doug Ford: The minister is doing an incredible job supporting students, increasing—let's really talk of what we did compared to what you did when you were in government. We actually, in the public sector, invested unlike any government in the history of this province: $6.4 billion. Within that $6.4 billion, we added more STEM seats to the tune of $1.7 billion, adding thousands and thousands more seats for STEM—science, technology, engineering and math—because we need these people, because we're out there creating more opportunities for companies to invest right in Ontario.

Isn't it amazing, Madam Speaker? Some $236 billion has been invested in Ontario, unlike any jurisdiction in the country. We're leading the country. We are a super powerhouse when it comes to energy. We're going to continue leading the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Before the member speaks, I would remind to direct your questions and responses through the Speaker.

I recognize the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: Here's the story for thousands and thousands of students—people—receiving OSAP: They're approved, they're enrolled and then they're abandoned in a period of seven weeks. The Premier has abandoned—and his government, not just you; and this minister—people just trying to get ahead.

Here's a message we received from Katherine: "I am part of the dental assistant program. We were only one class away from entering our pre-clinic training when we received the email that class was being suspended due to OSAP and the Ford government. We are a class of six, highly motivated students who just want to finish our program."

Premier, Katherine and thousands like her are being cut off at the knees and abandoned by this minister's incompetence.

How is it that this minister still has his job while thousands and thousands of others lose their opportunity to get a better one?

Hon. Doug Ford: Speaker, what my colleague across the aisle is saying is, "Let's support criminals. Let's support crooks. Bring them back. Just open the colleges and let them continue playing the games." We identified the bad actors. We reported them to the OPP, and they're going to get charged. But according to the opposition, we should just ignore it and let more people come in.

We aren't doing that. We're going to hold every single person accountable to make sure they stop defrauding the taxpayers. That's what we're going to do. He wants to welcome all these criminals back to collect more taxpayers' money, just like they did under your watch as the Liberal government. That's what you did. You squandered it. Your chief of staff went to jail. That's what you're all about, buddy. That's what—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I will remind members to direct your responses through the Speaker.

I recognize the leader of the third party.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. John Fraser: Respectfully, to the Premier, Katherine is not a criminal. She's just a young woman trying to be a dental assistant, okay? So remember this, Premier. I want you to remember this tonight when you put your head down: approved, enrolled, abandoned—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Your questions go through the Speaker; your responses go through the Speaker.

Mr. John Fraser: Thanks for the reminder. Speaker, through you: approved, enrolled abandoned. And through you, I asked the Premier to remember this when he puts his head on his pillow tonight.

You knew since 2023 there was suspicious activity. You failed to act. For three and a half years, Speaker, the Premier failed to act. In one year, 2024-25, $385 million went to seven colleges, more than what every university student in the province of Ontario got. More money and grants for seven schools. Think about that. You've got to ask yourself: Is this sheer incompetence or complicity, or some combination of the two?

So, Speaker, how—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I will caution the members on your comments. Your time is up.

I recognize the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: The member of the opposition can focus on me, but these are serious criminal allegations, and any misuse of OSAP by bad actors will be taken very seriously. It's completely unacceptable.

Following an increase in complaints tied to the growing volume of OSAP applications at private career colleges, our government took action to strengthen oversight of the sector, including engaging a third-party auditor to examine the integrity of those claims. This followed months of ministry investigations into specific institutions, including institutions where OSAP eligibility was cut off.

The preliminary findings from the third-party auditor confirmed broader concerns and left our government no choice but to take further action. We've referred the matter to the OPP, and as a result, we have paused OSAP eligibility at all private post-secondary institutions.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's almost four years. It's three and a half years. You've known since 2023.

This government has failed. They're abandoning people. They're abandoning not just students with OSAP but people who have lost their job. The better jobs grant,

or the Ontario Job Grant—they're all done. All these people are being cut off—all of them. You're cutting them all off. You're abandoning them, Premier—it's not funny, Premier. I wouldn't laugh.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I have asked three or four times now to direct your questions and your responses through the Speaker.

Mr. John Fraser: I apologize.

It's really quite frustrating, Speaker, through you, that the Premier finds it somehow funny that there are people losing their jobs.

I have three career colleges in my riding: a trucking school, cosmetology and a career college. The trucking school—they've had to let go of one third of their employees last week because of what this government does.

Not only is this minister responsible for people not being able to get a better job but for people losing their jobs now, and I don't understand—back to the Premier—why he still has his.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Before I actually answer that question, I just want to remind the member that trucking schools are not OSAP-eligible, so I'm not too sure where that fact is actually coming from. But I recognize the serious impact this pause has on students at private institutions, and rest assured, we're working quickly alongside the experts to get to the bottom of it.

In the coming weeks, we'll introduce legislation to remove OSAP eligibility from online-only programs at private institutions. We will require all private institutions to meet stricter criteria to be eligible for OSAP and ensure every dollar spent is spent properly and in the best interests of students.

1130

While this is a serious course of action, Speaker, let me be very clear: It was entirely necessary based on what the investigators have found. And to support students during this period of transition, we are working with options—third party, low-interest bank loans with banks.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Maybe the minister didn't hear. I'll give him the benefit of the doubt. I also said the better jobs grant and the Ontario jobs grant are gone, which trucking schools do get. So what I'm saying is, you're not just doing it to the folks with OSAP; you're going to do it to everybody—people who lost their jobs.

And in one year alone, 2024-25, they gave $385 million to seven colleges—like I said, more than any university student got that year. Anybody notice a red flag? Anybody awake over there? It took you years and years—and even one college, you said, "We're going to inspect them." You failed to get there on time, and you gave them money for another year. You gave one company with three sites $219 million in one year.

I don't know. That doesn't look like success to me, and it doesn't look like success to all these people who you approved, got enrolled and then you abandoned, Premier. And the only person you're standing beside—not them, Premier—Speaker, through you—is your minister, who has failed miserably to manage this file, and he should not be—

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Let me be very clear: Every single tip that our government received about improper OSAP usage has been thoroughly investigated. In fact, we've conducted over 3,200 OSAP investigations since 2020. These investigations are complex and often take over a year to gather the evidence that we need. It is from these ministry investigations that we uncovered how widespread this issue may be, and that's why we brought on a third-party auditor to launch a sector-wide investigation.

I recognize the impact this pause has on students at private institutions, but rest assured, Speaker, we're working quickly alongside the experts to get to the bottom of it.

I will not apologize for protecting taxpayer dollars.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. In February, this government slashed OSAP grants, blaming and punishing students for the program costing too much, they said. We have learned, however, that it wasn't students at all. For more than three years, this government has been shovelling hundreds of millions of OSAP grant funding to a handful of private career colleges without any oversight, monitoring or accountability. That's why OSAP costs were rising. Speaker, if this isn't gross incompetence, it's something worse, and all the details will soon be coming out.

Will the Premier take responsibility for the OSAP fiasco and fire his Minister of Colleges and Universities?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: As I've mentioned, these are serious criminal allegations. Unfortunately, bad actors have taken advantage of the post-secondary system, but that member opposite wants the government to tell students where they should attend post-secondary institutions. Speaker, we saw an increase at career colleges during the pandemic of PSWs, early childhood educators, as well as dental hygienists, but we're not going to tell students where they are to attend.

But any misuse of OSAP dollars is completely unacceptable; it's egregious, and we're going to ensure that we have legislation brought forward that will close the guardrails on those bad actors, to make sure all taxpayer dollars are well respected and we're protecting students in the meantime, as well.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, this government's failure to act earlier has in fact protected bad actor institutions, and you are attacking students instead.

This government ignored warnings from the Auditor General in 2021 about the lack of inspections of private career colleges. This minister looked the other way after

Career Colleges Ontario and the federal government raised red flags about OSAP at certain career colleges. This minister dragged his feet on investigating two of the campuses under suspicion and instead approved their OSAP funding. Clearly, he has failed to do his job, so I ask again: Will the Premier take some accountability and fire his Minister of Colleges and Universities?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: As I mentioned earlier, in late 2024, a growing volume of OSAP applications at the career colleges gave us cause for pause and concern. In January 2025, Career Colleges Ontario understood our concern and sent us a letter as well, recommending that we do look into it, Speaker.

In May 2025, that member said we ignored the federal government. We actually listened to the federal government's information they provided us. We did enhanced reviews and targeted inspections, as well as eliminating eligibility for career colleges in general.

But in May 2025, the government did provide us that information, so in June 2025, we cut off and started targeted inspections across the sector, Speaker. In May 2026, we did non-renewal notices to six career colleges, as well as in August 2026. We realized this was widespread. We brought in a third-party auditor, KPMG, and in October 2026, we recognized the early findings from KPMG. We did a system-wide pause to ensure that taxpayer dollars are respected and not used for fraudulent activity.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

MPP Tyler Watt: I'm old enough to remember that in the 2018 election, the Premier promised that not a single person under his government would lose a job. Meanwhile, nurses and health care workers across Ontario are being fired because of this government's chronic underfunding. Students have had their OSAP ripped away.

This government tried to scapegoat students and blame them for abusing OSAP; that's why they had to cut the grants to public colleges and universities. Now we know the truth: A billion dollars of OSAP grants went to private career colleges, six of which had nearly half of that money. So, yes, it was unsustainable, because under this minister's watch, under this Premier's watch, they broke it.

This Premier talks all about respecting taxpayer dollars and accountability for it. So, Premier, when will you take accountability and fire that minister?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: That member is compounding the changes we made in February to ensure that OSAP is sustainable not just for today's students, but the next generation of students. In 2018, the Auditor General said it's unsustainable, what the previous government did.

But let's get back to the facts, Speaker: What the investigators uncovered, even in a preliminary phase, left our government no choice but to take a systematic approach and pause OSAP payments at private institutions to protect taxpayer dollars. But we need to hold the bad actors accountable. If what we have found proves to be what we think it is, then it is nothing short of criminal, which is why it's now in the hands of the Ontario Provincial Police.

Let me be clear, Speaker: Every single tip that our government received about improper OSAP usage has been thoroughly investigated. We have conducted over 3,200 OSAP investigations since 2020, and we will not stop at every single tip we receive.

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

MPP Tyler Watt: I have hundreds and hundreds of emails here from people and students across Ontario that are pleading for help, Minister, because of your decision—sorry; through you, Speaker—because of this government's decision to just cut everyone off from OSAP. They let it go on for years; they have known about this since 2023. They were warned about it again in 2024, again in 2025, and in October 2026, seven weeks into the new school year, they decide, "We've got to cut everyone off, because we got caught." That's what's going on here.

Because of you, there are people who are living in their cars right now with their children. People are facing homelessness. They can't pay their tuition. They're dropping out of school. They can't pay their bills or afford their groceries because of this minister.

So, Premier, I'd like you to stand up and answer my question. When will you take accountability, fix OSAP, honour your commitment to these students and fire that minister?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: It's because of serious allegations, criminal allegations against bad actors. That is the reason why we have paused OSAP: because we're respecting taxpayer dollars.

But, Speaker, I truly recognize the serious impact this has on the good students at private institutions. That is why we're working quickly, alongside the experts, to get the bottom of this. But I need assurances from the third-party auditor that there is confidence in the OSAP system before we release another taxpayer dollar to the students.

1140

We'll continue to ensure that taxpayer dollars are well respected. That is why we brought in the Ontario Provincial Police, we referred it to the Auditor General, as well as bringing in KPMG—to ensure that taxpayer dollars will continue to be respected.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MPP Mohamed Firin: I'd like to welcome everyone back to the House, and I'd like to congratulate the three newly elected members.

Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

When our government took office, we made a commitment to reversing the Liberal era of chasing manufacturing jobs and investment out of this province. We know how important it is to create the conditions for businesses to succeed, because without businesses, you cannot create jobs. Whether it's cutting red tape, reducing the cost of

doing business or landing more global investment, our government has laid the groundwork for businesses to succeed.

Can the minister please tell us how our government's pro-business policies are attracting global investment and creating good-paying jobs across Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, since 2018, as you heard from the Premier a few minutes ago, we have attracted $236 billion in new investment. That is unprecedented in Canada.

Every time we go on a mission, we hear the same message: that Ontario's business-friendly environment, our stability, our reliability, but mostly our predictability, make us the premier jurisdiction for businesses to invest.

Just look at some of the results: In Argentina, we met with Tenaris, who ended up making a $300-million investment—200 new jobs in Sault Ste Marie. In Italy, we met with global chocolate company Ferrero, who invested $445 million in a new facility in Brantford—500 jobs. In Japan, we met with Marusan-Ai and Alinova—$24 million in a new soy milk powder plant in Morrisburg, 20 new jobs. These are the kinds of results that we're landing.

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

MPP Mohamed Firin: I thank the minister for the response.

Speaker, the most important thing businesses look for when deciding where to grow, expand and create jobs is certainty.

It has been our government's objective since day one to build a business environment that is predictable, stable and reliable, while ensuring Ontario businesses have the tools and opportunities that they need to succeed.

Ontario is already home to world-class sectors, including advanced manufacturing, technology, life sciences and more.

Can the minister highlight how our government's trade missions are delivering results for Ontario businesses, helping them access new markets, strengthen international partnerships and create jobs right here at home?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, when we go on missions, we deliver results.

In Norway, we met with Vianode, who are now investing $3.2 billion in St. Thomas to build North America's first large-scale synthetic graphite plant; 1,000 new jobs will be there.

In Sweden, we landed an $85-million investment from Sandvik to build a new 135,000-square-foot maintenance, repair and overhaul mining shop in Sudbury—50 new jobs.

And just this past Friday, we were very pleased to be in the city of North Bay, my hometown, where a company we met with in Germany, RailOne, won a contract to build concrete rail ties for the Ontario Line. We told them they needed to build them in Ontario, and that's what they're doing.

Speaker, when we go around the world promoting Ontario's competitiveness, these are the results we bring home.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: ᒥᓂᑲᒑᓱᕆ

This summer, people in northern Ontario faced the worst wildfire emergency they have ever seen, and the government was not prepared. Two First Nations communities and several camps burned to the ground: Namaygoosisagagun, Whitewater Lake, Thousand Lakes Resort, Wabakimi Wilderness Lodge, Cushing Lake Resort, among others. Many more communities were forced to evacuate to places all over Ontario. Speaker, this government let the north down.

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

Hon. Mike Harris: Yes, this year was very difficult across northern Ontario, particularly in the northwest. Our hearts go out to all the communities who were affected. I have spent some time up there, been able to tour around and have really seen some of the devastation first-hand. It is difficult.

But I want to remind this House that, since 2018, we have increased the wildland firefighting budget by 114%. Under the previous Liberal-NDP coalition, that budget was stagnant for years. One of the first things we did when we came in and took government was increase that budget, because we knew it was important.

We continue to make those record investments, Madam Speaker. Six new CL-515 water bombers are on order. We're in the process of procuring five new helicopters—so, more to come. Obviously, there's a lot to do. We're going through our seasonal debrief right now, and I'm happy to answer more in the supplemental.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: When forests are burning and communities are devastated, it's this government's responsibility to fund them and send emergency funding.

This summer, on July 27 and, then again, on August 2, the residents of St. Catharines were faced with an emergency: devastating floods affecting thousands of homes—and 92 days later, still no relief.

A north-end community group surveyed 450 residents. Over 60% of the residents are still in limbo with their insurance claims. Seniors and vulnerable families are drowning in repair bills, in fear of losing their homes. This government says they need data. There's your data. Stop pointing the finger and start taking responsibility.

Speaker, through you to the minister: The residents of St. Catharines cannot afford another day of delay. Will you activate the DRAO and deliver emergency financial relief today?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Rob Flack: Let me begin by saying that when natural disasters strike, obviously our hearts go out to those who are affected.

It is important to note—and the member knows this—we held a meeting with the members opposite to talk about the rainfall that came so fast in that region.

Speaker, the first defence always in this province is private insurance. That is what we say every time—not sometimes, every time—is your first response. Over a billion dollars has already been awarded to people in the Ottawa and Niagara regions that felt this difficult response. Through private insurance it has been developed.

DRAO is not insurance. It is there to support municipalities, those people who are in dire need. The bottom line is, DRAO was not activated because it was not overland water; it was sewer backups. That's the program. That's the way it is right across this country. That's the way it is in Ontario.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: In one year, OSAP grants to private career colleges doubled from half a billion to $1 billion. That's more than every university and public college combined. Of every new dollar added to student grants, 95 cents went to private career colleges and $385 million went to just seven for-profit campuses—not seven universities, not seven public colleges, seven career college campuses that most Ontarians have never heard of.

Speaker, I spent my career in finance. So did the Minister of Finance. In that life, he would have flagged this issue in a week, and he should have under this role too.

To the Premier, through you, Speaker: When did he and his ministers look at those dollars flying out the door and see that something was very wrong?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Let me say it again: Ministry investigators uncovered egregious amounts of alleged criminal activity. But what investigators have uncovered, even in the preliminary phase, left our government no choice but to take a systematic approach to pause OSAP payments to the private institutions to protect taxpayer dollars. If what we have found proves to be what we think it is, it is nothing short of criminal, which is why we have called in the Ontario Provincial Police. I will not apologize for reporting this to the Ontario Provincial Police.

1150

Let me be very clear—and I continue to be clear on this—every single tip our government receives of improper use of OSAP we take very seriously and we investigate them thoroughly. As I said earlier, we've conducted over 3,200 OSAP investigations since 2020 and we will not hesitate to continue inspecting any egregious uses of OSAP. These investigations are complex and they take over a year to be able to complete and gather the information we need.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: This government had numbers, they had warnings and they still had their picture taken with these people.

In 2021, the AG flagged this government's failing oversight. In 2023, Career Colleges Ontario rang the alarm bells, but no one responded. In 2024, they asked the government to call the police. In 2025, they flagged 10 schools whose OSAP applications jumped over 500% in two years. This government, they did nothing—until this month, when the story broke and then they called the OPP. All the while, owners of these three campuses who were donating to the PCs got $219 million.

The incompetence is astounding. It's incredible, and it's either incompetence or it's complicity. Either way, it is time for this minister to resign. Premier, when will you stand up and make that happen?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: They can continue focusing on me. I'm going to focus on the bad actors that got us to this point in the system.

In January 2025, we received a letter from Career Colleges Ontario highlighting concerns with the applications at career colleges. In May 2025, the federal government shared information from their own investigation into career colleges. My ministry expanded the review at that point, did enhanced reviews and targeted inspections of institutions, which led to eliminating eligibility in the OSAP system. Those targeted inspections launched in July 2025, and then in May 2026, we issued the non-renewal to six career colleges. In August of this year, we referred it to KPMG because we understood the severity and scale of the fraud we were dealing with. In October 2026, we put a system-wide pause on all of OSAP because we recognized that the severity of the bad actors have compromised—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

TAXATION

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. People simply cannot afford to live in Ontario: homes not affordable, groceries through the roof, hospitals overflowing, kids crammed into crowded classrooms, OSAP cuts—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Natural Resources will come to order.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: With this government, everyday people struggle while the rich get richer.

Your government says that there's no money to help people who are struggling in this province. Speaker, Greens have a solution to raise $27 billion to help everyday people. Will the Premier support our call for a wealth tax on the super rich so we can raise the funds needed to help everyday people afford to live in this province?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Well, Madam Speaker, there you have it. Finally, the Greens are joining the Liberal Party and the NDP; the solution to everything is raise peoples' taxes. Make life more unaffordable. Well, you

know what? We're not going to stand for that. This government stands for lower taxes, helping people out, putting money in their pockets, right across the province, whether you're in the north or the west or the east or the south, or Brampton. We are putting money back in people's pockets.

We're cutting the gas tax $2.3 billion. Every time, when you go to the pumps—although that fellow may not do that because he's got an electric car, but when he pays for electricity, who's kept the electricity prices reasonable? It's this government, because affordability for individuals, for farmers, for small businesses, is critical to a functioning province. So no, we reject outright raising taxes.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, there you have it. This government is going to fight for the multi-billionaires and the super rich.

We're not talking about taxing workers who already pay their fair share, or the fact that property taxes are going up because of this government's policies, or that electricity prices were jacked up 30% because of this government's policies. Over and over again, they stand with the super rich against everyday people.

People are tired. They're tired of overcrowded classrooms. They're tired of OSAP cuts. They're tired of not being able to afford a home.

We have a solution. Will this government ask the super rich to pay their fair share so everyday people can afford to live in this province?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order. Sidebar conversations and the heckling across the aisle will come to a stop.

I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: There you have it again, Madam Speaker. The other side is suggesting that every time anyone goes to buy a new home—and the 13% cut for ordinary Ontarians they would not support because they want to raise taxes. Every time that anyone goes to fill up their tank or wants to put food on the table for the hard-working families of Ontario—where we cut the personal income tax; we're putting money in their pockets. Or for the small businesses, we cut the small business tax. Those aren't the wealthy. Those are ordinary Ontarians trying to put food on the table, make a little bit of money, pay the rent. Those are the people we're supporting. Join us in cutting taxes, not raising taxes.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Good morning, colleagues. It's great to be back with you. My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. Madam Speaker, Canada's relationship with the United States has changed permanently. We can no longer take for granted the economic certainty that businesses and workers have relied on for generations. The uncertainty created by US tariffs is putting pressure on key sectors of Ontario's economy, including steel, manufacturing, forestry and other industries that support hundreds of thousands of jobs right here in Ontario.

At the centre of these industries are hard-working people, the men and women who keep our economy moving forward. That's why our government is taking action. At a time when Ontario's workers are facing unprecedented challenges, can the minister tell the House what our government is doing to support workers, to strengthen our economy and to protect critical industries from the impact of US tariffs?

Hon. Trevor Jones: I want to thank the member for Bay of Quinte for that question. He's absolutely right. The economic uncertainty created by US tariffs is putting pressure on workers, on businesses and all our communities. That's why our government is taking action as part of our plan to protect Ontario. We're making sure workers have the tools they need to adapt, succeed and build a future right here at home.

Our government is investing more than $228 million over the next three years to protect workers affected by tariffs and trade disruptions. Through Skills Advance Ontario, this investment is helping to retrain, upgrade skills and stay competitive in key sectors like steel, forestry, manufacturing and agribusinesses, agribusinesses that make tomato paste and stroopwafels.

We're protecting workers, protecting jobs and supporting key industries, ensuring Ontario remains resilient for generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Bay of Quinte.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the minister for that excellent update. As Ontario continues to navigate economic uncertainty, it is important that workers have the tools and the opportunities that they need to be successful. That's why our government is investing in skills training and workforce development initiatives that help people build new skills, connect with employers and prepare for rewarding careers in growing sectors of our economy.

Workers are at the heart of Ontario's success. They deserve access to the training, employment services and supports that help them adapt to changing labour market needs and to pursue good-paying jobs.

Recently, our government announced new supports for workers in Hamilton's steel and manufacturing sectors. Through you, Speaker, could the minister share how Skills Advance Ontario is helping workers build the skills they need for today's jobs and for tomorrow's opportunities?

1200

Hon. Trevor Jones: Thank you again to the member for Bay of Quinte, who worked hard all summer long, talking to people in communities—his communities and throughout Ontario—to advance Ontario.

Just as our Premier recently announced a major agreement to strengthen and protect Ontario's economy, our government is taking an all-hands-on-deck approach to supporting workers in this period of economic uncertainty.

Skills Advance Ontario is one of those responses—one component where people can actually gain new skills, connect with training opportunities and prepare for in-demand careers.

In Hamilton, where we were this summer celebrating the victory of our new member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, this initiative will support our steelworkers and manufacturing workers to upgrade, retrain and customize their supports to connect them to in-demand careers and support their families. It's one example where our government is protecting Ontario.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

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

MPP Robin Lennox: Thank you, Madam Speaker—

Interruption.

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

I recognize the member for Hamilton Centre.

MPP Robin Lennox: Thank you, Madam Speaker—and solidarity forever.

My question: Sabrina Apitz-Grossman is a 31-year-old woman with stage 4 synovial sarcoma. She needs life-saving treatment, but instead, your government has decided to rewrite the rules and deny her coverage.

Speaker, how can this government justify spending one single cent on self-promoting advertising while denying life-saving treatment to people like Sabrina living with cancer?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: There's no doubt that we are all deeply impacted when we hear about these disturbing stories. I cannot imagine what the patients and the families go through. But I want to remind the member opposite, who should know, that these are decisions that are made by clinicians, that are made by surgeons, that are made by ethicists and not by politicians. And frankly, Speaker, it's been that way since 2011, and that's the way it should be done.

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

MPP Robin Lennox: Madam Speaker, the minister knows that's not accurate. The doctors and the clinicians are the ones recommending these treatments that your government is denying coverage for. And these programs are meant to be safety nets for people at the most difficult moments in their lives. By rewriting the rules, you are ripping away that hope, and you are taking away their last hope at treatment.

And so, Madam Speaker, I am asking this government to look inward because these are real people's lives. These are families' whole worlds. And if the Minister of Health isn't doing everything in her power to save the life of someone living with cancer, then what are we doing here?

Sabrina is watching this question period today. Her family is watching. My question, again, is, will the Premier commit that not a single cent will be spent on self-promoting advertising or other frivolous spending until every single person in this province living with cancer gets the treatment they need to live?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I will remind the member that the regulation was to codify something that has been happening in the province of Ontario since 2011.

What I can tell you is that programs that we have put in place under the leadership of Premier Ford, like the FAST program that's accelerating cancer drugs and therapies into the province of Ontario by over a year—and because of that program, we now have eight cancer therapies that would have taken an additional year to go through the process without that accelerated process.

We have a health innovation pathway—again, something that did not exist before Premier Ford became the Premier—where we are actually accelerating innovative programs, so that everyone in Ontario has access to these innovative medicines and programs, and to ensure that people get those programs and innovative medicines faster in the province of Ontario.

That's what we're doing to make sure that all Ontarians have access faster, and we'll continue to do that work because we all know that people suffering from—

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Adil Shamji: Madam Speaker, the moral test of a society is how it treats those in the dawn of life, in the twilight of life and in the shadows of life. And judging by that test, the Premier has failed. OSAP is broken, youth unemployment is up, health care is buckling and homelessness is skyrocketing. While history will not be kind to the Premier, there is a group of people who may not live long enough to read those history books if this government doesn't act today.

Madam Speaker, a growing number of patients with cancer and rare diseases are being rejected by Ontario Health, with the out-of-country and case-by-case review programs repeatedly and inappropriately telling them no. And now, if they don't get their treatments, they will die. They have been given a choice between debt and death.

Will the minister meet with these patients to hear their stories and will the minister fund these treatments?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As I said previously, these are heartbreaking stories for the patients and their families. Receiving US-funded treatment and approvals is a process that we have had in the province of Ontario for decades. You would know that as a physician.

We also know that these are not decisions that are made at the political level. They are made with the input of clinicians, with the input of surgeons, with the input of ethicists, and they are not politically driven decisions. We have had this process in the province of Ontario for literally decades. It is an appropriate way to assess US-based treatment pre-approval, and we're going to continue to do that work.

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: Madam Speaker, that answer does nothing but condemn a whole bunch of Ontarians to a debt sentence while she has the power to stop that.

You see, the clinicians, the oncologists, the surgeons have already said that these patients deserve these treatments. In fact, the courts have even gone so far as to tell her that her application of these programs is wrong.

I want everyone in the House to hear the names of the people that are being left to the sidelines and left to die: Kevin Nash, an outdoor enthusiast with melanoma; Holly Wardlow, an anthropology professor at U of T with bile duct cancer; Alex Shved, a 37-year-old father of two who has melanoma and months to live; and Sabrina Apitz-Grossman, a 31-year-old Oxford graduate with metastatic sarcoma.

Sabrina told me that all she wants to do is to be able to turn 32 later in December and have a hope of turning 33 the year after. Is that too much to ask? So will the Premier please help her and help other Ontarians like her?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I want to be very clear with the member opposite and everyone listening that our priority is to make sure that we get innovative medicines into people's hands faster and get those approvals happening faster. Through the accelerated FAST program, we were able to approve eight additional cancer drugs that literally would have taken over an additional year to be in hospitals, to be in patients. We have, through the health innovation pathway, made sure that as innovative work happens in the province of Ontario—and there is lots of it with our life sciences sector—that they have a pathway faster through the ministry approval system.

But it is not appropriate, and it will never be appropriate, for politicians to be making decisions about US-based treatment, out-of-country coverage. That should be left to ethicists, clinicians and surgeons. That is where it is lying right now.

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

The House recessed from 1210 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

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

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

Bill 119, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 119, Loi édictant deux nouvelles lois et modifiant diverses autres lois.

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

Report adopted.

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I beg leave to present a report entitled Performance Audit: Ontario Place Redevelopment (2024 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario) from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Mr. Rakocevic presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Yes, I do, Speaker. As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts I am pleased to table these two reports; another one is coming up. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the committee and substitute members who participated in the public hearings and report-writing process.

The committee extends its appreciation to officials from all the ministries and agencies who participated in the respective hearings. The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and report-writing deliberations by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee and legislative research.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Mr. Rakocevic has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I beg leave to present a report entitled Performance Audit: Community-Based Child and Youth Mental Health Program (2025 Special Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario) from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Mr. Rakocevic has presented the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a comment?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs pursuant to standing order 109(a).

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Ms. Armstrong presents the committee's report. Does the member wish to make a comment?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 109.1(a), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the Clerk received reports on intended appointments dated June 4, 2026, June 18, 2026, July 9, 2026, July 30, 2026, August 27, 2026, and October 22, 2026, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 110(f)(9), these reports are deemed to be adopted by the House.

Reports deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

BUILDING ONTARIO FASTER ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 VISANT À BÂTIR L'ONTARIO PLUS RAPIDEMENT

Ms. Khanjin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to enact two Acts and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant deux lois et modifiant diverses lois.

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 minister wish to address the bill?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: Yes, Speaker. The Building Ontario Faster Act, 2026, would, if passed, cut red tape and streamline permits and approvals so that projects can move forward faster and with greater certainty. It would also provide targeted initiatives to create a faster, more predictable business environment.

By reducing unnecessary delays and regulatory burden, Ontario is creating a more predictable, investment-ready environment that supports job creation, economic resilience and long-term growth.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

5028833 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2026

Mr. Pang moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr58, An Act to revive 5028833 Ontario Ltd.

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

First reading agreed to.

BEFANA INVESTMENTS LTD. ACT, 2026

MPP Firin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr61, An Act to revive Befana Investments Ltd.

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

First reading agreed to.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Steve Clark: I move that the following changes be made to the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs: MPP Bouma replace MPP Smith, Thornhill; MPP Gualtieri replace MPP Vickers; MPP Firin replace MPP Sandhu.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House leader has moved that the following changes be made to the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs: MPP Bouma replace MPP Smith, Thornhill; MPP Gualtieri replace MPP Vickers; MPP Firin replace MPP Sandhu.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

VETERANS

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to introduce once again the petition called "Raise the 'Lest We Forget' Veterans' Flag at Queen's Park." Before I read a little bit of this, I just want to say that all of our hearts and thoughts are, of course, with those affected by the CFB Wainwright tragedy, and I want to thank the member from Kanata–Carleton for giving such an emotional speech about that this morning.

This petition is very simple. The way that we honour veterans in Ontario, in Canada, is through showing up for them at our local Legions. Every Remembrance Day, we attend and we pledge to always remember and never forget. One of the ways that we can do this at Ontario's Legislature is to raise the "Lest We Forget" flag on November 11; right now, 11 out of 13 provinces and

territories have agreed to do so. Ontario is a standout in this, and I'm asking the Legislature and the government to please consider raising the "Lest We Forget" flag.

1510

I want to thank veteran Don Ian Coren from Kitchener–Conestoga, who has been collecting signatures for over two years now.

Let's get this done. Let's show our veterans the respect that they deserve.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

M^me^ Lucille Collard: I have yet another set of petitions from Dr. Sally Palmer, and I want to thank her for her continued and really relentless advocacy on this issue.

The petition is asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP. 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. It describes how our 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 costs of food and rent. However, the reality is that even doubling the rate today wouldn't be sufficient for today's cost of living.

This petition has been tabled since March 2022. It has been tabled again and again in this Legislature for years, 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 to make a living.

I agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Hajar to bring to the table.

HIGHWAYS 11 AND 17

MPP Billy Denault: Over the course of the past couple of months, we had many opportunities to connect with constituents, and certainly one of the things that I heard about was Highway 17. So I've had many members of my community sign this petition that states that the government of Ontario should work in partnership with the government of Canada to help advance the expansion and modernization of Highways 11 and 17 as a project of national significance, recognizing the vital role these highways play in supporting nationwide trade, strengthening supply chains and enabling critical mineral development.

I support this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Kate to deliver to the table.

TRUCKING SAFETY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further petitions? I recognize the member from Nepean. Apologies. I recognize the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you, Speaker. I didn't cross the floor.

Speaker, a big issue in my constituency is the issue of illegal truck yards. I have a petition here signed by dozens of members of my community, and they are asking the government to pass Bill 119, Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act, which would allow municipalities to issue administrative monetary penalties for illegal land use, including truck yards, helping to strengthen local enforcement and deter future violations.

Again, this petition calls on the Legislature to pass Bill 119, Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act.

I support this petition. I'll affix my signature to it and give it to page Andrea.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING ONTARIO'S STREETS AND COMMUNITIES ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES RUES ET LES COLLECTIVITÉS DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Kerzner moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 119, Loi édictant deux nouvelles lois et modifiant diverses autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): To the Solicitor General to start debate.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I am so pleased to share my time today with the member from Hamilton Mountain, the parliamentary secretary to the Solicitor General; the member for Carleton; and the member for Whitby.

Mr. Speaker, it's great to be back, and it's great to be back to talk on third reading of Bill 119, Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act.

Our government has been laser-focused. We have been unapologetic, we have been intentional and we have stood by the men and women, every single day, that help keep Ontario safe. Mr. Speaker, let me tell you who I'm talking about. I'm talking about our police officers. I'm talking about our fire fighters. I'm talking about the brave men and women that put on the uniform of a correctional officer, the people that come to work every day as a probation and parole officer, the incredible people that are animal welfare inspectors, the people that work in the Office of the Chief Coroner, the people that work in the Centre of Forensic Sciences, the people who are incredible contributors to our public safety.

Mr. Speaker, as we talk about Bill 119, let me take this legislature on a bit of a road map, at least since I became Solicitor General, the highest honour of my professional life, in June 2022. I don't walk this journey alone; I walk it with the incredible people that have helped me. In the ministry are two incredible Deputy Solicitor Generals: Mario Di Tommaso, our Deputy Solicitor General for community safety; and Erin Hannah, our Deputy Solicitor General for corrections. I don't walk this road alone, because I have incredible people in the Office of the

Solicitor General that have been there to help guide me and make sure that that the priorities of our government, led by Premier Ford, are carried out to the highest degree of professional standards and with dispatch.

Bill 119 builds on this intentional and sustained work to make our province a safer place to live. It is about protecting Ontario. And I've said this before: When we protect Ontario, we protect our interest in seeing people invest here. We protect those entrepreneurs that want to come forward with the next big idea. Ontario has long had a phenomenal history of recognizing entrepreneurship through innovation, through imagination and through talent unmatched anywhere in this world.

Bill 119 strengthens our public safety by understanding what we have done in the last four years. The Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, Bill 102, which we passed in June 2023—one of the hallmarks that I am so proud of. It recognizes the collaboration across our province, through the associations. Please let me acknowledge them again today: the Toronto Police Association, led by its president, Clayton Campbell; the Police Association of Ontario, led by a great Ontarian, Mark Baxter; the Ontario Provincial Police Association, led by an incredible individual, David Sabatini; the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, led by Chief Jeremy Parkin of the Rama fire service; and finally, Greg Horton, the president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association.

These associations on the public safety side have been indispensable to me to carry out my role, and to work collaboratively to make sure that each piece of legislation that I had the honour the speak to on public safety is something that we have collaborated on and encouraged their participation, and I appreciate that.

When we came forward, I remember it like it was yesterday: my first visit to Thunder Bay. And boy, it was a visit where, as we go up north in northern Ontario in different parts of the winter, we see first-hand the trueness of our province. It's large. It's very large. It's 2,400 kilometres from Cornwall to Fort Frances. And although I haven't made it yet to Fort Frances, I did make it to Pigeon River, which is just outside.

Our province is vast. How do I know it? I had the privilege of going up to almost Hudson's Bay, to a First Nations community called Peawanuck at the Winisk River. It was a privilege of a lifetime to see first-hand just how vast but, most importantly, how special our province is.

1520

When we came forward to bring our hallmark piece of legislation, the Community Safety and Policing Act, again, we did it with intention, because we wanted to make sure that our police services—our First Nations, our OPP and our municipal police services—had a modern piece of governance so they could ensure that their communities would be kept safe.

The CSPA called for other things as well. We brought forward the office of the inspector general. We brought forward other streamlining pieces of governance with police service boards. But we didn't stop there. Some would say what you did took 35 years, but wait, there's more.

We didn't stop. We came forward in June 2024 with the Preventing Unethical Puppy Sales Act, which we called the PUPS Act, Bill 159. That strengthened our government's commitment to animal welfare to make sure that we would target illegal puppy mills. It set minimum care standards, increased financial penalties and granted animal welfare inspectors broader search powers. Today, as we talk about the bill that is here—119—it is again an incremental, staged approach to keep public safety at the forefront of everything that we do.

In May 2026, which was just like yesterday, we passed Bill 75, Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, and we established a public offenders registry, maintained by the OPP, of repeat violent and high-risk offenders. We brought forward the concept of mandatory cash security deposits for bail releases. This is very important because this is set by the courts. But it means that a person that is coming out of our correctional system must have an obligation to behave better, and that's why we came out with the mandatory cash security deposits. We came forward to make sure that there are mandatory requirements for court-ordered sureties to maintain up-to-date contact detail information with law enforcement to ensure bail conditions carry enforceable consequences, and we amended legislation on police record checks to establish standards and reduce delays.

We came forward also, Mr. Speaker, with a narrative item that's very important: that we must see the day soon that we live in a society that is barrier free—and it's not just from an access and accessibility point of view. We have one of the finest ministers of seniors and accessibility; he is a true treasure to Ontario. Barrier-free is part of a narrative item in Bill 75, which spoke to the fact that we must see a day when our infrastructure is not impacted by protesters who feel that they have a right to just disrupt our daily life by blocking key points of infrastructure—roadways and highways and bridges and subway stations and hospitals and houses of worship. Ontario knows that we are a better society than that, and it's something that I hope we will develop further and faster and reassure our public that somebody is on their side, that somebody will stand up for a person who just wants to go about their lives without having a disruptive protest affect their moving around our city or our province.

Ontario is a big and warm-hearted province. Supporting law enforcement has been very personal to me.

Monsieur le Président, pour moi, c'est très personnel. En tant que solliciteur général, rien n'est plus important que la sécurité de notre province.

It is personal to me because, as Solicitor General, I want to make sure that my priority is to help Premier Ford protect Ontario.

From a public safety perspective, we haven't stopped. We're never going to stop. I point to the fact that recently, on September 18, little more than a month ago, I had the privilege, together with the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, a true passionate Ontarian that saw first-

hand what I saw—a graduated class of over 500. It represented my 15th time going to the Ontario Police College to bear witness to something truly miraculous and common at the same time. And the class said, "How can it be both?" I said because the marches and the pipes and the drums and the formality are common, but what's miraculous, Mr. Speaker, is seeing in my time in office, thus far, 8,000 people graduate their basic constable training—an undeniable high-water mark that no government will ever match, Premier Ford's commitment to our public safety.

I said to the graduating class that day, "Three things to carry with you as you go forward to receive your commissions and your badges: Carry forward the fact that Ontario does not speak with the same voice. We speak multiple languages. Some voices are louder. Some voices are quieter. It's up to you as our police officers-to-be to understand we have to be good listeners."

I spoke to the fact that our province is large. It was here long before us. It will be here long after us. But I said to the class, "Remember, it belongs to every one of us." Finally, I encouraged them to make something of themselves: "Find the best of yourselves on the journey to keep Ontario safe."

We expanded the size of the police college over the last four years, culminating in 2025, when over 2,000 people graduated from the Ontario Police College by paying no basic constable training fee—BCT fee—because this was a commitment of our government, led by Premier Ford: to pay the tuition to encourage people to come forward and serve as police officers.

Our Community Safety and Policing Grant program has been a hallmark, a high-water mark of our government's commitment of working with our police services across the province to make sure that their priorities of their communities are represented by the grants and supports from our government. Just since 2019 to the present: $638 million, $551 million to support police services with local priorities.

I want to thank the minister, the member from Milton, my former Associate Solicitor General, a fine man, who tackled also with a microscopic focus prevention of auto theft by tackling why our cars are being stolen and what can be done about it.

I'm happy, Mr. Speaker, to take back the mantle again and make sure that our vigilance, our intent and our focus to fight auto theft remains at the highest priority, and that's why we came forward recently with another announcement of $6 million to further combat auto theft.

Auto theft, Mr. Speaker, is down. It's down because our government didn't take our foot off the pedal. It's down because police officers work every day. It's down because we have combatted it by understanding that while people have become more sophisticated to disrupt our way of life, so have we. We came forward, Mr. Speaker, with the Joint Air Support Unit, and that's a substantial investment of $190 million to provide helicopters, which are badly needed, to work with police services, including the OPP, in the four corners of our province: in the greater Toronto area, in Niagara, in Windsor and in Ottawa. I'm delighted that I had the privilege of seeing our first two helicopters branded and in the air already, in Durham and in Peel.

We came forward, Mr. Speaker, with Operation Deterrence 2.0 recently, a further investment of $32.5 million, because we want to strengthen our border communities. As I took the Premier's instructions, "Visit the borders; go from Cornwall all the way out west," and I did as far as Pigeon River, I saw that the federal government's assets to keep the unprotected border safe are minimal. I've been encouraged by the federal government's intent to reinvest with the RCMP, with CBSA. I appreciate their cooperation in how they have been working with our OPP, but we're not waiting.

1530

Our government came forward with a seriousness on corrections and bail reform. It's not only the fact that we in the Legislature debated the urgency of calling on the federal government to take its first steps, its first measures, on introducing, at the federal level, meaningful bail reform—and they have taken the first steps. I'll acknowledge it. When I'm at the federal, provincial and territorial meeting on justice and public safety in beautiful Niagara Falls in a month and a half's time, I'll push them again. I'll say, "Look at what you've done. You've taken the first step. That's helpful. Now go further and faster so that people understand that there are consequences when you break the law—people who continuously break the law, who are part of this revolving door of justice, because we have a weak Criminal Code." We have to understand that we have to move further and faster.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 119 talks about where we have been and where we are going. Let me spend a few minutes on the seriousness we have taken with corrections as well. It wasn't just that we became aware that eight jails were closed by the previous Ontario Liberal government. It wasn't just that they took 2,500 spaces offline—almost 25% of the then capacity; it's that we would not accept that status quo. It took time for us to look at our inventory of assets, but we have moved forward with dispatch.

I have to say, as I have travelled the province as Solicitor General, meeting with our correctional officers—as I do—I saw first-hand how hard their job is. Their job is a tough job. I'm proud, as the minister, that I will always stand up and have their backs. I told them that we would address our capacity issue by having a three-pronged approach: a short-term approach, a medium-term approach and a longer-term approach.

I said I wanted a plan from our ministry to bring a thousand beds online, a thousand spaces online, in the shortest possible order. I'm proud that we are well on our way, and we will have exceeded our targets. I will have more to say in the weeks and months ahead.

We came forward by saying that we wanted to expand our spaces because our population is growing. But do you know what, Mr. Speaker? The previous Ontario Liberal government knew it. Our population was growing for years. It was growing at a time when the correctional capacity wasn't reaching where it should have been. The hiring—as we have done—of over 3,000 new correctional

officers didn't take place by the prior Liberal government. We decided that we would not follow their model; we would build and we would hire.

The Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act focuses on three areas: safer communities, strengthening enforcement and protecting the most vulnerable. When we talk about strengthening the communities, we talk about the governance and transparency of police service boards, ensuring that the priority of a police service board aligns to the priorities of the government. This is important. We're not telling a board what their priorities should be. That's up to them. But what we're saying is, you must align it to the priorities of our government.

I'll give you some examples, Mr. Speaker. If this means fighting to get illegal guns off our streets and that's a provincial priority, that should be your priority. If it means that we must find a way to get illegal guns off our streets and that's a provincial priority, that should be a municipal police service board's priority. If it means that we have to have a strategy to combat human trafficking—and that's a serious file on its own—that should be a priority if it's a priority for us.

We're modernizing the oversight—and this is important—for private security guards. You have to dust off, again, where the Ontario Liberal government left it a long time ago. I dusted it off. I was surprised. We're now in 2026. We're coming forward to say that if you are a security guard or you are a security guard company, there must be a standard which we all must meet.

Again, I want to thank all those who have worked, all our stakeholders who have participated and will participate in the conversation, because those who put on the uniform of a security guard are important people too. They keep Ontario safe. What we want to do is to make sure they are prepared for the job they're doing.

And when it comes to strengthening enforcement, I want to talk about how we have to stop illegal drugs at their source. We have to address the unlawful possession of precursor chemicals and equipment like pill presses by those who have an intention of producing illicit drugs. And we have to hold commercial landlords accountable for knowingly permitting their premises to be used for illegal drug production or other offences. And we're enabling special constables to stop drug use and other dangerous behaviours on public transit.

When it comes to combatting predatory towing operators that prey on drivers in distress and position themselves intentionally near collision sites, we want to make sure that we are not talking about the good towing actors, the legitimate towing companies, the towing companies that are there when we need them. We're talking about those that are predators. And we are going to establish towing and storage rates—maximum rates—so that the breakdown on a highway in your car does not turn into a financial disaster.

Mr. Speaker, it was only a couple of weeks ago that I attended a conference organized by Peel Regional Police on organized retail theft. It costs our province billions of dollars a year. We're moving forward. We will establish a dedicated prosecution team, building on the success of similar specialized prosecution teams we have already created.

I want to talk about protecting vulnerable people, and I think of Christopher's Law. Perhaps there was no one episode in my four-years-plus in office that will be as personal to me as meeting the family of the late Christopher Stephenson. To see his parents as I did—and the member for Thornhill was there that day, and other members around our chamber were there to meet. We can't understand the pain that they have suffered. We can't understand how traumatic the days have been for them.

Premier Mike Harris, almost 25 years ago, heard their cries and came forward to make sure that what happened to young, beautiful Christopher Stephenson should not happen to anyone else, that there must be consequences, that we must protect the most vulnerable in our society: our own children.

As a father of three, of two sons and a daughter, who are growing up, as we will say across the aisle—our children, in front of our own eyes—while we're here; they're growing up, and we can't do our job without them supporting us. I'm blessed to have Seth, Aaron and Shaina in my life, together with their incredible mother, my wife of 30 years, Rochelle. We know that without family supporting us, we can't do what we're doing.

But that night, after I met the Stephenson family, I came home and I cried, and I held my three kids and my wife that much closer. We have to make sure that we will continue to make it impossible for somebody to get away with doing something as heinous as they did to Christopher Stephenson.

The other measure that we're doing as part of Bill 119 is addressing the vulnerable sector police record checks, because we've heard it across the province. Some services, some police detachments, are quicker, and I appreciate that. But our province's population is all over Ontario, and in urban centres, more people go to their police station.

Why do people apply for a vulnerable sector check? It's because they want to work in a long-term-care home, or they want to be a councillor at a summer camp, and they have to know that they will be able to have their record check assessed and reviewed and issued, if appropriate, by a police service.

1540

We want to make sure that we're cracking down on people that want to engage in human trafficking. It is a vile act. As I attended most recently, again, the anti-human trafficking summit in Peel, it was something again that I said to them: that we are not going to stop. We will always stand with the victims and the survivors, but we will combat it at its source by making sure that there are more investments, that there are more professionals in police services with dedicated units to combat it.

Mr. Speaker, our Bill 119 is not our first kick at the can when it comes to public safety. And I'll tell you something else: It won't be our last. It goes back to my personal enthusiasm as to why we are here. It's something that I have said willingly to my colleagues across the aisle, that no one

of us has an exclusiveness of loving our province. No one has an exclusiveness of saying that our area is more or less important than anyone else's. The common denominator of our province is one of equality. It's one of understanding that everything in our province revolves back to public safety, so people can invest, so entrepreneurs can find the next discovery, so the innovators of tomorrow will build, companies will hire, people will go to school, people will go to work, people will shop and people will play in the park. And yes, Mr. Speaker, like we do, that we go to worship in a safe environment is something that we aspire to because it's our fundamental right.

Public safety doesn't just mean anything. To me, to the Premier, to our government, it means everything. That's why our commitment of standing firm every single day, of calling out bad behaviour when we have to, of making sure people know there will be consequences—of sending a message in this Legislature that we will come forward, spring and fall, and when we have to, to make sure that our legislation, our regulations, our expectations and the tone of this government match the clarion call of our province. Somebody has to be on their side, and we will.

I'll end where I started. To all those people that put on the uniform, to all those people that support those people in uniform—our police officers, our firefighters, our correction, probation and parole officers, our animal welfare inspectors, the people that work in the Office of the Chief Coroner and the Centre of Forensic Sciences—and everybody that works to ensure that our public safety is something that is adhered to and fulfilled as a fundamental right, I say to them: We will always have your backs.

The commitment of our government today and every day will not change. It will be something you can take to the bank. It's something that I invite everyone across the floor of the Legislature—to join us, stand up for your communities by standing up for public safety. And when you have an opportunity to thank someone who's doing just that, do it. It's the right thing to do.

I'm proud as the member for York Centre to take the concerns of my residents to heart every day. Nothing is more important to me than their concerns, and to serve them and to serve the province of Ontario by being somebody that simply loves my province and loves my country. I will not stop; I will not rest. I will work as hard as I can every single day to help Premier Ford, to help our government protect our province, to protect Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Hamilton Mountain.

MPP Monica Ciriello: It is my great honour to stand up today to speak to Bill 119, Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act. As a member of the justice policy committee and as the new parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, Minister Kerzner, it is an absolute privilege to speak of the steps our government is taking to protect Ontario.

Bill 119 represents the next steps in a commitment that guides everything we do—everything our government has ever done under the leadership of Premier Ford: keeping families safe, keeping Ontario communities safe, keeping our economy strong and keeping our economy secure, and protecting the people who count on their government to stand up for them. Because public safety is not just another government responsibility; it is the responsibility. It is the foundation of a strong province.

Our government knows that when people feel safe, they put down roots, they raise families, they start businesses and they build communities. When they don't, nothing else matters.

Ontarians expect their government to stand with law-abiding citizens, support victims and take meaningful action against those who threaten public safety. This expectation has guided our approach since 2018.

Our government has invested more than $1 billion to support policing and community safety within our province. Our government has invested more than $3 billion to expand correctional capacity and strengthen a system that was left under severe strain.

We have strengthened support for victims and survivors in Ontario, and we have advanced major public safety reforms to help ensure that Ontario remains the safest place in North America to live, work and raise a family.

Bill 119 builds on that work. It reflects a simple belief that people have the right to feel safe within their own communities. It's not asking a lot, Madam Speaker. They have a right to expect that those who break the law will be held accountable, and they have a right to know that their government will always put public safety first.

Today I would like to focus on the main objectives of Bill 119, protecting victims of crime and other vulnerable Ontarians. One area of focus is access to information about high-risk offenders within our province. The proposed legislation includes amendments to the Community Safety and Policing Act to require the OPP commissioner to establish a public-facing website that publishes information about high-risk offenders, including high-risk sex offenders, who have been the subject of a disclosure of personal information by a chief of police for the purpose of the protection of the public.

The legislation also includes proposed amendments to Christopher's Law. These changes would better align reporting requirements for Ontario's Sex Offender Registry and the national sex offender registry and ensure that the registry remains an effective investigative tool for police services across our province.

We're also proposing changes related to police record checks in the province of Ontario. Police services in Ontario process over one million police record checks annually. More than 70% of those are vulnerable sector checks. These are detailed checks used to screen people working or volunteering with vulnerable populations. This could be children, it could be seniors or it could be people living with disabilities.

Vulnerable sector checks require more detailed screening than any other police record check, which can lead to longer processing times. Because vulnerable sector checks involve highly sensitive information, federal rules require them to be completed by the police service of the local

jurisdiction where the applicant resides, or with an authorized body under the federal Criminal Records Act.

The proposed amendments to the Police Record Checks Reform Act would allow the province to designate eligible police services as authorized bodies. This would support periods of high demand by processing vulnerable sector checks for applicants who live outside of their jurisdiction.

1550

Implementation of these changes would involve coordination with our federal partners, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Public Safety Canada, to give designated police services access to federal databases for this purpose. This added flexibility could help reduce delays for applicants and improve overall efficiency while ensuring that the strongest safeguards still remain in place for our vulnerable populations.

Our bill also includes measures specifically focused on victims and on survivors. Amendments to the Victims' Bill of Rights would establish a new statutory tort of harassment. This would provide victims with the ability to pursue damages from their harassers through civil court even when there hasn't been a criminal conviction.

The bill also supports the policy established under the Protection from Coerced Debts Incurred in relation to Human Trafficking Act. Human trafficking can involve not only physical and psychological coercion but also financial exploitation. Victims may be forced by their traffickers to take on debts they didn't choose to nor did they benefit from. The proposed changes would ensure victims are not left responsible for debts imposed on them by their exploiters.

Bill 119 also includes measures involved in protecting children and young people, including strengthening oversight of private domestic and intercountry adoptions, broadened authority of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers to make interim orders even earlier, and regulation-making authority to enhance safety in youth justice facilities, with details to be prescribed in future regulations.

For the first time in decades, our government is taking the steps to propose changes to Ontario's private domestic and intercountry adoption system. This will help support safe, ethical and permanent adoption outcomes for children in need of adoption.

Another measure that this bill outlines is animal welfare. In the spring, a regulation was made to prohibit the declawing of cats as well as the devocalization and ear-cropping of dogs, unless required by a vet specifically to treat an injury or a disease. To support these regulations, the ministry is proposing legislative changes to the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act to expand an existing authority that allows for the establishment of record-keeping requirements for dogs only. The amendment proposed in Bill 119 would expand this authority to also apply to cats as well as other animals. This change could enable record-keeping requirements to be prescribed in regulation for other animals as needed in the future. Record-keeping would also support compliance with the new regulations prohibiting these prescribed procedures, which will come into effect on January 1, 2027.

Speaker, when you look across the measures contained in Bill 119, a clear principle emerges: This legislation is all about protection—protecting victims, protecting children, protecting vulnerable people, protecting the people of Ontario—and giving law enforcement and public institutions the tools that they need to keep Ontarians safe. We are improving access to information about high-risk offenders, strengthening Ontario's sex offender registry, reducing delays for vulnerable sector checks, creating new civil remedies for victims of harassment, protecting survivors of human trafficking, strengthening oversight of adoptions, enhancing safety in youth justice facilities and supporting animal welfare.

Every measure in this bill, in Bill 119, is grounded in the same objective, putting safety first, because behind every policy and every amendment is a person—a parent who just wants their child to be safe, a senior who deserves to live free from fear, a victim who deserves support and justice, a community that expects dangerous offenders to be held accountable and a citizen who simply wants to know that their government is taking their threats seriously. That is what the residents of Ontario expect from all of us.

The vast majority of Ontarians are law-abiding people. They work hard. They care for their families. They contribute to their communities. They deserve to know that the laws we pass and the institutions who oversee them are working to protect them. They deserve a government that stands with victims and not offenders, a government that recognizes public safety is not an afterthought but rather the core responsibility, a government prepared to act when changes are needed to keep people safe.

Bill 119 reflects that commitment. It builds on the work already under way across our justice and public safety system and takes a practical step to address real challenges facing our Ontario communities today. Most importantly, it sends a clear message: The safety of Ontarians comes first. It comes first for families, it comes first for communities and it comes first for this government.

As the MPP for Hamilton Mountain, I am proud to stand up here today to support Bill 119, Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act, and I encourage all members of this House to do the same.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Carleton.

MPP George Darouze: I'm happy to rise and join my colleague from Hamilton Mountain this afternoon in supporting the third and final reading of Bill 119, Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act. In particular, I would like to thank my colleague the Solicitor General for bringing this bill before the House earlier this year.

Speaker, Bill 119, at its heart, is all about public safety. As the minister noted, our government has been clear and consistent in our commitment to public safety. Bill 119 addresses a range of public safety concerns that would, if passed, collectively advance our government's commit-

ment to protecting Ontario streets, families and communities.

With specific regard to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Bill 119, if enacted, would strengthen oversight of private and international adoptions. It would also strengthen the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers' authority to make interim orders at an earlier stage.

I would like to review these specific legislative proposals with members, starting with adoption. From the beginning, our government has prioritized enhancing safety, reinforcing accountability and strengthening our oversight within Ontario's adoption system. Bill 119, if enacted, would be another important step in our efforts to achieve better outcomes for every child and youth.

To improve the supervision of private and intercountry adoptions, we are proposing amendments designed to protect the best interests of children and help ensure that Ontarians can have full confidence in the integrity of the system.

To further protect children and youth, we are expanding the criteria under which licences can be denied or revoked, supporting accountability for individuals who fail to meet standards. We're also proposing the introduction of directives and compliance orders for adoption licensees under the Intercountry Adoption Act. These tools will enable us to act quickly and decisively when concerns arise, allowing for timely and concrete interventions to protect children. This work also includes strengthening accountability by expanding tools for oversight of adoption practitioners and supporting them to achieve compliance when concerns are identified.

Speaker, our government has been absolutely clear that every child and youth in Ontario deserves to feel safe so that they can succeed and thrive.

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To support this goal, we are ensuring that those who work with and support children and youth have the appropriate qualifications—qualifications that reflect and uphold the highest standard possible.

Speaker, across Ontario more than 31,000 social workers and social service workers contribute meaningfully to the well-being of individuals and families every day. These front-line workers are absolutely critical to the safety and protection of our communities.

We are proposing amendments that would allow the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers to make interim orders at an earlier stage, including suspending a member's registration where there is a risk that the member's conduct may expose a client to harm or injury. These changes would allow the college to issue interim orders for serious concerns at any point following the receipt of a complaint or the appointment of an investigator.

This approach would bring Ontario's social workers and social service workers into alignment with the practices of other regulated professions and jurisdictions. These changes would also enhance the college's ability to protect clients and maintain public confidence.

Bill 119 also addresses our responsibility for the safe custody, supervision and detention of young people who are in conflict with the law. I'm proud of our government's ongoing work to support youth through justice programs that help guide them toward more positive paths.

The proposed changes in the legislation are also intended to strengthen safety for both youth and staff within Ontario's secure youth justice facilities. Each year, approximately 1,000 dedicated staff work with around 1,300 young people in custody, as well as more than 1,800 youth under community supervision. These front-line professionals perform essential work every day and play a critical role in maintaining safe environments.

Our government remains committed to supporting staff at youth justice facilities and giving them the tools they need to manage high-risk circumstances safely and effectively. Bill 119 would, if passed, allow for expanding the circumstances in which secure areas may be used in secure youth justice facilities, subject to regulations. These future measures would include appropriate safeguards and procedures to ensure the protection of the young person's well-being as staff respond to complex situations.

These legislative measures are reinforced by our government's financial commitment to the youth justice system. Beginning this fiscal year, we are investing more than $38 million over three years to expand capacity in youth justice facilities and to support their long-term sustainability. With this strong foundation, staff will be better positioned to focus on rehabilitation and help young people successfully reintegrate into their communities.

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

Our government recognizes and appreciates the efforts of Indigenous women, organizations, families and survivors whose lived experiences and recommendations have shaped this work. We're especially grateful to the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council for their guidance in the development and ongoing implementation of the strategy. The council ensures that the voices of Indigenous women remain at the forefront of this work.

As we look ahead to the next five years of the Pathways to Safety strategy, we will continue collaborating with Indigenous partners and levels of government. In the past years, we invested $125 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 $35 million in the Family Well-Being Program supports children, youth and families in healing from the impacts of intergenerational violence and trauma. We've also renewed our anti-human trafficking strategy with a $345-million investment over five years aimed at raising aware-

ness, protecting children and youth, supporting survivors and holding offenders accountable.

Together, we're working towards a province where everyone can live in safety, free from intimidation, harm and the threat of violence.

So, Speaker, I urge all members in this House to give Bill 119 a speedy third reading approval so that our communities remain safe and protected.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to join the debate as the Chair of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and to have an opportunity to speak about Bill 119, the proposed Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act. This important piece of legislation builds on our government's ongoing work to protect streets and communities like the town of Whitby, as well as strengthen public safety across other parts of the region of Durham.

For many of us in this chamber, public safety is one of the most fundamental responsibilities of government. Hard-working families in my community deserve to feel safe in their homes. They deserve to feel safe walking down their street, taking public transit, going to work and raising their families.

Our government has made significant investments to strengthen public safety across Ontario, in particular in the region of Durham. I want to provide a few examples, Speaker, through you, if I could: We just had a brand new helicopter purchase for the Durham Regional Police Service that was acquired through JASU, an initiative that brings together multiple police services in the greater Toronto area, ensuring every region has specialized air support when and where it's needed most. It's equipped with the most advanced law enforcement technology, including thermal imaging and day-and-night camera systems.

The police chief, Peter Moreira, had this to say: This investment represents a significant policing initiative. "Air support has long played a valuable role in helping our officers protect the community, and Air4 enhances that capability through advanced technology, improved operational flexibility and strengthened regional partnerships."

Another example, Speaker, is close to $400,000 has been invested as a victim support grant to organizations such as Victim Services of Durham Region, Durham Children's Aid Society and Bethesda House in the region of Durham.

We've also invested in other aspects of front-line policing, police recruitment and training, modern equipment and infrastructure.

Speaker, it's clear that we're modernizing and expanding also Ontario's adult correctional system, while hiring additional correctional staff and strengthening safety within our institutions.

Importantly, at the same time, we've continued to update Ontario's laws to respond to emerging public safety challenges, and Bill 119 continues that work. It's part of a broader public safety and justice package focused on three key objectives: yes, making our communities safer, strengthening enforcement and protecting victims of crime and other vulnerable Ontarians.

But I want to turn, first of all, to safer communities. Speaker, effective policing depends on public confidence, strong governance and clear accountability, and that's why the proposed legislation includes amendments to the Community Safety and Policing Act which are intended to strengthen the governance and transparency of police services boards. Among other things, the proposed changes would limit the ability of police services boards to hire current or former board members. This would create clear confidentiality requirements and allow for clearer rules around attendance at closed police services board meetings, and this would also enable the Solicitor General to establish priorities for police services boards. This legislation also proposes changes intended to streamline the operations of Ontario's Inspector General of Policing. Taken together, Speaker, these measures are meant to support consistent, accountable and effective policing across our great province.

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Another area we're focusing on is private security, and this is a large and growing sector. Ontario currently has more than 130,000 licensed private security personnel, more than four times the number of police officers in the province. These personnel work in communities across Ontario and are often highly visible to members of the public. The proposed amendments to the Private Security and Investigative Services Act would take steps to modernize the framework, to strengthen oversight, training and accountability within the private security sector. These changes would enable more responsive training and resources for private security personnel and help ensure effective public complaints processes are in place.

Our broader public safety and justice package also addresses the efficient operation of Ontario's justice system. Proposed amendments to the Provincial Offences Act would enable parties to reach plea agreements for certain provincial offences outside the courtroom. This is intended to help reduce unnecessary court appearances and address pressures on the justice system.

At the same time, we're also examining emergency public safety issues that require a coordinated response across government. These initiatives reflect a simple reality: The public safety landscape continues to change, and this government needs to respond to those changes.

The second major objective of this package is stronger enforcement. Laws need to be clear, Speaker, but they also need to be practical and enforceable. One area where this has become important is illicit drug activity. Police need appropriate tools to intervene where there's evidence that materials or equipment are being assembled for the illegal production of drugs.

That's why this package includes proposed legislation that would address the unlawful possession of precursor chemicals with the intention of producing illicit drugs. It would also address the unlawful possession of pill presses and other equipment intended specifically for illicit drug production. This measure is part of the government's plan

to keep our streets safe and provide additional tools to help police intervene and curb illicit drug production before these substances can reach Ontario's streets and communities.

This legislation addresses enforcement issues in Ontario's towing industry. Tow trucks provide an important service on our roads and highways. The proposed legislation includes amendments to the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act to reduce dangerous driving by tow truck operators and ensure the industry is more effectively regulated. These changes would also make it easier for authorities to enforce penalties against tow truck companies that don't follow the rules. Dangerous driving and non-compliance within the industry create risks for motorists, police officers, other first responders and responsible towing operators.

Municipalities also need effective tools to enforce their own rules. The proposed amendments to the Planning Act would allow municipalities to issue administrative monetary penalties for certain unauthorized land uses.

Speaker, I'm approaching the end of my time to speak. I just want to emphasize a couple of other key points.

This new package helps strengthen public safety by giving law enforcement, prosecutors and regulators stronger tools to crack down on illegal activity. New measures will better protect victims of crime, human trafficking and harassment. The government is taking action to protect vulnerable people, whether they're in Whitby or other parts of the region of Durham, while ensuring supports remain available for victims and families. This legislation also strengthens oversight, accountability and public confidence across policing, private security and other regulated sectors.

Speaker, these measures build on previous public safety initiatives, including bail reform, safer streets legislation, investments in enforcement and, finally, correctional capacity. Thank you, Speaker.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I want to thank the minister and all the government individuals that have spoken on this bill, Bill 119.

Minister, families across Niagara are worried about illegal drugs and community safety. Passing another law makes a headline, but it doesn't put more officers on the street or dismantle illegal operations.

Speaker, to the minister: How much new funding will the Niagara regional police receive to enforce Bill 119's pill press and precursor provisions, and when will this money arrive in Niagara?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Please let me also mention to the member from St. Catharines how much I appreciate her support of her fire service and the police service.

Let me say this, Mr. Speaker: When it comes to the Community Safety and Policing Grant—I mentioned it in my remarks—over $600 million just in the last few years, those monies will continue to flow. But it's up to police services, like Niagara Regional Police Service—let me just give a shout-out to the association, to Chief Fordy, the deputy and everybody there—to identify with the police service board where monies can be used.

When we talk about the new $32.5-million Operation Deterrence 2.0, I know that they and other police services who are on maritime borders have applied for the grant to allow for them to acquire assets. I hope to report back on that soon.

She has a great service, and I'm proud to acknowledge that today.

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

Hon. Graham McGregor: Folks in my community in Brampton are sick and tired of the organized gangs that are causing havoc and mayhem in our streets.

I wanted to ask the minister about the provisions around police service boards and focusing them on certain provincial priorities. My region is a haven for these organized criminal thugs and scumbags who are engaging in human trafficking, drug trafficking, violent crimes, violent break-and-enters.

What residents in my neighbourhood want is they want police to arrest these scumbags and throw them in jail. They want them to rot there for a long time. How will this bill help our police services, like the brave police service at Peel, do exactly that?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: To my friend the minister and member from Brampton North: Peel Regional Police service is a gold-standard, flagship service. I want to give a shout-out to the men and women that work hard to keep Brampton and Mississauga safe.

What this bill does is another incremental step to show just how serious our government takes it. We want to shut down the pill presses. We want to make human trafficking and people that do it that much more responsible for their actions. We want to come forward, as we have done, and further strengthen Christopher's Law. We want to combat organized retail crime. We're doing this incrementally, we're doing this with focus, we're doing this with intent and, Mr. Speaker, we're doing it unapologetically.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: This government can introduce legislation all day long. The real test is whether it protects people, delivers accountability and provides the resources to get that job done.

Minister, from 2024 to 2025, human trafficking investigations in Niagara rose by 52%. Behind those numbers are real people whose lives have been devastated by exploitation. Bill 119 addresses coerced debt, but helping victims deal with debt after exploitation is not enough. We also need to stop trafficking before more people become victims.

What specific awareness and prevention measures is your ministry implementing to stop human trafficking in Niagara and other communities in Ontario, and what resources will be provided to support that work, Minister?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Again, I appreciate the question from the member from St. Catharines. We're doing everything incrementally. The member talked about making sure that a person who has been victimized and

coerced into human trafficking should not have to bear the burden of the debt that they were forced to incur. We continue to address this by making sure that this is a priority.

When the member opposite talked about making sure there are resources to have police services have the appropriate units, we have to make sure that the government grants are continuously prioritized by priority of the police service boards. This is something that Bill 119 talks to.

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Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite talks about ensuring that police services—her police service, a great police service—has the resources, this is something that we know has to be prioritized by the regional municipality as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Ottawa–Vanier.

M^me^ Lucille Collard: It's always good to get the third reading—by then, we get a better understanding of what the bill does—especially that I have the opportunity to go to committee as well and ask some questions to the ministers or the Solicitor General. But some of them were not really clearly answered, and I would like to give the minister another opportunity, maybe, to answer.

The new provisions that will actually give the minister more extended power or more authority to direct police services boards on what their priorities should be—we know that those boards are made up of civilians, and their role is oversight and to make sure that the local priorities are being represented.

I would like to know from the minister, what evidence actually demonstrates that those expanding powers are necessary?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'll acknowledge, again, the member opposite and her support of her police service, the Ottawa Police Service, and its great chief and its great association.

Mr. Speaker, we are not taking over police service boards. What we are doing as part of Bill 119 is acknowledging that the priorities of protecting our province should be priorities to a police service board. We're talking about alignment. We're talking about ensuring that the local priorities of any given police service board should match the priorities of the government of the day. Because one day, another government will inherit this piece of legislation, and they will have their own agenda to fight for priorities of the province. It should be communicated.

I think this is important because, historically, this has not always been the case, where a provincial government's priorities were not a priority of the police service board. We want to bring that into alignment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Thornhill.

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the minister for his remarks.

A few weeks ago, I visited the Sons of Jacob synagogue, and for all of those in House, you'll probably remember those words because Sons of Jacob was the unfortunate victim of a violent anti-Semitic attack. A number of bullet holes hit the stained glass—I witnessed them—and I want to thank officer Jeff Smith, who fought off the attack and was actually injured as well, and officer Mike McCurdy, who also did such a tremendous job in fighting off that attack.

One of the policy items referenced is safer communities and options to address intimidation-free access to infrastructure, community centres and roadways. Given Belleville and my own community that has faced so much incredible hate and challenges—no one should have to fear where they pray—how will this legislation help our vulnerable communities?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Please let me acknowledge the member's comments from Thornhill. What happened in Belleville was a massacre in the making. I was there, Mr. Speaker, three times. I saw it. I was in a state of disbelief that a person had a full intent of creating a massacre by not only killing everyone there on the holiest night in the Jewish calendar but blowing up the city block.

What we want to do, as part of what the member spoke of, is make sure we have a right to carry on our business everywhere across the province. This is something that we're going to consult our stakeholders on. This is something that will be posted on the Ontario Regulatory Registry. This is something we will talk about.

But tell me one reason why one person should feel the right that they should disrupt our lives by blocking our reasonable access—to transgress—in what we want to do every day about going about our lives.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): With the limited time left, I'll go to further debate.

Further debate? I recognize the member from St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I rise today to speak to Bill 119, the Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act. After participating in committee hearings, questioning the Solicitor General directly and hearing from police chiefs, victim services, organizations, community advocates, businesses and those working on the front lines of public safety, I believe there are two truths that can exist at the same time. The first is that there are parts of this legislation that deserve support. There are practical amendments, some that are long overdue, and others that respond to legislative concerns raised by people and organizations across this fine province.

But secondly, Speaker, Bill 119 is also a missed opportunity. What became increasingly clear throughout the committee hearings is that this government is presenting Bill 119 as a major public safety bill when, in reality, much of what we are looking at is a collection of very different legislative amendments: Some are administrative, some are technical, some are supportable and others raise serious questions about accountability, government authority and how these changes will actually work in practice.

What we do not see is a comprehensive response to the public safety challenges Ontarians are facing today. And, Speaker, I made that point directly to the Solicitor General during our committee hearings.

In my home community of St. Catharines, people are concerned about crime. They are concerned about court delays, retail theft, addiction, the toxic drug supply and whether victims can actually get help when they need it. They are concerned about what is happening in their neighbourhoods, their downtowns and public spaces. They want to feel safe in their communities, and they want to know that their government is taking those concerns quite seriously. Those concerns are shared by people right across Ontario, in all the corners.

After eight years of this government, people are justified in asking a straightforward question: Are these announcements actually making our communities safer? When we look at the challenges facing our justice system, we know Ontario is under enormous strain. Court backlogs remain severe. Statistics Canada has reported that more than 58,000 criminal cases in Ontario were withdrawn, stayed or dismissed in 2022-23. Those outcomes can occur for different reasons, but the scale of the problem warrants serious attention. When cases do not reach a determination, victims may be left without answers, accused individuals may be left with uncertainty and public confidence in our justice system suffers tremendously.

At the same time, provincial correctional facilities have been operating under significant overcrowding pressures. Many people in custody are awaiting trial rather than serving sentences following a conviction. The Ontario Ombudsman has repeatedly raised concerns about conditions in our provincial correction facilities.

So when the government introduced another omnibus bill, a law-and-order bill, we have the responsibility to ask whether it addresses the underlying pressures facing our justice system. Tougher rhetoric alone does not reduce crime. Overcrowded jails do not improve public safety, backlogged courts do not improve public safety, underfunded mental health and addiction services do not improve public safety, and under-resourced victim services certainly do not improve public safety.

Bill 119 may contain worthwhile measures, but let's be clear: A public safety bill is not the same as a public safety strategy. Ontarians needs more than announcements and tough rhetoric. They need courts that function, victims who receive support, police who have the tools to do their jobs and a government that delivers on its promises.

One of the clearest examples of the gaps between the government's announcement and legislation before us involves transit safety and retail theft. Ontarians have heard repeated announcements about stronger enforcement powers on public transit, including the ability of special constables to address illegal drug use.

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I think we can all agree that people deserve to feel safe when they're using public transit. Whether someone is commuting to work, travelling to school, or simply trying to get home to their family, public transit should be safe and accessible.

But during committee hearings, I asked the Solicitor General why so many measures being promoted alongside Bill 119 were not actually contained in the legislation. The government spoke about new transit enforcement powers, organized retail theft and animal welfare protections. And yet, when we examined the bill, many of those headline-grabbing measures were absent or left to future regulatory changes. The minister pointed to existing powers that allow police to direct individuals to stop using illegal substances on transit. But when my colleague from Toronto Centre pressed the Deputy Solicitor General about what additional enforcement measures Bill 119 actually introduced, the response was that those powers were not part of the bill. The government is asking this House to support legislation based partly on promises that are not actually written into the bill. When those details are left to future regulations or future legislation, we are being asked to trust that the government will eventually follow through. During committee, the Deputy Solicitor General confirmed that the ministry was engaging with the Retail Council of Canada on additional measures that could be brought forward through future legislation. The keyword here is "future." There's nothing wrong with consultation. In fact, consultation is essential to getting legislation right. But we must be honest about what is before us today.

Speaker, if a measure is being used to sell a bill to the public, Ontarians deserve to know whether that measure is actually in the bill. A promise is not a law, an announcement is not implementation, and a future commitment does not help a family today. The government must be clear about what it is delivering, and when.

If I order dinner at a restaurant and the restaurant tells me that the meal I wanted might appear on a future menu, I cannot exactly tell my family that dinner has arrived. A promise of a meal is not a meal. And a promise of stronger public safety measures is not the same as putting those measures into effect.

We saw a similar issue with animal welfare. The government spoke about stronger protections against unnecessary cosmetic procedures involving animals, such as ear cropping and tail docking. But when we asked about those protections at committee, the Deputy Solicitor General explained that the actual amendments focused largely on record-keeping requirements. Those requirements would be expanded from dogs to cats, with authority to prescribe additional animals through regulation. Improving documentation may be worthwhile, but record-keeping is not the same thing as establishing comprehensive new protections against harmful procedures. That distinction matters to animal welfare advocates who were expecting more from this bill.

Speaker, if the government wants credit for a measure, it should be prepared to show us where that measure is found, how it will work, and when people can expect to benefit. That is not partisan politics. That is basic accountability.

Another major concern raised during the hearings involved schedule 3 and the government's proposed powers over local police service boards. Under Bill 119, the Solicitor General would gain authority to issue directives establishing priorities that police service boards must reflect in their strategic plans.

I questioned the minister directly because, in St. Catharines, residents expect their local police service and police service board to understand the needs of our community. They expect those making policy decisions to understand our downtown, our neighbourhoods, our local businesses, and the challenges facing front-line officers.

And Niagara is not the same as Toronto. It's not the same as Ottawa, Windsor or Thunder Bay. Every community has unique public safety needs.

The Solicitor General said he wanted greater consistency and alignment with provincial priorities. Speaker, consistency can be a good thing. We should have consistent standards of accountability, professionalism and public protection. But consistency must not come at the expense of local decision-making.

The minister suggested that some police service boards had not been acting in good faith, yet offered little explanation about which boards were failing or what specific problems these new powers were intended to resolve. We should not expect political authority over local policing without clearly demonstrating why those changes are so needed and necessary.

The testimony we heard from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police reinforced the importance of protecting local decision-making. Niagara regional police chief Bill Fordy explained that policing priorities in Niagara are developed through consultation with residents, police service members and community stakeholders. We have a major tourism industry, international border crossing, rural communities and urban neighbourhoods, each with its own public safety concerns. Those differences must be reflected in how policing priorities are established.

Chief Fordy and Chief Peter Moreira emphasized the importance of consultation, consistent standards, and ensuring police services have the training and resources necessary to implement the new provincial requirements.

Consistency in policing standards is important. Accountability is important. But those goals should not come at the expense of local communities having a meaningful voice in the decisions that affect them. Provincial priorities should complement local policing strategies. They should not override them.

Speaker, the committee hearings also highlighted the importance of modernizing policing tools and strengthening public accountability. The Niagara Regional Police Service does not have body-worn cameras in place—imagine that. These cameras are not a solution to every challenge facing policing. However, they are one example of a tool that can help improve transparency, accountability and public confidence when supported by appropriate policies, training, privacy protections and oversight. Body-worn cameras can help document interactions, support investigations, provide evidence and assist with the resolution of complaints. They can also help protect the officers by providing a record of encounters that might otherwise be disputed.

But cameras require more than simple purchasing of equipment. They require secure storage, policy governing activation and access, training, maintenance and clear rules around privacy and disclosure. That is why the absence of body-worn cameras at the Niagara Regional Police Service deserves this government's serious attention.

Niagara regional police officers deserve tools to do their job safely and the public deserves confidence on how policing is carried out. The Niagara Regional Police Service does not have body-worn cameras in place. Body cameras are not a magic solution, but they can support transparency. They can support accountability and public trust. This government must take responsibility for helping ensure police have the tools, training and resources they need.

Speaker, I want to be clear: This is not an attack on our police officers. It is an argument that officers deserve the tools to carry out their responsibilities safely and professionally, and the public deserves confidence on how those responsibilities are exercised. If this government is serious about safer streets, it must be serious about the practical tools that help make police officers safer and more accountable.

I want the government to explain what support it is prepared to provide to the Niagara Regional Police Service's move towards body-worn cameras with appropriate training, privacy safeguards and accountable policies. How would the cost be addressed? We want to know what implementation support is available. How will the government work with the police services to establish appropriate standards? These are reasonable questions, and they deserve clear answers, Speaker. We should not have to choose between supporting police officers and supporting public accountability; we should be working to achieve both.

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Speaker, there's another important gap in the way this government approaches the public's safety. We spend considerable time discussing what happens after crime occurs; we discuss enforcement powers, investigations and consequences. Those matters are very much important, but a serious public safety strategy must also ask what we are doing to prevent foreseeable harm and prepare communities before emergencies happen.

That question is particularly important when we consider flooding and other major emergencies across Ontario. A devastating flood can damage homes, destroy businesses, disrupt transportation, threaten essential services and force families from their properties. And the damage does not end when the water recedes. Families may be left dealing with unsafe homes, lost possessions, temporary accommodations, loss of income and months of uncertainty. Small businesses can lose all their inventory, equipment and customers. Critical infrastructure can be damaged. People who are already struggling financially can find themselves facing costs they simply cannot absorb. In those moments, people need more than sympathy. They need a clear plan.

Speaker, we cannot wait for another devastating flood before deciding how Ontario will respond. Families should not have to wonder who will help them evacuate, where they will find shelter or how they will rebuild. We need a

coordinated emergency relief strategy with clear responsibilities, rapid financial assistance and recovery support for communities all across Ontario before disaster strikes, not after.

We need a coordinated provincial emergency relief strategy that clearly identifies responsibilities, supports local governments and ensures residents can access timely information and assistance. That strategy should include clear coordination between provincial and municipal emergency management authorities, reliable public alerts and accessible evacuation information, rapid damage assessment and transparent timelines for emergency financial assistance.

We should be examining how relief programs can be activated quickly and communicated clearly so that families do not have to spend weeks figuring out which office to call while they are already dealing with a disaster. This is all keeping communities safe. The senior living alone may need help evacuating. A person with a disability may need accessible transportation and accommodations. A family may not have the savings to cover temporary housing. A small business owner may be trying to keep employees paid while their premises are unsafe.

An emergency strategy must account for these realities, not just in these bills—an omnibus bill. Municipalities and first responders are often on the front lines. They know their communities, but they need clear, responsible, reliable information, and the resources to respond effectively.

Speaker, this connects directly to Bill 119. We should not wait until a crisis overwhelms a whole community before deciding what resources are needed. We should not wait until front-line workers are stretched beyond capacity before asking whether they have the support they need. And we should not wait until families are trying to rebuild their lives before establishing a clear path to assistance.

Whether we are discussing safer streets or safer communities, during a flood, the principle is the same: Preparation, coordination and follow-through protect people from being left to navigate a crisis alone. I urge this government to make a coordinated emergency relief and flood preparedness strategy a priority for communities throughout Ontario, including St. Catharines and Niagara. Our residents should not have to wait for the next disaster to find out whether a plan is in place and ready for a safe community.

One of the areas where Bill 119 does make meaningful progress is schedule 9, dealing with coerced debt and survivors of human trafficking. I want to spend some time on this because the committee hearing gave us valuable insight into how these protections could improve people's lives, but also where the legislation may still fall a little short.

Going back to Niagara for a moment, we are a cross-border region with major highways, international border crossings, tourism infrastructure in place and large numbers of visitors travelling throughout our communities from all areas of this world every year. Unfortunately, traffickers exploit these environments.

The figures cited for 2025 indicate that Niagara regional police initiated 241 human trafficking investigations, 52% more than 2024. Behind those investigations are vulnerable victims, families and communities dealing with exploitation, fear and definitely trauma.

Bill 119 proposes important measures to address coerced debt incurred through human trafficking. It creates a framework through which survivors can challenge debt connected to exploitation, including through designated organizations and dispute resolution processes. Those protections matter because traffickers often use debt as another means of control. Even when someone manages to escape trafficking and tries to start a new life, the financial damage often follows them for many, many years after.

We heard from Carly Kalish, the CEO of Victim Services Toronto, who explained how financial exploitation can affect nearly every part of a survivor's life. A damaged credit history can prevent someone from renting an apartment. It can prevent them from getting a vehicle. It can make it difficult to obtain a phone, secure employment or rebuild financial independence.

Victim Services Toronto operates a program called Reclaim, which works with trafficking survivors to address fraudulent and coerced debt. While the program has helped survivors negotiate with creditors, not every creditor cooperates. This is where the legislation becomes so important. A victim getting access to reliable transportation can mean getting a job, and that job can mean the beginning of a stable, independent life with a roof over their head.

Presenters also welcomed provisions allowing certain disputes to be resolved through the written submissions rather than requiring survivors to repeatedly recount traumatic experiences verbally. That is practical, trauma-informed improvement.

But I want to remind everyone about Bill 41, the Protection from Coerced Debts Incurred in relation to Human Trafficking Act, which was passed in December 2023. That legislation received support across party lines, yet it was not brought into force. It was not brought into force. Survivors have been waiting a long time for protections the Legislature has already approved.

During committee, when the minister was asked for a firm implementation date for the human trafficking protections in Bill 119, he could not provide one.

Speaker, survivors of human trafficking should not have to escape their exploiter only to remain trapped by the debt and exploitation created. Passing legislation is important, but passing a law and putting it into force are two different things. Survivors need accessible protections, qualified support and a clear implementation date, not another promise to sit and wait two more years.

We also heard from the Salvation Army's human trafficking response unit, which raised important concerns about what happened after someone escapes trafficking. What about debts that are incurred after leaving an exploitation situation, but directly because of exploitation?

What happens when a survivor has to use a credit card to pay for temporary accommodations because there's no safe shelter available? They're full.

What about transportation, medication, food, identification documents or legal assistance? These all cost money.

Those debts may not have been directly imposed by the trafficker, but they may still be connected to the harm that person experienced.

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Will those debts be covered? What about survivors who face language barriers, immigration insecurity, or difficulty accessing legal representation? These questions need answers before the legislation is implemented.

We need meaningful funding, staffing, accessible services and designated organizations that understand trauma and the realities facing survivors. Implementation must be built around the needs of survivors and not force them to navigate another complicated government system.

Advocates also warned that removing coerced debt from victims' records must not unintentionally damage a survivor's legitimate credit history. They raised concerns about standardized procedures, properly qualified advocates, and clear processes that creditors and survivor support organizations can follow with ease.

We also heard from the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association about human trafficking prevention. This issue is especially relevant to Niagara, given our tourism sector, our hotels throughout Niagara Falls and the large number of visitors travelling through our region. Hospitality workers may sometimes be among the first to recognize that someone needs our help, but those workers should not be expected to investigate trafficking themselves. They need the right information and training to recognize potential warning signs, respond very safely and know who to call.

Bill 119 focuses on what happens after someone has been exploited. Prevention and awareness must also be part of our response. Helping survivors recover is essential. Preventing exploitation in the first place is just as important.

Speaker, we also heard significant testimony about schedule 6, the proposed Pill Presses and Precursors Act. The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police supports the new tool aimed at disrupting illegal drug protection, and Chief Fordy spoke about the amount of illicit drugs Niagara police are dealing with right now. These are serious criminal operations, and law enforcement must have the appropriate tools to investigate them. New powers are only useful if officers are properly trained and equipped to use them.

We learned about the need for specialized training, clear guidance around search and seizure, and the equipment necessary to safely handle dangerous substances. Those supports must be available when the new authorities come into force.

We need the resources, the training and the operational planning to make Bill 119 effective. And while stronger enforcement against illegal drug production is important, we cannot ignore the other side of Ontario's addiction crisis. We cannot arrest our way out of addiction.

In St. Catharines, we have seen the impact of the toxic drug crisis first-hand. Families have lost loved ones. Paramedics, health care workers and police officers are responding to increasingly complex emergencies.

In June, the provincially funded consumption and treatment services site in St. Catharines closed. During its operation, the site recorded more than 89,000 visits and responded to more than 1,500 overdoses. Those numbers represent people who had families. They were neighbours; they were friends. They represent a need in our community that cannot simply be ignored.

When a service closes, the underlying need does not automatically disappear. So, when the government talks about community safety, I want to know what it's doing for those individuals and the front-line workers trying to help them. Where is the comprehensive plan to expand access to addiction treatments? Where are the mental health supports for families who are desperately trying to access them? Where is the supportive housing? It's unheard of with this government. Where is the investment in early intervention? Without those supports, we are asking emergency departments, paramedics and police officers to manage crises after they have already happened. This is not sustainable.

Enforcement has a role. Treatment has a role. Prevention has a role. Housing, mental health care and community services all have a role. A serious government must understand how those pieces all fit together.

I'm going to skip through because I'm going to share my time with the member from Toronto Centre.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the people of St. Catharines deserve a government that takes their concerns seriously. The people of Ontario deserve a government that takes their concerns seriously. They deserve streets where people feel safe. They deserve police officers that have the tools and the training to do their jobs. They deserve victims who can access support without having to fight their way through a complicated system. They deserve survivors of human trafficking who can rebuild their lives without being held back by the financial consequences of their exploitation. They deserve access to mental health care and addiction treatment. They deserve a justice system that delivers timely and fair outcomes, and they darn well deserve a government that prepares for emergencies before families are left picking up the pieces.

Interjection.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I already did. Yes. Sorry.

They deserve a government that prepares for emergencies before families are left picking up the pieces. We cannot wait for another devastating flood before asking whether Ontario was prepared for a disaster. We cannot wait for another public safety crisis before asking whether front-line services have the resources they need. And we cannot keep asking survivors to wait for protections that have already been promised in other bills and legislation.

Speaker, Bill 119 contains measures worth supporting, but this government must be honest about that legislation and what that legislation does, what it leaves unresolved

and what additional actions are required. A bill is not a substitute for strategy, an announcement is not a substitute for implementation and a promise is not a substitute for the results.

I will sit down because I think the member from Toronto Centre, who I'm sharing my time with, has some very interesting facts as well. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm always proud to rise in this House to speak to legislation that is important to Ontarians. Bill 119 touches upon a very significant topic that occupies much of people's consciousness in Ontario. The bill is entitled Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act. Once again, we have a bill that has multiple schedules. It is an omnibus bill, Speaker, and it's a bill that is difficult for the public to understand.

Before I go into the substantive debate, speaking to each individual schedule of the bill, I want to thank those who came forward to committee to provide oral deputations. There were those who travelled from outside of Toronto to Queen's Park to speak to the bill as well as those who joined us online. Speaker, there were also individuals that provided written submissions.

I want to thank the Association of Professional Security Agencies, the Criminal Lawyers' Association, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, the National Police Federation, the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, the Ontario Long Term Care Association, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, the Port Hope Police Service, as well as the Salvation Army, the Ontario association of police chiefs, Cadillac Fairview, the Police Association of Ontario, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, B'nai Brith Canada and a number of individuals who appeared on their own merit and on their own time and not necessarily representing organizations. I want to thank them as well because when members of the public engage with government and engage with all elected officials, their time should be valued. So I want to say thank you to Terry Wayne, Richard Dunwoody, Tyler Robillard, Larena Smith, Katrina Maile, Kimberly Zanko, Holly Roy, Hae Bin Park, Carly Kalish as well as Eli Yufest. I'm hoping that I have not omitted anyone.

Speaker, I want to highlight that the process around the bill should be noted for public record. The process around committees' work is not oftentimes seen broadly by the public. But Bill 119, a bill that the government boasts about being significant, went through a very truncated process around feedback.

1700

And I just want to highlight something for the members of this House. The hearings for Bill 119 were scheduled on October 5, and our hearings ended at 5 p.m. Written submissions were due exactly one hour later, on the same day, October 5, at 6 p.m. And then the amendments from members of the committee had to be advanced and submitted by 7 p.m. on October 5. There were members of the public who came before committee, including organizations, who literally said to the committee, "I don't know if I have time to formally submit a written submission." I wanted to flag that because that is a very important piece of information that all members of the public, all researchers must know. The committee did not have adequate time to properly review the submissions, as well as the members of the public who came before us, who came to the committee to provide oral submissions—they may not have had time afterwards to provide the written submissions. And then, clause-by-clause review of Bill 119 happened on October 8. If the government was serious about advancing a bill around public safety, the process would not have been truncated or manipulated in such a way.

Bill 119, as I've said, is an omnibus bill, and it is very difficult for the public to understand. The schedules are disparate, and the bill is not easy to summarize, which is why we've heard various speakers all tackle different parts of a schedule. Each schedule deals with a specific piece of legislation that's outside—and at the same time, it just tinkers around the edges of one piece or another. So it's not like it's a substantial bill where you're tackling one big issue—it's multiple little issues grafted onto one another. At best, it's opaque governance, and the government should—I want them to do better, but if past history would predict the future, then we may not expect it. The bill ranges from regulating private international adoptions to technical police oversight changes, and beyond. I think that the government would be wise to create legislation that actually engages Ontarians in a truly meaningful way. Unfortunately, it doesn't do that. Therefore, the legislation provides very little on paper, and it leaves all the substantial improvements or enhancements or changes left to regulations.

We know that the government has a horrible habit of advancing very vague legislation, giving themselves room to build out more specificity in the regulations, when the public is no longer watching. So recognizing that this is a classic play on a tactic to pass the vaguest legislation possible, the government then gives themselves, or their minister, powers to do extraordinary things in regulations.

That would probably explain why the government was so eager to ensure that the hearings were held on October 5 and the deadline was met by 5 p.m., and then written submissions were due one hour later, and then clause-by-clause amendments were due the hour after that. That's why this is done in such a way, and that's why the bill is not as clear as it could be. And that's why members of this House, especially on this side of the aisle, question the government's sincerity on actually tackling the real issue of public safety.

There are some positive pieces around the bill that should be commented on. I want to be able to say that, because I think it's important to talk about what doesn't work, what is missing in terms of a deficit in the bill, but I also want to be responsible here and talk about what does work or tries to work. The intentions, perhaps, are there.

This bill finally acts on coerced debt for human trafficking, and this is the result of long-time advocacy of victim services activists and anti-human trafficking activ-

ists. They are the ones who should be extremely proud to push this government to take action—action that is so long overdue. It should be noted it took three years for us to get here.

Bill 41, which achieved the same goal, received royal assent in December 2023, but it was never brought into force. Survivors waited while the government consulted and then delayed and then it was repackaged, but I suppose it's better late than never. I would say, for the record, survivors deserve better.

Let me be clear on where things now stand with the province. Our communities are less safe today than when the Premier took office, largely because of a justice system that is dysfunctional, that is disorganized and that is backlogged. We have an opioid and fentanyl crisis that has reached every single corner of this province, and literally the government has been letting criminals out the door from jails—and that's by accident—and then not knowing where they are. We have seen this government now formalize overcrowding in jails and detention centres. Crowding three to a bunk is now the official policy, and we know that that is not going to help anybody who has to go through rehabilitation, which is why the rates of recidivism are so incredibly high.

All we have is a spiralling way of spending a lot of money and getting very poor results. If the public have a sense that perhaps they're not as safe, then they have nowhere else to look than to look to this government for their policy failures on not doing their job.

Bill 119 adds new rights for victims of harassment on paper, and yet it doesn't put a single dollar towards supporting survivors. Victim service organizations survive on grants instead of sustained funding, and the victim compensation fund was dismantled without a proper replacement. That's why there's so much that this bill continues to fail to deliver on.

The government also, by way of public announcement, promised action on transit safety; they promised action on retail theft, eespecially around organized crime; they promised more action on animal welfare; and yet none of it is in the legislation. They are just words that are projected from the Premier's and ministers' mouths at press conferences, and yet we never see any evidence that it is going to be put into legislation.

New powers for transit special constables, the retail theft task force and a ban on ear cropping and tail docking for pets have all been left to future regulations that may never come. Let us not forget, it's taken three years for the government to bring forward Bill 41.

Real community safety means being smart, not just tough. That requires actually funding the system that justice is founded on. Ontario courts are overwhelmed and under-resourced, bail supervision programs are underfunded, mental health and addiction supports don't exist, and the tools that actually prevent crime have been cut.

The Ontario NDP has been pushing to clear the court backlogs and ensure that the bail compliance and supervision programs are properly resourced and coordinated for success. We've been calling for meaningful compensation for victims of crime. Safe communities are built when we, as a whole, in this House, invest in justice, mental health and social supports that actually stop the harm and violence before it starts.

1710

I want to speak about the schedules in a light fashion, Speaker. I'm not going to go into detail because the member from St. Catharines did an exceptional job on that. What I do want to say regarding schedule 2, Christopher's Law, which we know as the sex offender registry—I'm always happy to see legislation that actually protects survivors. I'm happy to see legislation that is actually going to be tough on crime with a very effective rehabilitation program so people can move on and it doesn't become a constant financial drain on the system. I want to see provincial laws that are aligned with the federal changes from 2023, and this needs to happen in light of the Supreme Court decision, and I'm glad that this has been cleared up now.

But what is not in the bill—which could go a long way to help survivors—is the changes that we needed to see from Lydia's Law. The government is still ignoring how the 2019 Auditor General report made recommendations to proactively report on sexual assault cases and intimate partner violence cases through the court system and capture reasons why cases are being stayed or withdrawn before trial.

Recommendation 1 from that report specifically called upon the government to do this, to proactively manage the progress of criminal cases through the court system and resolve them in a timely manner. This recommendation was provided to the Attorney General, specifically to be applied to the criminal law division.

The recommendation also called on the government to monitor all criminal cases that have been pending disposition for more than eight months by court location and region and analyze the reasons for delays; capture all reasons for cases being stayed by judges; to distinguish the reasons under the control of the division, which includes the availability of crown attorneys and the disclosure of evidence, and the courts, such as the scheduling of courtrooms, from those caused by any defence; must take timely action, including the allocation of resources as needed. We needed to work with the judiciary to improve the court scheduling process.

Recommendation 3 from the AG report called on the government to reduce the costs that result from delaying the withdrawal of charges when there's no reasonable prospect of conviction and to promote the timely disposition of criminal cases. This was again a recommendation that went to the AG—the Attorney General in this case—through their criminal law division, calling on them to collect complete data, which includes the breakdown of all reasons for withdrawal before trial, the average number of days from charge to withdrawal for each reason and the average number of appearances required by the accused in court for each reason, covering all court locations.

It also called on the independent legal advice program, saying that it was insufficient to actually meet the needs of

survivors. They specifically said that the Victim Quick Response Program was far too restrictive and unsustainable to long-term healing. This is something that has been repeatedly brought to this House's attention. It has been brought to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy during the IPV report.

When it comes to schedule 3 and the Community Safety and Policing Act, I think it's very important to note that this schedule now gives the minister, the Solicitor General, enhanced powers to direct police boards on establishing priorities, and that the boards must then reflect those priorities in their strategic plan.

What I think is of concern to some of the deputants that came before us who raised this as a concern, especially those in police outfits, was that the wording of this amendment gives the Solicitor General not just the power to issue directives on specific issues—because it doesn't just say that the Solicitor General can advise the service boards on their goals—but it specifically allows the Solicitor General to make binding directives to make whatever demands that he—or she, in the future—feels would be appropriate of the police service board.

I would argue that the government should not be allowed to overturn local oversight. That's why we have these civilian boards around accountability to start with. The Solicitor General is really overreaching and stepping into what is a locally delegated matter to police boards.

The purpose of those police service boards, as a reminder to the members of this House, is to act as a voice for community members and organizations, to ensure that the people who live in those communities get the type of policing that is appropriate for them. People who live in communities know what they need to ensure public safety. They also know the type of policing that is required. Small towns may have a different need than big cities. Rural and northern communities may have a different need than urban environments. We want communities to have a say, and that's why you have these boards, but the Solicitor General is doing away with all of that by saying that he gets the final say.

And if there is a disagreement, as we have seen—we have seen the Toronto police board push back against the Solicitor General when he wrote a letter to them in December 2025 suggesting that they weren't doing enough to curb protests in the city. When the police chief and the chair of the Toronto Police Service Board said, "We're doing our job as prescribed by the law. We've made these arrests, we've sent out officers to watch and monitor those demonstrations, and we're doing everything that is legally bound to be done"—I'm just paraphrasing, Speaker—clearly the Solicitor General wasn't satisfied with that answer. I argue that's the reason why we now have this legislation that gives him these enhanced powers.

So what happens when the local police board pushes back, like they did in the city of Toronto? Well, what happens now in Bill 119, Speaker, is the Solicitor General can now file a complaint to the independent inspector of policing to then investigate whether or not the police board is actually following the rules and the ministerial directive of the Solicitor General. I wonder, why is the government pushing their way into systems of accountability and collaboration in local communities?

The Solicitor General also spoke to reporters about this matter when they asked why he would need these powers to direct the police. The Solicitor General's response at that time was that he wants to coordinate priorities. I think that is a ludicrous answer, Speaker, because I don't think we need to pretend that he doesn't already have the power to coordinate priorities. He is the Solicitor General, after all. Police service boards set budgets. They choose their police chiefs. They also set out strategic priorities and objectives. By giving all these police boards mandatory directives, it will just undermine the independence and civilian accountability that is needed and enshrined by law to ensure that communities get the type of policing that they deserve and that they need. So I believe that the government has set up some false dichotomies here. They want to convince us that this is the only way that they can provide advice or input to the local policing outfits, the boards. But we already know that they can provide advice in many different ways, and they already set out priorities.

1720

What does this bill do for First Nations communities? I think it's very important, and I don't know if I've heard anybody in the House speak to this section. Under section 3(1), it says that the minister shall consult with and advise police service boards, chiefs of police, municipalities and First Nations regarding the implementation of community safety and well-being plans, and conduct research and analysis to inform policy and program development and system planning. Right there, we already know that the minister has always been able to coordinate priorities by collaborating with police service boards and presenting research to support his recommendations. So there is no need to seize this additional power. The Solicitor General has not made a viable case—I would say even a reasonable or compelling case—on why he needs this additional power. And if you can't convince your chiefs of police of Ontario that you need this power, then who are you trying to convince here?

I want to say that people are appointed to these police boards specifically because they understand the needs of the community—and civic appointments don't just grab anybody off the streets; they're usually experts or they're chosen for specific reasons, whether they have professional experience around policing or perhaps they represent a significant stakeholder. So I think it's really important that these civilian oversight bodies are not undermined.

I'm spending time on this issue because I think it's so important. It's a piece of the legislation that really needs to be examined further, because you're changing something that has been working in Ontario for decades, and there's no need to change it. When the Solicitor General couldn't win and he couldn't get what he wanted, he brought forward this piece of legislation.

I'll tell you, Speaker, that the Toronto Police Service Board and the Toronto police said they did not want to deny people their constitutional right to protest; specific-

ally, when the Solicitor General demanded that the Toronto police and the Toronto Police Service Board shut down demonstrations and take strong action against protesters who were opposing the genocide in Gaza. The Premier demanded an injunction from the courts and was slapped down by Justice Robert Centa. The justice said there was insufficient evidence that the protest would lead to significant criminal activity or that the police could not maintain the peace. That's exactly what the Toronto Police Service said in court. They felt, based on their decades of experience, that they had the tools to manage the situation safely. But because this government disagreed with them and they couldn't win the argument in court, we now have Bill 119. So when there was insufficient evidence provided by the government in court and they lost against the Toronto police, we now have this bill.

Speaker, my time is coming to a close. I want to just stress how important it is—the issues around public safety—and how real solutions, properly resourced solutions, a coordinated and effective judicial system, working with law enforcement, will actually bring us real community safety, and that's what's missing in the bill.

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

Hon. Graham McGregor: I want to thank my colleagues across for their thoughtful intervention on the bill. I want to ask about a provision around the bill that I think benefits community safety—I think it's good for my community; I think it will be good for their communities—and that's around banning pill presses.

Organized crime groups make enormous profits off the drug trade. They get people sick. They ruin families. They harm communities. Of course, the profits from the drug trade also go on to fund other enterprises—violent crime, human trafficking and other, even more serious offences.

I think banning pill presses and making it harder to manufacture pills is just common sense. I think it's a good provision in the bill. I haven't heard the members opposite say that they support it and that it's good policy, so I want to give them the chance to say that.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you for that question, actually. It is really important that when we say that we are going to have safe communities and safe streets and we name these legislative bills, we should be naming them properly and not with misleading information.

When we're talking about street drugs that are getting into the criminals' hands—as I stated in my part of the bill and how I see it, I find that the Niagara regional police in St. Catharines are lacking some safety measures. We have to look after our police officers and our street workers. Actually, in St. Catharines, we have volunteer street workers that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Thank you. I will ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary language.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Sudbury for the next question.

MPP Jamie West: I want to thank both my colleagues from St. Catharines and from Toronto Centre for the debate on Bill 119. In both their debates, they mentioned Bill 41. I'm reminded—the member from Oshawa, actually, when I was learning about human trafficking, a phrase she said to me once was that "anything you could imagine, it's probably worse." I know we're united on both sides of the aisle when it comes to human trafficking, but this bill was passed in December 2023, almost three years ago. This is to protect people who are human-trafficked from coercive debt. A lot of times, what will happen is we'll have people who are being trafficked taking out loans, and they'll spend the money on their needs and that leaves them with a debt. This bill is supposed to protect them, but it's been almost three years and it hasn't been implemented yet.

I'm just wondering if either of my colleagues want to expand about how this would help people who are being human-trafficked.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: The bill does provide some new services that I think are important. Specifically, one of those services is to find a dispute resolution to provide debt relief up to $50,000 for those who have been exposed to morally toxic and fraudulent debt. However, there are also survivors who incur more than $50,000 and they are not afforded any type of alternative dispute resolution process. So those survivors, I would argue, also deserve protection, but this bill does not provide it to them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Ottawa–Vanier.

M^me^ Lucille Collard: Looking at the title of the bill that is supposed to aim at protecting our streets, Ontario's streets, I think we need to realize that one of the reasons our streets may not feel as safe as they should be, or as safe as they used to be, is because we find on our streets so many desperate people with addiction issues, with mental health problems and without a place to stay. I think there's a big opportunity missed in this bill to try to address that and effectively make our streets safer.

You both alluded to the situation, but what could the government have done to improve that situation? Because we can't jail ourselves out of this crisis.

1730

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the member for that very important question.

You know, the perception of public safety is one that has dominated a lot of communities, especially since we've just gone through civic elections in Ontario. One thing that the province can do and must do—and this government in particular has the power to do—is to build a coordinated and properly funded mental health and addiction system. If you have that, I would imagine that your jails and detention centres would empty out very quickly, and people would be in rehab, in transitional and supportive housing, as opposed to being left or released from government custody without a pathway to housing. That is exactly the challenge that the member from Ottawa–Vanier has spoken about.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the members opposite for their remarks this afternoon.

My question is around creating a statutory tort for harassment. Harassment can have serious consequences for victims, affecting their safety, mental health, their well-being and their ability just to go about living their daily lives. Yet, many people who experience persistent and harmful harassment feel that they have very limited options when trying to seek accountability and protection. Bill 119 would create a statutory tort of harassment, giving victims a clear legal avenue to pursue remedies against those who engage in serious harassing conduct.

So, through you, Speaker, do the members opposite agree that individuals who experience serious and persistent harassment should have legal tools available to seek justice?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member from Burlington for that significant question.

Yes—the answer is yes. We do agree that having a specific tort would allow another avenue for survivors for recourse and some type of financial justice perhaps, something that you may not necessarily get through a criminal process.

However, I would say that when the courts are so backlogged, when the judicial system is so expensive for those who don't have the means to fight their abuser through the courts to extract that financial justice, it really means justice is ultimately still denied. So yes, it works for some people, and usually the very wealthy, but it doesn't work for everybody else.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the members from St. Catharines and Toronto Centre for their presentation today.

When it comes to issues like this, this government likes to talk about criminals. All the time, it's about criminals, criminals, criminals, but they spend very little time talking about the victims and, in particular, the area of victim compensation.

When a crime is committed, an individual and their families suffer undeniably—huge amounts. It's life-changing. It's terrible. And without proper victim compensation, it's very hard for them, in many cases, to get their lives back on track. And what we see under the government for these many years that they've been here is that compensation is lacking; it takes time to be dispersed. But ultimately, when it does arrive, we hear from families that it's just not enough to really help them.

Can the members talk about why this compensation being adequate is so important in helping the families that have been victimized?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I want to thank the member for that question. You're absolutely correct. One part of this Bill 119 actually does say they'll act on coerced debt for human trafficking survivors. I know that what we had said was, there are often times where these survivors, later on, after they've been victimized, can't get a debit card; they can't get a bank card or a roof over their head.

This is exactly what you asked. How can we compensate people who have been—and this is just one situation where individuals have been human-trafficked. But I think it's really, really, really important that this government should really realize that they need to have some kind of—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize a quick question from the member for Kanata–Carleton.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'm good.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Apologies.

Question? I'll go to the member from Nickel Belt. Quick question.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Very, very quickly. Thank you to the members for St. Catharines and Toronto Centre. We had tabled Lydia's Law to help with the transparency and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Question, please?

M^me^ France Gélinas: Do you see any changes in this bill?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from St. Catharines for a quick answer.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: No, but that's something that we would, if we had this policy in front of us and it was the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Thank you.

I move to further debate. I recognize the member for Kanata–Carleton.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I was a little anxious there, getting ahead of myself.

I rise today to speak on Bill 119. I want to begin by making something absolutely clear: Every member of this Legislature wants safer communities and, as elected representatives, it is our responsibility to make sure it's done right.

But, Speaker, wanting safer communities does not mean that we should automatically support every measure that the government introduces in the name of public safety. It doesn't mean that we should abandon transparency. It doesn't mean that we should weaken privacy protections. It doesn't mean that we should undermine local accountability or reduce independent oversight. And it certainly does not mean that we should stop listening when people come before a legislative committee and tell us that a bill needs to be improved.

We need to listen and we need to act on that information. That is what I want to focus on today because Bill 119 raises important questions, not only about public safety but also about how this government approaches the legislative process itself. We have before us an omnibus bill that amends numerous pieces of legislation and touches on an extraordinary range of issues: police governance, privacy rights, human trafficking, provincial offences, independent investigations. Each of these subjects deserves careful consideration, each affects real people and each deserves more than a government simply insisting that its original approach is the right one without amendment.

Speaker, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy is supposed to provide an opportunity to improve legislation.

We invite witnesses to appear. We ask experts to provide advice. We receive written submissions. We question officials. We hear from people whose lives, whose lived experience is directly affected by the laws that we will pass.

I will be sharing my time with the member from Ottawa–Vanier; thank you.

Then, members have an opportunity to propose amendments and that is how parliamentary democracy is supposed to work. But a consultation process only has value if the government is genuinely prepared to consider what it hears. Otherwise, we are simply going through the motions. We are inviting people to participate in a process without giving their recommendations or concerns real, meaningful consideration. That's a serious concern.

The Ontario Liberal caucus brought forward a series of proposed amendments to Bill 119. These were not attempts to dismantle the legislation; they were targeted, practical proposals designed to strengthen accountability, protect individual rights, improve fairness and address potential unintended consequences. I want to walk through these amendments today because I believe they illustrate precisely why a proper committee process matters so much.

Speaker, let me begin with schedule 3, which makes significant changes to the Community Safety and Policing Act of 2019. One of the important features of the schedule is proposed authority for the Solicitor General to issue directives to police service boards concerning priorities that must be reflected in their strategic plans.

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Now, there may be circumstances in which provincial coordination is appropriate. No one is suggesting that the provincial government has no role in establishing public safety priorities. The province has a critical responsibility to ensure that policing standards are maintained, that legislation is enforced and that communities receive effective police services. But there is a fundamental difference between establishing provincial standards and directing the priorities of local police service boards without adequate transparency or accountability.

Police service boards exist for a reason. They provide civilian governance of policing. They're an important link between police services and the community those services are supposed to protect. They are expected to understand local concerns, establish priorities and provide oversight.

What matters most in one community may not be identical to what matters most in another. A rural municipality may face very different policing challenges from a major urban centre. A community struggling with property crime may have different priorities from one dealing with organized crime, traffic safety or intimate partner violence. Those local circumstances matter, and the people who live in those communities deserve a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their police services.

Our first proposed amendment addressed a very simple principle: transparency. It would have required police service boards to include the full text of any ministerial directives in their strategic plans. That's it. Not a complicated administrative burden, not an obstacle to effective policing—simply a requirement that the public be able to see the directions their police service board has received from the provincial government.

Speaker, why would that be controversial? If the Solicitor General directs a police service board to change its priorities, surely the people served by that board have a right to know. They should know what the directive says. They should know what changes are being required. And they should be able to understand whether a particular policing priority originated from within their local board or was imposed by the provincial government.

Without that information, how can residents hold anyone accountable? If policing priorities change, who is responsible? If resources are redirected, who made that decision? If a local concern receives less attention because of a provincial directive, how are the residents supposed to understand why?

Transparency is not an inconvenience to government; it is an essential condition of public accountability. And I would argue that it is particularly important when we are talking about policing.

Public confidence in policing depends not only on the work police officers do, but also on the public's confidence in the institutions that govern them. Our amendment would have strengthened that confidence. It would have ensured that important provincial directions were visible to the communities affected by them.

The government should explain why such a straightforward transparency safeguard would not be appropriate.

Granted, our second amendment went a little further. It would have removed subsection 3.1(4), which exempts these directives from part 3 of the Legislation Act, 2006. This matters because part 3 establishes he statutory framework governing regulations. The government's proposal would allow these directives to operate outside of that framework. Why would that be necessary?

Now, not every ministerial direction necessarily needs to be treated exactly like a regulation. But when a directive can affect the priorities of a police service board, we should be asking what transparency, what scrutiny and what kind of mechanisms will apply in its place. Will the public be informed? Will affected communities have an opportunity to comment? Will there be a clear public record? Will the government be required to explain its reasoning? Our amendment sought to remove the exemption and preserve the ordinary statutory framework.

The government may argue that it needs flexibility. It may argue that public safety priorities sometimes need to be established quickly. Those arguments are worth considering. But flexibility should not automatically mean secrecy, and administrative convenience should not automatically take precedence over public accountability.

Speaker, when government exercises authority over institutions that are supposed to provide independent civilian governance, the need for scrutiny increases; it does not decrease.

Our third proposed amendment was designed to protect the independence and accountability of local police

service boards. It would have required two things before a ministerial directive could take effect. First, the directive would have to be published for 30 days of public consultation. Second, it would have to be confirmed by a vote of the police service board.

These are reasonable safeguards. Thirty days would give residents, municipalities and community organizations an opportunity to understand the proposed direction and provide feedback. A board vote would ensure that the locally accountable civilian governance body had an opportunity to consider the directive before it was implemented.

Let's be clear about something else: This amendment would not have prevented the province from communicating its priorities. It would not have prevented the Solicitor General from identifying emerging public safety concerns. It would have meant that local communities and their police boards have a meaningful role in deciding how those priorities are reflected in their strategic plans.

Speaker, police service boards should not simply become administrative extensions of the Solicitor General's office. They have responsibilities to their communities. They have a duty to exercise judgment, and they should not be placed in the position where their strategic priorities can be redirected without meaningful local participation.

There's a broader democratic principle here. We frequently hear this government speak about local decision-making only when it supports the government's objectives, but local accountability must be respected even when local institutions may disagree with the province. It cannot be something we support only when the outcome is convenient.

These first three amendments were about making provincial directions transparent, subjecting them to scrutiny and protecting the role of local police governance. They were constructive proposals that deserve serious consideration, and they raise an important question for the government: Why should Ontarians accept less opportunity to scrutinize decisions affecting their local police services rather than more?

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Speaker, I want to turn now to another very significant part of schedule 3. This concerns the publication of personal information on a publicly accessible website. The bill establishes a framework under which certain personal information may be published when an individual has been convicted or found guilty of a qualifying offence and is reasonably believed to pose a significant risk to other people or property.

Let me acknowledge the government's objective. There are circumstances where the public needs information to protect itself from serious risks, and police already have responsibilities relating to public safety notifications. There may be legitimate reasons to disclose information about individuals who pose a significant threat, but whenever government creates a mechanism for publishing personal information, particularly on a publicly accessible website, they must also establish strong safeguards, because once information is placed online, the consequences can be profound. It can be copied. It can be circulated. It can remain accessible long after the circumstances that originally justified publication have changed and it can affect people other than the individual whose information is being published.

This is not a theoretical concern; it's precisely why we have privacy legislation and independent privacy oversight. In this case, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario raised concerns about the proposed framework. The commissioner publicly called for the removal of subsection 80.1(4), including in submissions dated June 30 and October 1. The letter from the commissioner was also sent to the committee. That is important evidence. This is an independent officer responsible for protecting access and privacy rights in Ontario. When an independent oversight body identifies a problem with legislation, we should take that advice seriously. We may not always agree with every recommendation, but we should be required to explain why we accept or reject it.

Our fourth proposed amendment would have required reasonable efforts to provide written notice to individuals whose identities or personal information could reasonably be inferred from material being published. It would have also given those individuals an opportunity to respond before publication.

Speaker, this amendment recognizes something very important: Information about one person can reveal information about someone else. Imagine a public notification that identifies an offender and describes the circumstances of an offence. Even if the notification does not directly name the victim, details about the location, relationships or circumstances may make that person's identity obvious to people in the community. The same concern may arise for family members—a spouse, a child, a parent—someone who has committed no offence and may have already experienced enormous hardship. These individuals may suddenly find themselves exposed to unwanted attention, stigma or additional trauma, and they may have had absolutely no opportunity to raise their concerns before that information was published.

Our amendment was intended to address that risk. It did not create an absolute veto over publication. It did not say that information could never be released. It simply required reasonable efforts to notify people who might be indirectly identified and give them an opportunity to respond. Speaker, surely that's a reasonable expectation.

If we are serious about supporting victims, then we should consider how public safety measures may actually affect them. We should not be creating additional risks for people who have already suffered harm, and we should not assume that protecting the public and protecting privacy are mutually exclusive objectives. Good legislation is capable of doing both.

Our fifth amendment addressed subsection 80.1(4). This is one of the most important privacy issues in the bill. Under the proposed framework, certain access and correc-

tion rights concerning information published on the website would be governed through regulations under the Community Safety and Policing Act rather than continue to operate through the established frameworks of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. These two statutes are often referred to as FIPPA and MFIPPA; they are central components of Ontario's privacy and access to information framework.

In her letter, the Information and Privacy Commissioner specifically recommended removing subsection 80.1(4) to protect existing privacy rights. Speaker, think about what that means: The independent office charged with overseeing privacy rights identified a concern about moving those rights into a separate regulatory framework, and our proposed amendment responded directly to that concern. It would have struck out subsection 80.1(4). The purpose was to preserve the established statutory protections and avoid creating a separate system with potentially different standards.

Why does that matter? Because privacy rights should be understandable, they should be consistent and they should not depend on an individual navigating multiple overlapping legal frameworks simply to determine what rights they have. If personal information about someone is incorrect, that person should have a clear process for seeking correction. If information is being disclosed properly, there should be legal protections. If government creates exceptions to established privacy rights, those exceptions should be carefully justified.

Speaker, this is exactly the kind of issue for which committee hearings are designed. They are essential. A witness or an independent expert or an advocate or someone with actual lived experience comes to the committee and they identify a concern. It's our responsibility to review and consider that concern, and, if appropriate, an amendment is proposed to address it. The government then has an opportunity to improve the legislation. That's not obstruction; that is responsible legislative scrutiny.

If the government chooses not to follow the commissioner's recommendation, it owes this House a clear explanation of how equivalent privacy protections will be maintained.

Our sixth proposed amendment concerned the removal of personal information from the public website. It would have added two circumstances requiring removal: First, when there is no longer a reasonable belief that the person poses a significant risk to other people or property and disclosure is no longer necessary to reduce that risk—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I'm sorry to interrupt, but the time is now 6 o'clock. It is now time for private members' public business.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

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