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ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 29 May 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 mai 2024

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning. Let us pray.

Prayers.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Mr. Trevor Jones: First, if I may raise a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member on a point of order.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you. Pursuant to standing order 7(e), I wish to advise the House that tonight's evening meeting has been cancelled.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S FUTURES ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À SOUTENIR L'AVENIR DES ENFANTS

Mr. Parsa moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 188, An Act to amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 and various other Acts / Projet de loi 188, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2017 sur les services à l'enfance, à la jeunesse et à la famille et diverses autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the minister care to lead off the debate?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Thank you very much, Speaker, and good morning, colleagues.

I am proud to rise in the House today to begin third reading of Bill 188, the Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024. Before I begin, I'd like to note that I'll be sharing my speaking time today with my colleagues: the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity and parliamentary assistants the member for Markham-Thornhill and the member for Thornhill. You'll hear from them, Mr. Speaker, the important foundational work that we've done in recent years.

We're focused on delivering better outcomes for children and youth across the province, including those in the child and youth services sector who are some of the most vulnerable individuals in our province. We've committed to ensuring that they are safe and supported in childhood and have the right foundations as they transition into adulthood.

Speaker, we're here today because we will not leave any child or youth behind, and we're committed to ensuring that they have every chance to thrive and succeed regardless of their circumstance or history. I say that be-

cause while our past is important, it's even more important to focus on where we're going.

We listened when sector partners spoke about the need to implement measures that will better protect the rights of children and youth, that will enhance the quality of out-of-home-care services and improve the accountability of service providers. That's why this bill includes a broad range of legislative proposals supported by important regulatory and policy changes.

Before I review these proposals in more detail, I'd like to share some of the feedback that we've heard since Bill 188 was introduced last month. Let me start with Carly Kalish, the executive director of Victim Services Toronto. This is what Carly had to say. She says:

"We commend ... the government for their commitment to improving the safety, well-being and privacy of children and youth in care through the introduction of the Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024. Every child deserves a safe and supportive environment to thrive, and these changes mark a significant step toward achieving that goal.... We look forward to seeing the positive impact of these measures on the lives of Ontario's children and families."

Building on that, Leena Augimeri, the director of the Child Development Institute, said, "I applaud our Ontario government.... They introduced legislation that shows they do care by enhancing protections and accountability for children and youth in care and helping to strengthen the systems that are designed to help them."

It's so special to hear such strong support from voices from within the system. We'll keep working with them so that every child and youth has an opportunity to succeed.

Our government will continue to work towards a province where all children, youth and families are empowered with the resources and supports they need. Our proposals would, if passed:

(1) Modernize and standardize important safeguards throughout the child and youth services sector. This includes stronger enforcement tools to hold licensed out-of-home care operators accountable, and to keep children and youth safe and healthy.

(2) Create a framework that would enhance privacy protections for those individuals who were formerly involved in the child welfare system. This will be done by further restricting access to records comprised of their personal childhood histories once regulations are developed.

(3) Enable individuals to speak freely about their lived experience and give them more control over what they want to share publicly. These circumstances will be outlined in regulations following further consultations with the sector.

(4) Provide authority to expand the information that individuals working with vulnerable children and youth can be required to provide. This would go beyond formal police record checks, such as offence declarations.

(5) Reinforce the requirement for children's aid societies and out-of-home care licensees to explain the role of the Ombudsman and how children and youth can contact their office.

(6) And finally, the bill clarifies that early childhood educators can be subject to an offence for failing to report child protection concerns to a children's aid society. This would be in line with requirements for other professionals, like teachers and social workers.

This bill encompasses a suite of changes that can be grouped into three themes. The first is strengthening oversight and enforcement of licensed out-of-home care. The second is establishing clear and consistent practices, and the third theme is supporting stable transitions.

I'd like to describe the specific actions we're proposing to take under each theme and how they will foster better outcomes for children and youth. First, by strengthening the oversight and enforcement of licensed out-of-home care, we're working to enhance the safety of children and youth. I want to be clear that there are many hard-working people in the out-of-home care sector, such as foster and group homes, who dedicate themselves to the children and youth that they serve. Many strive to provide the best possible support to vulnerable young people who are experiencing some of life's most difficult circumstances. This is hard work, but it's important work, and they have my profound gratitude for the commitment of supporting those that they care for.

However, not all service providers achieve that standard, and some don't always operate in compliance with licensing requirements. To us, this is simply unacceptable. Let me be clear: The changes that we're proposing in this part of the legislation will have little or no impact on the operators who are already complying with the licensing requirements, but in cases where operators are knowingly or repeatedly contravening licensing requirements and putting children and youth at risk, the proposed changes will establish new and enhanced enforcement tools to allow the ministry to take action, and our commitment to young people demands nothing less.

The legislative changes in this bill will modernize and standardize important safeguards in the licensed out-of-home care sector. The amendments would strengthen the ministry's oversight of foster care and group homes, improve the quality of care for children and youth and introduce additional or strengthened enforcement tools.

These proposals are aimed at enhancing compliance with licensing requirements. They would help ensure that everyone receives high-quality care that supports their health and safety, as well as empowering them to reach their full potential.

I'd like to share a few additional comments that we've received since this bill was introduced which relate directly to these proposals. First, from Susan Somogyi Wells, CEO of Family Service Ontario, who says, "[We]

strongly support this legislation for its commitment to safeguarding the well-being of our children and youth, mitigating the risks of developmental trauma."

Julie Despaties, the executive director and founder of Adopt4Life, says, "We're encouraged to see this recognition of the need for improved safeguards for vulnerable children and youth.... These children and youth deserve our highest commitments, collectively, to supporting their safety and well-being, their healthy development and long-term successful outcomes, including the protection of their privacy and personal information after they have left the child welfare system."

0910

Again, Speaker, such strong support means a lot, and our government is committed to seeing these changes come to fruition.

I'll now turn to the second theme that I mentioned earlier, which is clear and consistent practices. By establishing practices that are clear and consistent, we aim to improve the safety and quality of services delivered by all providers. We're proposing six actions in this area.

First, to improve the safety of all children and youth, we propose to clarify that service providers, such as children's aid societies, can share personal information with the College of Early Childhood Educators and the Ontario College of Teachers. Service providers are already authorized to share personal information with colleges of regulated health professions and social work colleges. This simply clarifies and spells out that these two colleges are also included. This will better support the safety of children and youth by reducing potential delays in sharing information that could be used to support proceedings such as investigations, hearings and new registrations. This could apply in cases where a college requires information from a society about a verified allegation against an early childhood educator or teacher.

For our second action, we propose to enable the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers to share information in particular circumstances with governing bodies and others, including children's aid societies. Several professional colleges already have this authority in their governing legislation, including the College of Early Childhood Educators, the Ontario College of Teachers and other regulated health professionals. To improve the safety and well-being of children and youth, we want to make this authority consistent across the board.

During an investigation, this reform would help enable timely information sharing about a member to support responsive action. Currently, if a person engaged in the administration of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers Act believes that a member poses a risk to others, they would be prohibited by the act from sharing their concerns with anyone without the member's consent or until after the college has investigated and the results of the investigation are made public.

A practical example of this was when a social worker had their membership revoked by the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers in February 2023, for professional misconduct involving sexual abuse

and sexual misconduct with a student. Now, Mr. Speaker, this is important: The college opened their investigation in August 2019, but the legislation prevented them from sharing their concerns with others, such as new employers or other professional colleges, for four years. Unacceptable situations like this are why we are proposing these amendments, and if passed, they'd help us ensure that scenarios like this never happens again.

Again, I want to be very clear that our commitment is to young people. We want to make sure that they succeed and thrive, and young people demand nothing less. That's why our third action, in order to support the long-term success of adoptions and to keep children safe, is to bring forward future regulations that would require children's aid societies to do the following for children in adoption-placement settings: conduct safety assessments, create safety plans as needed and create plans of care. Right now, children's aid societies are required to take these steps for children in care when they're in other types of placement settings. Our goal is to include similar requirements for adoption-placement settings as well.

The fourth action we're taking is to strengthen existing requirements for children and youth to know and exercise their rights. This includes additional clarity proposed in the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, to ensure that children and youth are informed about the Office of the Ombudsman. This change would help clarify the requirement for children's aid societies and licensed out-of-home-care providers to notify children and youth that they have the right to be informed about the Ombudsman and their role. Vulnerable youth and children deserve to have private and frank conversations about the care that they're receiving. We want all children and youth receiving services to understand their rights under the act, because the legislation's paramount purpose is to promote their best interests, their protection and their well-being.

Further, for our fifth action, we propose to clarify that early childhood educators would be subject to an offence for failing to report a child protection concern to a children's aid society. This proposal would make it clear that all early childhood educators can be subject to the same offence as other individuals who perform professional or official duties with children, such as teachers and social workers, if they fail to report a child protection concern.

Finally, to further improve the safety of those who are in care or receiving services, we are proposing to provide the Lieutenant Governor in Council with the authority to make regulations for information other than formal police record checks, such as an offence declaration, to be required for individuals who are working or providing services within the sector. In addition, our government intends to bring forward future regulations to standardize police record check requirements for the child and youth services sector.

Those are the six key actions we propose taking to establish clear and consistent practices.

Madam Speaker, I'll now turn to the third theme that I mentioned earlier, and that's supporting stable transitions.

Under this theme, we're proposing two actions which aim to support children and youth as they transition to adulthood. First, we propose to enhance privacy protections for individuals with previous involvement in the child welfare system. We've heard concerns from former children and youth in care about their personal information being held in perpetuity and accessible in society databases. There are many examples when this information has been used negatively to impact their futures. Individuals involved in the child welfare system as children have many details recorded about themselves over the course of service, much in the same way that any parent would observe their own children's experiences growing up. However, parents don't permanently record this information, nor do they use it to prevent their children's ability to succeed in the future. Children raised in care deserve the same respect. Restricting access to and disclosure of these records would create a framework that would protect the private details of the childhood experiences of these children and youth and allow them to regain control over their own information.

I'd like to share some of the public feedback that directly relates to this third theme.

From Carina Chan: "As a former youth in care and a lawyer who practises family law and child protection law, I support the proposed amendments set out in Bill 188.... I have seen first-hand how childhood histories and records can be used as ammunition when former youth in care become parents themselves or seek employment in the child welfare sector, even though they were in care due to circumstances entirely outside of their control. Individuals who were involved with the child welfare system as children deserve to have their personal information kept confidential so they can have a fresh start as they transition to adulthood."

Likewise, from Nadia George, a volunteer at the Child Welfare Political Action Committee: "A new era is marked! One that could give those who have lived experience in the child welfare system the much-needed privacy and protection rights we deserve. This is something myself and others at the Child Welfare PAC have been advocating for since 2016. Thank you ... for letting current and former foster kids know we matter."

Speaker, we agree with the Child Welfare Political Action Committee, which is why our government is proposing to make changes that would, once regulations are developed, enable individuals who have a history in child protection involvement to publicly identify themselves and speak about their own experiences with child protection, if they choose to do so. This would help clarify the rules for publishing this type of information and give individuals more control and ownership over their own personal stories and experiences.

0920

To all members: The Supporting Children's Futures Act is not the first step that we have taken to improve child welfare, nor will it be the last. It is simply another important step towards a brighter future for some of the most vulnerable children in youth in our province. The

proposed legislative changes, as well as the regulatory and policy changes that I've just outlined, move us closer to achieving our government's vision where no child or youth is ever left behind.

This bill is the result of the collaboration and the valued input of children, youth and families with lived experience in the child and youth services sector. I'd like to thank many individuals who have shared their feedback with us over the past six weeks and those who have attended and presented their perspectives to the committee at public hearings, and we will continue to hear from you as we build a province where everyone has the resources and supports they need to succeed.

I would like to take a moment to thank several people who have made all of this possible. I want to start off with:

- the Deputy Minister of Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Denise Cole, for her leadership;

- our many amazing ADMs, but I want to name in particular ADM Linda Chihab and ADM Rupert Gordon;

- from my own team, Sean Forsyth, Kimiya Zamani, Gregory Smith and Chris Clarke;

- of course, the amazing parliamentary assistants Laura Smith, Logan Kanapathi and Nolan Quinn; and

- last, but certainly not least, my chief of staff, a strong voice for the youth and children in care who had so much to contribute to this bill. Thank you so much to Jane Kovarikova for all her leadership and support.

Madam Speaker, with that, I'd like to turn things over to the amazing colleague I have here, the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, Minister Williams.

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

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Good morning, colleagues. It's a pleasure and an honour to rise on behalf of Bill 188, the Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024, now under consideration by this House for third reading.

Thank you and congratulations to my colleagues and to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services for his comments today. This minister has really just been such a voice for so many children who felt like they were forgotten, making sure that we are not leaving any child behind. And also, thank you to all of the people who worked on this bill.

Madam Speaker, I used to work in the sector for a long time and have worked with many children who have been really hard struck by some of the things experienced in their lives. Knowing that we are making the changes and making it possible for them not to feel like they are condemned to details written in a file; that their lives are not going to be hindered by the things they experienced when they were growing up in such a challenging time, where their parents have had to make difficult decisions to release them to the care of children's aid, where they felt lost, where they felt like everyone has abandoned them—this is such a great change, and I'm just very thankful to

see that we are making these changes. Thank to all of you who have been able to do this.

Speaker, we are here today because of our government's vision to ensure that no child is left behind and that they have every chance to thrive, to succeed, regardless of their circumstances. At its heart, that's really what Bill 188 is about, and I must say that it resonates with me deeply, not only in my role as Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, but because of the experience I've had working in children's mental health for almost 20 years as a behavioural consultant, multi-systemic therapist and counsellor. Working with families, especially when I was working with families who were being supported by children's aid to manage and understand the aggressive behaviour in the homes, knowing that they are going to try to do everything they can to keep the families together but understanding that sometimes that decision or that possibility can't happen. And when a child would be in care, especially now with the licensing requirements and also making sure that we are holding bad actors accountable, it's going to make such an impact to those families who have to relinquish their child in care. To know that their child is still going to be taken care of is so important.

Bill 188 is just one of the ways we're working to ensure that all children, youth and families, including those getting support through the youth services sector, get the resources and supports they need. The children and youth services sector supports a wide range of individuals with diverse needs, as well as their families and caregivers, in every corner of our province.

For example, the sector supports children and youth in need of protection who may have experienced trauma or have been or are at risk of being abused or neglect. The sector supports children with complex needs, as well as children who may be medically fragile. And I'm also talking about youth who are involved in the youth justice system, including those admitted to custody or detention, who also need support to walk a better path in life and to make sure their future, again, is not condemned to their past.

Ensuring timely support, care and intervention can also mean supporting the family or protecting a child from an abusive caregiver. It can mean encouraging a child to break through barriers to their future goals. And it can mean helping a youth involved in the justice system find their way so that they can engage with their families, friends and community in a positive way.

Bill 188 includes reforms to the child welfare system that aim to deliver better outcomes for young people and their families and caregivers who are receiving support from the children and youth services sector. A critical part of this work is collaboration, which is a theme I'd like to pick up. I listened to the minister's remarks with great interest and noted his comments on noted his comments on collaboration and valued input of those with lived experience with the children's aid sector. This work builds on collaboration with children's aid societies and other

service providers, as well as First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous communities from across the province.

I too pass on my sincere thanks and appreciation to the many individuals, stakeholders and partners who have taken time to share their feedback and their experiences. If I may, I'd like to share some of the public feedback we've received since Bill 188 was introduced.

From Mohamed Firin, Ontario's advocate for community opportunities, ACO: "I want to applaud the government for introducing the Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024. This legislation will complement the mission of the ACO to empower young Ontarians by ensuring that all young people, in particular those in foster and group homes, receive the safest and highest quality of care so they can succeed and unlock their full potential."

From Ingrid Palmer of the Child Welfare Political Action Committee: "The Supporting Children's Futures Act is a significant move in the direction of enhancing the well-being of children and youth with child welfare experience. One's time in care should never be a source of harm or discrimination years afterwards. Protecting the personal histories of this vulnerable community must be a high ... priority."

Now, of course, feedback like this is great for us to hear, not just because it makes us feel good, but because it confirms that our proposed legislation is hitting the mark. And in that same spirit of continuing collaboration, our ministry is working with First Nations, Inuit Métis and urban Indigenous communities to help reduce the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care. We recognize that the approach to supporting Indigenous children and families must reflect the primacy of First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous communities in the well-being of their children and families. That's why supporting services that integrate Indigenous cultures, heritage and traditions is central to our work to achieve better opportunities and outcomes for children, youth and their families.

0930

To support these goals, in March 2022, the Legislature passed amendments to the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017. The amendments, once in force, are intended to:

- increase access to customary care, helping Indigenous children and youth to remain connected to their culture and traditions;
 - establish circles of supportive persons;
 - improve access to updated complementary services;
- and
- strengthen the role of prevention-focused Indigenous service providers.

We carried out engagements on the draft regulatory proposals for the prevention-focused regulations in early 2024, and we continue to engage with Indigenous representatives to further this process.

Madam Speaker, another part of this work involves important discussions and negotiations with Indigenous communities pursuing models of child and family services under Indigenous laws.

For example, Wabaseemoong Independent Nations, Ontario and Canada signed a trilateral coordination agreement regarding child and family services. That was the first coordination agreement signed in the province and the second in Canada since the federal legislation, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families came into force in 2020. The agreement supports the implementation of the Wabaseemoong Independent Nations' Customary Care Code, which acquired the force of federal law in January 2021.

On March 31, 2023, a coordination agreement between KI, Ontario and Canada was executed to support the implementation of KI's child and family services law, which came into force the following day—the second such agreement in Ontario and the first in Treaty 9 territory.

And just last month, the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation became the third Indigenous governing body in Ontario to have its own child and family services law take effect. Their new child and family well-being law provides a foundation for a system specifically designed to meet the needs of the children, youth and families of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation. We're incredibly excited to keep continuing to work with the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation and Canada to support the implementation of the new child and family well-being law.

These are important accomplishments, and it's reflective of our government's approach and our commitment to ensuring we're communicating with and making sure that we are having their voices in every step of the decision-making process—something that I feel very strongly about.

It was just last term that our government created the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council, and it has been an honour to work with the many women of our First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities around the table to discuss the challenges and to discuss and come up with solutions with Indigenous women. This has been important—being able to say, "I'm not going to speak. I'm going to let you speak because you can communicate the needs that you have better than I can." Having IWAC represented at the federal-provincial-territories meeting and—it's Ontario. We advocated to make sure the women who are around that table are the ones communicating the needs, and we're here to support and implement the strategies that they're putting in place.

Bill 188 is another important step towards achieving our government's vision where no child or youth will be left behind in Ontario. We're building a province where all children, youth and families have the resources and supports they need to succeed and thrive. These new proposals build on the work the government has undertaken over the past several years, but there's no way we're going to stop there. We can never rest. We have to keep moving forward, and we have to keep making sure that we're making improvements and committing to our ongoing collaboration with individuals, advocates, stakeholders and partners. Healthy parents raise healthy children who become healthy adults, and again, those healthy adults

become healthy parents who raise children to become healthy adults. That's cycle that we are working to establish here in Ontario, and that should not be any different for children who are being raised in the system of care through children's aid.

I'm really honoured to be working with this government to make these changes. It's one of the reasons why I made the shift from working in children's mental health to becoming a parliamentarian and getting involved in this electoral system, because I've worked very intimately with families who've been stuck in a system that wasn't working for them, and knowing that there are changes we can be making to make lives better, and again, making sure that children are not being condemned to the things written in a file—that shouldn't be the determination of their future. That's why we're making these changes.

I encourage many to read and look at what our government is doing because we are making things better for a system that needed support and changes for many years.

I want to again thank everyone who took the time to share their insights and their experiences with us. As we continue to take steps forward together, we will strengthen families and communities across the province, and I will continue in my role to work with women and the girls who have been impacted by a life that has been filled with trauma, making sure that they have opportunities and pathways to their success.

With that, I would now like to turn things over to my colleague the member for Markham–Thornhill to continue on the remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: It is a pleasure to rise today and speak again on Bill 188, Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024. First, I'd to thank my colleague the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services for his hard work, dedication and passion in getting the legislation through. I would also like to thank the staff at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services for their important work. They are a wonderful team up there. Thank you. I would also like to thank the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity for her support and comments.

Speaker, if passed, this bill would improve the safety, security and well-being of children and youth in the child and youth services sector in our wonderful province.

We are proposing changes that would include new and enhanced enforcement tools. These changes would support better compliance with licensing requirements designed to protect the safety and security of children and youth in licensed out-of-home care.

We are proposing changes that aim to better protect the privacy of individuals with a history in the child welfare system, that would further restrict access by others to their child welfare records once regulations are developed.

We are also proposing changes that would enable these individuals to speak freely about their lived experiences. This would give them more control over what they want to share publicly about their involvement in the child

welfare system, in circumstances to be prescribed following consultations.

Speaker, the proposed changes within Bill 188 are another way we are working to better support children, youth and their families across Ontario. Transforming services for children, youth and their families is a significant undertaking and takes time. That's why many of the reforms proposed in this bill further strengthen measures that are already in place.

The minister spoke about stronger enforcement tools—I want to touch on that—such as those intended to hold licensed out-of-home care operators accountable for the safeguards in place to keep children and youth safe and healthy.

0940

To help members further their understanding of our proposed reforms, I would like to provide some insight into the oversight mechanisms that are currently in place to allow the ministry to hold licensed out-of-home care providers more accountable.

The ministry licenses out-of-home care service providers, which include foster care agencies and operators of group and staff model homes. Licensed out-of-home care providers for children and youth, such as group homes, must comply with the requirements set out in the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, its regulations, licence conditions and ministry policies.

Ministry oversight and regulation of licensed out-of-home care settings currently includes:

- scheduled and unannounced inspections, which is very, very important;
- licence renewal inspections conducted, at minimum, on an annual basis, and monitoring visits may also be conducted throughout the licensing term;
- mandatory serious occurrence reporting; and
- monthly reporting of the use of mechanical restraints and complaints.

A progressive enforcement model is in place to hold licensed operators accountable. Depending on the circumstances, and under the current rules, the ministry may impose conditions on a licence; impose a maximum capacity on a licence or change that maximum capacity; suspend the licence where there are immediate safety concerns regarding the children and youth in care; and propose to revoke or refuse to issue or renew the licence.

These are the vital factors of this bill.

If this bill is passed, the ministry will be able to publish more details online, providing greater transparency and more information that placing agencies and persons can use.

Speaker, as is evident, there are many existing oversight mechanisms in place for the ministry to hold licensed out-of-home care providers accountable. However, when it comes to keeping children and youth safe and healthy, our government will never rest. We are always looking for ways to improve and strengthen measures to safeguard children and youth. An important part of this has been listening to feedback from stakeholders. The proposals in this bill stem from a broad range of feedback. For this, I

would like to take this opportunity to thank individuals with lived experience, advocates, service providers, children's aid societies, as well as First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous communities. Their input has been vital in supporting the government's vision of leaving no child or youth behind in this wonderful province, and we tried to reflect their voices throughout this bill.

In developing these proposed changes, various recommendations were considered, including the lived experience of youth; investigations, inquests and recommendations from the Ombudsman of Ontario; and feedback from stakeholders, including from engagements with Indigenous communities, organizations providing services to Indigenous children and youth, service providers and children's aid societies.

The ministry also held more than 30 virtual engagements with various stakeholder groups, including youth with lived experience.

As this clearly shows, the changes we are proposing in Bill 188 are a result of extensive consultation with many individuals and stakeholders. Our work has been and will continue to be responsive to their interests and feedback.

I would like to take this opportunity to share a couple of recent comments that we received.

From Nicole Bonnie, the principal consultant with Firma Strategy Group and the former CEO of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies: "The primary objective of any system serving children, youth, and families is to ensure sustainable outcomes that nurture every aspect of a child and youth's identity. Drawing from 15 years in the child welfare system, I've witnessed ongoing endeavours to align various arms within the system for the betterment of children, youth and families. The recent policies and legislation bring us closer to this objective by prioritizing the needs of children and youth in alternative care placements."

As you can see, Speaker, Bill 188 is part of our continued commitment to people across Ontario who depend on the child and youth services sector.

As I outlined for the House at second reading, the changes we are proposing in Bill 188 also build on the Ready, Set, Go Program we launched on April 1, 2023. This program represents another significant step in the Child Welfare Redesign Strategy. Ready, Set, Go connects youth in the child welfare system with additional services and supports earlier to better prepare them for life after leaving care. This includes the development of life skills such as financial management, incentives for pursuing post-secondary education and support finding pathways to employment. This program has a three-year, \$170-million funding commitment from the ministry. This year, Ready, Set, Go is expected to support more than 4,000 youth as they prepare for adulthood.

To continue our work, the ministry has been hosting regular engagement sessions to gather feedback from key stakeholders. We also have been working collaboratively across ministries to implement Ready, Set, Go to better support youth and provide them with information and

supports that will help them build a brighter future after leaving care.

On July 1, 2023, our government implemented key components of a comprehensive quality standards framework into regulations to help licensees, placing agencies and other service providers improve the quality of care in licensed out-of-home care settings. The framework is based on feedback from a panel of 12 youth with lived experience in out-of-home care. These youth told the ministry very clearly what quality of care means to them.

The framework provides guidance on how to better meet the needs of children and youth in licensed out-of-home care and to support them to thrive and achieve better outcomes. The framework also encourages care that is safe, strength-based, trauma-informed and culturally responsive and relevant. It also considers the unique needs and identities of children and youth.

The new requirements, embedded in regulation and policy directives to support the implementation of the framework, include front-line staff and supervisor qualifications, training requirements for foster parents and enhanced safety and service planning obligations. The ministry will continue to work with service providers on the implementation of these important changes. Our goal is to improve the quality of care and better hold licensees and placing agencies, including children's aid societies, accountable for the care they provide.

All children and youth in Ontario deserve safety, stability and access to resources and supports to help them succeed and thrive. As the minister noted earlier, sector partners and communities have clearly articulated the need to implement measures that better protect children and youth rights, enhance the quality of services and improve the accountability of service providers.

0950

Our government's proposals in Bill 188 build on the work that we have undertaken over the past several years and are widely informed by partners in the children and youth services sector.

Our government is committed to continuing to collaborate with our stakeholders and sector partners on future regulation, policy and legislative proposals.

As I said at the top of my remarks, Speaker, we need to provide better support for our children and youth as they transition into adulthood. That includes giving these individuals more control over their past and more control over how they voice and reflect on their time in Ontario's child welfare system.

Proceeding with these legislative proposals, in conjunction with other regulatory and policy changes, is our next step toward meeting these needs. These changes will help us achieve our government's vision of an Ontario where all children, youth and families, including those getting support through the Ontario children and youth service sector, have access to resources and services they need to succeed and thrive.

Speaker, we are all in this together.

Now I would like to pass it to the hard-working PA, my colleague the member for Thornhill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Ms. Laura Smith: I am pleased to join my colleagues the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services; the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity; and fellow parliamentary assistant the MPP for Markham–Thornhill and rise on behalf of Bill 188, the Strengthening Children's Futures Act, 2024, now under consideration by this House for third reading.

It has been truly a pleasure to work with the minister on this bill. We believe that all children and youth deserve safety, stability and access to resources and supports to help them succeed and thrive, and as the minister said before, children and youth may only be a portion of our population today, but they are 100% of our future. This is why our government is working to ensure that no child or young person is left behind in Ontario and that everyone has the best chance of success as they approach adulthood.

Speaker, I think we all want to see successful transitions for individuals as they leave Ontario's child welfare system. I think we all want to see and we all need to see these children and youth becoming confident adults who can contribute to the success of our province, and this is the essence of Bill 188.

Speaker, as I outlined for the House at second reading, our government has worked diligently to introduce other reforms into the child welfare system that will deliver better outcomes for children and youth and their families and caregivers who are receiving support from the child and youth services sector.

But components of Bill 188 are an important part of the government's ongoing redesign of the child welfare system, and I'd like to take this opportunity to speak to the connection between the proposed changes in child welfare design as it provides important context for the proposals in this bill.

Members of the House will recall that the ministry announced the Child Welfare Redesign Strategy in July of 2020. Through this strategy, our government has introduced new initiatives to improve the quality of services that children and youth receive in out-of-home care. Some of these initiatives have included developing a new framework for what quality of care looks like and feels like; increasing and enhancing oversight and accountability for out-of-home care; and adding 20 new positions across this province to support the management, inspection and oversight of out-of-home care for children and youth.

Speaker, every child and youth deserves a fair start and position in life, and our government is delivering on that. We hit the ground running by:

- consulting widely in the community and with service providers to better serve children and youth;

- increasing the numbers of inspections;

- increasing access to customary care, which helps children and youth remain connected to their culture and traditions—and this is very important. As somebody who worked within the child protection act, having that child touchstone with their community and their culture gives

them the essence of the child and helps them really be a positive person for the future;

- bolstering family-based options like kinship and foster care to ensure children and youth and families have a voice and decisions about their care;

- improving the quality of child welfare data, as well as developing an outcomes-based performance measurement framework; and

- releasing the children and young persons' rights resource to help children and youth understand their rights and use their voices.

Speaker, we have backed this important work with significant investments of more than \$1.5 billion in the child welfare system. This investment supports Ontario's 50 independent children's aid societies, including 13 Indigenous children's aid societies.

Since announcing the child welfare redesign in 2020, we've made several changes and investments to better support children, youth and families receiving child welfare services.

We have invested almost \$3 million to help support kinship service and customary caregivers, adoptive parents, and caregivers who have obtained legal custody of a child in extended society care. I can't stress the importance of kinship—I worked in that area, and I know the value of that work and putting the child in the right place.

We have annualized \$800,000 in funding to One Vision One Voice, which supports culturally appropriate service delivery for Black and African Canadian children, youth and families in the child welfare system.

We've invested an additional \$1.5 million annually in the Education Liaison Program to help children and youth in care across this province get the support they need to focus on their studies.

We are providing \$5 million in annualized funding to enhance access to prevention-focused customary care for Indigenous children and youth, helping them remain closer to their homes, families and communities.

And we launched and invested \$170 million in the Ready, Set, Go program which provides youth in the care of children's aid societies and other eligible youth with the life skills they need, starting at age 13. This includes financial and other supports to those aged 18 to 23 so that they can focus on post-secondary education, skilled trades, or pursuing employment.

I'm so proud to add that youth and child welfare first-voice advocates were important contributors to the design of Ready, Set, Go and the new youth-leaving-care policy.

Aside from these investments, we've directed children's aid societies to end the practice of using birth alerts, which we heard disproportionately affected Indigenous and racialized expectant parents and families.

As Associate Minister Williams outlined, we continue to work with Indigenous communities that are pursuing Indigenous-led models of child and family services.

Speaker, I believe all of this is a strong record of achievement, and the passage of Bill 188 would continue our efforts to improve the child and youth services sector.

Thank you to all the children and youth with lived experience—so important—families, children's aid societies, service providers, as well as First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous communities, who have taken the time to share their insights with us through various engagements. Your input is vital to the success of our government's work.

The Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024, would, if passed, modernize and standardize important safeguards throughout the child and youth services sector. We are proposing changes that would provide new and enhanced enforcement tools. These changes would support better compliance with licensing requirements that are designed to protect the safety and security of children and youth in licensed out-of-home care, including foster care and group homes. In addition, these changes would hold service providers more accountable for the care they deliver. The proposed changes include amending the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, to strengthen ministry oversight, enforcement and licensing; mandating children's aid societies to provide information about health and safety risks to the ministry's licensing and enforcement staff; and enhancing information-sharing between stakeholders and the ministry's licensing and enforcement staff.

These changes would help children and youth in three important ways.

First, they would supplement current ministry compliance and enforcement tools by enhancing the ministry's progressive oversight model. This would better enable the ministry to choose and use the right tools to respond to instances of non-compliance. The proposed new tools include compliance orders, restraining orders, orders requiring management, orders for the return of funds, and notices of administrative penalties. In addition, we're proposing enhancements to existing powers, including powers to refuse issuing, renewing or revoking a licence.

Second, these changes would enhance program administration and delivery by enhancing criteria to obtain a first licence, strengthening ministry staff's oversight and enforcement powers, clarifying regulatory and administrative processes, and improving transparency and information-sharing.

And third, these changes supported by recent complementary regulatory amendments would enhance oversight of children in care by children's aid societies by requiring societies to visit each child placed in out-of-home care more frequently and enhancing information-sharing and service coordination between societies.

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We are proposing changes under the Child, Youth and Family Services Act that would restrict access to the records of individuals involved with the child welfare system, in certain circumstances, once regulations are developed. These changes aim to better protect the privacy of individuals who were formerly children or youth involved with the child welfare system. They would also enable individuals to speak freely—which is so important—about their lived experiences which would give them more say and control over what they want to share publicly

about their time in the child welfare system in circumstances that would be prescribed at a later date.

Speaker, our government is working so very hard to ensure that individuals involved with the child and youth services sector receive high-quality care from service providers—care that supports their health, their safety and their ability to reach their full potential. We're working to help ensure that all children and youth have access to the resources and supports they need to succeed and thrive.

I would like to just briefly provide a little bit of context for all of the wins that we've had in this, because this has been a positive time for the ministry. I'd like to share some important feedback that we've received.

From Valerie McMurtry, president and CEO of Children's Aid Foundation of Canada:

"We commend the Ontario government for their work to increase clarity regarding the care of young people placed in out-of-home-settings through the Supporting Children's Futures Act.... Our collective priority should be to ensure that young people remain in the care of their families and communities. However, when this isn't feasible, it's critical that young people have access to the high-quality supports they need, including understanding their rights and assistance available to them through" the "Ombudsman. We value the government's commitment to making sure young people receive this information and ensuring their voices stay central in shaping this act and next steps with respect to child welfare redesign."

Madam Speaker, it is so clearly apparent to me, as somebody who worked within the child protection act, that these proposed changes are a result of extensive and continuous consultation with so many valued stakeholders. Now that we've arrived at third reading, I owe it to our stakeholders and people across our great province, and in particular to the children and youths' families, who will ultimately benefit from the proposals in this bill, to take the next steps and pass this bill.

I want to thank everyone in the House for listening to my statement, and I truly appreciate all of my colleagues within the ministry for their support on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions.

Miss Monique Taylor: It is always a pleasure to be able to stand in my place as the official opposition critic for children, community and social services and to be able to lay out a few questions to the minister regarding the bill, as we're now in third reading.

Through the committee process, we had several people who provided written submissions, who came and testified, who spoke to us, ensuring that their voices were heard and that their comments were heard. We heard from the Ombudsman, who had several requests and even provided the language of what the amendments could be for making Bill 188 better. Some of it was making sure that there was contact info provided in and out; digital; appropriate language; speaking to young people in their own terms—the government refused those amendments.

Could the minister please tell us why—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank my colleague for the question. Quite the contrary, Madam Speaker—if you look at the bill, this bill was developed by sector partners. It was in my remarks. Both the IPC and the Ombudsman were involved, and they both had positive things to say about this bill and the member knows that.

As I said from day one, this isn't the first and it won't be the last initiative that we will put forward. We will continue to look at ways, talk to our stakeholders, talk to partners, talk to experts within the field and within the sector to make sure that we look at every single proposal to improve the lives of children and youth in care. Because I've said it before and I'll say it again and again and again, we will do whatever it takes to make sure no child and youth is left behind. But this isn't the first or last initiative. Bill 188, if passed, some of initiatives that were brought in by the opposition were—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I wanted to ask a question: In the debate on Bill 188, we heard how the staff at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has consulted widely to develop the proposals found in the Supporting Children's Future Act. That consultation, I understand, was broad and included over 30 virtual engagements with various stakeholder groups, including youth with experience in the sector, and that included engaging stakeholders through the Ontario Regulatory Registry as well. And the ministry, I understand, received something like 35 written submissions to proposed changes.

I just wanted to ask the minister, because he is here: Why is that engagement so important? And will the minister continue to engage toward the goals of this bill and our child welfare redesign?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Thanks to my colleague for that important question. As I said, hearing the voices of people within the sector, within the system, is paramount. It is critical. That's what's important to us. This is why we did have more than 30 virtual consultations. This is why we had 35 written submissions from partners. This is why we've been engaging with those with lived experience throughout the process.

We won't stop that, even past this bill. As I said, this isn't the first; it won't be the last. We are going to continuously put initiatives forward to improve the lives of children and youth in care. Throughout the child welfare redesign, which was initiated a couple of years ago, that has been the theme. It's paramount that we capture the views and input of everyone within the sector: service providers, those with lived experience. That's the only way we're going to get it right. We're going to continue to listen to everybody who has an input that would help us improve the lives of children and youth in the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: Not only did the minister not want to hear the Ombudsman's input, but they also didn't want to hear from the Information and Privacy Commissioner, because amendments were put forward saying that the ministry shouldn't be able to have access to these young people in care. We've taken it away from the children's aid workers and people within CPIN to be able to, but the ministry still has.

Signing a consent form is nothing new. That could have been put into place, but again, the government turned that down. Why did the government continue to once again turn down an independent officer of the Legislature?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Once again, let me make it very clear for this House so that everybody hears this: The Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Ombudsman were a part of developing this bill. Let me make that very clear. They both had positive things to say about this bill.

That's not going to stop. We're going to continue to listen to them. We're going to continue making sure that we get the feedback, because in some cases—maybe other governments in the past had put one initiative forward and forgot about children and youth. It's not going to happen under this Premier. It's not going to happen under this government. This isn't the first and it won't be the last. We're going to continue engaging with our partners. We're going to continue listening to them to make sure that we get it right every single time.

That's what's driving the child welfare redesign in our province, Madam Speaker, because we are collaborating, because we are listening, because we are listening to those with lived experience, which is why we're protecting the history of children and youth in care, something that—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the minister for this initiative. I know that our plan to redesign child welfare began in 2020 and has taken action through many initiatives since then. Particularly we are looking at Ready, Set, Go, which has ensured for the first time that Ontario has a plan to support children and youth in care as they near adulthood and set them up for success.

Speaker, we've all heard many times that society has no greater responsibility than to those who are vulnerable and to our youth when they are not ready to look after themselves. So I do want to ask: Could the minister speak to how Bill 188 complements and builds on the work done by the child welfare redesign? Please and thank you.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank my colleague for the question. It's a very important question. I've said this before: Youth leaving care face many barriers. I alluded to this in my remarks, which is why, through the Ready, Set, Go Program, we want to make sure that children and youth who are in care have every opportunity to succeed and thrive in their communities. That's why, through the Ready, Set, Go Program, backed by \$170 million over three years, Madam Speaker, we are providing supports to societies to make sure children and youth in care are receiving supports as young as 13 years old, with life skills

they need to thrive. Again, it continues at 15, and they will receive financial support when they are pursuing post-secondary education, the skilled trades or other employment, Madam Speaker. Why? Because we want to make sure they are set up for success.

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We backed that up by investment and we'll continue to support them to make sure no child and youth is ever left behind in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: The children's aid societies ran a \$15.9-million deficit last year; this year, they're forecasting a \$50-million deficit. That, to me, is not protecting our most vulnerable children. How could you possibly expect the children's aid societies to really be able to care for kids, keep kids home with their families where they want to be, if you are underfunding them and providing them one-time funding instead of consistent funding to ensure that they have a forecast and that they are able to properly take care of our most vulnerable children?

A \$15.9-million deficit, Minister; a \$50-million projected. It kind of counts. It's facts.

Hon. Michael Parsa: You know what are facts, Madam Speaker? Let me actually talk about facts, okay? The facts are, Madam Speaker, that we have increased funding—I just mentioned that: \$170 million over three years to support children and youth. Maybe that's not important to the opposition; it is to us.

We want to make sure every child, every youth is set up for success, which is why we backed that up by investment. We wanted that support to start as early as 13 all the way up to their 23rd birthday with incentive and support so they can get post-secondary education, they can be connected to the trades, whatever it is they want to explore, because we want to make sure every child and youth in this province is set up for success.

Whether you're in care or not, your circumstances matter. We'll keep fighting for you to make sure you have a chance to succeed in your community.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we are out of time for questions and answers.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: a report entitled Ontario Economic Monitor: October 2023 to March 2024, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: There are more than 1.5 million Canadians who trace their origins to Italy, with most living here in Ontario. In fact, their contributions here and across the world stage are so numerous, we have dedicated June as Italian Heritage Month in Ontario.

Speaker, the Italian Canadian community is known and respected for their values and traditions of hard work, ingenuity and dedication to family life in their community. And, of course, Italians have a deep and proud history to draw upon, filling the shelves of libraries around the world. Their ancestors had an empire that spanned Europe and beyond, and their legacy has had a profound impact on all of humanity. Countless great Italian figures have shaped Western philosophy, law, culture, faith, science and so much more. To this very day, Italians continue to be a name on the world stage in science, engineering, sports, cuisine, fashion and much more.

Today in Ontario, there are almost one million Ontarians of Italian descent—Italian immigrants and their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren who literally built so much of the province with their own hands, minds and hearts. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Italian Ontarians, and it is a real honour to recognize their great culture and identity today with all of you.

Happy Italian Heritage Month.

ONTARIO-QUEBEC PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

ASSOCIATION PARLEMENTAIRE ONTARIO-QUÉBEC

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Last week, I had the privilege of joining several of my colleagues in representing our Ontario provincial government at the Ontario-Quebec Parliamentary Association 28th general assembly in Quebec. The theme of this year's meeting was artificial intelligence.

Les objectifs de l'association sont de favoriser le développement de la coopération interparlementaire; de promouvoir la compréhension entre les deux Assemblées, en particulier dans les domaines de la législation, de la culture, de l'économie, de la science et de la technologie; et de renforcer notre amitié, la bonne volonté et la compréhension entre les peuples de l'Ontario et du Québec.

The topic of AI was timely, given the cross-partisan agreement moving my private member's motion on the use of AI in government forward. Additionally, this week we had the second reading of Bill 194, Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024. Artificial intelligence is already being used in many sectors. It was an interesting visit to the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec to see how AI has been incorporated into the art-piece-viewing experience. It was

a wonderful experience in Quebec; look forward to next year.

MACK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: June 7 will mark the end of an era in nursing. The Mack school of nursing alumni association is closing with a 150-year history of advancing their profession in Niagara and beyond. Originally inspired by the techniques of Florence Nightingale, Mack nurses pioneered nursing standards that transcended the St. Catharines-based school itself.

During the school's operation from 1874 to 1974, the Mack name was well known. When the school itself closed, Canada's oldest alumni association decided to give back to their profession in a meaningful way. In partnership with Brock University and Niagara College, the nursing alumni started a scholarship fund to help aspiring nurses pay their tuitions. The money came from the alumni's own membership fees and donations that they collected personally.

With the closure of the alumni association this year, Brock and Niagara College have agreed to enshrine the Mack name and offer their scholarship under the original title on an ongoing basis. As a former Niagara hospital worker, it fills my heart to see Mack nursing's legacy carried on. At a time when we need nurses more than ever, they have helped the next generation to get their start. My sincere thanks to the Mack Alumni Association for 150 years of dedication to nursing. It is advocates like you who bring the term "health care heroes" to life.

MOBILE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Kevin Holland: It's a privilege to rise today and recognize our government's recent investment of more than \$2.7 million over three years to launch the Superior North Specialized Treatment and Alternative Responders program in Thunder Bay. This innovative new mobile crisis response pilot program is a behavioural health-first response approach to specialized mental health and addictions care in our community, diverting visits to the emergency department and reducing unnecessary police involvement.

With the three-year pilot funding model, our government has once again recognized the value of resilient funding structures. It has been an honour to work closely with chief Shane Muir and superintendent of community paramedicine Andrew Cuglietta of Superior North EMS throughout the proposal process. Because of the work that the EMS leadership, their team and community partners have committed to day after day, chief Shane and superintendent Andrew were well-positioned to submit a purposeful, credible proposal in a very short time frame.

On behalf of our community, we would like to thank Associate Minister Tibollo, his team and Minister Sylvia Jones for their invaluable support in making this crucial service a reality. Speaker, I take this opportunity to also recognize the tremendous work that has already been

advanced locally and regionally through existing partnerships and networks that embrace a whole-of-community approach to our collective safety and well-being. We are working together for all our people.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Unfortunately, our Premier's obsession with booze continues. We now have the billion-dollar booze boondoggle. We learned that the Premier is using tax dollars, up to a billion dollars, to break a contract early so that folks can get easy access to beer at convenience stores.

1020

While parents struggle to cover child care costs and seniors search in vain for a family doctor, why does it make any sense for this government to hand out hundreds of millions to big breweries and discounts to mega-rich grocery store billionaires? They should be funding our public services instead. Lining the pockets of massive corporations should be at the very bottom of this government's priority list. How does getting access to easy beer help a parent who can't afford daycare for their kid? What's the point of grabbing a six-pack easily if you're stuck waiting for years to get a family doctor?

A government is supposed to focus on ensuring quality public education, child care, health care and ensuring citizens live with dignity. Why is this Premier prioritizing beer sales over any of our other crises? The health care crisis, the housing crisis, affordability crisis—people can't afford baby formula in this province.

Really, Ontario deserves better than politicians who throw away our tax dollars on handouts to mega-corps when families' basic needs remain unmet. It's long past time that this government got their priorities straight, and I say no more corporate giveaways until the basic needs of all Ontarians are met.

MINISTRY GRANTS

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Recently, I was proud to announce that five organizations in Mississauga-Lakeshore have received \$310,000 in funding through the Experience Ontario program. That includes \$55,000 for monstARTity for the Bollywood Monster Mashup in July, the largest South Asian festival in Canada; and another \$55,000 for the Canadian Community Arts Initiative for their 19th annual Mosaic Festival in August, the largest free South Asian art festival in North America. It includes \$125,000 to XL Lifestyle for the Taco Fest in August, the best Mexican festival in the GTA; \$55,000 for CreativeHub 1352, formerly known as the Small Arms Society, for the Mississauga Festival of Trees, an annual winter arts and cultural festival in the Small Arms Inspection Building in December; and lastly, \$20,000 for Mississauga Italfest.

I also want to invite all members to join us at my own annual Italian Heritage Month event at the Small Arms Inspection Building on June 13 at 6 p.m.

Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport for these grants, and I want to thank these organizations for all the important work they're doing to enrich the lives of the people of Mississauga and to build stronger communities and a better Ontario. On behalf of all the members, we appreciate everything you do. Thank you.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Mrs. Robin Martin: Last Thursday, I was delighted to host my sixth annual Eglinton–Lawrence Volunteer Service Awards, my favourite event. Each year, these awards give us all an opportunity to recognize community heroes and allows all the attendees, along with friends and families, to reflect on the profound impact of their dedicated service to others.

This year, 110 people from 20 organizations received an award in recognition of their exemplary volunteer service. These organizations include places of worship, hospitals, not-for-profits, Toronto Police Service and others. Each award recipient is recognized for their individual contribution, but also for their work with an organization, emphasizing the notion that, while volunteering starts at the individual level, we'll accomplish more by working together.

The recipients' contributions are truly inspiring. For example, those serving the Italian community in my area through Columbus Centre, Villa Charities, received awards this year. One recipient from Baycrest Seniors Support Program, Susanne Treichel, has volunteered as a friendly caller and listened to the calls of the seniors with empathy and compassion for as long as they needed for over 25 years. Also, a volunteer, Clayton Johnson with the Asbury and West United Church, was recognized for all of his work with property maintenance over several years.

These are an inspiring award. It's always better to recognize people for giving than for what they get, and I really want to congratulate all the Eglinton–Lawrence 2024 recipients for this year.

JAYE ROBINSON

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I rise today with a heavy heart to pay tribute to a remarkable woman, an amazing public servant and a long-time neighbour and friend, Councillor Jaye Robinson, who represented ward 15, Don Valley West, at Toronto city council for almost 14 years. Jaye exemplified spirited leadership and served with distinction in roles such as chair of the Toronto Transit Commission. Prior to being elected, she served as director of events for the city of Toronto, where her spirit for fun and community service shone through as she led efforts to create beloved traditions like Nuit Blanche and Summerlicious.

Jaye's resilience and commitment to public service were truly inspirational, especially as she courageously battled breast cancer during recent years while continuing to serve our community with the utmost dedication. When

she could not be physically present at events, she made sure her presence and support were there virtually or through her amazing staff. She was a great municipal partner to me since I was elected as MPP, and while she was non-partisan, she gave me good advice when I sought her counsel before deciding to run.

We remember Jaye for her profound dedication to public service, her ability to inspire those around her and her fierce and fun spirit. As we honour her legacy, we extend our deepest sympathies to her family: her beloved husband, Billy; her sons, Jake, Sam and Will; mother Shirley; siblings Elizabeth "Brandy," Robin, Kelly and John; and daughter-in-law Brooke; her colleagues, friends, church family and all who will miss her.

Jaye's legacy is a lifetime of public service, ongoing, enriching and fun events for the city of Toronto, and community dedication that will continue to inspire all who were privileged to know her.

STUDENT FUNDRAISING

Mr. Steve Clark: Today, I want to recognize eight food bank superheroes from South Crosby Public School in my riding of Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. These students in Power Up 2, led by their teacher, Mrs. Leanne Huffman, have spent the last year growing and donating produce to two local food banks.

In late October 2023, these eight students in grades 3 and 5 started growing lettuce, and they decided they wanted to donate it to the Elgin Food Bank. In the new year, the Power Up 2 students decided to host staff hot lunches prepared by the students themselves. Also, they sold ice cream sandwiches to their peers. All the proceeds went directly to the Elgin Food Bank.

The students have even been making monthly donations of fresh lettuce grown in their own ZipGrow to the Portland Food Bank, including with each donation an instruction manual on how to grow these plants so that food bank users can grow their own tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and lettuce over the summer months.

Since last January, these eight students have raised a total of \$1,012 dollars that have been donated to both the Elgin and the Portland food banks.

I want to do a special thank you to Mrs. Huffman and her students: Sheamus Dance, Paisley Wood, Jacob George, Jacob Gordon, Joseph Riley, Jackie Rightmyer, Oliver Worrall and Johnathan Worrall.

Colleagues, please join me in congratulating these eight food bank superheroes.

BULLYING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think everyone in here can agree that there should be zero tolerance of children being bullied in a classroom, on their school bus or anywhere in the province of Ontario. I've had the opportunity to stand both in opposition and here in government to make my mark as best I could to support children who may be vulnerable to such attacks, whether it was anti-Indigenous,

anti-Black racism, for children with special needs, the LGBTQ+ population, Muslim students, Asian students and Indo-Canadian students.

I think that we can all agree that every student deserves a safe place to learn in the province of Ontario and to get to school. But since October 7, some children in this province have been impacted quite negatively, and that's the Jewish students both in Ottawa, Toronto and elsewhere across the province. Jewish day schools have been shot up and children in our classrooms in different parts of the province have dealt with racism. These Jewish students are beneficiaries, of course, of increased Holocaust remembrance education, but we need to do more.

1030

I want to talk a little bit about Tejaswinhi Srinivas, who had to take to the Ottawa Citizen this week to talk about her five-year-old child who was on the school bus and said this: "Someone on my bus told everyone Jewish" person "to raise their hand. But I knew not to do it, Daddy. They sounded mean." Can you image that that's happening in Ontario today?

Every member here has said on occasion, at least once a year, that "never again" is now. "Never again" is now. "Never again" is now. And now is the time for all of us to stand up for zero tolerance of bullying of Jewish students in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our members' statements for this morning.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Good morning, Mr. Speaker and thank you. I hope you'll indulge me for a few moments to introduce this morning because I have a lot of family here today: my daughter Frances; her husband, Rohan Negandhi; Alma Negandhi; Haren Negandhi; Gavin Lopez; Robin Lopez; Beryl Annette Lopez; Gracian Anna D'Costa; Darryl John D'Costa; Sanjay Peter D'Costa; and Brother Sunil Bosco D'Costa, who was just recently ordained on May 17, 2024, as a Capuchin Franciscan friar. There is life for us after Queen's Park, as I've discovered; he used to work in the AG's office.

And last, but not least, I want to introduce my wife, who's here today as well: Silvana Tibollo. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Miss Monique Taylor: This morning, with gratitude, I had a meeting with the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, who are here today. It was fantastic to have Dave Cunliffe, who is the fire chief from the Hamilton Fire Department; Jared Cayley, fire chief, Gravenhurst Fire Department; Simon Worley, who is from the Tecumseh fire department; and Ed Melanson, who is also chief from Saugeen Shores. Thank you so much for your meeting this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Do you have more?

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Go ahead.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. I also have the privilege of meeting with some steelworkers from district 6 who are here today. I have a portion of the list. My dear friend Shannon Horner is with us—Kim Hume, Bonnie Powell, Dave Meinzinger and Mohamed Herzi. Welcome to Queen's Park and enjoy your lobby day.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, everyone. I would like to give an extra warm welcome to the Ontario fire chiefs, especially Ontario's best deputy fire chief, my brother Stephen Emo, who's here from Collingwood. Thank you for all you do.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to welcome to the House my brand new constituency assistant, Lisa Parsons, and her husband, Kevin. Thank you for being willing to serve the people of Brantford—Brant and Ontario.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome platoon chief Brent Shea from the London Fire Department, as well as deputy fire chief Mark Parkhurst from the Ajax fire service. Welcome to Queen's Park. I look forward to our meeting.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the House members and representatives of the Canadian Franchise Association, led by their vice-chair, Mr. Todd Wylie. Welcome to the House.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm very glad to welcome Fire Chief Stephen Barkwell of the Oshawa Fire Services as well as Mark Pankhurst, the fire chief from Ajax fire. I'm looking forward to our meeting. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'd like to welcome everyone from the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies here at Queen's Park today, with a special shout-out to Laura Lambie, Doug DeRabbie, Peter Lejcar and Dylan Hemmings. I'm looking forward to our meeting today.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I would like to welcome my three interns, Angelina Covino, Elizabeth Becke and Milena Basciano, to Queen's Park today. Thank you for being here.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Bear with me. I have a number of introductions to make.

I'd like to begin by welcoming Dave Paxton, acting fire chief from Thunder Bay Fire Rescue, and Kent Readman, fire chief of Loyalist fire and emergency services. Welcome to Queen's Park. I look forward to meeting with you.

I'd also like to welcome USW members Sean Staddon, Roopchand Doon and Kim Hume.

Finally, I would like to welcome the family members who came here this morning to speak on behalf of their relatives who are being—

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Evicted?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Evicted from Heritage Glen: Karen Santaguida, Victoria Santaguida, Stacey Saracini and Gordon Cork. Thank you very much for being here.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I'd like to welcome Monique Belair, fire chief, and Don Carter, deputy fire chief, of Kingston Fire

and Rescue. And I spy friend Mike Cavanaugh, who's representing Toyota here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): If the members agree, I'd like to continue with the introduction of guests.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: I would like to introduce a local hero from Innisfil, Innisfil's fire chief, Brent Thomas; and a hero for many families in Ontario, Dawn Mucci, the founder and CEO of Lice Squad who's here with the Canadian Franchise Association. Welcome.

MPP Jamie West: I often say that steelworkers make great leaders. We have steelworker leaders here joining us: Sean Staddon from Sudbury, Roopchand Doon, Lorei De Los Reyes and Scott Weaver. I don't see Jordan Rego, but if I know Jordan, he's somewhere in the building. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I too would like to welcome members of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs: Paul Boissonneault, fire chief, Oakville; and Robert Garland, deputy fire chief, Markham.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I'd like to introduce and welcome Steve Jones, acting platoon chief with the Burlington Fire Department. Steve is here as a guest speaker at the Mental Health Commission of Canada Father's Day reception.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I have the honour to introduce a few guests this morning. I would like to welcome to the House Carol Dueck, executive of Mack Schools of Nursing Alumni Association. Also, I have the distinct honour to welcome a good friend, St. Catharines fire chief Dave Upper, and deputy fire chief Andrea DeJong from the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. I'm looking forward to your meeting. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I do want to welcome the page captain Westley Tam here from Markham–Stouffville and his family: Alvin, Milan, Blythe and AJ Tam. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was a pleasure to meet with Jesse Oshell, the deputy fire chief from the city of Greater Sudbury, as well as Harry Baranik, the fire chief for the municipality of Bayham. Thank you for sharing your wisdom with me.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: It's my pleasure to welcome to the House Matthew Anderson, assistant chief, Carleton Place Fire Department; Stephen Barkwell, fire chief, Oshawa Fire Services; Paul Boissonneault, fire chief, Oakville Fire Department; Terry Jones, fire chief, Kawartha Lakes Fire Rescue Service; and Mike Matthews, deputy fire chief, Kawartha Lakes Fire Rescue Service. It was a pleasure meeting you this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'd like to welcome my summer intern students here. We have Tarek Abo Atiaa, Magdalene Barack and Miral Reyad. Welcome to Queens' Park.

1040

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Good morning, colleagues. I'd like us all to welcome the Canadian Franchise Association. I had the pleasure of speaking with Derek Robertson and Caitlin McClung. Thank you very much for

your participation and the hosting of the reception this morning.

I also want to extend my congratulations and welcome to the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: As we welcome so many fire chiefs here today from throughout Ontario, I want to especially welcome my friend, the president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, Deputy Chief Rob Grimwood. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to welcome all the fire chiefs that are here from across the province of Ontario, but I'd also like to give a special welcome to Jo Zambito, the fire chief of the Niagara Falls Fire Department. I'm looking forward to our meeting at 12 o'clock today. Welcome.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to introduce, from the great riding of God's country, Craig McFarlane, the vice president of Linwood Homes.

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: As a firefighter, I appreciate everything that these fire chiefs do and I'd like to send a special welcome out to, from my home community of Chatham-Kent, Chief Chris Case.

Hon. David Piccini: I, too, would like to welcome fire chiefs. A special welcome to Gene Thompson, Brighton fire chief; Jeff Ogden, Port Hope fire chief; and Kevin Ashfield, deputy chief for Cobourg. I'd also like to thank Mark MacDonald and all the firefighters who contribute valuable service on our section 21 committee as well.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: A big welcome to Dave Upper and Andrea DeJong from St. Catharines fire.

I also have a very special thing to tell the House today: that it is my seatmate the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound's "big five" birthday, so I just want to welcome him to see this place.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'd like to wish my good friend and colleague Jennie Stevens a happy 60th birthday today.

Ms. Laura Smith: I would like to welcome Oliver Stone, general manager with Chartwell Retirement Residences, and a very special shout-out to my very own fire chief for Vaughan, Chief Andrew Zvanitajs, also known as Chief Andy. Welcome.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: I have a couple of introductions. First, I would like to welcome the fire chief from South Glengarry, Dave Robertson. Welcome.

And then, as well, it's my pleasure to introduce the Mental Health Commission of Canada to the Ontario Legislature. Today is an important day at Queen's Park for men's mental health. Please come by and show your support in room 228/230 from 12 to 2. I'd like to welcome Michel Rodrigue, CEO of Mental Health Commission of Canada; the platoon chief with Burlington Fire and keynote speaker, Steve Jones; as well as co-chair of the federal mental health caucus MP Matt Jeneroux.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I'd like to welcome representatives from the OAFIC here today, in particular Dave Robertson, James Waffle, Bruce Morrison, Jeff Ogden and, from the Thunder Bay fire service, Mr. David Paxton. To all firefighters here in the House today, thank you for your service.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to welcome, from Central York Fire Services, Deputy Chief Jeremy Inglis. Welcome.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'd like to wish a warm welcome to two members of the fire service who I've worked with over the years, incredible people: the deputy fire chief from the city of Windsor, James Waffle, and the fire chief from the town of Amherstburg, Bruce Montone.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I'd like to welcome a number of fire chiefs from my riding today: Cameron Smith, deputy fire chief for the town of Blue Mountains; Brent Thomas, fire chief from Innisfil; and Steve Emo, deputy fire chief from the town of Collingwood. Thank you for all you do.

Ms. Jess Dixon: We have a number of representatives from a mainstay in my riding in Ontario, Toyota manufacturing. I'd like to welcome Mike Cavanaugh, Andrew Gordon, Ryan Westbrook, Diana Galassi, Lynn Hall, Tarek Abdel-Missih, Leah Michalopoulos, Leslie Miller, Frank Ricci and Vanessa Montana. I invite you all to swing by the reception in room 228 at 5:30.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe that everyone here has been introduced—oh. The member for St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you, Speaker. I have a point of order, actually. I want to correct the record.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for St. Catharines on a point of order.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to correct the record. I'm 29 again in my 31st year.
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): What is it?

Hon. Todd Smith: An introduction.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This is the final introduction of visitors.

Hon. Todd Smith: My wife does that same trick, by the way.

I'd like to welcome the chief from Prince Edward County—I think I see him up there—Chad Brown. Good to see you, Chief.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the House for allowing us to introduce all of the visitors who are here today.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. Back in February, I asked the Premier about discrepancies in his chief of staff's testimony to the Integrity Commissioner. You're going to recall that Mr. Sackville testified that he didn't discuss removal criteria related to the greenbelt with anyone until October 27. We now have evidence that he actually got an email with all the greenbelt removal criteria to his personal email account 10 days earlier.

Can the Premier explain why his chief of staff provided false testimony to the Integrity Commissioner?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, as I said yesterday, if the honourable member has additional information that she would like to provide to the Integrity Commissioner, I encourage her to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, as I've said before, I certainly have already done that and will continue to, including to the RCMP, but this is a serious matter, and it deserves a serious answer. The Premier's chief of staff told the Integrity Commissioner that this email was overlooked because, and I want to quote him here again, "I do not conduct government business on my personal email." Now journalists have unearthed dozens of emails showing the chief of staff to the Premier not only used his personal email for government business, but he did so routinely.

Why did the Premier's right-hand man apparently mislead the Integrity Commissioner on multiple occasions, and what consequences is he going to face?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, I have all the confidence in the world that the Integrity Commissioner will look into this, and if he decides that further actions need to be taken, I'm confident that he will advise the House of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, I hope they have a better explanation for when they are interviewed by the RCMP.

This is the third senior staff member from this Premier's office to have been caught given inaccurate testimony to the Integrity Commissioner. This is a government that has shown they have no respect for the people's right to know.

I want to remind the government that their former minister was forced to resign when it was revealed that he lied under oath to the Integrity Commissioner about—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the unparliamentary comment.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Withdrawn.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton North will come to order.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll remind them that he resigned when he gave the Integrity Commissioner some inaccurate information related to his Vegas trip. You remember that? I do. So do the people of Ontario. Is this business as usual for this government, or will he demand Mr. Sackville's resignation?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution the member on her choice of words.

The government House leader can reply.

1050

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, as I said, I have every confidence that if the member has information that she wants to share with the Integrity Commissioner, the member will do so. I have the same confidence that the Integrity Commissioner will review any information that he has, and if he needs to inform this House of additional actions that need to be taken, I'm sure the Integrity Commissioner will do just that.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, I'll tell you what—and back to the Premier again: This is business as usual for this government. They will do anything to avoid accountability.

I'm going to give you another example. Global News has obtained through a twin freedom-of-information request a bunch of texts that were sent between Mr. Sackville and Metrolinx million-dollar-man Phil Verster.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Wow, you're really digging. You have to rely on the media?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Nepean, come to order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: There were text exchanges that were provided in Mr. Verster's response, but in Mr. Sackville's response, those texts were mysteriously missing. In fact, Mr. Verster's FOI returned 100 pages while Mr. Sackville's response was 29 pages less—29 pages missing.

So, Speaker, I want to see the texts. Ontarians want to see those texts. Where are the texts?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'll reiterate that it is the Integrity Commissioner who will review any information that the Leader of the Opposition has to provide, and I have confidence in his ability to undertake that work on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario.

The Leader of the Opposition talks about accountability. Well, the people of Ontario just returned a verdict on accountability, and they returned two Progressive Conservatives to this government. They didn't just return two Progressive Conservatives, they returned them in greater numbers than they did at the general election. And do you know what happened at that point? They also passed judgment on the Leader of the Opposition and on the leader of the Liberal Party. Do you know what that judgment was, Mr. Speaker? That they continue to fail the people of the province of Ontario.

In the NDP's case—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —“other” got more than the NDP candidates in those two ridings. Right? “Other.”

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, it was a straightforward question. It deserved a straightforward answer. Where are the texts? Where are they? Where are the texts?

Deleted emails, contradictory testimony—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Nepean, come to order. The Minister of Energy, come to order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: —seem to be commonplace with this government. It's a common pattern that we see over and over again. The Auditor General found evidence of deleted emails in the greenbelt scandal, which Ontario's privacy watchdog, we now know, is set to probe. The use of personal emails was only discovered after we appealed, because—surprise, surprise—they were not included as part of the original disclosure request.

Does the Premier think he and his staff are above the law?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Just the opposite. Do you know what we are about? We are about building a bigger, better, stronger, safer province of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It has been at the heart of everything we have been doing since 2018. Do you know who has been against that? It has, of course, been the opposition, the Liberal and NDP opposition, in this place. When we talk about—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Waterloo, come to order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —building and investing in infrastructure, the Liberals and the NDP, how do they vote? They vote against that. When we talk about reinvesting in our emergency services, in our police, fire, front-line services, our paramedics, they vote against that. When we talk about bringing investments to the province of Ontario, how did we do that? By ensuring that we had the energy supply to ensure that when we ask people to come here and make billions of dollars of investments, we could do that in the cleanest way possible, and that has resulted in \$43 billion worth of investments in a province that was decaying under the Liberals and the NDP.

Out of the ashes of them, we are building a bigger, better, stronger Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind the members: If they ignore my repeated requests to come to order, I will warn them.

The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: What is it going to take for this Premier to stand up and show some accountability for his office's actions and his government's? I mean, really.

For months now—months—there has been a flood of evidence that shows deleted emails, missing texts, inaccurate testimonies, hidden text messages, a flagrant disregard for the law by this government.

I want to ask the Premier again: If Mr. Sackville doesn't have the integrity to resign, will this Premier have the guts to fire him?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: We have seen, time and time again—we have received a report from the Integrity Commissioner, from the Auditor General, and we have taken action, Mr. Speaker. We have taken action, but more importantly—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member from Hamilton Mountain is warned.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —is continue to invest in the people of the province of Ontario.

The Leader of the Opposition talks about accountability; we know what accountability means for the NDP. We're seeing it in Ottawa right now: They could bring down a government in Ottawa that is forcing a carbon tax on the people of the province of Ontario and Canada, which is harming Canadians. What do they do? They sit on the sidelines. When the former Liberal chief of staff was going to jail, what did they do? They kept him in office, Mr. Speaker, because that's what the NDP do.

They don't want to do the work. They don't want to put the time in to build a bigger, better, stronger Ontario. They're always happy to talk down to the people of this province.

What we will do is talk up Ontario, continue to bring investment opportunities—700,000 people have the dignity of a job that didn't before, and we'll continue on that path.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Niagara Falls will come to order. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

Start the clock. Next question.

HOUSING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, it's no wonder that this Premier and this government won't be transparent with the people of Ontario, won't even stand up and answer the questions of the people of Ontario; they are a government in complete disarray.

While this government is flip-flopping, hiding texts, losing ministers, deleting emails to enrich their land speculator friends, housing starts—which I will remind the Speaker and the government was what this was all supposed to be about, by the way—are 37% lower than they were last year. To catch up on that lagging goal—I think they had said they were going to build 1.5 million homes by 2031—the province needs to build at least 125,000 homes this year. Based on the government's own plans and their own budget, we are nowhere near where we need to be.

So my question to the Premier is, where are the new, deeply affordable homes that this government promised Ontarians?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I just—you can't make this up. The people of the province of Ontario listen to the NDP day in and day out. They have been listening to the NDP for how long? The NDP have sat in the opposition benches in the province of Ontario forever, with the exception of five long, hard, arduous years that cost us—how long?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Hon. Paul Calandra: We are still trying to dig out of the mess of an NDP government.

Now, just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, the Liberals came in and doubled down on bad government. So what did we have to do? Rebuild the province of Ontario from the ground up, Mr. Speaker. We had to encourage people to come back and invest in Ontario. We had to rebuild our health care sector. We had to ensure that our emergency services—our police, fire, paramedics—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo is warned.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —are treated with respect in a way that they had never been done before, Mr. Speaker.

We had to build new schools, roads, public transportation. The job is not done, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to build a bigger, better, stronger Ontario whether they join us or not. We know the Liberals never will. We will continue to get the job done.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Perhaps the minister didn't get the memo. We're talking about homes here—real homes, homes that the people of this province desperately need and were promised by this government.

But again, housing starts are 37% lower right now than they were a year ago. I've got to tell you, Speaker, that doesn't shout success to me. That shouts failure, after six long years of this government, after ministers resigning, deleted texts, emails gone missing.

1100

It's just another example of how this government refuses to treat the housing crisis with the urgency that it deserves. They promised 20,000 new homes by now. Six years into the affordable housing agreement with the federal government—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Small Business will come to order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: —we have barely built, get this, 1,000 new affordable homes. One way we could move that forward is building fourplexes. So I want to ask the

Premier to stop blocking new housing and commit to authorizing fourplexes as of right across this province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore will come to order.

To reply, the government House leader and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's clear to me that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't have a clue what is happening in the province of Ontario. In fact, we have had some of the highest housing starts in over a generation over the last number of years. You know what home builders are telling us is the number one reason they're not getting shovels in the ground? It's high interest rates, carbon tax and infrastructure. We brought in the largest infrastructure program in history—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: You know who voted against it? The Leader of the Opposition. She talks about affordable housing. This is the crew that would have signed the first deal with the federal government on the National Housing Strategy. We said no. You know what we did yesterday? We announced a better deal for the people of the province of Ontario—a better deal.

But we've seen this before. Remember when the Minister of Education was negotiating a child care deal? They wanted to take the first deal that was put in front of them. That's them: first-deal NDP. What we are is better-deal Progressive Conservatives—better for the people of the province of Ontario, better for the economy, better for taxpayers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Are we ready to move on?

Start the clock. The next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Speaker, the federal carbon tax is increasing the price of everything for everyone in the province of Ontario. Families across the province who are already struggling with high interest rates and rising costs of living are being punished with even more tax hikes. The Liberal agenda of high taxes is taking away people's ability to afford basic necessities and feed their families.

Our government will not stop fighting against this costly tax. The federal government must stop their plan to triple the carbon tax and instead eliminate it altogether. Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is supporting every Ontarian that is negatively impacted by the carbon tax?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member opposite for the question, the first good question today in question period. Because you know what? It's impacting the people of Ontario's daily lives. The number one issue that our friends from Milton and Lambton–Kent–Middlesex heard

at the doors in their by-election over the last month and a half or so was the high cost of living in Ontario and in Canada because of the federal carbon tax—as the member rightly points out, a carbon tax that isn't done yet. It's going to continue to go up and up every April 1, making life more unaffordable for the people.

We've taken a different approach here in Ontario, under the leadership of Premier Ford. We've been cutting taxes—the gas tax, 10.7 cents a litre off every fill-up. How do you like that? No more tolls on the 412 and the 418. How do you like that? If you're a transit rider in Ontario, the minister of One Fare, Minister Thanigasalam—One Fare for transit riders, saving them \$1,600 a year. Cutting fees like licence plate sticker fees—I have so many other things I can say that we're doing to make life more affordable, but that federal carbon tax continues to go up and put people—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The supplementary question.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Minister, for the response. Many people are struggling to afford just the basics: food, gas, electricity and a home. Higher gas prices are forcing Ontario families to cancel or scale back their summer vacation and any road trip plans, all because of this disastrous tax.

Speaker, despite our government's continued efforts in keeping costs down for families and businesses, the Liberal carbon tax is working against us every single day. It's not fair that hard-working Ontarians can be hit with one tax hike after another tax hike after another tax hike. We need less talk and we need decisive action from the federal government. End the carbon tax today.

Can the minister tell this House why the Liberals must stop serving up more punitive tax hikes?

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, we don't need higher taxes. We don't need more taxes in Ontario, and we've proven that, that we can grow our economy with lower taxes, reducing taxes, reducing fees. We're seeing massive investments in our province as a result.

The carbon tax is driving up the cost of everything from gasoline to groceries to home heating. The member for Brant who just asked the question, he's a volunteer firefighter as well in Brantford. We're surrounded by fire chiefs from across the province here today, and we know the impact that the carbon tax is having on our municipal fire departments. The Solicitor General, right next to me, has answered questions on this in the past. It's \$15,000 more annually per fire truck that the carbon tax is costing our municipalities and our local fire departments. It's making life unaffordable.

The federal government and the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, and the NDPs and Mr. Green all have to get together. Join us, let's end this carbon tax once and for all.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Just a second. Who is Mr. Green?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): As a reminder, we refer to each other by our riding names or ministerial title, as applicable.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. A bill that would ban federal employers from using replacement workers or scabs during walkouts or strikes passed the House of Commons unanimously on Monday.

MPs from all parties voted in favour of the legislation, seeing it pass 316 to 0. United Steel Workers District 6 represents over 78,000 active members and 50,000 retirees across Ontario and Atlantic Canada. They're here today calling for action.

Premier, the Ontario NDP has brought forward anti-scab legislation 17 times, and every time, your government has said no. Will you follow your federal cousins' lead and pass this important legislation here in Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the members to please take their seats. I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. David Piccini: This Premier is focused on ensuring workers in this province are protected, and at every opportunity, I would say, as I've said in this place before, 98% of deals in Ontario—98 plus per cent—are done at the table under collective bargaining.

This Premier has made historic investments into workers through the Skills Development Fund, reduced barriers for marginalized, racialized workers, and got more women into the trades. The consistent thing—more than 18 times—is that the party opposite has voted against every one of those measures. It's really regrettable because it's ensuring men and women are collecting better jobs and bigger paycheques. They're working on the front lines to support the automotive investments, the historic public transit investments.

We'll keep working with labour unions across Ontario, and I welcome their ideas any day of the week.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for Sudbury.

MPP Jamie West: In Sudbury, steelworkers have been on strike at SNOLAB since May 8. Some of these workers haven't had a raise in years. I've talked to these workers several times. They love their jobs, but they can't make ends meet. They want a contract with a cost-of-living increase, and they want paid family responsibility leave, which is similar to management.

The employer keeps saying that there's no money for this, but they always have money to pay for scab workers across the line. They always have money to pay for security to bring them across the line. And I was just told this morning that they've hired summer students to do this work.

We need anti-scab to protect the summer student workers. We need anti-scab to protect these workers and

have shorter conflicts. My question is: Will the Premier support and commit to restoring anti-scab legislation in Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

1110

Hon. David Piccini: I'd welcome a sit-down with that member with respect to the incident that he referenced.

I would also mention—he mentioned family leave. He would know that Ontario has launched extensive consultations. I just met with colorectal, with cancer groups on a protected leave, and it's on our registry right now.

At each step of the way, this Premier, through multiple labour bundles, is putting forward progressive legislation that's expanding protections under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, expanding protections under the Employment Standards Act, putting in place some tough fines for bad actors, and he's doing it creating a competitive economy that's attracted \$40-plus billion in automotive investments alone; creating a world-class power grid that's keeping costs down, unlike the reckless Green Energy Act of the previous government; building public transit—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Oh, God.

Hon. David Piccini: She says, "Oh, God," Speaker. Oh, God, yes, because those people are back on the job in ridings like mine, working in manufacturing. They've got a job. They've got a paycheque, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member will take his seat. Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South will come to order.

The next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. I'm so proud that Ontario continues to be top of mind for businesses that want to invest and expand. However, I think we all agree that the federal carbon tax imposed on the hard-working people of Ontario and our businesses really threatens all of that great progress that we've done as a province.

It's unbelievable the Liberals in this House continue to be silent. They continue to sit on their hands as their federal Liberal colleagues chase investment and jobs out of this province and out of our country. I'd love for the minister to explain how the Liberal carbon tax not only makes life more expensive for Ontarians and our businesses, but how it threatens the progress that you and Premier Ford have been able to make in our province for job creation.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, at every single opportunity they get, the Liberals have hiked taxes. Not only do they continue to hike the carbon tax, but now they plan to cancel the accelerated capital cost allowance. Now, Speaker, that's the exact program that our government put in place to create 700,000 jobs since we were elected. The Liberals are taking that away from our businesses.

Their tax hikes chased 300,000 manufacturing jobs out of Ontario. If they need proof that lower taxes create jobs, just look at our track record: again, 700,000 jobs created since we were elected, 80,000 jobs this year alone.

Enough with the tax hikes. They don't work. Lowering taxes is what works to create the jobs. Scrap the tax today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: We've heard loud and clear from the people of our province: The last thing we need in Ontario is the carbon tax at the federal level. It doesn't matter where you are in Ontario, every corner of the province, every worker tells us that the Liberal carbon tax is making life more unaffordable.

We know that the members opposite are hearing the same things in their ridings that we're hearing, yet they are ignoring their constituents' calls to stand up and ask the federal government to scrap the tax. Their lack of concern and the rapid rise in costs just show how out of touch the provincial Liberals and their federal colleagues are.

We don't believe as a government that lowering emissions by crushing businesses and individuals, making life more unaffordable, is the way to go. So, Minister, can you please elaborate on why it's so important that the federal government scrap that tax?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, I want to thank the member for the question and the great job by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. He's travelling around the world, as he said, creating over 700,000 jobs. We have become now an economic powerhouse, not just in Canada, not just in North America, but around the world.

As we saw in the news there, now Bloomberg said in the headlines that Canada—which should really be Ontario—is now the number one destination for EV battery assembly, right here. We've seen over \$43 billion of investment and over \$16 billion in the tech sector. We have now overtaken Silicon Valley, the San Francisco Bay area, with the most employed in the tech sector.

We've seen over \$3 billion in life sciences and more coming every single day. Last year, Ontario manufacturers created more manufacturing jobs here in Ontario than all 50 US states combined. We've seen revenues go from \$150 billion, from a bankrupt province before we took over, to \$214 billion, a gain of \$64 billion, by reducing—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members will please take their seats.

Start the clock. The next question.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé.

Mike, a proud steelworker, is a 78-year-old resident of Sault Ste. Marie. Mike has diabetes. He is a two-time cancer survivor. Last year, he underwent a heart procedure, so Mike needs frequent consultation with his doctor to manage his recovery and his new medications.

On Friday, Mike, his daughter, two grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and 10,000 more Sault Ste. Marie residents will lose their family doctor. What is the Minister of Health's plan to help the good people of Sault Ste. Marie?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As soon as we were notified by Group Health Centre that they were going to be separating themselves from some of their patients, we energized, we motivated and we got the member from Sault Ste. Marie, who has been working non-stop on this issue—he's actually issuing some very good news for Mike and others in the community today. We are increasing our investments in Sault Ste. Marie.

We've been able to do this because we have set aside and invested in primary care and multidisciplinary teams across Ontario: 78 in total, two in Sault Ste. Marie and more good news coming today from the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Murray and Eunice Patterson were some of the first patients of the Group Health Centre back in 1964. They are now 92 and 88 years old, with mobility and some health issues, but on Friday, they are losing access to primary care.

It doesn't have to be that way, Speaker. The Group Health Centre has submitted solutions, alternatives, to this Minister of Health, and they did not even get a reply. Some 10,000 people in Sault Ste. Marie are losing access to primary care this Friday; no answer, no plan, no action, nothing from this government. How could that be, Speaker?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Members will please take their seats.

The Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It can't be, Speaker, because it is wrong. We have been working actively with Group Health Centre, with the local community and with the MPP from Sault Ste. Marie. Perhaps the member opposite didn't hear me when I answered that the member from Sault Ste. Marie has been working actively with the community to make sure that coverage continues.

Are we going to take the first proposal that comes forward? No. We're going to assess. We're going to review and look at them, and make sure that they are

patient-focused. The announcement that the member from Sault Ste. Marie is making today is exactly that.

ACCÈS À LA JUSTICE

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

M^{me} Lucille Collard: La semaine dernière, j'ai rencontré un avocat francophone à mon bureau de Vanier qui s'est déplacé de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell pour me faire part de multiples exemples décrivant de sérieux manques de services en français à la Commission de la location immobilière—je parle du Landlord and Tenant Board—des histoires d'Ontariens qui ne parlent que le français, mais qui voient leur dossier confié à un adjudicateur unilingue, anglophone, ou des francophones qui sont accusés de créer des délais simplement parce qu'ils demandent des services en français.

La réalité sur le terrain, c'est que chaque jour, la commission viole les droits linguistiques des Franco-Ontariens. Le fait d'être francophone ne devrait pas mettre en péril leur droit à l'accès à la justice.

1120

Donc, ma question pour le procureur général : que fait ce gouvernement pour assurer que dans les 26 zones désignées par la Loi sur les services en français les francophones puissent réaliser leur droit à une audience en français?

Hon. Doug Downey: I'm very pleased, in fact, to stand alongside the minister responsible for francophone affairs. We've expanded French services throughout Ontario not only for interpretation for individuals, free of charge; for filing documents at any court counter across the province. We do actively recruit all the time for adjudicators who are qualified, who are bilingual. We look for them vigorously.

Just yesterday, I sat down with the Windsor-Essex Bilingual Legal Clinic to hear how things are going for them in front of the Social Benefits Tribunal, the LTB and the other tribunals. So Mr. Speaker, not only are we on the job, we're getting the job done.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: La Loi sur les services en français oblige le gouvernement à offrir de façon proactive des services juridiques en français. La loi est claire : la qualité des services gouvernementaux doit être la même en français qu'en anglais.

Cependant, les expériences des francophones démontrent que dans nos cours de justice et nos tribunaux administratifs ce n'est pas le cas. Les francophones sont trop souvent traités comme des inconvénients et des boulets, et forcés de naviguer des processus en anglais. Ils sont obligés de remplir des formulaires en anglais, d'écouter des réponses à leurs questions en anglais ou d'attendre très longtemps avant que du personnel francophone soit disponible pour les aider.

Il est clair qu'il existe un manque cruel de juges et de personnel bilingue dans nos cours et tribunaux administratifs. Donc, au lieu de dépenser plus d'un milliard de dollars pour prioriser l'accès à l'alcool aux Ontariens, ce

gouvernement va-t-il investir les fonds nécessaires pour embaucher plus de juges et de personnel francophones dans nos tribunaux pour que les Franco-Ontariens puissent accéder aux services en français auxquels ils ont droit?

Hon. Doug Downey: Mr. Speaker, we work closely with the Chief Justice of Ontario for postings of judges. There's one open at the moment for Ottawa. We're looking for bilingual judges. The designation of where they're needed is set by the Chief Justice, who is in charge of deploying the judges and managing that.

Mr. Speaker, we actively seek out bilingual individuals when it comes to justices of peace as well, because that's a very important component of our system. But I know, the member opposite—we share the same goal, which is robust services for the people of Ontario. So I'm always open to ideas or to know where the gaps may be, and I look forward to continuing to work with you to solve some of those challenges.

TAXATION

Mr. Mike Harris: My question is for the Associate Minister of Housing. Last month, the federal government increased the carbon tax by a staggering 23%. It is the cruelest April Fool's joke the province has ever seen.

Speaker, the federal Liberals, with the full support of their provincial counterparts, want to triple this tax by 2030. It's not right, Speaker. This disastrous carbon tax is burdening Ontarians and adding more obstacles in housing construction, leaving more young families waiting to achieve their dream of home ownership.

The people of this province cannot afford the carbon tax and that's why we are calling for its complete removal. Speaker, can the associate minister explain how the carbon tax is driving up the cost of building new homes?

Hon. Rob Flack: Let me begin: I want to congratulate our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for negotiating a great deal for Ontario. The National Housing Strategy: We've got our rightful \$357 million that are going to help the most vulnerable in this province. So well done, sir.

Our government is committing to getting more homes built faster. We've seen more homes built in the last three years than we have since the 1980s. We've seen more purpose-built rentals started than in years—actually a record.

But Speaker, as a federal MP, Bonnie Crombie supported the carbon tax. I know that's a surprising fact, but it's true. As a mayor, she said no to housing. She had the worst housing record, one of the worst in the province of Ontario.

So I wonder, Speaker, are the Liberals going to continue to raise taxes? Are they going to continue to support taxes, or are they going to support us by helping get needed infrastructure on the ground and getting homes built faster?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the minister for that response. It's encouraging to hear how our government is

getting more homes built faster and supporting Ontarians' housing needs.

The carbon tax is impacting each and every Ontarian who is looking to buy a home. It not only drives up the cost for home builders, but it is making it more expensive to build the critical infrastructure that each community needs to meet its growing housing demands. If we want to be able to build more homes and make housing more affordable for Ontario families, we need the federal government to remove the carbon tax.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how the carbon tax is also raising the costs of building housing-enabling infrastructure?

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for that important and thoughtful question.

When I think of the budget in 2024, Speaker, I really call it an infrastructure budget. When you think of it, we added a billion dollars in housing-enabling infrastructure. We quadrupled, thanks to the Minister of Infrastructure, the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund. We added \$1.2 billion, as you know, to the Building Faster Fund. That's over \$3 billion, Speaker, that we've invested in our communities, with our municipalities, to get shovels in the ground faster.

What is driving us crazy is this carbon tax. Infrastructure is key to getting homes built, and the cost of the carbon tax is punitive, especially in our rural communities. Rural communities that—it takes longer to get infrastructure there. Transportation costs become punitive.

So, Speaker, let's use the line—it rings true—scrap the tax.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Minister of Education. Humberstone Collegiate in my riding is in desperate need of major repairs. When it rains, the roof leaks, the basement gets flooded, entire sections of the building must be closed off. A classroom ceiling has caved in. These are the conditions that students and teachers are learning and teaching in. It's also a serious health and safety issue.

Minister, you know the problem very well. You have underfunded school repairs for years. Now, we've reached rock bottom. It doesn't get any worse than this when it comes to building maintenance.

If the images and videos I've shared don't lead the minister to fix the schools, I don't know what will.

I want the minister to fix the schools. Are you going to fix it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the members to take their seats, and I'll remind the members to make your comments through the Chair.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We want school boards and TDSB to do their job. The member opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, it was this government and Premier that doubled the funding to build more schools. The Auditor General of this province recommends 2.5% of our budget for maintenance, \$1.4 billion, which has been codified in our budget since 2018. Mr. Speaker, the TDSB is sitting on banked money in their maintenance fund of \$350 million. Just to make sure we understand this: A school board is sitting on \$300 million of banked cash instead of spending it on that very roof. It's such an egregious—

Interjection.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: No, don't shake your head. They are such an egregious violator of the rule that we had to pass a law forcing TDSB to spend their money within two years. It's a dereliction of duty.

Stand up to TDSB and demand better for your students.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development will come to order. Member for Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

Start the clock.

Supplementary question?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Speaker, I'm not even going to ask my supplementary question, because I don't want to hear excuses, I don't want to hear talking points and I don't want to hear positioning of the issue.

What I want the minister to do is take the time, go to the school and fix it. You are the Minister of Education; the buck stops with you. Fix it.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): One more time, I'll remind the members of the House to make their comments through the Chair.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The Minister of Education may reply.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, this is not about lack of funds; it's a lack of will of the TDSB to do their job. You should stand up to the school board who is literally sitting on \$350 million of maintenance funding. What do you not understand about this problem? They have literally a quarter of a billion dollars in cash that they're supposed to spend on maintenance that they don't spend and they keep banking year over year. They became such an outlier—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Ottawa West–Nepean, come to order.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: —because most boards actually spend the money on HVAC and repairs. It became such a problem, we passed a bill that requires school boards to spend the money when it's required in a timely manner.

Stand up to the boards of education who are hoarding cash, who do not in any way uphold their obligations under law to make sure—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Oshawa, come to order. Member for Toronto Centre, come to order.

Hon. Stephen Lecce:—kids are learning in safe spaces. This government doubled the funding, cut the timeline in half—248 schools approved and funded by our government, 100,000 spaces, \$1.4 billion of maintenance. Get on board and stand up for kids.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I feel compelled to remind the House that we are a Parliament. This is not a baseball game.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have no lunch plans whatsoever. I could just stand here all day. The House will come to order.

Start the clock. The member for Haldimand–Norfolk, next question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: My question is to the Premier. There are 2.3 million Ontarians currently without a family doctor, and no admission from this government that this province is headed into a perfect storm.

On Monday, the health minister, in response to a question, suggested the member sit down with hospital CEOs to learn the truth. I've sat down with hospital CEOs and they are clear that health care in Ontario has never looked as grim as it does today.

Last week, I was contacted by a mayor, represented by a government member, who said that in the near future, one third of the population this mayor represents will be without primary care. "We are desperate now," this mayor told me, and yet the minister is on record as saying recruitment and retention of doctors in Ontario is not a major concern.

Speaker, through you to the Premier: If 2.3 million Ontarians without a doctor or a third of a town's population without a doctor is not a major concern, then what constitutes a major concern with respect to health care in this province?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I want to remind the members of the investments that our government has made under the leadership of Premier Ford. In February, we announced expansions and 78 new primary care multi-disciplinary teams.

What's happened since February, Speaker? Couchiching Ontario Health Team is already taking on new patients. The Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle is already taking on new patients. Unison Health and Community Services in Toronto is already taking on new patients. And it goes on and on. In Kingston, in Minto-Mapleton, in Lambton, we are making progress.

We see, for two years in a row, a historic registering of both nurses and physicians in the province of Ontario. Why? Because people want to live here, they want to work here and they want to practise medicine here.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I'm baffled—more and more money being thrown at a system that continues to fail. It's clear health care needs a major rethink in this province; otherwise, I can't help but think that this crisis is a means to an end.

I was on a call recently, and there were government members also on that same call, where a mayor expressed frustration that this government expects him to welcome more and more people through new builds, and yet his local ER is constantly shuttered.

If everything is fine, why are 2.3 million Ontarians without a doctor? Are the hospital CEOs not telling the truth? Are the mayors I speak to being dramatic? What about constituents lining up for hours at walk-in clinics or at ERs? Are they faking it? And why are there thousands of Ontarians set to converge on Queen's Park tomorrow for a health care rally?

Ontarians need a doctor, not rhetoric. Speaker, again through you to the Premier, who is telling the truth: this government, or the very people who rely on an ailing system each and every day?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Perhaps it would help the member opposite if I shared some facts with her. In the last year, we've had 17,000 new nurses register to practise in the province of Ontario. We have had 2,400 new physicians register to practise in the province of Ontario. We've worked with the midwives. We've worked with nurse practitioners. We've worked with nurses to make sure that we increase their scope of practice, to ensure people have access.

But I think that the most important thing that we are doing is actually building our health care services through the students, through the young people. A new school for medicine in Brampton will be taking students on in September 2025. In York region, a brand new medical school will actually focus on family medicine.

We are doing the work. There is more work to do, but we're getting the job done.

TAXATION

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development. At a time of high interest rates and a rising cost of living, the federal Liberals decided to hike the carbon tax by another 23%. The disastrous effects of this costly tax are being felt in communities across Ontario, but especially in the north.

Northerners already pay more at the gas pumps and at the grocery stores as compared to the rest of Ontario. They should not be punished with more tax hikes. Our government will always advocate on behalf of Ontarians.

We will continue to call on the federal Liberals to end the tax now.

Speaker, can the minister please explain to the House how our government is supporting northern communities instead of imposing unjust tax?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I thank the member for her interest in northwestern Ontario. Yesterday I shared with colleagues our annual ritual where myself, my sweet precious Abigail Mae and darling Poppy Kate, and their friends Whisper and Adele joined us in our leap into Lake of the Woods, at 48 degrees.

Interjection: Wow.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Shocking, but what was really shocking, on a more serious note, was, tourist operators were busy getting on the lake too, as well, Mr. Speaker. Now, these are small businesses with very thin profit margins. They've got eight, 10, 12, 20 boats and fuel tanks. Can you imagine the cost of transportation of food and goods so that they can offer tourists from around the world one of the most amazing experiences that northwestern Ontario can serve up?

Mr. Speaker, the message is clear from those tourism operators: The federal government needs to scrap the tax, and our provincial counterparts need to stand with us in keeping costs low so that these folks can make an honest living.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the minister for that response. It is not right that the businesses and families in northern communities are forced to pay more for daily necessities because of this regressive tax. Unlike our government, who is supporting Ontarians, the independent Liberals, under the leadership of carbon tax queen Bonnie Crombie, are supporting their federal buddies. They want to see this tax increase time and time again.

Speaker, we know that unlike other parts of our province, the north faces unique challenges that should be recognized, not taxed. The federal Liberals and their provincial counterparts need to respect northerners and finally get rid of this disastrous tax. Speaker, can the minister further explain why families and businesses in the north cannot afford this costly carbon tax?

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Northern Development.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Speaker, I've spent the past couple of weeks chronicling the happenings among the carbon tax nobility, and it's quite a cast of characters. Of course, you've got the bafflegab coming from the junior ranks: Prince Carney and—I don't know what you would call Jagmeet Singh; maybe duke of the carbon tax. Nonetheless, no clear position on this tax; it's one of convenience, when Canadians speak out against the crushing impact it's having on their everyday lives, Mr. Speaker.

But one thing is perfectly clear: The king of the carbon tax and the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, are

unrelenting in their position. They see this as an environmental policy, when everybody else knows it isn't. What families and small businesses in northwestern Ontario know is that it costs too much to live, it costs too much to operate a business. That's why we need to scrap the tax.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier. Residents at 435 Nelson Street in London are dealing with a terrible landlord. The owners, who call themselves the "House Hustlers," have pushed tenants out so they can drive prices up further. A government that truly cared for people would pass Bill 25, the Rent Stabilization Act, and end the financial incentive to kick people out of their homes. Why does this government allow bad landlords to renovict and make the housing crisis even worse?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you for the question. I'm not aware of the file that the member opposite is talking about, but as he well knows, we have an independent tribunal that will hear complaints, that will hear issues for landlords. We also have a robust legal aid clinic that will likely be able to help the individual.

I can't get into specifics of individual cases, because it is an independent tribunal—it's a quasi-judicial entity—but there are rules in place and those rules will be enforced. I'm happy to hear more of the individual's experience, but we can't wade into an independent process.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The Attorney General would be wise to use the word that has been used to describe the Landlord and Tenant Board, which is "moribund." People do not get their cases heard. This government has passed legislation to have fines, but those fines rarely ever get levied for renovictions.

Back to the Premier: 11 tenants are left at 435 Nelson Street. One started chemotherapy just last week. In an email to residents, "House Hustler" Amanda claimed to have "started the permit process to demolish," yet city records show that no permit has been requested or issued. It's clear: They're trying to scare people into leaving their homes.

When will this government actually stand up for renters and pass legislation to stop renovictions before they happen?

Hon. Doug Downey: There's a lot in there to unpack. We have different tools. We have the renoviction tools for bad-faith actors, if in fact that's what's happening. It's hard to discern without knowing the facts.

But we also have a tribunal that's independent, with independent adjudicators, with rules that can be applied, and that can issue orders. At this point the board is issuing orders within 30 days 90% of the time, from the time of the hearing.

So there are resources. There is also legal assistance, whether it be legal aid clinics or others. I would encourage the member to steer them to the resources that are available, rather than just politicizing the situation of individuals.

TAXATION

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: My question is for the Associate Minister of Small Business. Ontario's manufacturing and automotive sectors are vital components of our economy, contributing significantly to our provincial GDP. Not only are we home to the next mega-factories, but also to many small businesses in the automotive and production sectors that form the bedrock of our economy. These businesses provide well-paying jobs for tens of thousands of workers and drive innovation across the entire supply chain.

But the prosperity of these essential industries is being threatened by the Liberal carbon tax. This regressive tax is driving up costs for manufacturers and jeopardizing their businesses.

Speaker, through you, can the minister shed light on the detrimental impacts this short-sighted tax is having on small businesses in the automotive and manufacturing industries?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the great member from Brampton West for his advocacy towards small businesses in his riding.

The manufacturing industry is the cornerstone of our provincial economy, providing well-paying jobs and driving innovation across a wide range of sectors. Maybe we shouldn't be surprised that the opposition Liberals and NDP have turned a blind eye to the devastating consequences their beloved carbon tax is inflicting on these small businesses; after all, they chased away companies and lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

With the soaring cost of powering their factories and operating machinery to the increased expenses of transporting finished goods, the carbon tax has placed an unbearable financial burden on small manufacturers. In the automotive sector, they're telling me that if the carbon tax keeps increasing, fewer cars will be sold or repaired and they will ultimately cut staff.

While the opposition seems content to let these vital job creators fail, our government will continue to fiercely oppose the regressive tax that's crippling—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the associate minister for the response. It is unconscionable that the opposition parties would so brazenly turn their backs on Ontario's automotive entrepreneurs and the communities that rely on this sector's success.

From Windsor to Ottawa, Kiiwetinoong to Leamington and all points in between, the federal carbon tax is poised to inflict damage on an industry that is the pride of our province. The people of Ontario deserve better. That is why we won't stop calling on the federal Liberals to eliminate this disastrous tax.

Can the minister elaborate further on how our government will continue championing Ontario's automotive businesses and their highly skilled workforce against the threat posed by this short-sighted Liberal tax scheme?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you again to the member for his timely question. Let me be unequivocally clear: Under Premier Ford, our government has understood that the success of Ontario's small businesses, including small manufacturers, is key to the economic well-being of our entire province. I'm talking about businesses that make automotive parts—tool, die and mould makers that employ people from all backgrounds in our province. They are who we're fighting for day in and day out by standing against the federal carbon tax. From cutting gasoline taxes to implementing measures to foster a talented pipeline of skilled workers, our government has already taken concrete steps to ease the burden on these businesses.

Unlike Bonnie Crombie and the carbon tax caucus, we believe we owe it to the tens of thousands of Ontarians whose livelihoods depend on this sector to be their fiercest advocate in this House. I call on the Liberals and NDP to scrap—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The next question.

SENIOR CITIZENS' HOUSING

MPP Lise Vaugeois: A report came out this morning noting that more and more seniors are winding up homeless and living in shelters. Is this the government's answer to the families who are here today whose parents are currently being renovicted out of Heritage Glen as we speak? The minister knows there is no other safe housing available that these seniors can afford. The offer of three months' rent means nothing if you are being ripped out of your home, and it means nothing if you can't afford month four.

You are the government, you have the tools available. What are you going to do to keep seniors from losing their homes, their communities and their security?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The Minister for Seniors and Accessibility will respond.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you for the question. In Ontario, all retirement homes are regulated by the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority, or RHRA. This retirement home is responsible for submitting a transition plan to the RHRA before ceasing operations. The RHRA works with all retirement homes to ensure compliance and that residents receive support in the event of a closure.

We encourage the home to continue to work together with the community organizations and the local government to resettle residents and ensure all are able to live comfortable, healthy lifestyles.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Spadina–Fort York, supplementary.

Mr. Chris Glover: To the Premier: 200 seniors are set to be evicted from Chartwell Heritage Glen on July 31 of

this year, and this government has not taken the action. The people have been asking for responses; they're not getting responses from the government. The mayor of Mississauga has written to this government and to seven Conservative MPPs and not received a response.

What we've uncovered is that Chartwell, since 2004, has received 75 million taxpayer dollars in subsidies. This is the corporation that is now renovating 200 seniors. Will this government stand up to Chartwell and demand that those seniors be allowed to stay in their homes?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

The Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: The retirement home has been working with the RHRA to transition all residents to a new home. Rules are in place to make sure residents are transitioned into new facilities and supported to find the best new accommodations. The retirement home has been able to find a new home for more than 150 residents already, and we know that they are working to ensure every resident is resettled in the best way possible.

We encourage the retirement home and others involved to keep working together to ensure all residents have a safe and comfortable place to live.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period for this morning.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the Premier may have a point of order. Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, I never had a chance to welcome our great firefighters and the leadership. I love our firefighters. If you have time after the vote, please come down to my office. Pay us a visit right after the chamber.

Thank you. Great to see everyone.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin has informed me that he has a point of order.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I would like to correct my record in Hansard. Yesterday during question period, I said, “Does the speaker plan to run” the election “on more alcohol ... sold in Ontario,” when I should have said, “Does the Premier plan to run the election on more alcohol in Ontario?”

And on a further point of information, I have a response to the Premier for a question I was asked yesterday: I will be running as an independent candidate, and I'll leave it to the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin to return me.

DEFERRED VOTES

CHILDCARE AND EARLY YEARS WORKFORCE STRATEGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LE COMITÉ CONSULTATIF DE LA STRATÉGIE RELATIVE AUX PRÉPOSÉS AUX SERVICES POUR LA PETITE ENFANCE ET LA GARDE D'ENFANTS

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

Bill 191, An Act respecting the establishment of a Childcare and Early Years Workforce Strategy Advisory Committee / Projet de loi 191, Loi concernant la création du comité consultatif de la stratégie relative aux préposés aux services pour la petite enfance et la garde d'enfants.

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

The division bells rang from 1153 to 1158.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

On May 28, 2024, Ms. Armstrong moved second reading of Bill 191, An Act respecting the establishment of a Childcare and Early Years Workforce Strategy Advisory Committee.

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

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Gretzky, Lisa	Shamji, Adil
Bourgouin, Guy	Harden, Joel	Shaw, Sandy
Bowman, Stephanie	Hazell, Andrea	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Hsu, Ted	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutila	Tabuns, Peter
Clancy, Aislinn	Kernaghan, Terence	Taylor, Monique
Collard, Lucille	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McCrimmon, Karen	Vaugois, Lise
Fraser, John	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gates, Wayne	Rakocevic, Tom	
Gélinas, France	Sattler, Peggy	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Harris, Mike	Rickford, Greg
Babikian, Aris	Hogarth, Christine	Riddell, Brian
Bailey, Robert	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sheref
Barnes, Patrice	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Breese, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Byers, Rick	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Calandra, Paul	Kerzner, Michael S.	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Khanjin, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Cuzzetto, Rudy	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Graydon

Dowie, Andrew	Martin, Robin	Smith, Laura
Downey, Doug	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Jill	McGregor, Graham	Surma, Kinga
Fedeli, Victor	Mulroney, Caroline	Tangri, Nina
Flack, Rob	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Ford, Doug	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Michael D.	Piccini, David	Wai, Daisy
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pierre, Natalie	Williams, Charmaine A.
Ghamari, Goldie	Pinsonneault, Steve	Yakabuski, John
Hamid, Zee	Quinn, Nolan	
Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew	

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LOWER FARES, BETTER SERVICE ON THE UNION PEARSON EXPRESS ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR DES TARIFS PLUS BAS ET UN MEILLEUR SERVICE SUR L'UNION PEARSON EXPRESS

Ms. Bell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 202, An Act to amend the Metrolinx Act, 2006 to provide for a committee to review matters relating to the Union Pearson Express / Projet de loi 202, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur Metrolinx pour prévoir la création d'un comité chargé d'examiner des questions concernant l'Union Pearson Express.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the member from University–Rosedale to briefly explain her bill.

Ms. Jessica Bell: This bill calls on the government to establish a committee to come up with a plan to make the Union Pearson Express affordable, to integrate it into the TTC so it costs a TTC fare to ride; to increase capacity; and to electrify the line. This would be the cheapest mass-transit line Toronto could ever get. It's very sensible, and that's what this bill proposes to do.

KEEPING PRIMARY CARE FAIR ACT (RESTRICTING PRIVATE PAYMENTS FOR NURSE PRACTITIONER SERVICES), 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À MAINTENIR DES SOINS PRIMAIRES ÉQUITABLES EN RESTREIGNANT LE PAIEMENT PRIVÉ DE SERVICES FOURNIS PAR DU PERSONNEL INFIRMIER PRATICIEN

Mr. Shamji moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 203, An Act to amend the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004 with respect to payments to nurse practitioners / Projet de loi 203, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur l'engagement d'assurer l'avenir de l'assurance-santé à l'égard des honoraires à verser aux infirmières praticiennes et aux infirmiers praticiens.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Don Valley East like to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Adil Shamji: The bill amends the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004. The amendments prohibit nurse practitioners from accepting certain private payments or benefits for providing services to an insured person that would normally be provided as insured services

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 37; the nays are 67.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: 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 159, An Act to amend the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019 / Projet de loi 159, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2019 sur les services provinciaux visant le bien-être des animaux.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

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

Bill 185, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 185, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

in specified settings. Payments or benefits for these services may still be accepted from specified public sources or in accordance with the regulations.

The penalties for contraventions of the act are increased, and a new regulation-making power permits regulations providing for and governing reimbursements of payments or benefits made for these services within six months after the day this act receives royal assent.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition to raise social assistance rates. This petition comes from Sally Palmer.

This petition asks that the rates for Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program be doubled in order to address poverty in Ontario.

I support this petition, and I will be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Sophia.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It gives me—actually, it's quite sad to present this petition on the one-year anniversary of the permanent closure of Minden—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to interrupt the member to remind her that there's no editorializing. She needs to make a brief explanation of the contents of the petition. She can indicate the number of signatures and whether or not she endorses the petition.

I'll return to the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm presenting this petition on behalf of people from Minden that had a permanent closure—Chesley, Clinton, Almonte, Arnprior, Campbellford, Carleton Place, Durham, Hamilton, Hawkesbury, Listowel, Mount Forest, Palmerston, Red Lake, Seaforth, South Huron, St. Marys, Thessalon, Walkerton, Wingham, Fort Erie and Port Colborne. What they are asking for is to keep rural Ontario emergency departments open.

Basically, all of the people who signed this petition live in a community where their emergency room has closed, and they would like the government to take this seriously. They urge the Legislative Assembly to take immediate action to protect the health and well-being of people who live in the rural communities that I just named and to keep their emergency department open.

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

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Adil Shamji: This petition has been brought forward by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, has garnered thousands of signatures, of which I have at least one or two—several hundred at least.

It recognizes the fact that we are in a drug-poisoning epidemic across the province and that consumption and treatment sites and safe consumption, supervised consumption sites have been an essential method of keeping people alive.

The members who have signed this—representing many nurses and people who have been impacted by the drug-poisoning crisis—call for immediate funding to reopen consumption and treatment sites, supervised consumption sites in Windsor, Sudbury, Timmins and in any community that requires it to stop the deaths.

I support this petition and am pleased to submit it to page Jessica.

ONTARIO PLACE

Mr. Chris Glover: This petition is entitled “Save Ontario Place,” and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

It points out that Ontario Place has been a cherished public space for 50 years, it has provided recreation and cultural experiences for Ontarians, and it was designed to celebrate the people of Ontario and the ingenuity of Ontarians—including Eb Zeidler, who was the original architect, Michael Hough, who was the landscape architect—and also to celebrate creating the first IMAX movie theatre. And IMAX is a technology that was developed in Ontario.

They're saying that the plan to lease this out for 95 years to Therme, which is an Austrian spa company, is in breach of the original intention of Ontario Place. It has nothing to do with Ontario and it's a waste of at least \$650 million.

1510

It also talks about how relocating the science centre and destroying that iconic building is also a waste of our tax dollars, another \$400 million there. So they're asking the government to stop the 95-year lease of the Ontario Place site.

I fully support this petition. I will pass it to page James to take to the table.

CHILD CARE

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This petition is entitled “A Future for Child Care in Ontario.” This petition was put together because there is so much risk of child care spaces shutting down in Thunder Bay. The request of the petition is to create an early-years and child care workers advisory commission to develop recommendations on how to support the early-years and child care workforce by addressing staffing shortages, including through a salary scale, increased compensation and improved working conditions.

I fully support this petition. It's extremely important that these issues be addressed. I will give it to Jasnoor and sign it.

TENANT PROTECTION

MPP Jill Andrew: This petition has been submitted by hundreds of constituents from my community in St. Paul's. It is simply titled: "Demand Real Rent Control Now."

There are a lot of constituents, a lot of community members in St. Paul's who are asking for the Conservative government to bring back real rent control, which will help address the housing crisis in Ontario and, of course, in St. Paul's, along with the affordability crisis that's impacting St. Paul's and our entire province, as well as the homelessness crisis. Some of the folks who signed this petition are now living on couches, because they haven't been able to afford the cost of their rent.

We are asking for real rent control now, so that we don't have to see St. Paul's residents go from having rents of \$2,500 per month up to rents of \$9,000 per month for a two-bedroom condominium in midtown. I absolutely support this petition calling for real rent control, because it is calling for an end to the housing crisis, the affordability crisis and the homelessness crisis created by this government.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to present the following petition on behalf of Dr. Sally Palmer. This petition is entitled "To Raise Social Assistance Rates." Across Ontario, people living on social assistance are living in legislated poverty. As the petition points out, the current social assistance rates are well below the poverty line.

It also asks the question: Why was the basic income, instituted during the pandemic through CERB of \$2,000 a month, made standard for others, while social assistance is dramatically lower? It points out that rates are unfair, unreasonable and inhumane. It calls upon this government to do the right thing, listen to its common humanity and double social assistance rates.

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and deliver it with page Sophia to the Clerks.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to table this petition on behalf of the Ontario branch of Ostomy Canada. As you know, Speaker, the cost of ostomy supplies has increased a lot in the last few years. The Assistive Devices Program is mandated to reimburse ostomy supplies at 75%. Unfortunately, the reimbursement rate has not changed since 2016. Ostomy in 2016 would cost you about \$1,200 or \$1,300 a year. It is now double this, yet the grant from the government has not changed.

All the people who signed this petition want the Assistive Devices Program to do what it is mandated to do: that is, reimburse them 75% of the cost of ostomy supplies.

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

ADDICTION SERVICES

MPP Jill Andrew: This petition has been given to me by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. It has been signed by parents, by young people, by health professionals, by social workers, by people who use drugs, and by people who have lost loved ones to the terrible drug toxic poisoning tragedy that is currently happening. It is entitled "Petition for Funding of Supervised Consumption Services Sites, and Consumption and Treatment Service Sites."

Speaker, it is signed by dozens, if not hundreds, of folks, and I want you to know that harm reduction—which this petition is asking for—is health care. The government should address the issue of the drug poisoning tragedy by properly funding supervised consumption service sites in Windsor, in Sudbury, in Timmins—frankly, across our province, wherever they are needed to save lives, and they can do that today.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank a good friend of mine, Ron Michaud, who is the president of the retiree Unifor Local 598 in my riding, for this petition. It's called "Gas Prices."

Basically, what they want is—there are wild fluctuations in the prices of gas. If you come in my riding on a Thursday rather than on a Sunday, there could be up to 15, 20 cents per litre difference in what you're going to pay for the price of gas. If you go further into my riding, into places like Levack and Onaping, where there's only one gas station—or even to Foleyet or Gogama—it's not out of the ordinary to pay close to \$2 a litre for the price of gas.

They know that other jurisdictions, other provinces and other states in the US, have regulated the price of gas. They set a maximum price at which the gas can be sold across the province. That would help the people of Nickel Belt.

This is something that I support. I will affix my name to it, and I will ask page Jasnoor to bring it to the Clerk.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Chris Glover: This petition is entitled "Raise Social Assistance Rates," and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It talks about how social assistance rates, which include Ontario Works and ODSP, are well below the poverty line. The \$733 for somebody on Ontario Works is simply not enough to survive in this province. The \$1,300 for people with disabilities on ODSP is also not enough. You can barely rent a room for that amount of money, let alone take care of somebody or have somebody live with a disability.

They've written an open letter to the Premier and cabinet ministers. They have had this signed by thousands and thousands of Ontarians. They want to double the ODSP and Ontario Works rates. The Ontario Works rates—it has to be more than doubled, minimum. It also talks about how—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): So, again, I appreciate the member summarizing his petition briefly, but I would ask him not to add additional editorial comment or opinion. He can summarize and also indicate the number of the people who have signed the petition, as well as expressing whether or not he supports the petition.

I'll return to the member from Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: The petition talks about how the CERB program established the basic income at \$2,000 a month. This petition has been signed by thousands and thousands of Ontarians.

I fully endorse this petition, and I will affix my signature and pass it to page Farah to take to the table.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Chris Galloway from Capreol in my riding for these petitions. They're called "Enact Anti-Scab Labour Law."

As you know, Speaker, most collective agreements are negotiated without a strike or lockout—that's about 97% of them—but for the 2% to 3% where strikes or lockouts happen, the use of scabs is really hard on communities and leaves long-lasting hardship in the community.

1520

Anti-scab legislation has existed in Quebec since 1978, in British Columbia since 1993, and at the federal level since yesterday, so they would like this to also exist in Ontario. That's why they signed this petition to bring anti-scab labour law—the sooner, the better.

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

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: This petition is in memory of Rona Ramsey from Naughton in my riding, and it's for an MS specialized clinic in Sudbury. We have a centre of hope called the Rona Ramsey centre of hope in Sudbury that Rona Ramsey funded, basically because northern Ontario has the highest rates of multiple sclerosis in all of Ontario.

Many people who live with multiple sclerosis, and their families, have a hard time gaining access to the care they need to treat their disease and stay as active as possible. They would like an MS clinic to be set up in the north-east—more specifically, in Sudbury—to serve the people of the northeast.

Many, many people have signed this petition, especially in honour of Rona Ramsey, who was very active on this file.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S FUTURES ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À SOUTENIR L'AVENIR DES ENFANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 29, 2024, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 188, An Act to amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 and various other Acts / Projet de loi 188, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2017 sur les services à l'enfance, à la jeunesse et à la famille et diverses autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: It truly is an honour to be able to stand in this Legislature as the member for Hamilton Mountain, as well as to be the official opposition critic for children, community and social services.

When I was first elected, in 2011, I was appointed critic of children's services at that time. My first experience of the children's file was to sit in on the Youth Leaving Care Hearings, and what an experience that was. You were here at that time, Speaker. I'm not sure if you had the ability to step in, because many members could and couldn't—it wasn't to point any member out; by no means. It was quite the experience. It was down in the main committee room. There were youth from all over the province who were telling their stories. They were sharing their stories. They were singing their stories. They created poetry. They created many forms of ways of being able to share their very difficult stories.

As kids in care, nobody was coming here and talking about rainbows and lollipops. They were coming here and talking about the struggles that they faced within the children's aid societies, and it was very powerful, and from that came My Real Life Book report, which sat with the Liberals at that time. One of the main features that they had asked for was to create youth leaving care day, and we did that, which was fantastic. It happens every May 14. That day allows us the opportunity to reflect and to reaffirm our commitment to youth in care—because let's not forget that when a youth comes into care, the government then becomes their parent, and as parents, the government has a responsibility to ensure that that youth has what they need to thrive and survive. We definitely heard from youth at that time that the struggles were real. We heard many stories. And today, 13 years later, we're still talking to youth in care and from care and we're still hearing so many struggles.

It's important that legislation comes before this House, because it doesn't happen very often that an act is opened—unless, of course, under this government, it's a lot of housing and building roads. That gets opened a lot, but the youth file does not. The last time that we had a bill under the Child, Youth and Family Services Act was 2017. It's been many years since we've had the ability to debate a very important bill for our most vulnerable youth in this Legislature. It gives me great pride to be able to stand here

in my place, be able to advocate further for young people in care and be able to raise their voices to the best of my ability, as should be each and every one of our jobs, and so I do that very proudly.

When we fast-forwarded to 2018 and this Conservative government came into power, one of the first measures that they did was combine the children's ministry and community and social services. What that did was it took the focus away from kids. To combine it into a very large ministry just allowed the children's needs to be muddled, to not be the focus. That was terribly unfortunate. That was one of the government's first measures, to take away that self-focusing children's ministry.

The next thing they did was they fired the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. They did that really quickly. They did it pretty much under a cloak of darkness, where he found out—not respectfully, through any interview process or even a nice letter; he found out through the media that his office was being shuttered.

The office of the provincial advocate had the ability to bring forward voices and to raise the voices and allow young people to raise their own voices of their needs. We know that there are a lot of kids in this province with great needs and that structures are important to a child's best interest. So not having the ability to raise those voices and to hear those voices clearly, quite frankly, stifled the voice of children. That is probably one of the most crass things that this government could have done on their way in the door in 2018.

We had children around the province who found themselves in groups like themselves that allowed that advocacy to flourish, to nourish each other, to stand together so that they weren't afraid to tell their stories because they were amongst peers who had stories very similar to theirs. All of that advocacy work stopped in 2018 when this government fired the provincial advocate for children. That was really, really unfortunate.

We really didn't get much from the government after that. We know that, under the children's file, the autism file exploded. We've seen a minister who capped funding, who put age caps in, who really took away a brand new program that had just been put into place and was still working its way in. It wasn't a perfect program, but it was a pretty decent program that would have seen many more children be able to access services through the autism file. But the same minister at that time blew that up, because it was a Liberal plan and thought that they could do better when, quite frankly, what it did was it collapsed the system even further. Less kids were in service and just did not get what they needed. So they cut the ministry, then they cut the provincial advocate, and they've allowed children to just kind of coast as it is.

1530

Bringing it up to today, I'll go back to the children's aid societies. For the first time in history, children's aid societies right across this province are running deficits. Last year, they saw a \$15.6-million deficit. For the year coming forward, they're projecting a \$50-million deficit. For the \$15.6 million from last year, the government did a

one-time bailout, and now, children's aid societies this year have no idea what that's going to look like.

So you can imagine the children's aid—their mandate, their mission, is to keep kids at home with their families, to the best of their ability, but to do that costs money. To do that, they have to ensure that services are available when families are in crisis. Mental health, complex critical care, stress levels: These are the types of things that we've seen young people face, which are some of the reasons why they're taken away from their families. So a family is struggling, the young person has some mental health issues, mom and dad are scrambling to be able to get them services and they're just not able to.

We know we have 30,000 kids on wait-lists for mental health services in this province and a two-and-a-half-year wait-list. So when a family is not able to get those services and they find themselves in crisis—because when there's part of the family that's broken down, as you know, it affects the entire family, not just that child. It affects the entire family structure. There can be siblings who are affected. We've heard many stories in several different situations.

Families sometimes find themselves going to children's aid saying, "Please help me. Take my child. Please get them the services they need. Help our family heal and help us get back on track." So we see those kids go into care, and they still don't get the services, because there's no prioritization for those kids who go into care. That was something that was asked for throughout the amendment process of this bill, but the government shot it down and didn't think it was important to pass that amendment.

That is a really important piece. Making sure that someone who's in care—their family is already in crisis. That they're hitting that priority list, I think, is something that should be fundamental. No child should be separated from their family if there's no risk to that child: It's not an abuse case; there's nothing where the parent is doing harm to the child; everybody is trying to work together, but there's a health issue in the middle that's preventing that family from being healthy and safe. To not help that family in their biggest time of crisis—I just think it's a really big missed opportunity, as well as an extra expense that we already know the children's aid can't manage. Like I said, they're running deficits. That was something that I think was a missed opportunity in Bill 188.

Maybe I should back up a bit. What Bill 188 actually does is it provides legislation that the young person has to be notified of the Ombudsman and that—oh, my goodness; I've got so many papers, too many papers. They have to be notified of the Ombudsman and be told how to reach the Ombudsman. Now, that was something that was already in place, but I guess the minister felt that it wasn't strong enough, and so it's put into legislation.

What else it does is that it closes the CPIN file so that no one can just punch in a person's name and have their name pop up and see that they were in the children's aid society for any portion of time in their life. This is critically important, and I congratulate Jane Kovarikova

and Child Welfare PAC, who worked really hard to get that legislation before us and to make that come true.

Imagine being a young person. We were all young people. We all did things that we're probably not proud of. It could be a big thing; it could be a small thing. But everything is written into a person's file by a third party, by another adult. And then when that person is possibly trying to get a job within the children's aid society, maybe they want to adopt a child, anything for any reason, the person's name can be typed in and come up and then, all of a sudden, you're a red flag because you've been a kid in care.

These aren't criminals. They're kids who were taken from their family for whatever reason, and they should not be treated in any way that reflects the fact that they were in care. Even if a youth has a criminal record, that record is sealed at the age of 18, and so now, today, due to this legislation, that will seal those records, which is super important.

What this bill also does is that it strengthens the licensing act for group homes—critically important to ensure that there are heavier fines and that there is possible jail time for those who offend against children who are put into group homes.

If we get into the group home section of what group homes are like today, I can tell you that adding 20 inspectors, which is important, is not going to be enough. It's not going to be enough to actually change the land of the group homes.

We know that there are so many for-profit, unlicensed group homes in the province of Ontario, and we have heard horror stories come from those homes. One of the amendments that we had asked for to strengthen that was to ensure that, when an inspector does go to a home, the kids are home. That's not much to ask for. There's no sense in going at 11 o'clock in the morning when the kids are all expected to be in school, right? To ensure that a young person is able to speak in privacy when that inspector was there, instead of having fear of reprisal and being scared to speak out in front of, possibly, whoever works in the group home; to ensure that people who work in group homes actually have credentials, because we've seen and we've heard—right in Hamilton—young people working in group homes. One story was of this young woman, barely 20, in charge of 15-, 16-year-old boys who really ran over her and did whatever they wanted. But there was talk about appropriate clothing of the young woman and appropriate behaviour of the young woman.

This is a young woman who's applied for a job, and it's our responsibility as adults and as legislators to ensure that the people who apply for those jobs and the people who get those jobs have the proper credentials, understand youth with mental health, understand the lay of the land, are able to have a control system and an adult-over-child capacity in group homes like this. Instead, the house was complete chaos at all times of the day, with many complaints from the neighbourhood and the community about what they've seen and what concerned them from that home. So that's a prime example.

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We also know of group homes who have locked windows. They have removed doors from bedrooms. We have seen fires. We have seen deaths. We have had young people die by suicide and been missing for six months and nobody looked for them. That was just pretty much on the same property back in a field. These are the things that we have seen in our group homes.

So just to add 20 inspectors and no actual teeth around them, other than a fine—by the time you get to a fine, it's too late. It's reactive instead of proactive. And I think that's what we were really hoping to do. We brought several amendments forward trying to strengthen the bill, and yet, the government found it necessary, time and time again—every single one of them, actually—to vote against them.

And it's really unfortunate because we had no issues with this bill whatsoever. Sometimes it's just really great to work cordially together and to say, "I support this legislation," and to be able to continue to talk positively about it, but independent officers of the Legislature as well as former youth in care had given us several ideas of where it wasn't enough.

The Ombudsman laid it out. He literally did the work and had the amendments written out: By adding, "Where a child wants to enter into an agreement under this section and a society decides not to enter into an agreement, the child shall be informed, in language suitable to their understanding, of the existence and role of the Ombudsman of Ontario and how the Ombudsman could be contacted." So as soon as a person goes into care, they should have an automatic, "Here you go. This is how you reach the Ombudsman," and when you leave, just like when you leave a job, you have an exit interview—"Here's, again, the information that you need."

One of the other amendments that we asked for was that—and we all know this to be true: Young people aren't necessarily picking up the phone to call anybody. They live in a digital society, right? We know that everything young people do is typically a text message or an Instagram or somewhere—and that's how they proceed. Many young people don't pick up the phone. Some parents will say, "My kid will never call me. The only thing I ever get is a text message." So how do we ensure that we're getting this information to young people and that we're giving them the ability to text in, to send that message in and not have to pick up the phone to call, which many of them wouldn't do. Unfortunately, the government voted that down too.

We asked for information to be given in a person's language to ensure that the language was suitable to the young person's needs. That was voted down. They were just amendments to tighten up the bill that was already there, to truly ensure that young people have the ability to be heard and that they had the ability to know what their rights were in their own language, and that the government voted that down I think is absolutely shocking. I offered the committee members to take a five-minute recess so they could go and confer with staff, to see if they could

support an amendment like that, but they refused that also. I tried to help them, but they didn't even want that.

"The CYFSA should be amended to require all employees of youth justice facilities to co-operate with investigations conducted by a children's aid society"—that was a proposal that the government also turned down, and that was a request of the Ombudsman. Any time that a person comes into contact with that young person, those adults should be responsible to speak out. That was turned down by the government. That was the Ombudsman. You're giving the Ombudsman powers, but you don't want to give him the rules around it and the tools around those powers to be able to do his job well. I think that's a complete missed opportunity by this government.

Really, just for the sake of, they think that they put out a bill and that it's right—well, colleagues, how many bills have we seen put in front of us that the government has had to retract, or put a new bill forward? There have been several, and I believe the animal bill, the PAWS bill, that's currently in front of us is another example of just exactly that. We're watching it happen in real life right now. They had to not proclaim things, and then they're putting forward amendments to clean up a mess that they created before.

We had told them that it was a problem, because we hear the stakeholders. We bring those voices forward. We listen to the experts. We bring those voices forward, and they shut it down. That is just more wasted time in the Ontario Legislature, wasted dollars, for the amount of time we spend in this Legislature, and really, just a big waste.

If the government would see fit to just pass one amendment, two amendments—we don't scratch these out on the back of a napkin. We're not sitting at night with our crayons and a bottle of wine making stuff up, trying to get the government to pass these things. We're actually getting these amendments from the Ombudsman, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Ontario children's aid societies. People had real things to say.

Like I said, it has been since 2017 that the act has even been opened, so this was the opportunity to dot the i's, cross the t's, give the Ombudsman what he needs to do his job, and they did not.

We also asked that we stop the for-profit sector of group homes, and the government shot that down. We asked that children not be placed in hotel rooms, Airbnbs, children's aid society offices and for-profit, unlicensed group homes, and the government shot that down. Why? Why is the question.

Let's remember again, the children's aids are underfunded. A kin care family could be the grandparents or the aunts and uncles of a young person, and they may very well not have the means to be able to take in a kid—their grandchild or niece or nephew or whatever it may be. There may be a need for beds, cribs, school clothes, extra food in the house. We all know the cost of living has certainly ballooned and people's paycheques have not, particularly for grandparents. We know grandparents are struggling. Pensions haven't gone up, and yet the cost of living has. Those families are not afforded the same

amount as a foster family would be. A foster family, I believe, gets \$1,000 a month; a kin care family gets \$300. So we're kind of alienating those possibilities because the family can't afford it. What happens is, those kids come into care, we have no foster placements, because the lack of work that's done to build community around vulnerable kids—does not exist. It does not exist—to build that community care and to find places to be able to care for our kids.

Interruption.

Miss Monique Taylor: Sorry about that. Sorry, broadcast.

1550

So that's a problem, right? Instead, we literally have a young person with autism who is sleeping in a children's aid office currently, right now.

CUPE did a full report. They did a survey of their members to discuss, to find out data, because this government refuses to collect data when it comes to kids in care and to track outcomes—a huge failure. That was something else we asked for; the government shot it down. How important it is to know where you come from and the struggles that you face to improve it for the future—you can't do that if you don't have actual data, and this government does not collect data.

So CUPE surveyed workers at 27 agencies and received responses from 20 of them. The survey found, "Every single agency that responded has placed a child or youth in an unlicensed home in the last 12 months, with the vast majority having used unlicensed homes multiple times.

"Three agencies had placed children as young as five in hotels and motels."

Let's talk about living in a hotel and motel. There is no ability to cook a proper, healthy meal. It's just not happening, right? So we have children's aid workers who are being full-time caregivers in hotel rooms, scrambling to try to give this child—who is already in crisis, could possibly have traumas, possibly have mental health, possibly have complex care—a proper home in a motel room.

We're now putting them further at risk of trafficking, of drug consumption—just all of the things that a young person shouldn't be tossed into, and it's happening. "Three agencies have placed children as young as five in hotels and motels." Babies—five years old. You can't cook them a meal. What are you going to give them, an iPad and a TV? What is their life in a hotel room? Garbage—that's what it is. But they didn't want to stop it.

"Three agencies have placed children or youth in CAS offices." As I just said, currently we have a young person today who has been there for months already, with autism, in a one-room hotel room.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Alone?

Miss Monique Taylor: No, they have a children's aid worker with them. But there's no continuity. Children's aid workers are turning over; people are changing shifts. We already know the young people with autism are struggling and at high risk, and we're putting them in CAS offices.

“Workers in nine agencies said that children in unlicensed homes do not receive the mental health treatment and other support they need to thrive.” So they’re in an unlicensed home. We have no real regulation over what’s happening to them, because they’re a for-profit typically, and they’re not receiving the mental health treatment or other supports they need to thrive. This is how we treat our most vulnerable children. These are the children who the government is responsible for. They are their parents. I cannot stress that enough.

“Some examples from the last 12 months:

“—20 children as young as five years old in Brant, Norfolk and Haldimand counties;

“—more than 10 children in Windsor;

“—five children and youth in Frontenac-Lennox;

“—five children and youth in Nipissing-North Bay have been placed in unlicensed homes.”

Their solution was, “Pass legislation that prohibits the use of unlicensed placements for children.” We tried; they said no.

“Consult with service providers and workers during funding model redesign to account for cost of upstream interventions.” That piece is critical moving forward—absolutely critical, to change the funding formula and the way that children’s aid societies are funded, because they can’t continue to live in deficits and to have bailouts. They have capital costs; they have maintenance costs. They have to be able to retain staff. They have to be able to build community around kids so that we have foster parents.

“Expedite the licensing process for foster homes and new treatment facilities.” Actual, real licences—expedite them. Make sure that they have that process in place and that there is oversight and regulation.

“End the privatization of care providers”—absolutely so critical.

I want to talk about some of the comments that we’ve heard in regard to kids in care. This came from an article that I read into the Hansard in second reading, but it’s important that we continue to talk about this and that we continue to push the government to stop the for-profit model.

Connor Homes: I don’t know if they’re millionaires or billionaires, but they have so much money, they call kids cash cows. They call them paycheques. Imagine, “paycheques”—they’re children who have been taken away from their homes, who are living lives of trauma already. Cash cows and paycheques—that’s why we need to take it out of there.

There were stories that, for Christmas, kids would get a little bit of clothing for Christmas and no other gifts. The lack of real food in the home, the nutritional value just was not there, because the unlicensed are unregulated. You’re giving them to the wolves and expecting these poor, young, defenceless children to survive. We’ve seen the human trafficking of these children, abuse—I’ll say it again—death. If they make it through, sometimes they’re just taking their own lives and dying by suicide because they can’t take it.

This is the scenario that you refused to address under this. You’ve had recommendations from all of these folks for quite some time that could have been addressed in this bill, that we haven’t addressed in years, and you refused to do it. You did some minor changes, great that they are, but they do not change the safety of kids in care. They do not change the safety. They protect the person as an adult when it comes to privacy—perfect, as they should. But jeez, I’d hate to read some of those files of kids who have been living in these unlicensed care providers and what was said about them.

One of the other things that was asked for was by a former youth in care who came to depute in front of us. She said that when she was 15 or 16—I can’t remember; it was right around that age. She was at the society. She was in a meeting. They offered her lunch. She said, “I was in a bad mood, and I wasn’t happy, so I refused lunch.” In her report that she read all those years later, it said that she had an eating disorder. She had an eating disorder because she refused lunch that day. She says, “I remember the day exactly.” She says, “I was in a bad mood. I was mad at them. I wasn’t going to eat their lunch, and I didn’t want it.” So all of a sudden, they write in her file—that’s in her file for the rest of her life—that she has an eating disorder.

And it took her months and months and months and months and months to be able to get her own file. That was one of the amendments also, that youth, after they’ve left care, should have the right to their files. When they get their files, if they ever get them, it’s highly redacted. There’s much information that they would claim is false and not true. They were asking, first, to be able to get their file, that it not be redacted and that they have the ability to edit their file. Now, we know that if changes come into the medical sector, all of the information is still there—it’s crossed out, but you can still see it—and the new information is added. That’s what we were asking for. The government said no—no. It’s this person’s life, she lived it, and anybody can write anything they want and nobody is able to change that or to fix it or maybe even see it? How does that seem possibly right or fair in any manner? It doesn’t.

1600

So, once again, youth in care or youth from care, young people who have lived in care, are punished. They’re punished for not doing anything wrong. They’re punished for getting stuck in a situation that they didn’t ask for. That’s not okay—not okay at all.

Part of the bill that I was happy to see was that there would be a child-centred focus and that there would be whistle-blower protection. Both of those things I had private member’s for in this chamber and so I was happy to see some of it enrolled in here. I think that whistle-blower protection is very important for people in the workforce who are working there and are afraid of losing their jobs if they see things that aren’t right, and so I was very happy to see that.

The other piece that I think—I guess I would say it goes under the lack of funding and the lack of homes that are available—would encounter the story of Mia. Mia is 16

years old—was 16 years old. She was struggling at home; home life was not good. She had asked to be in care. It's got to be bad for a kid to ask to be in care. She wanted to be in care. She wanted to have a safe home. She wanted to go to school.

The children's aid denied her. They denied her because they probably didn't have funding and they had nowhere to put her. So they dropped her off at a shelter, at a youth shelter, and kind of said, "Here you go. This is where you're going to fend for yourself." And a couple of months later, Mia died. It was a kid who was asking for the help from her government which she should be entitled to. Now, Mia's no longer with us because she was failed. She was failed by the system that has a duty to protect her.

When we ask for changes within the child welfare sector, we're asking for a reason. We've asked for changes because something has gone wrong. We shouldn't have to just always react to everything. There should be proactive measures in place to re-look at things, to re-evaluate, and then to instantly change it, to get it in, to get it done and move forward so that nothing like that happens again.

But that doesn't happen here. We see it time and time again, where people are left to fend for themselves. And we can't expect kids to fend for themselves when they're kids. We don't expect it from our own kids. We're at home taking care of our kids. We cook them dinners and make sure their clothes are washed and that they're keeping their rooms clean. But we don't see any of that when it comes to our most vulnerable children and youth, and that is the responsibility of the government, to make sure that kids in care have what they need.

The government will say that they put \$170 million in, I believe, but that's for a new program. That's for the Ready, Set, Go Program. That's to start kids at the age of 13 to be able to ready themselves to get out into the world, because once they become 18, unless they're in school, they're out. They don't have a parent to fall back on, to help them—to help them learn how to drive a car or just give them that parental advice that we give all of our kids to the best of our ability. They have no one to ask.

The Ready, Set, Go Program is a really important program. I think it's great that it's in place, but that can't be the only measure. We can't underfund all the rest of the sector of the children's aid societies just because we're educating kids to be adults. It's a great step forward, but while they're there, we still need to make sure that they have safe housing that's protecting them and that they're not being called cash cows, because that is probably one of the most horrifying things that I have ever heard. And it is a reality. That is what happens in a for-profit system, because people are more concerned about the dollars that they're making instead of the kids that they're actually supposed to be representing and protecting.

I heard another story not that long ago from someone who works in a group home. They had a young Indigenous girl in the group home. She was just starting to function. She had made a friend. For the first time, she had someone who she was bonding with, and they were thriving. The home received a call that said, "Tell so-and-so to pack her

bags. We're on our way." They showed up, and she literally had to pack what she had and was taken out of there and sent to a shelter because they didn't have any more funding to be able to keep her in that home any longer—this, again, is a for-profit system.

If we're basing how we treat our kids in care by how much money the children's aid societies have, and we're leaving them in deficits—you can see where I'm going, right? I mean, it takes money to be able to run these systems and to protect kids. It can't be the ministry that constantly gets cut. It just—you can't do it. You have to fund the children's aid societies appropriately.

The OACAS says:

"Addressing the legislative gaps, such as:

"—urgent basis placements of 16- and 17-year-olds who do not have the capacity. The CYFSA does not provide a mechanism to commence a protection application on an urgent basis for youth over the age of 16.

"—emergency medical decisions for children and youth that are brought into care during the initial five-day period prior to the removal hearing."

So this addresses the fact, again, of making sure that there's proactive work done.

The medical decisions: We've heard of complex care kids, critical care kids, critical medical health care kids that are removed from families and put into care. This is another story that I heard directly from a family: Mom is at home. She's trying to care for her kid. The child has very high needs, needs nurses around the clock to come into the house. They're struggling to get these nurses into the homes at the cost of now what it costs to get a nurse into a home because they're coming from temp agencies. So the cost for those nurses has ballooned, but the complex care money has not, so mom keeps running out of money. So she's struggling. She's trying to get help. She's trying to make sure that she has enough money to keep these nurses into the home and keep her kid breathing.

They took her kid from her because she wasn't able to provide that care, and it went on for quite some time. I actually haven't had an update from that family in a while, but they literally took the kid because mom wasn't able to afford that complex care and those nurses that had ballooned out of control under this government. The kid was taken into care—but then it just became the cost of the children's aid, to be able to manage those costs, which was a problem and which they had a very difficult time doing. So that's just a prime example of not providing supports at home.

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The Children's Aid Foundation of Canada said to increase investments in mental health supports for children and youth in care, and implement a comprehensive mental health strategy to help improve health outcomes after care for those who have left care.

Investing in a person's mental health is a great investment to ensure that they have the ability for better outcomes. So I think that we should be doing that. But we know that mental health care waits in this province are two-plus years, for people to be able to access that care.

So that doesn't really work, nor does it help support the family or the kid.

The Child Development Institute said to consider creating a regulatory college for child and youth care workers, as this would enhance oversight and training. We put an amendment forward for this, and the government turned it down. I think that it's an important piece—to be able to have a mechanism in place, as a college; to be able to have that complaint process; to be able to have the oversight; to be able to have the regulatory body to oversee social workers for youth in care. The government turned it down.

A young woman with lived experience said to consider measures to ensure family cohesion, especially among siblings in care, who can be unique sources of support for each other; and implement a comprehensive mental health strategy to help improve health outcomes after care for those who have left care. That's the same as what the Child Development Institute had asked for.

We heard about mental health quite often from the hearings, and yet it all fell on deaf ears with the government.

Making sure that siblings have the ability to see each other, to spend time together, to keep that family network together, to keep that family support structure together is so important. There's nothing more important than siblings, as they're growing up, especially if siblings are struggling in a family that is not doing well.

Victim Services Toronto said to consider measures to address human trafficking of children and youth in care—none of that was addressed in Bill 188, which was definitely a missed opportunity; consider measures to ensure family cohesion—like I said, this other person also said that; and regularly engage with children and youth in care to give them a voice as to their needs and experiences and ensure a child-centred system.

There's nothing more important than a child-centred system—not members who refuse to listen because they think they know everything best, but really having the ability to make changes when changes are necessary, and to listen to proactive measures that our community with lived experience brings forward.

It's mind-blowing that they refused to listen to the Ombudsman's request, the Information and Privacy Commissioner's request, the OACAS request. All of these people who the minister said they worked with throughout the bill—and maybe they did; I can't dispute that. I have no proof, nor would I, so I'm not going to say that they didn't talk to them; they probably did. But after talking to them, they never heard from them again, and then the bill's in front of them, and they've seen pieces that should have been there and they were rejected.

So if you're actually saying that you want to work with communities and you care about the voices of these people who brought their experience forward, why would you shoot down every amendment that they asked for?

Quite frankly, the government should have brought forward their own amendments with the voice of the Ombudsman and the information privacy—the government is asking the Ombudsman to increase their abilities

and their roles and yet refuses to give them the tools to do so. It doesn't make sense. It is not in the best interests of the child, by no means.

It's very minimal, the cost that would have been associated to that. Every kid who comes into care meets with a worker right away, so that was one of the asks: at that initial meeting, to make sure that child knows who the Ombudsman is, information about the Ombudsman—and written in children's language, not written as something that we see in legislation. How do we talk to kids in their age appropriateness? That would have been important. Speaking to them in the language that makes sense to them—that would be important. Giving them the tools to say, "You can text the Ombudsman at this number. You can text a complaint or you can text a concern to this number," because young people are digital. We live in a digital era. This is how our young people connect.

But instead of taking the Ombudsman on his word of what he needed to be able to do his job, they turned it down. That was probably one of the most mind-blowing ones to me. Do I expect them to turn down the not-for-profit? Absolutely. I expect that all day long from the Conservatives. They believe in a for-profit system. They believe in our health care being privatized. We're seeing it across the board. So I expect them to turn down amendments like stopping the profit, like stopping them from calling kids "cash cows." But I expect it.

But something like that? The government should have had their own amendment to the bill. You don't always get it right the first time, and you've had plenty of legislation throughout this House, time and time and time again, to prove that you certainly don't often get it right the first time.

The members, we know that when they go into committee, they already have their marching orders. They know exactly what they're going to do. It's all laid out in a plan in front of them. I asked for a five-minute recess so that they could go and confer with the staff to see if they could accept this amendment. And they said no to the five-minute recess, probably because it was almost lunchtime or something and they were in a rush. I don't know. It really was that time of the session—

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member from Hamilton Mountain. I recognize the member from Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Based on standing order 25(k), I suggest that the member be required to retract that last remark.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I'll allow the member to continue.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker.

I mean, I have no idea why the government refused to accept amendments that would just make their bill better.

I have said all the way along, Bill 188 is good. It's good steps in the right direction. Does it go far enough? No. Will any bill ever go far enough? No. But we could have made the vital effort. We could have made those small changes that had been asked for by people who lived in care, who

work in care, who are independent officers of this Legislature, to strengthen the bill, so then, when the bill passed, I could have walked over and shaken the minister's hand and said, "Good job."

But instead, everything becomes partisan, and it makes everybody angry, and it makes everybody feel like they're left out and let down.

We have former youth in care who have worked for this government—literally worked for ministers. I see her in the hallways. I hug her. I know her from her advocacy. She was one of the people who came and spoke to us and had asks about her privacy and about her ability to read her own file and her ability to change it. She works for you guys half the time, and it still was a no. It was a no.

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These are important things to youth in care. And unless you've had to live that and be a part of that, I guess you never know how it feels, right? I mean, I did not, but I remember I had foster brothers and sisters. My parents always had kids in care living with us, and I remember the struggles—now, when I look back; as a kid we didn't know. We all played together. She babysat us. She gave us the best bubble baths ever.

It's just really unfortunate that these important voices that took the time to submit to committee, to come to committee, to spill their hearts to committee of what it felt like and what they're asking for and what they needed, the ability to tell their own story—that's what they want. They want the ability to tell their own stories and that it be factual, not based on how somebody else felt because you didn't eat your lunch, so you've got an eating disorder. That's not okay. That's not okay for somebody to read about themselves.

Like I said, I really wish that I would have had the opportunity to, when this bill passed, to walk over to the minister and say, "Good job, you did it. Well done." But, instead, I'm going to say, "It was all right, Minister. You did okay, but you could have done better. You could have done better." It's a fact. We could have done better. We could have done better by working together, by including the voices of people that are experienced in the child welfare sector, not in political action.

That's my hour, and so I appreciate the opportunity that I've had to work on this bill. I thank all of the voices who came to us, who sent their submissions, who tried to make this bill better.

We won't give up. We will continue to fight until the day that our child welfare sector actually truly serves the children of this province to the best of its ability and that we can always ensure that when a child or a family is in need, that they have a safe home, that we know we can count on, we can put our kids there safely, not because we want to, but because it's necessary and the government has a duty to protect them. Hopefully, we'll one day get to that day.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for questions and answers.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: To the member from Hamilton Mountain: Thank you very much for your speech

here today. I can tell there was a lot of feeling there, so thank you.

When the Fostering Privacy Fairness Act, which contained many of the same privacy measures as in this bill, came up in debate in 2021, the Leader of the Opposition said, "It perhaps goes without saying, Speaker, that children end up in the system through no choice of their own, and they should be protected accordingly. But then, as adults, they find that their personal information can be accessed. This has been proven repeatedly to be a barrier as they enter into adulthood, seek jobs and so on."

My question: Does the member agree with the sentiment from here and what this bill is doing now?

Miss Monique Taylor: Absolutely. That's a great thing about this bill. I commend everyone who worked on that—Jane Kovarikova from Child Welfare PAC. This has been going on for years. I've been meeting with Child Welfare PAC for years as the critic under this file and so, yes, I applaud that being here. There are measures that are missing under that same piece. Yes, they should have—but they need to have access to their files. They need to have self-access to the files, and they need to be able to correct their files when they know that there's something seriously not right in it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for your speech today, and I'm so glad that you are the critic of children, community and social services, because it's obvious from the member's speech that she has a real passion for defending children, and especially for fighting for children in care and making sure that they get the best opportunities that are possible.

Currently, you also described—there were a number of anecdotes, but one that stuck out for me is that you were talking about a child with autism who's staying in a children's aid office, I believe. Could you just talk about how that happened and how we fix that? How do we make sure that every child in care is actually in an appropriate home?

Miss Monique Taylor: Absolutely. Thank you to the member from Spadina-Fort York. That was one of the amendments we brought forward, saying, "This is not okay. You cannot put a kid in an Airbnb or a motel or a children's aid office because there's nowhere else for that child to go." That just shows you the lack of services and autism services. What kind of services did that child get for autism? Probably none, and now they're being failed by the system once again, because the parents obviously weren't able to manage or handle that child and so they're being stuck in a children's aid office because there's nowhere else who will take them.

That's absolutely egregious that we see that in the province of Ontario, and it starts with a lack of services right from the start with the autism services.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Understanding that Bill 188, the Supporting Children's Futures Act, will not be our final bill with MCCSC, I just wanted to touch upon the Ready,

Set, Go Program. On April 20, 2021, the Leader of the Opposition stated, “The research is clear and it is exhaustive. It shows that the system needs to be overhauled to prepare youth better to transition into adulthood. Kids now are aging out with no transitions or supports past the age of 18.”

Our government understood the challenge, and that’s why we launched the Ready, Set, Go Program, a program for youth leaving care across the province to set them up for success until the age of 23. When approval of that measure came up for a vote in this House, every single member of the opposition present voted against it. Does the member opposite now regret this?

Miss Monique Taylor: I think it must have been in a budget bill, which we would have of course voted against, but I think that any time that we’re supporting youth is a good measure.

I wonder if the member regrets his vote against the amendments from the Ombudsman and from the Information and Privacy Commissioner. That member was one of the members who voted against every amendment that was brought forward to this legislation. The question goes back: Does he regret voting against kids at that time?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I want to commend the member from Hamilton Mountain. Of course, it’s not an easy feat to speak that long on a piece of legislation, and she was able to complete that—

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: Sorry, sorry, I didn’t hear you at all.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Nepean to ask a question. We weren’t standing at this time.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I commend the member from Hamilton Mountain. It is not an easy feat to speak in this Legislature on a piece of legislation for the length of time which she has. I heard a lot of criticism throughout the remarks, which is fair; that’s why we’re here.

She did indicate that she did support a piece of the legislation which was on the privacy aspect. I was in committee while she was there, and we heard three deputations where that was supported.

My question is a very simple one: Is she going to support this piece of legislation and move it forward after she was able to air her concerns?

Miss Monique Taylor: I have said from the beginning that I had no problems supporting Bill 188. They are measures going forward that are necessary. I just think it’s so unfortunate that we weren’t able to work together as a whole, as an entire province. The Ombudsman, the Information and Privacy Commissioner—I can’t stress that enough—former youth in care, the OACAS, Native Child and Family Services, all of these folks had pieces to add to the bill. They’re the people who you’re truly letting down when you don’t add these amendments to strengthen bills that are brought forward. It’s been 2017 since we’ve seen

any going forward. So can the member maybe let me know whether they plan on bringing all these—

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I’m interested in whether there is space in the bill—any indication of a return of the Child and Youth Advocate. The reason I’m asking about this was because I had the privilege of attending an event sponsored by the Child and Youth Advocate. At this event were all kinds of leaders, community leaders, who were sitting around the table, and a group of young people who had been working together on a program called Feathers of Hope came and shared poetry, skits, talks, talked about their lives. The purpose was, really, to inform the leadership of their experiences. It was an opportunity to give them voice and it was very powerful.

So my question is, do you recognize the importance of the child and youth advocate and are you optimistic that that position can return?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from Thunder Bay. Yes, the advocate was one of the greatest offices and advocates that the children of Ontario could possibly have had.

I was also at that table, Feathers of Hope, in Thunder Bay a few years back and heard those voices and the pleas for help from those young people to hear what they had to say. We’ve seen so many young people die on the streets of Thunder Bay, and the lack of what’s been done still to date continues to provide ill fate for those young people.

There is nothing more that I would like than to see the child advocate’s office be re-implemented to ensure that children, regardless of where you fit in, will have a voice and an advocate and peers around them to be able to support—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions? We have time for one quick question and one quick response.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The legislation we’re discussing today already enshrines that a child is to be informed in the language suitable to their understanding. It’s enshrined in section 3, again in section 9 and again repeated in section 65 and section 171. So why would you want to amend something when it’s already doing—

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

Miss Monique Taylor: If the member wasn’t listening, it wasn’t me that created that. It was the Ombudsman and the Information and Privacy Commissioner that asked for those amendments to be able to—

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Why would you want to amend it if it’s already there?

Miss Monique Taylor: Why would the independent officers of the Legislature ask for amendments that—

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: I didn’t ask for a fight. You asked me a question. It was those people that brought it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I remind the member to address your comments through the Chair.

Miss Monique Taylor: Sure. Sorry, Chair. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for further debate.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Mississauga Centre.

This is one of those bills that, when I first looked at getting involved in politics, was something that I thought had a great deal of value and something that we should be doing. I really do commend the minister for this.

We've taken a look at some of the challenges that we have in child protective services, in the CAS, in foster care, and we've looked at how we can ensure that every child, no matter the situation they come from early on in their life, has an opportunity to succeed. I have to commend the minister on this because he's done some excellent things.

One thing that I really think hasn't gotten an awful lot of conversation about that we have to really point out is increasing the age from 21 to 23. The reason I say that: There are so many things that we do in government, there are so many things that we do in society, and we look at it and we've taken that arbitrary age—typically, it's 18—and we've said, "Once you hit 18, something changes. A switch is flipped."

But the reality is, every one of us matures at a different rate at different stages of our lives. By increasing it from 21 to 23, what we're recognizing is that sometimes your chronological age of 21 doesn't actually match your emotional age, and by increasing it to 23—yes, it is still a chronological age. But what it's doing is, it's giving the ability, then, to recognize that some of those individuals who have had traumatic experiences, who have been through different situations that maybe none of us actually truly understand—their emotional state may not put them in that same position as if they were coming from a more well-off family that has provided all kinds of supports for their kids. We're recognizing that every child in this province deserves to have that opportunity to succeed, and the difference between age 21 and age 23 isn't that great when we're talking about the number of days, but it could make a massive difference in someone's life.

I have three kids, and my kids all matured at different rates, as well. One daughter was ready to be on her own at 18. Another daughter of mine probably wasn't ready to be on her own until she was 20. My son is 26 and still lives in my basement, but he is a kindergarten teacher and he is trying to move on. And he's not in the basement because of his emotional state; it's because his mother doesn't want him to move out.

There are so many things that we take for granted as parents, and one of them, in particular, that I want to touch on is, I don't have a scorecard or a spreadsheet or a filing cabinet in my house where I have kept track and documented everything that my kids did. I can't go to the filing cabinet and pull something out and say, "On January 21, 2017, here's what you did, and here's what our reaction was to it"—but our child protective services, our

CASs, actually do have that. And the ability, then, as an adult, once you've left the system, to know that everything you did that was documented, that was put down on paper is not going to be held against you, I think, is one of the most valuable things.

We take a look at social media now—and I've seen this talked about a number of times. I was born in the 1970s, but I really was an 1980s kid, in terms of what I did. All the things I did as a child, all the things I did as a teenager are not documented and put on the Internet. We've got kids today who, through no fault of their own, were placed in protective services; the CAS was involved. They were taken to a foster home—trying to give them something of a better life. And yet, we documented all of that stuff, and that was made available. What this bill does—one of the key things for me is, it takes that away. The things that you did once—you have the right for it to be forgotten. That's something that's enshrined in this bill, and I think it's very, very important that it is.

We've made some changes to child protective services workers and police, so that someone who has been human-trafficked at the age of 16 or 17 can be taken from that situation and can then be given an opportunity to improve their lives.

There has been a lot of conversation about sex crimes over the last six years, and even before. The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock introduced a private member's bill—Saving the Girl Next Door—bringing some of that to light, and one of the scariest statistics on it is that the average age of a girl who has been human-trafficked is 12 years old. In Ontario, that is going on. Making it so that the police and social workers have more tools to help rescue some of those young women, to give them that opportunity to actually have a meaningful and fulfilling life, and to escape some of those challenges—that's something that is enshrined in this bill, and I think it is something that is very, very powerful.

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One of the things that I was surprised on, but the chief of staff for MCCSS talked to me about it a few times: She was not allowed to talk about her experiences, her own lived experiences, because she was someone who was in a foster home, and this changes that, so that those individuals who have gone through the system, who have had other issues while they were in the system, have the ability—without breaking the law—of standing up and saying, "This is what my lived experience was."

When you think about that, every other aspect of our lives, you're allowed to stand up and say, "This is what happened to me." But for the longest time, that was not something that was afforded to an individual who was in foster care. These kinds of changes are transformational for a lot of these individuals. There's nothing wrong with someone standing up and saying, "I was in foster care. Here's what I went through. Here's how I have succeeded in life, and I can be a role model for someone else"—but the law prevented them from doing that, previously.

We've talked so much—our society has talked so much about lived experiences and being able to be that role

model, being able to stand up and say, “It is possible for you to break that cycle. It is possible for you to aspire to something better. It is possible for you to live a fulfilling life.” When it came to kids in foster care, we didn’t let them say that.

Think about that powerful message. Think about that child who perhaps was sex-trafficked, who got pulled out of that system, who got put into a supportive foster care position, who grew up, who got to take advantage of Ready, Set, Go, who got a great education, who then continued to give back to the community, who was that positive example and they weren’t allowed to talk about it—they will be able to now.

How many more kids, then, in protective services, through foster care, are going to be able to look to those individuals and say, “I want to be like you. I want to be like Jane. I want to be in the position to succeed just like she is”? That’s what this legislation does, and that is why it is so powerful, because it is transformational for so many of these kids.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am going to turn my time over to the member from Mississauga Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Steve Clark): The member from Mississauga Centre.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I’m so glad to follow my colleague who gave such a great narrative speech. I’m going to stick to my notes, but it’s always impressive when members can speak from the heart. I think that’s a learned skill, and the longer we are here I think the better we should get at that skill. But I will stick to my notes for this particular bill.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed bill aims to elevate the standard of care for children and adolescents, which will enhance self-sufficiency as they transition into adulthood. Our government has embarked on redesigning the child welfare system, motivated by the fundamental belief that every child and youth across Ontario should be provided with a nurturing environment and a stable home. As part of this redesign, this bill will bring a series of new initiatives that will enhance the quality of care provided by out-of-home care systems, further strengthening the commitment to the well-being of Ontario’s children and young people.

This proposal seeks to improve the quality of services for children, such as safeguarding the privacy of individuals who have interacted with child welfare. Bill 188 seeks to give individuals more control and ownership of their narratives and experiences, enabling them to share information about their involvement with child protection according to their own preferences and decisions.

The children and youth services sector plays a vital role in supporting individuals with diverse needs all across Ontario. If passed, this bill will strengthen the service sector, ensuring enhanced support for our youth and children, whether it means protecting a child from abuse and trauma or empowering them with resources to overcome challenging times.

Speaker, this bill’s proposals would introduce new enforcement tools, such as compliance orders, restraining

orders and administrative penalties, alongside enhancements to existing powers, including the ability to refuse licences. The criteria for obtaining a first licence would be strengthened with more detailed application requirements and a new minister’s power to refuse permits in the public interest. Approved regulatory changes would establish stricter requirements to safeguard children in licensed settings, prohibit harmful practices and ensure privacy in designated areas. Additionally, amendments would clarify processes for hearings by the Licence Appeal Tribunal and streamline administrative procedures for inspectors dealing with non-compliance.

Mr. Speaker, this proposal aims to enhance program administration and delivery by focusing on transparency improvements. If approved, legislative changes would involve expanding publicly available information about licensed settings to encompass all newly proposed enforcement measures. Specific individuals, including societies, would be mandated to report to the ministry director if there are concerns about an immediate risk to a child’s well-being in a licensed setting. Approved regulatory amendments would require societies to notify the ministry when initiating child protection investigations involving children in licensed settings.

En outre, les ajustements réglementaires connexes obligeront les sociétés à rendre des visites plus fréquentes aux enfants dont elles ont la charge, passant d’une fois tous les 90 jours à une fois tous les 30 jours. Nos enfants méritent dévouement et amour. Ces visites réglementaires garantiront la sécurité et le bien-être des jeunes et des enfants placés hors de leur foyer.

Mr. Speaker, the changes proposed in this bill will help the licensed out-of-home care sector to provide better-quality support for these youths.

Across the province, there are 50 children’s aid societies primarily funded by our government. They are responsible for Ontario’s public adoption, planning and recruiting adoptive parents. If passed, Bill 188 will add 20 positions across Ontario, which will support the management, inspection and oversight of these service sectors.

Engaging extensively with the community and service providers to enhance support for children and youth is vital for a more significant impact. This bill will strengthen customary care arrangements, prioritizing family-based options such as kinship and foster care to ensure that children, youth and families play a pivotal role in decisions regarding their care.

This bill focuses on directing efforts towards enhancing the quality of child welfare data to establish standardized measures across children’s aid societies for public reporting. This information could be helpful during an investigation to support an action in a timely manner. However, exceptions to confidentiality have been added to the bill that respects the privacy of individuals.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will implement an outcomes-driven performance measurement framework. This will help achieve excellence within our out-of-home care facilities in Ontario. Additionally, the release of the Children and Young Persons’ Rights Resource aims to

empower children and youth by educating them about their rights and encouraging them to advocate for themselves. Simultaneously, this bill is laying the groundwork for their future success by ensuring that comprehensive support systems are in place to assist youth as they transition out of care, ensuring that they have the skills and opportunities to flourish and thrive.

We have heard this in committee, when we had members of the public come and present to us—that, for those who were in the system, they were not notified about their rights and they didn't know that they could turn to the Ombudsman, for example, for more help or more information about their rights. And that is why we are strengthening, with this bill, the information that children will be provided about their rights and about the Office of the Ombudsman.

Mr. Speaker, it has been reported that only some out-of-home care service providers are meeting the standard service. The proposed modifications in this bill will only impact service providers that are not performing in good faith. The bill will be adjusting licensing procedures and enforcement mechanisms for instances of unethical behaviour. Operators offering excellent care will not be impacted, as they are already offering high-quality service that addresses their individual needs while prioritizing their safety and security.

It is also important to point out that this bill will aim to ensure clarity regarding the obligation of children's aid societies and licensed out-of-home care providers to inform children in their care about the Ombudsman's office and its function. This proposal aligns with the government's broader initiative, the Children and Young Persons' Rights Resource, initiated a few years back, which aims to empower children and youth by educating them about their rights outlined in the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017.

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It is imperative for children and youth to be aware of their rights and where to seek assistance if they feel their rights are being disregarded by service providers. This legislation mandates service providers to explain these rights in an understandable manner, be available for clarification, and regularly check in with children and youth regarding their rights.

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by saying that I did appreciate the comments from the member for Hamilton Mountain where she shared her story about how her own parents fostered many children. I think that gives us a greater insight and perspective about her passion and what drives her work, and that's why she is doing that work that needs to be done and holding the government accountable, as is her role in this critic role. You know, we rarely get the opportunity to know members a little bit better, and I think when we share these personal stories, that gives more meaning to our work here. So I did appreciate hearing that unique perspective.

I also want to express my gratitude to the deputants that came and gave their testimonials in committee. Many of them were involved in the child care system themselves

and they have come out to be incredible advocates. We had a doctor who came. We had lawyers and others. This gives a testament to the fact that people, despite their challenges, can become incredible professionals and have incredible careers and then give voices to those children through their personal experiences.

I want to conclude by saying I was raised by a single mom. Times were tough, and my mom did everything she could to ensure that me and my brother had everything that we needed, whether that's food on the table, clothing. We had a very old car, and I was quite embarrassed when my mom was dropping me off because the muffler was broken, so I asked her to drop me off two blocks away from school.

But she worked extremely hard to ensure that we grew up to be productive members of society. Going through those challenges, I can only imagine what children who don't have caring parents, who don't have people to advocate for them go through, and that's why this bill is so important, to give voices to those children and to strengthen all the provisions that we can to ensure the safety and well-being of all children in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Steve Clark): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am glad to ask a question of the members regarding the committee process and the importance of this bill and some of the voices that were heard at committee, specifically Carly Kalish, the executive director of Victim Services Toronto. I always appreciated Carly's work when she worked in the Durham region. Her role as a trauma counsellor and with her experience working with children, she brought an important perspective to committee, as did anyone else who took the time to get their voices on the record.

So my question: When there were very thoughtful submissions made at committee about how to improve this bill, how to fine-tune to make it the best version it could be, why were all of those amendments and all of those voices unceremoniously rejected without consideration?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Steve Clark): The member for Peterborough-Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: I appreciate the question from the member from Oshawa. When we look at the committee process, it's not something that is new for any of us. We've all been through it multiple times. A lot of times, things get put forward on it that can tweak us in different ways to have a secondary look at what we're doing as we move forward, because we know that we're going to have more legislation that's going to come forward on certain topics, and a lot of the times, you have to do things in a stepwise or incremental way.

And it's not that those ideas aren't great ideas; they are great ideas if they come forward. It allows us to take a look at things from a different perspective as we start to introduce more legislation. It's not that those things get lost; it's that we're focused on what we're doing at that moment and what we're trying to accomplish with it, and sometimes when suggestions or amendments are being put forward by the opposition, they are truly good ideas, but

they don't fit in with what we're trying to accomplish at that point, but it does tweak us to move forward so that we can introduce something else that will start to address some of those other things.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Steve Clark): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to thank my colleagues for their comments and their generosity to each other in how they characterized each other speaking.

I had a question for the member for Mississauga Centre, who I thought was extremely generous talking about our colleague from Peterborough–Kawartha but also talking about the member of the opposition's comments as well, and you did end up speaking from an extemporaneous place and from the heart, and so I really appreciated that the member for Mississauga Centre was able to do that.

I was wondering if you could just talk about what matters most to you in what we are achieving in Bill 188 in the child welfare redesign.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I think the most important thing is that we are giving voices to these children and informing them of their rights, and with information comes power. We have heard over and over in committee that these children were often unaware of their rights and didn't know where to go, and so we're changing that.

We're also increasing the number of inspectors in the system, and so I want to believe that, by and large, most foster parents and foster homes are doing the job because they love caring for children and they're doing the very best job. But just like in any industry, in any sector, there are, unfortunately, some bad players, and by increasing the amount of inspectors and giving more tools to these inspectors, we'll be holding them accountable, and I think that's extremely important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Steve Clark): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Either one of the members opposite can answer this. It's actually three in one. What specific plans does the government have to ensure that inspections are both thorough and unannounced, including night visits when children are at home? And are you able to provide clear answers to communities and families across Ontario on how many inspectors will be added to the current roster? As well, how will their training be enhanced to detect and address issues proactively?

Mr. Dave Smith: It's an interesting series of questions to unpack there. First, I'll start off with, we're adding 20 new inspectors to the system, and as part of the process there will be unannounced visits for it. But by you asking me how I'm going to describe how we're going to do that, you're asking me to forecast and project to them so they know, then, when that type of unannounced visit is going to happen. Because if I lay out for you publicly how we're going to go about determining how we're going to make an unannounced visit, we've just said that this is what's going to happen and when it's going to happen. It therefore is not an unannounced visit to make sure that they are doing what they're supposed to be doing. We're giving them the heads-up by doing that, and we're ensuring, then,

that if they are one of those bad actors that we need to go unannounced, they know, ahead of time, a time period when it's going to happen, and they'll make sure that they are hiding those things that we're trying to find by doing it as an unannounced visit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Steve Clark): Further questions and comments?

Mr. David Smith: I want to thank both the member from Peterborough–Kawartha and the member from Mississauga Centre for presenting here today, and I also would like to thank them for sharing their personal stories. Some of us wouldn't be as frank as that, and it's nice to know that they can share those stories that they've shared with us here today.

I think the centre point of this bill is that the health, safety and well-being of children is paramount, whether they are in care or not, and it is crucial that we, as legislators and as a society, do everything in our power to ensure that these cases are heard and work towards a better direction. This bill takes many steps forward.

1700

Could the members please expand on what regulations are currently in place to ensure those who work with children and youth are qualified to do so?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you very much for that question, and I couldn't agree more. Whether it's children in care or children outside of care, our government is doing everything we can to enhance their safety and well-being, which includes more mental health supports through our Roadmap to Wellness: \$3.9 billion invested, including a lot of support for youth and children's mental health.

But Bill 188 takes important steps forward with a suite of progressive new enforcement tools that will give inspectors more powers to enforce compliance in out-of-home care. This bill also proposes substantially increased fines for the worst kinds of offences—up to \$250,000—and orders to return funding where funds haven't been used to provide high-quality care. These are some of the steps this bill is taking, and I'm sure there will be more from the great Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Steve Clark): Further questions or comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciated the remarks of the government members on this bill, which we on this side of the House have been clear that we support because it does take some modest action to improve protections for children and youth.

However, many of the concerns that this bill addresses and more—a huge number more of concerns—were identified by the former child and youth advocate in this province, Irwin Elman. He points out that there are 19,000 serious occurrence reports every quarter that are produced by group residential homes. And one of his primary roles was to address those serious occurrence reports.

So why did the government not take the opportunity to reinstate that vital position of child and youth advocate?

Mr. Dave Smith: I appreciate that. I appreciate the question. It opens up an opportunity to really talk about some of the things that we have done and why we have done what we've done with it. What we know is that there were 79 reports, a total of just over 4,644 pages from the office of the child advocate, and that was just from one source. But as we were making adjustments to what we were doing here in government, we were trying to focus on what's in the best interest of those kids as we move forward. How do we strengthen legislation in a way that gives all of those kids the opportunity to realize their full potential? That's what we have been focusing on all throughout this.

The changes that we've made have been made in a way so that it gives those kids a better opportunity to succeed in life. It gives those kids something that perhaps they wouldn't have had before. That's why we have done what we have been doing with this entire file.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Steve Clark): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will be happy to be supporting this bill. I'm happy that we all agree with the end goal. We all want children in care to receive the best possible support, to be given the chance to be all that they can be, to be loved, to be supported, to be cared for. This is what we all want.

But I also know, Speaker, that I have been in this place for a long time. Legislation is not a process that goes in increments. A new law is passed, and we probably will not pass another law that has to do with children in care for years.

So when, finally, people saw that there was a bill on the docket to amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, to do what we all wanted to do, many people came forward. I can tell you that the great majority of the people that came forward supported the bill and gave examples of how we can make it better. They understood what the government wanted to do. They understood the part of the bill that was up for debate and up for change, and they said, "You are going in the right direction. Just bring it a little bit further." People with lived experience came and did testimony after testimony, telling us that it's not enough to have a good goal in mind, it's not enough to look at a bill and not take the opportunity to make it as good as it could be, so we did. We listened to them, and I would say that on all sides, people listened to the testimony and the questions that were asked were good. It was respectful, and we learned an awful lot.

Kemesha Alli came. She is the board chair of people with disabilities, and she shared really, really hard stories. She was in care. She had a disability, but she faced insecurity, fear, neglect, abuse, trauma, multiple placements, and when she finally had her appointment at SickKids where she was diagnosed with a serious disability, her foster parents did not even come. She had the hospital hold her back for about an hour to get a social worker from the hospital so that they could share with her the results of the investigation that SickKids had done. Then she went on to say about all of this stuff that was in her file at the children's aid that 1,000 people can have access to, but

that she cannot, and even with the changes that we have made in the bill, there will still be issues.

We have Nicole Bonnie. She worked in the field for 15 years as a social worker. She has a PhD from Western University. She is the CEO of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and has worked with marginalized children and youth in care with all aspects of vulnerability. Again, she talked about the privacy breach that happens and that is at risk of continuing to happen if we don't make this bill stronger, but we tried. We put 16 amendments forward—all of them were voted down. Although we all want the same thing, we don't want privacy breaches. We want to make sure that the files of children in care are protected. They knew how to make the bill better, but the government did not agree.

We also had Kemesha Alli. She is the executive director of former youth in care, and she talked about the difficulty accessing resources. We had Victoria Hanton. Victoria is a lawyer, and she went through the bill with us and talked about the gaps in the legislation the way it is written now, particularly from a third party that would continue to have access into the file and how the limited ways that a child in care, who may grow out of care, cannot defend themselves. She talked about unverified information that will continue to be available to 1,000 child care workers and the necessity for safety not only for children in care, for foster children, and she went on to talk about abuse and neglect and how children in care should have the same rights.

She is the first one who made the link between how we have a way to protect the information of youth in the offenders' act. Basically, the offenders' act is very clear that nobody gets access to your file unless the court says, "Yes, we will release the file of a young offender." She wanted the same level of protection to be given to children in care, to be given and to be written into the Supporting Children's Futures Act. We made those amendments, and they were voted down.

1710

We had Meaghan Martin. Meaghan has been an advocate since 1985, and in 2004, she decided to share her story. She said that when she first requested a copy of her file from being a child in children's aid, she got a five-page summary document. It took her many, many years to get all 1,500 pages of her document. She is the one who shared with us the story that she remembered very well, where the children's aid worker was there and they offered her a lunch, and she said no to her lunch, and she was diagnosed by a social worker working for children's aid as having an eating disorder because she did not want to have lunch that day, because she was not happy with the interaction she was having with her children's aid worker. That happened in 1989, at a meeting with the CAS. When she came out of care, went through all of the processes to gain access—and to try to make any changes was impossible.

Meaghan and others made the link that files are kept in the health care system all the time. Errors are made by health care workers. They work really hard to not make them. But we're human beings; we make errors, and files

are corrected all the time. You put a line in the margin, write “error,” and then write down what should have been written.

There are solutions that exist, but we put them forward in amendments, and all of them were voted down. Those are people with lived experience. Those are lawyers who came to us and said, “We all want the same goal. We all want to improve things. You have a way to make it better. Here are the flaws in what you have written up. Here’s how we can tighten this up to achieve the goal that you say you want to achieve.” But the government would not look at it.

She also gave examples of the difference between the children’s advocate and the Ombudsman. This government got rid of the children’s advocate. The children’s advocate had powers to start investigations on his own. There are not too many two-year-olds who pick up the phone and phone the Ombudsman. When there was a children’s advocate, the children’s advocate did not have to wait for a complaint to start an investigation. But the Ombudsman has to wait for a complaint to do the investigation. Once a complaint has been made, the Ombudsman has many, many tools at their disposal to do a good job, but he or she does not have the power that the children’s advocate used to have.

That was brought forward by Carly Kalish, the executive director of Victim Services Toronto. She’s also a trauma therapist, and she specializes in human trafficking. She talked a lot about the number of children in foster care who end up being trafficked. She talked about some of the changes in the regulations for oversight of foster parents that would need to be reinforced in order to make sure that we achieve the goal that we all want. But none of the recommendations that she made that we put into our amendments were taken into account by the government.

Carina Chan also came and did a deputation. Carina is from the Office of the Children’s Lawyer. She handles, mainly, post-separation disputes, foster parents, adoptive—lived experience etc. She talked a lot about the stigma—the shift in mindset that would have been good to have in the preamble of this law to help out. It’s not there.

Ann Fitzpatrick also came. Ann is a retired social worker. She has a master’s degree in social work. She works in community development to try to strengthen families, and she was very knowledgeable—lots of emotions, listening to her. What she had to say about the bill was that it had a nice title, but lots of things needed to change if we were to achieve the end goal that we wanted, if we were to achieve the privacy that we needed for an Ontario-wide system that would help.

She talked about accountability, the rules that need to be followed by foster homes, by group homes and how to monitor the outcome of the care. Many, many people focused on, “We are not monitoring the outcome of the care, and this should be done.” This should be done by gathering data, by doing analysis of this data—not only the data from the people in care, but also data from the people after they age out of care. Again, we put amendments to

the bill to try to get those things done, to no avail. They were all voted down.

I could go on, but I see that the time is sort of running, isn’t it? So I’ll go on to some of the recommendations that were done.

If you look at the preamble of the bill, I would say that everybody who talked to that part of the bill, including the Ombudsman, said—and I’m quoting from the Ombudsman right now—“Affirm the Legislative Assembly’s recognition of the contribution of the cultural heritage of the French-speaking population and its wish to preserve it for future generations.” This should have been in the preamble of the bill. I mean, when people talked, everybody said that they want francophone children to be placed in francophone families and in francophone group homes, but it’s not enough to wish for it. It has to be put in legislation. The Ombudsman took the time to tell us it needs to go in, but it didn’t make it.

The Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada also shared, “Ensure the creation of a website or other mechanism for digital communication with and regarding the Ombudsman, including instantaneous digital chat and access to a trained worker. Make it youth-friendly and accessible in a format you can access and so they can understand what their legal options are. Work with you to develop something collaboratively.”

Again, it would have been good to have this kind of language in the preamble to let them know that it is very good—that we want children to know that if things derail, the Ombudsman is on their side. The Ombudsman will be there to try to provide investigation and try to help whatever complaints they have. But if we really want the Ombudsman to be helpful to as many children as possible, it’s time to talk about digital chat. It’s time to talk about making it friendly to youth and to make sure that the youth will have a say into what is about to be done.

I will quote from the Ombudsman again: “Provide that all children’s aid societies must inform a youth who is turned down for a” voluntary youth services agreement “about the existence and role of the ... Ombudsman” by adding section 77(8), “where a child wants to enter into an agreement under this section and a society decides not to enter into an agreement, the child shall be informed, in a language suitable to their understanding, of the existence and role of the Ombudsman of Ontario and of how the Ombudsman of Ontario may be contacted.” To make it mandatory every time a child is turned down by the voluntary youth services agreement to let them know that the Ombudsman is there would make a huge difference. It was voted down.

Another recommendations from the Ombudsman: “Provide that all children’s aid societies must inform a youth who requests, is offered, or enters an agreement under section 124,” the Ready, Set, Go agreements, “information about the Ombudsman by adding” into section 124(2) of the bill:

“Where a person requests, is offered, or enters into an agreement under subsection (1), or the society terminates the agreement, the person shall be informed by the society

of the existence and role of the Ombudsman ... and how the Ombudsman of Ontario may be contacted.”

1720

That is work that children’s aid does that often leads to conflict between the child and the children’s aid: The child is turned down for something that they want; a Ready, Set, Go agreement is put aside, or whatever. This is the time when the child should know that the Ombudsman is on their side and is there to help them.

It would have been really easy to put it into the bill. The Ombudsman had already said, “Here’s where you put it into the bill. Here’s the language that needs to be changed.” And the Conservative members on the committee voted it down.

There are a number of changes that were requested by the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Again, I will read into the record what they’ve asked: “Ensure the exceptions to the publication ban adequately balance the privacy interests of all affected individuals and are clearly set out in legislation rather than regulation.”

When an independent officer of the Legislature takes time to write things down, to say he or she has read the bill, that there is a way to achieve what we want to achieve—this is what we want to do, we all agree on what we want to do—but the bill needs to be written in a certain way, we should take this good advice into account. But the Conservative members on the committee voted it down.

There is only one minute left. Okay. I want to talk a little bit about the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario. They had a number of recommendations that they wanted to do to the bill in order to clarify how the fine collection was going to be done, clarify how the penalties were going to be done. They also wanted to “implement data collection tools that respect Indigenous data sovereignty, as Indigenous children and youth are overrepresented in care and most data will represent them. Use the Indigenous data governance principles of ownership, control, access and possession.”

We want reconciliation, Speaker. We all know that First Nations children are way overrepresented in the children’s aid societies. This has to change. How do you change this? Well, one way is to listen to the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies. They are on the front lines. They wrote things down for us to make amendments so that we would respect them, and the Conservative members voted them down.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It’s now time for questions.

M. Anthony Leardi: La députée a parlé au sujet de l’ombudsman. Il est écrit dans l’acte sur l’ombudsman : « La société d’aide à l’enfance ou le titulaire de permis d’un foyer, selon le cas, informe l’enfant recevant des soins, dans un langage adapté à son niveau de compréhension, de l’existence de l’ombudsman, des fonctions ... attribuent à celui-ci et de la façon de le contacter. »

À mon avis, ça, c’est bien suffisant pour protéger l’intérêt des enfants, et j’invite la députée à discuter de cette section.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci pour la question. Lorsque l’ombudsman nous a fait les recommandations, c’est vraiment—il y a des situations précises qui arrivent, entre le système d’aide à l’enfance et les enfants, qui sont souvent conflictuelles. Donc, ce que l’ombudsman voulait, c’est que chaque fois que ces situations-là vont se produire—et ça fait partie de la loi qui gouverne—ils devront dire à l’enfant à ce moment-là qu’il a le droit de contacter l’ombudsman.

De leur dire en général qu’ils ont le droit, c’est très bien, et on appuie ça. Mais de leur dire spécifiquement dans des moments où on sait que l’enfant est en conflit avec l’aide à l’enfance, c’était quelque chose que l’ombudsman encourageait. Il a même écrit les changements qu’il voulait voir dans la loi. Je crois que cela aurait été un changement qui nous aurait amené encore plus près de notre but à atteindre.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt for her passionate speech this afternoon. We’re very fortunate to have her as the critic for health care. She’s a passionate defender of our public health care system.

Today, you were talking about the children in care and the need for better protection and supports for children in care. At the end of your speech, you were talking about suggestions that were made to the committee about improving the supports for Indigenous children in care, and I’d just like to give you the opportunity to expand upon that.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It doesn’t matter which children’s aid society, we all know that First Nations, Métis, Inuit children—mainly First Nations—are overrepresented in our children’s aid societies. The percentage in my riding is through the roof. And this has to change.

The Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario wrote specific changes that they would have liked to see in specific parts of the bill to make sure that truth and reconciliation, to make sure that the respect of First Nations is there.

There is nothing in the bill that goes against First Nations, but there is nothing in the bill that recognizes that they are overrepresented, that more needs to be done to support those kids and that we now, in Ontario, have the knowledge, have the skills, to be able to do this. They shared that with us, and we ignored them.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

M. Anthony Leardi: J’aimerais poursuivre la prochaine question. J’ai demandé, il y a quelques minutes—j’ai posé la question à la députée sur la Loi sur l’ombudsman. Mais dans la loi que nous discutons aujourd’hui, c’est déjà écrit dans la section 3, la section 9, la section 65 et la section 171, la même chose que je viens de dire, qu’un enfant a le droit d’être informé dans un langage adapté à son niveau.

Donc, il me semble que ce fait est déjà mentionné cinq fois dans la loi : quatre fois dans la loi devant nous aujourd’hui et une cinquième fois dans la Loi sur

l'ombudsman. Il me semble que ça, c'est suffisant, cinq fois de mentionner la même chose pour la même protection. Donc, j'invite encore la députée d'en discuter.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Que les enfants sachent que l'ombudsman est de leur côté, que le bureau sera toujours là pour les aider, pour les protéger, c'est tellement important qu'on l'a quatre fois dans le projet de loi. Mais l'ombudsman a regardé le projet de loi et a dit qu'on devrait l'ajouter. Oui, c'est bien de l'avoir quatre fois, mais on devrait l'ajouter dans la section 77 et on devrait l'ajouter dans la section 124.

Donc, il y a des sections où on dit : « Dans cette section-là, tu dois dire aux enfants que l'ombudsman est disponible » et on le fait quatre fois dans le projet de loi. L'ombudsman voulait qu'on le rajoute à deux autres endroits—c'était la section 77 et la section 124.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank my colleague the member for Nickel Belt for her remarks. I think her summary of what happened in committee was very useful, to hear the kind of input that people brought to the public consultation process. It was also interesting and very disappointing to hear about the number of amendments that were proposed and yet were rejected by this government.

So I wanted to ask the member for Nickel Belt if she could highlight maybe one or two amendments that were rejected that she feels would have had the greatest impact on helping protect kids in this province.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would say all of the 16: some amendments that had to do with language, some amendments that had to do with respecting First Nations, some amendments that had to do with making the bar as to who can access your records from children's aid once you age out of children's aid as robust as the protections we put for young offenders. There were recommendations that were done to collect data so that we learn. The life of a person who has been a child in care tends to be very different. So, what are the averages? Are they going to school? Did they get a good job? We learn from this. But all 16 amendments were voted down.

1730

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite for her submissions today on the bill. I heard a lot about what's not in the bill. But there are great things in the bill, and I understand the member opposite is going to be voting for this bill.

I want to ask her if she thinks that the modern tool kit that we're proposing for inspectors, with more measures on how to correct compliance issues, where there are issues, is good; that the administrative monetary penalties, for example, are good and are an addition to what we are offering in the redesign of the child welfare sector; and if she sees this bill, which I understand she's going to support, as an improvement on the existing state of affairs, and whether or not—because it is an improvement—she

thinks that we should all be joining in support and working together to improve it further.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would say yes to pretty much all that she has asked for. We voted in favour of all six parts of the bill, so the bill works in all six parts. The end goals of all six parts are all things that we support. Provide for restrictions to the use and disclosure of certain personal information in certain circumstances—yes, absolutely. The part about investigations—yes, absolutely. The part about children in care, with respect to the Ombudsman—we respect the end goal.

We just wished that we could work together, listening to the experts who came and talked to us, many of them lawyers, many of them giving us—“This is the language that needs to be changed.” The changes were often small changes, just to make sure that we achieved the end goals that we all wanted to achieve. There was no collaboration when that process was going on.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we have run out of time for questions.

It's now time for further debate.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm proud to rise today to speak to the Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024. I'll be sharing my time with the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, my neighbouring riding.

Speaker, let me start off by saying that regardless of where you sit in this House, I believe that we can all agree that absolutely no child should be left behind, and the fact of the matter is, there are children who may be left behind or are in need of protection because they're at risk of abuse or neglect in Ontario.

This is why this act is so important. It is about protecting children and youth in Ontario's care today through new measures for safety, service, oversight, accountability and privacy, and providing better opportunities for children and youth who are in care in Ontario today to thrive as adults tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, we all have an obligation to protect children. We all have a responsibility to give children the best possible chance for a bright and productive future.

This bill, if passed, will protect children and youth in care and provide them with a better future by strengthening oversight and enforcement tools for out-of-home care, protecting privacy of youth formerly in care, and updating the Child, Youth and Family Services Act with lessons learned since it became law. The changes proposed in this bill will improve safety and independence for children and youth in care and moving on from care.

Speaker, isn't it in the best interests of all Ontarians to give all children and youth the best opportunities and protection to set them up for successful and bright futures?

Our government has invested \$1.5 billion into children's aid societies this year, which is steady to previous years despite a drop in children in care over the last several years. This is significant, Speaker. Children's aid societies are funded primarily by the province, but they make their own staffing and placement decisions independently without government interference based on the needs of

each unique child and the services and supports available in each community.

Another investment, Speaker: Our government is increasing investment in child protection this year by approximately \$14 million, in addition to last year's \$76.3-million increase and \$109 million for children and youth services. This is on top of last year's \$92.4-million increase.

Now, this isn't just about the money. We are caring for young lives that deserve our best efforts to ensure there is a system in place that not only offers protection but guarantees them protection from the evils we know are out there. That is why I was proud to be part of the changes our government made when I was the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. The now-Minister of Energy, Minister Todd Smith, and I worked to update the Child, Youth and Family Services Act to better protect youth in care from human trafficking.

Madam Speaker, I was recently speaking to a service club in my riding about being the local member and why I got into politics and what interested me and some of the things I was most proud of to this point. One of the things I mentioned was being the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues and working on the file of child welfare. I visited many children's aids throughout the province and met with some incredible young people, some incredible families who shared their stories: kin members like aunts and uncles who were looking after their nieces and nephews and who really wrapped the supports from their family around those young people when they needed them to.

Part of that system, with the modernization of child welfare, was to ensure that there were supports in the family, because we all know that a child is best raised with their parents, when possible, and providing the supports in the community for mental health services, addiction, health care services was key to ensuring that as many kids as possible were raised by their family members, whether it was their parents or grandparents—supportive family members. A lot of work was done in that area, and I was very proud to be part of that. It's something I reflect on, meeting those children. I look at my own children—I have three daughters—and the support they have from our own family, and you want that same love and support for all children out there.

The changes that we made at that time made the role of the children's aid societies clear, so that they could intervene in situations where a child is a victim of sex trafficking or at risk of being trafficked. It allowed child protection workers and police to remove 16- and 17-year-old victims of child sex trafficking, to voluntarily access protective measures and supportive resources. It also increased penalties for traffickers who interfere with or harbour children who are subject to an order of supervision or care by a children's aid society.

These changes strengthened children's aid societies' ability to intervene in child sex trafficking cases. It made the role of societies in these cases more clear and promoted consistent responses across the province. All of

these measures have improved the quality of child welfare in Ontario and made life better for children in out-of-home care. With the Supporting Children's Futures Act, we're continuing to build on what our government has achieved to date and moving forward towards an Ontario where no one is left behind.

Speaker, making a difference in the lives of children and youth does not happen overnight, especially when the goal is to ensure that no one is left behind. That is why I want to thank Minister Parsa for leading the way to bring this bill to fruition. Our government consulted extensively across the child welfare sector to develop the measures that are in this bill, and the most important stakeholders we consulted were the youth themselves, as there is no better source of insight than those with lived experience.

I look back to my time working in the child welfare system through the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. At that time, we were consulting with youth about youth aging out of the system, and one of those organizations we worked with was Youth in Care Canada. Conner Lowes, who was president at the time—we've still stayed connected over the past few years. I want to congratulate him now. He's a summer associate at a Toronto law firm. He will be going into his final year of law school and articling. The work that he did at that time with his group and some of the other youth really informed the decisions that we made moving forward.

1740

I want to congratulate the ministry after my time on the Ready, Set, Go Program that they brought forward. This was launched in April 2023, and it provides youth transitioning out of care with the life skills and supports they need to pursue post-secondary education, skilled trades, training and employment opportunities. Starting at age 13, they will begin learning practical life skills and planning educational goals. At age 15, the emphasis will expand to financial literacy and preparing for the workforce, including managing personal finances, setting up a bank account, grocery shopping, résumé building, and how to access social services and other supports. The Ready, Set, Go Program will also allow youth to remain in care until the age of 23, up from the age of 21. Monthly financial support will also increase to provide youth a better quality of life and shelter and housing opportunities so that they can focus on their studies or working.

This was something that was very important. We saw, during the COVID times, the moratorium on youth leaving care ended, so that youth had the supports during that difficult time of COVID and continued on. I have three daughters. I think of my own daughters being 18. No child is an adult at the age of 18; it's just an age. But the work that we did with the former youth in care to look at programs like Ready, Set, Go was really important, and I want to thank Conner and congratulate him on his success—someday, one of our future lawyers.

Speaker, it cannot be said enough that all children and youth deserve safety, stability and access to resources to help them succeed and thrive. Our government is taking

decisive action to ensure that those who provide care are truly fit to offer the high-quality services our youth deserve.

This bill proposes a significant enhancement in accountability, a measure we can all agree is not only responsible but essential. No one should dispute the importance of a thorough application process for care providers. This bill would empower us to refuse licences on several grounds, ensuring that only those capable of delivering top-tier care are entrusted with such responsibilities. This is clearly in the public interest, and most importantly, in the best interests of our children and youth. And to guarantee that every child and youth in care receives safe, high-quality services, this bill mandates increased accountability for operators. These measures will serve as a strong deterrent against negligence and misconduct, fostering a safer and more accountable care environment.

I'd like to thank you for my time today, and I will now pass it to my colleague.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I want to thank Minister Dunlop—now the Minister of Colleges and Universities, but her work was setting the foundation for a lot of what we see in this bill when she was over at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, because it takes time to evolve and to listen to the service providers and the communities, to get the right formula as we continue to protect more children in our province.

I want to thank the current minister, also, for MCCSS—if I can go forward and just use that acronym—for his dedication and hard work. I also want to thank the member from Sarnia–Lambton, my seatmate here, for bringing his private member's bill in about modernizing privacy rights for former foster children over the years, which is now incorporated in this bill.

Madam Speaker, as you've heard from the previous speakers today, our government remains steadfast in our commitment to revitalizing the child welfare system. Regardless of the circumstances or background, every child and youth deserves a decent start in life and a stable, safe place to call home, and this is where Bill 188, the Supporting Children's Futures Act, is the next step in reforming Ontario's child welfare system.

There's always continuous work to establish new initiatives that contribute to the overall quality of care in out-of-home settings such as foster care and group homes. I know I've spoken many times in the Legislature and worked with many MPPs from all parties on legislation and initiatives to combat human trafficking and exploitation across the province, through committees, hearing private members' bills from all parties. We have heard the terrible stories of abuse and exploitation. We've heard from those who've survived their abuse in urban settings as well as in rural areas—and the fact that the abuse of children, and girls, especially, can happen anywhere, even the girl next door. The traumatic experience and exploitation leaves scars that prove to be barriers in their healing journey and ultimately reclaiming their lives. It's

an ongoing issue, and one that requires a multi-faceted approach to support victims, reprimand perpetrators—multi-ministries involved, and multi-community providers and police associations. Everyone is involved in improving child welfare.

Bill 188: I know that some committee delegations were brought forward, and one was from Carly Kalish from Victim Services Toronto, who's a human trafficking specialist and trauma specialist. I've worked with Carly, as many members have in the House, over many years. She testified at committee, on Bill 188, about the troubling connection between human trafficking and the child welfare system. I've heard stories from experts in the field, and she has, too, about the pervasiveness of human trafficking amongst foster children and group homes. Some of these young children are exploited by the very people who care for them. The abuse of the power inflicts unspeakable harm on the victims. This bill aims to provide more safeguards for those in out-of-home care. That was brought up, and many of the terms—"more safety," "securities," "more inspections," "more fines," "more eyes," "more training," "more awareness of what's going on."

Many of us have group homes in our riding. You just have to paint the picture of young workers in the group homes who maybe have just graduated from college and they don't really understand the comings and goings of the people they're supervising, what the signals are that may tweak them to the fact they're being abused by someone from the outside—the boyfriend who's picking him or her up is not necessarily the boyfriend; they could be the trafficker. So that type of training has gone on, through many pieces of legislation or just organically in the community, from police officers, from survivors who have trained those front-line staff and those young workers who may be coming out of school and not really understanding the complexity of what to look for, for the signs of human trafficking.

I want to give a shout-out to Jennifer Wilson, who was the CAO of my Kawartha-Peterborough-Haliburton sector of CAS that covers, I think, three ridings that we have here in the Legislature. When we first started going around the province and bringing this to light, the CAS was saying, "Well, we have to do more." She initiated the first memorandum of understanding with the CAS of Ontario. So I thank her for that work. I know she's retired happily now, but she did great work. Another Jennifer has taken over her place: Jennifer McLauchlan, who does a great job with my local CAS.

These are tough stories, but our whole goal, and as pieces of legislation come forward—it is all about protecting youth in care. Be it human trafficking or other abuses that have occurred—they need the safe space. So we provided, in this legislation, a clear outline of children's aid societies' role in intervening in human trafficking and ever listening to more changes that may be needed.

I want to mention previous legislation that we've brought in to protect children, whether allowing protection workers

and police to remove 16- and 17-year-old victims of child sex trafficking, to voluntarily access protective measures and supportive resources, which I think maybe happened in the time that the minister who just spoke was in that file; increasing penalties for those who interfere with or harbour children who are subject to an order of supervision or care by the children's aid societies—so giving those organizations, like CAS, more tools, more strength, more training. They've all been given more capacity to intervene in the roles of human sex trafficking.

The child welfare design our government launched was mentioned also, the Ready, Set, Go Program, which I know was a big passion of the chief of staff now, Jane, which seeks to provide youth in the care of children's aid societies with the life skills they need, starting at 13, and the financial support as they leave care, up to the age of 23.

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The Minister of Colleges and Universities just mentioned her own children. We know what an 18-year-old is like from a very good home. Can you imagine one that's been in foster care and troubled and what they're like at 18 and the supports they still need? Our government did those measures to help support children into young adults and let them stay in those homes with CAS supports for a longer period of time and help them with post-secondary education—all the ministries working together to get more women in the trades, more women that have been in challenging circumstances, get them the skills they need so that they are going to pursue employment and be able to support their families.

This week, Madam Speaker, I'm going to be at the Women's Resources centre in Lindsay, which, with different supports and community fundraisers, is opening second stage housing affordability, coming with supports for women that have had violent situations, but for them and their families to actually have this type of housing, so it's like a step to a better life that they have. I'm very proud of the work that Women's Resources in Lindsay does.

All of this is building around helping people that have come from circumstances that have been, for lack of a better word, very rough and very traumatic in some things. So I'm happy to see this legislation. I'm happy with the support it's got. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services—the long name—has listened to voices of young people as well as the organizations that go and help our communities.

I spoke of survivors of human trafficking, but a lot of children that were in the CAS system are now able to come out and speak about their life experiences and offer invaluable insights into the gaps in the programs. Bill 188, in its provisions, helps with child care services, educational opportunities, mental health supports, strengthening the measures of protection for children.

The bill does many more things, Madam Speaker, and I have very limited time to say much more. But through many speakers this afternoon, we've heard of the changes that have occurred in Bill 188 and the support that it has received from the privacy commissioner, lots of victims'

services and support workers. I commend the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, the previous ministers and the present one, for continuing important work on safeguarding our children and giving them the best opportunities they can.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for questions.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the government members for their presentations. My question will be for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. I think the numbers are pretty clear: that 1,000 Ontario teens age out of care per year, 400 drop out of high school and 400 qualify for post-secondary education; but only about 80 actually pursue post-secondary education of that 400, and of that 80, only eight graduate.

I wonder if the minister could talk about the important work of Jane Kovarikova, who was able to secure a free post-secondary education for I believe it was eight students at Laurentian, five students at Brescia University College, five students at Huron University College, five students at King's University College and 15 students at Western University.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for the question, and good job remembering all those numbers. That was an important initiative that Jane left, and I was proud to work with her at that time.

Looking back, that was one of the issues of concern when youth were aging out of care, the low graduation rates from high school, which then, obviously, led to lower rates of students entering post-secondary. That was a real key piece for us in that: How do we ensure success in high school? Because we know education leads to success down the line.

I was with a few of the schools when they made their announcements. I'm very proud of the work that Jane did, but also proud of the universities for stepping up and being part of that program, because it is so important, and recognizing that.

When I was hearing the questions here today, I was excited to hear the support from the NDP on this bill because I think we can all agree that this is an important issue that we are there to support children and ensure the best supports are available for success for those young people.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. She has been known in this assembly and throughout the province and the country as being a strong advocate for children, but particularly those who have been sex trafficked. She has been a leader.

I had the opportunity, when I was in this portfolio as the minister, to work with her in advancing that. One of the things that shocked me—and I think would shock most people here—is that a number of our youth that are in care tend to be susceptible, and many have been subjected to

trafficking as a result of the lack of oversight. I'm wondering, given the work that she has done, is she pleased to see our government's agenda move forward on supporting children in care, and if she's ever seen anything quite like this bill to protect children in the province of Ontario.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I thank my colleague for her question. She has been a supporter at many committee meetings, and hosted us in the city of Ottawa many times as we have spoken to survivors of human sex trafficking, their providers of care; I know VoiceFound's Cynthia Bland is a very strong proponent.

I am so proud of the work that this government has done, especially on Bill 188, in protecting more rights for children, giving them more opportunities and protecting them and educating the providers of what to look for.

Children in care are very susceptible and, when we first started this—I think over 10 years ago—on the raising awareness and fighting human trafficking, as I said, for my own CAS CAO, they were like, “We need to do more. We had no idea.” I remember her vividly telling me that she went to a hotel in Lindsay and rescued a 14-year-old, but the work was that the survivors came and they educated the police, they educated the CAS. They knew what to look for and they made the call, and—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I want to note that I'm really happy about the extension of the age—up to the age of 23—of support for children. I know people who aged out at 18, and it didn't go well for them.

But my question is really about the child and youth advocate. There's very much a difference between an Ombudsman and a child and youth advocate, because the child and youth advocate is proactive, whereas the Ombudsman is reactive. I wonder if you are supportive of bringing that role back.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: No, I'm not supportive of bringing the youth advocate back. We do have the Ombudsman there for complaints, but we've also modernized the system, as I said, to ensure that there are supports through children's aid, but also community supports to ensure that success for children to remain in their home with their families or, if they're in the care of children's aid societies, that there are supports there as well—so looking at the modernization of the system that was done in the past, but also the work that's being done with this ministry and Bill 188 to ensure that children are protected.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Speaker, I truly appreciated listening to the members opposite—or the members with me—speak on what a progressive move this is.

I was interested in the member for Kawartha Lakes. She talked about being involved in this, hands-on, and there are so many improvements that are coming forward with this bill. One of the things that's provided through this bill is protecting the children, but also enabling the new students, the ECEs, through the colleges and universities—actually, we could ask the Minister of Colleges and Universities this question, perhaps, because it's better suited for her—but enabling that individual, that student to realize what they are supposed to do in those circumstances where they do see a child that's in distress—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we do not have time for a response.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is time to move to private members' business.

Report continues in volume B.

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