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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

SP-51

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

SP-51

**Standing Committee on  
Social Policy**

Estimates

Ministry of Colleges and Universities

**Comité permanent de  
la politique sociale**

Budget des dépenses

Ministère des Collèges et Universités

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
43<sup>rd</sup> Parliament

Monday 7 October 2024

1<sup>re</sup> session  
43<sup>e</sup> législature

Lundi 7 octobre 2024

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Chair: Steve Clark  
Clerk: Lesley Flores

Président : Steve Clark  
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# CONTENTS

Monday 7 October 2024

Estimates .....	SP-1327
Ministry of Colleges and Universities.....	SP-1327
Hon. Nolan Quinn	
Mr. David Wai	
Mr. Josh Paul	
Mr. Jeff Butler	
Ms. Zoë Kroeker	



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
SOCIAL POLICY**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DE  
LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE**

Monday 7 October 2024

Lundi 7 octobre 2024

*The committee met at 1500 in committee room 2.*

**ESTIMATES  
MINISTRY OF COLLEGES  
AND UNIVERSITIES**

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on Social Policy will now come to order. We're meeting today to consider the 2024-25 estimates of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities for a total of three hours. We're joined today by staff from Hansard, broadcast and recording, and legislative research.

From the ministry, I'd like to welcome the Honourable Nolan Quinn, Minister of Colleges and Universities, as well as Deputy Minister David Wai and representatives from the ministry.

I just want to remind both of you that we want the ministry to closely monitor the proceedings in case there are questions or issues that the ministry wants to undertake to address. I trust the deputy has someone watching the proceedings for those questions. At the end, we can also get legislative research to bring forward the questions, if you need it.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Chair?

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Yes, MPP Fife?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** We received notice that this meeting went from 3 to 5. I know that the Clerk is just going to double-check that.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Thank you. We'll get back to you.

Are there any other questions from members before we start?

I'm now required to call vote 3001, which sets the review process in motion.

We're going to begin with a statement of not more than 20 minutes from you, Minister. Your time begins now.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Good afternoon, everyone. As Ontario's Minister of Colleges and Universities, I'm proud to be here to talk about our government's investments in the post-secondary education sector—investments that play a critical role in our commitment to better position Ontario's students, colleges, universities and Indigenous institutes for success. While I'm new at this role, I recognize, from my many years as an entrepreneur and as a passionate advocate for bringing convenient health care closer to home to all of our communities, that the people

of Ontario are the greatest asset that we have. By creating the right conditions for learners to succeed, both during their academic journeys and as they prepare for the workforce, Ontario will have everything it needs to build our economy; safeguard our competitiveness in critical sectors like advanced manufacturing, AI and life sciences; and ensure we have the talent we need to increase access to health care and to continue to build Ontario, because when students succeed, Ontario succeeds.

As the new Minister of Colleges and Universities, I understand my own experience as a student is unique to this position, because I'm a product of our province's college system—a proud graduate of St. Lawrence College in Cornwall. All in all, my college education gave me everything I needed at that stage of my life. It helped me start my family, start a career, and to buy a home and also a small business in my community where I grew up. My experience is a pretty common one across our province, but I understand it's pretty unique to my new role, so I look forward to bringing the perspective of a proud college grad to the ministry. In doing that, I want to make sure that students from all walks of life continue to get the kind of education that gets them ready for the jobs we need for today and also for tomorrow.

Today, more than ever, access to good jobs relies heavily on access to a solid post-secondary education. Our government has been steadfast in creating a better future for everyone across the province, including students from all walks of life. As a province, we must continue to keep the doors of opportunity open so that everyone in Ontario who is ready to learn has the opportunity to access an affordable post-secondary education.

I know that during these challenging times, when inflation and the cost of living are forcing Ontarians to make some tough financial decisions, it has never been more important to keep costs down for students and their families. That's why our government is maintaining the current tuition freeze for in-province domestic students for another three years. When we first took office, Ontario had the highest tuition fees in Canada. That's why we took action to put student affordability front and centre by cutting tuition by 10% in 2019-20 and holding the line against future increases. On average, these actions to freeze and cut tuition over the past few years have saved university students roughly \$1,600 per year and college students roughly \$350 per year. At a time when so much else is so much more expensive, those savings make a

huge difference to students and their families as they seek to build their future.

At the same time, we recognize that post-secondary institutions also need our support, which is why earlier this year our government announced a historic investment of nearly \$1.3 billion in new funding to support our sector. It's the single biggest investment in post-secondary education in more than a decade. This includes providing \$903 million over three years through the Postsecondary Education Sustainability Fund, with \$700 million in broad-based support for all institutions, and \$203 million in additional top-up funding for institutions with the greatest financial need.

But I want to be clear: Our approach to ensuring the sector's financial sustainability does not simply include infusing more money into the system, because taxpayer dollars should be spent efficiently while still maintaining the high level of education that students deserve. That's why, to help public colleges and universities operate in an efficient, accountable, and transparent manner, we created the Efficiency and Accountability Fund. This fund will provide institutions with \$15 million over the next three years to support third-party reviews that will identify actions institutions can take to drive long-term cost savings and positive outcomes for students and the communities they serve.

We want our post-secondary system to remain strong and stable for generations to come. Bolstering an education system will ensure students have the supports they need to prepare for the in-demand jobs of today and tomorrow, which in turn will help to build Ontario's economy. At the end of the day, a strong economy benefits everyone in Ontario.

As we continue to help foster economic growth, our government is building on its plan to create an Ontario that the people of this province can be proud of, not only today, but for generations to come. An important part of this plan is preparing Ontarians for the jobs of a modern economy, with the skills they need to be adaptable lifelong learners and that help them secure the in-demand jobs of tomorrow. But for students to flourish in the post-secondary education journey and beyond, we first need to ensure that the right conditions are in place to help foster success.

That's why, this spring, we passed the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, 2024, which helps create safe and inclusive campus communities. The legislation requires all public colleges and universities to have policies in place to address and combat racism and hate, as well as mental health and wellness supports and services. It also authorizes the minister to issue directives requiring institutions to provide information about ancillary fees and other student costs, such as learning materials. I look forward to continuing to work together with the sector to build more inclusive campus communities where every student feels welcome and has the opportunity to succeed, and this legislation we passed will get us one step closer.

Instead of burdening hard-working families with higher tuition, we're making historic investments to stabilize

colleges and universities. We're taking action to make fees more transparent.

And we're fostering safer campuses in preparing students for rewarding careers.

It is up to us, in partnership with all of our institutions, to establish pathways that set Ontarians up for success so they can find meaningful careers.

We know that Ontario's economy is becoming more knowledge-based and technology-driven. That's why we invested \$100 million in 2023-24 to help cover the operating costs of STEM programs at public colleges and universities with enrolments above their funded levels. On average, STEM graduates have better postgraduation outcomes than their non-STEM counterparts; for example, higher wages. Therefore, it's in our best interests to provide enhanced supports for these programs as they will help students secure good, in-demand jobs.

We're also taking steps to reduce financial barriers to help students get more opportunities to prepare for the careers our workforce needs, particularly in health care, and one of the exciting ways in which we're doing this is through the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant. When the grant launched last spring, we marked an important milestone in our government's plan to deliver more convenient and connected care for people across the whole province, helping students to pursue in-demand careers. Since it was created, the grant has focused on health human resources, to help get health care workers into the communities where they're needed the most. Having previously worked for Saint Elizabeth Health Care, I understand the incredible value of a program like this. Interest in the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant has been tremendous, and the numbers speak for themselves: As of August 2024, there are almost 3,900 grant recipients who have received over \$34 million in funding. The grant is the first of its kind and offers students full, upfront funding for tuition, books and other educational costs. This will truly make a world of difference for students who might not have otherwise pursued post-secondary education because they didn't think they could afford it. Now they'll have the opportunity to train for and land an in-demand job when they graduate, with many of their education costs completely paid for. By making it easier for future health care workers to access world-class training through this grant, we're helping to build a stronger, more resilient health care workforce in the communities that need it the most. This is a historic investment in our students and in the future of our health care workforce, and one this government is extremely proud of.

#### 1510

In the spirit of putting students first, we're also addressing an issue that is vitally important for students and their ability to go to school: access to safe and affordable housing. Recently, the government took important steps by removing red tape faced by universities when building student housing. As part of the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024, we exempted universities from the Planning Act. Universities, like public colleges, are no longer subject to many municipal planning approvals. This

will help them save years in approvals, avoid application fees and enable them to build faster to better meet the needs of their students.

Ontario's publicly assisted colleges and universities are now also required to publish their student housing policies and must guarantee that housing options are available for incoming international students. This will further ensure that all students, whether domestic, out-of-province or international, have access to and are aware of student housing options that are safe, affordable and within an easy commute to campus.

I would be remiss if I didn't take a few minutes to speak on another critical piece of the ministry's work that impacts all Ontarians: research and innovation. Truly, at the intersection of health and prosperity lies Ontario's robust research sector.

In 2023-24, our government announced it is investing over \$278 million in research projects at post-secondary institutions and research hospitals across the province. These investments are going a long way to laying the groundwork for continued discoveries and economic development right here in Ontario, all of which directly benefit the people of this province.

For example, with help from our funding, post-secondary institutions and research facilities are using innovative tools and technologies to change the medical field—this includes Dr. John Valliant at McMaster University. Through funding from the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research and the Ontario Research Fund, among others, Dr. Valliant and his team developed cutting-edge pharmaceuticals for precision cancer treatment, which targets tumours while ensuring the surrounding healthy tissue remains unaffected. This research resulted in his Fusion Pharmaceuticals spinning off and growing to become a multi-billion dollar publicly traded company that employs more than 100 people in the Hamilton area. Earlier this year, pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca bought Fusion Pharmaceuticals for US\$2.4 billion, with a commitment to keep jobs in Ontario and to further strengthen its presence in this province.

Another great example of the value of research investment is the work of Dr. Phillip Karpowicz from the University of Windsor. He used research funding from the province to establish a tissue-imaging facility to study inflammatory bowel disease, which affects more than 300,000 Canadians. Along with this work, he is also studying colorectal cancer, the second leading cause of cancer death in men and the third in women. His imaging has already shed new light on how poor circadian rhythms can contribute to these diseases, leading to promising avenues for disease prevention and treatment.

These are just a couple of examples of the meaningful research taking place in Ontario. By continuing to make investments in this space, we're providing opportunities for researchers to drive major advancements that benefit Ontario's economy, for students to learn from some of the brightest minds in our province, and for Ontarians to benefit from the incredible inventions and discoveries that can make such tangible differences to all of our lives.

While I have covered a lot of actions our government is taking today, at the heart of all of them is a commitment to always put students, their education and their futures first. There is no greater investment we can make than in the talent and the skills of the next generation.

In my days as a small business owner and in my role connecting communities with health care workers and the care they need—and now as an MPP, I see every day how important education and training are to the broader community.

We want to help students get more opportunities to prepare for the in-demand careers our workforce needs. The actions we're taking will strengthen the system in a responsible way, supporting both students and post-secondary institutions. We're building on past successes to help students feel safe and supported, and helping our institutions in upholding high standards.

I look forward to continuing to work with our institutions, student groups and other partners to make sure our world-class post-secondary sector continues to support a bright future for all the people of Ontario. Together, we will continue building strong, vibrant communities, and create real opportunities in every corner of this province for the people who live here and the businesses that want to invest here.

I'll pass it over to the deputy.

**Mr. David Wai:** Thank you, Minister.

My name is David Wai. I'm deputy minister at the Ministry of Colleges and Universities.

Career colleges and Indigenous institutes, and colleges and universities located across our province provide students and job seekers with the highest-quality education and the latest in training and skills development. Our post-secondary sector is producing the talent and leadership of tomorrow, but it also plays a direct role in moving the province forward today by helping to build a stronger Ontario, fostering a modern economy and ensuring equitable access to health care for all.

To ensure the post-secondary education system will remain strong for years to come, the government took vital actions this year to both address the immediate and critical needs of Ontario's institutions and drive long-term cost savings and positive outcomes for students, institutions and their communities. This broad range of measures will offer much-needed stability to the post-secondary sector so it can continue to produce the world-class graduates Ontario is known for.

The wealth and prosperity of this province depends on the hard work and contributions of its skilled workforce, and Ontario's workforce depends on the students, researchers and lifelong learners in our world-class institutions. That's why, as Minister Quinn mentioned, supporting students and helping them succeed will always be our biggest priority. One example of the way we're putting that into action is through applied master's degrees. The government is helping Ontario's institutions develop programs that better meet students' needs and evolve with the labour market in priority industries. This provides students with more pathways to prepare for in-demand

jobs, giving them the skills needed to thrive in a rapidly changing economy.

Succeeding in this economy means giving workers the opportunity to upgrade and adapt their skills. That's why the government has invested \$60 million since 2020 to support Ontario's first micro-credentials strategy. During the first round of the micro-credentials challenge fund, Ontario supported the creation of more than 300 new micro-credentials that are expected to serve about 6,000 learners. We also invested \$5 million through a second round of the Ontario Micro-credentials Challenge Fund to support post-secondary institutions in working with industry partners. Together, they can co-create and expand rapid training programs that serve labour market needs.

This year, Ontario is providing funding for 88 micro-credential projects at post-secondary institutions across the province. One example is Fanshawe College's manufacturing fundamentals. This is a program that prepares learners for digital advances in manufacturing. Another is the electric vehicle supply equipment upskilling for electricians program at Mohawk College. That program gives electricians specialized skills to enter the booming electric vehicle industry.

I'm proud of the part our ministry is playing in projects that will give learners the skills needed to contribute to Ontario's modern economy.

Another way we're helping to ensure Ontario has the workers we need for the future is our work to help post-secondary institutions train more health care professionals than ever before. In fact, the government is rolling out the largest expansion of medical education in over 10 years. This expansion includes all six medical schools across Ontario, and, by 2028, that will bring the total number of undergraduate seats to just over 1,200 and postgraduate training seats to more than 1,600.

In addition to expanding medical enrolment, the government is also supporting new medical schools in growing communities. This year, Ontario announced an investment of \$9 million to begin the design of York University's new medical school. This is the first medical school in Canada to be focused on training primary care doctors.

The province also continues to support Toronto Metropolitan University's new medical school in Brampton, set to open next summer.

**1520**

Ontario's commitment to health care doesn't stop with doctors. The ministry is investing in nursing education, with \$128 million over the next three years to support additional enrolment in college and university nursing programs. This investment will create 2,000 bachelor of science in nursing and 1,000 practical nursing program spaces.

With these investments into medical and nursing education, we're building a stronger, healthier and more prosperous Ontario.

The success of Ontario's post-secondary initiatives, be it applied programs, medical education or research breakthroughs, all depends on the success and sustainability of

our institutions. It's important to recognize that the supports—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Deputy, you have one minute remaining.

**Mr. David Wai:** It's important to recognize that the supports we put in place for our students to learn and successfully transition through a course are only as useful as the strength of the Ontario post-secondary system as a whole. We know that post-secondary institutions were hit hard during the pandemic and continue to navigate increasing costs.

That's why, as Minister Quinn mentioned, the government is continuing to focus on efficiency, accountability and financial sustainability in our world-class post-secondary institutions.

In addition to the Postsecondary Education Sustainability Fund and the Efficiency and Accountability Fund, in 2023-24 Ontario also implemented the new University Financial Accountability Framework.

All these actions that Minister Quinn and I touched on make it clear the government is fostering success for institutions, students and employers all over this province. Together, Ontario's government and the post-secondary research sector are building a stronger, more innovative and prosperous future for this province and everyone in it.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Thank you, Minister and Deputy.

Just before we start the question round, we have confirmed that the schedule adopted by the committee on May 13, 2024, has selected the Ministry of Colleges and Universities for three hours, so this meeting is scheduled until 6 p.m. I just wanted to confirm.

We're going to begin the questions and answers in rotations of 20 minutes for the official opposition, 10 minutes for the independent member, and 20 minutes for the government. The official opposition will begin. MPP Sattler.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you, Minister Quinn, and congratulations on your new position.

Thank you, Deputy, for coming to the committee today.

Many of my questions will focus on vote item 3002 and the overall post-secondary education program.

When we did the estimates process last year, there was already a very dire financial situation for colleges and universities in this province. Of course, in November, we learned just how dire it was, with the recommendation that \$2.5 billion was urgently needed over three years just to keep the sector afloat; your government, as you pointed out, responded with about half of the recommended amount. Since that recommendation of \$2.5 billion, we've seen federal government changes to the study permits and work permits which have basically closed the tap on the international student tuition dollars that were subsidizing our system in this province. There has been high inflation. There have been the costs associated with the remediation of the unconstitutional Bill 124. Taken together, these fiscal pressures have really continued to undermine the sustainability of our colleges and universities. Yet, what we see in the estimates is a very meagre increase to trans-



fer payments; it is below the rate of inflation, which means that it is effectively a cut.

Minister, can you explain why the funding included in the estimates before us is significantly less than what every institution, advocacy organization, sector stakeholder and expert recommended is needed to keep Ontario's post-secondary system from failing?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Thank you for that question.

I think it's worth pointing out that Ontario does invest \$5.1 billion in operating funds, with \$3.7 billion going to universities and \$1.3 billion going to the colleges.

It was our government that actually introduced the blue-ribbon panel to provide us with some options.

That is why this spring we announced \$903 million into the Postsecondary Education Sustainability Fund starting in 2024-25, consisting of \$700 million in right-across-the-board-funding for all public institutions as well as \$203 million in funding for top-ups for institutions with a greater financial need. On top of that, we also have a \$15-million investment over three years beginning, again, in 2024-25 into the Efficiency and Accountability Fund that will support third-party reviews to drive long-term cost savings and positive outcomes for students and the communities they serve.

I'll allow the deputy to provide further context on some of the funding.

**Mr. David Wai:** Thank you, Minister.

I would say, within the \$1.3 billion, the \$903 million is for the Postsecondary Education Sustainability Fund, including \$203 million related to the top-up fund.

I would ask ADM Josh Paul to come forward and talk further about a few other pieces of the fund, including the additional capital fund.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** ADMs and other ministry staff, just make sure you introduce yourself and your title for the accurate purposes of Hansard.

**Mr. Josh Paul:** I'm Josh Paul, ADM of financial sustainability, performance and oversight.

I'm happy to provide a bit more detail, in particular in relation to the blue-ribbon panel recommendation of about a 15% increase in resources—a 10% increase for funding from the government and a 5% increase in tuitions.

When you look at the breakdown of the top-up that the deputy and the minister referred to as part of the sustainability fund, you'll see that some organizations that were particularly high in need received either a 10% increase or, in some cases, a 15% increase over their base funding, which relatively aligns to what the blue-ribbon panel recommended.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you very much for those responses.

The concern, I think, that many in the sector share is that your government appointed an expert panel to make some recommendations about the amount of funding that was needed to keep the sector afloat, that panel came back with recommendations, and then your government ignored it.

Even with these funding amounts that you have provided to this committee, Ontario is still going to be at the

bottom of every Canadian province in terms of the per student funding that is allocated to both colleges and universities; it's 57% of the Canadian average for universities and just 44% of the Canadian average for colleges. The blue-ribbon panel recommended a 10% increase in per student funding for 2024-25 and then said in subsequent years there should be either a 2% increase or an increase to match inflation, whichever was higher.

So my question is, do these estimates reflect a 10% increase in per student funding this year, as was recommended by the blue-ribbon panel, and if they do not, why not?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Part of these estimates have the \$700 million over three years, and that is a 3% increase this year, 2% in the following year and another 2% after that, for a cumulative total of 7% by year three to base funding. On top of that, we do have another \$203 million for the institutions that have higher risk or that are in a more challenging financial position; of that, as ADM Paul mentioned, there are institutions getting up to 15% to their base funding, and then there are also institutions getting 10%. Just doing some quick math—about 20% of the institutions are receiving a 15% base funding increase, as well as another 22% of the institutions are receiving a 10% increase.

Through this targeted approach, the ministry is providing very significant financial support where it is needed most within the sector.

I'll pass it over to the deputy minister to provide further context.

**Mr. David Wai:** Thank you, Minister.

I would just emphasize again that we targeted the funds of those institutions most in need, as the minister indicated, and those increases—both the broader across-the-board money is connected to inflation as well as the broader numbers meant to address those in need.

I'll ask ADM Josh Paul to provide further information on those that maybe have received the highest amounts and the thought process behind those.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** If that could be provided to me in writing later, that would be appreciated.

I want to move on to another issue. Minister, you addressed this in your remarks about the additional funding that has been provided for seats in STEM programs, but I did want to address the 30,000 domestic students in this province who are attending Ontario universities this year, who get no funding whatsoever from your government, and that's an increase from the 21,000 unfunded domestic students last year. This is because your government has set an arbitrary cap about how many domestic students will be funded, and so that causes the institutions to have to dip into other areas of revenue to enable those students to attend. The Auditor General said that those caps should be changed. The Council of Ontario Universities is actually projecting that by 2030, there are going to be 100,000 unfunded domestic students in this province. These are students who want to attend university, who are eligible and qualify to attend, but may not

have a space because the sector cannot continue to subsidize them.

**1530**

My question is, why is your government maintaining these caps on domestic student enrolment that prevent Ontario students who are accepted into college or university from being able to attend?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Obviously, when we're speaking about corridor funding, the government is ensuring that Ontario's publicly assisted colleges and universities have a clear mandate that's focused on driving accountability and sector sustainability through measurable results and positive outcomes for post-secondary students and communities. Also known as SMA3—this is the third iteration of the agreement, and we're currently involved in and about to start touring the province to be able to start on SMA4, which will take us through 2025 until 2030.

I'll pass it to the deputy minister to provide further context.

**Mr. David Wai:** Thank you, Minister.

Again, I will ask ADM Josh Paul to come up in a minute, but I will just underline that our funding approach at the ministry really provides stable and predictable funding to institutions as long as enrolment stays above a certain level or floor. This means there may be some growth at some institutions above the funded level, but at the same time there may be some that are below that level. So the model provides some flexibility for institutions to shift their program mix to best meet student and labour market demand.

Obviously, things have changed since the release of the blue-ribbon panel's report. As the minister indicated, we're about to undergo a negotiation and discussion with institutions around strategic mandate agreements 4, and I'll ask ADM Josh Paul to talk further about that.

**Mr. Josh Paul:** Thank you, Deputy.

I think the comments from the minister and the deputy cover most things.

I might point out just a technicality in the way the province funds. It's not based on enrolment per se; it's based on weighted enrolment, which takes into account program resources. As the deputy mentioned, at the beginning of every strategic mandate agreement, that particular weighted enrolment measure is fixed for every institution as part of the bilateral agreements that make up the strategic mandate agreement.

Maybe one other thing just to quickly mention is that as part of the SMA4 mandate that the province is about to embark on with each of the 45 institutions, the government has committed to review the funding formula. That's something that we need to take into account as we go forward.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** When will that review take place?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I'll pass it to the deputy minister.

**Mr. David Wai:** We are starting those discussions. We've issued some initial memos on starting those discussions shortly.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Okay. I want to turn to OSAP now, vote item 3002-1.

The estimates include a 0.9% increase to student financial assistance this year versus last year. Just as with the grants, this is an increase that is well below inflation, which means that it is effectively a cut.

So my question is, why has your ministry effectively reduced financial assistance for students at a time when young people in this province are really struggling with the rising cost of living?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I'll just remind the member that OSAP is an entitlement-based system, so ultimately, if they are eligible for it, they do receive the funds.

Something I am very proud of is the 400,000 students who are being helped with OSAP this year alone—82% of that is to full-time students in the form of grants, compared to 54% on the federal assistance. So we have a larger amount of grants than loans coming through OSAP, through the provincial portion.

Again, I'll pass it over to the deputy to provide further context.

**Mr. David Wai:** I would again underline that, obviously, access is an important part of promoting post-secondary studies—and I'll ask ADM Jeff Butler to talk a bit more about the increase. We have obviously included areas such as micro-credentials, which are now available through OSAP eligibility, as well as other accesses, including to the nine Indigenous institutes.

I'll ask ADM Jeff Butler to talk about the increase to the OSAP funding.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I wonder if I could ask a follow-up question related to the provincial contribution to student financial aid and the federal Canada student loans program.

As you are aware, the federal government increased its portion of student financial aid in 2021. But instead of increasing the amount of revenues that were available for students who require financial aid, your government decided to make a reduction in the amount that was available in Ontario. Basically, that left students no further ahead and represented \$400 million that would have otherwise been available to students with this federal increase. That has accumulated into a total of \$1.2 billion in those years, since 2021, since that federal increase. So my question is, has that \$1.2 billion been reinvested back into the program to increase the amount of funding that's available to students?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** So, understanding the member did mention that there are some challenges with affordability right now, something I'm very proud of is our government's 10% tuition cut, and that we've frozen tuition since that cut in 2018-19.

Ultimately, it takes all levels of government—including families and the institutions—to ensure that post-secondary education is affordable for students.

I will pass it over to the deputy to provide further context.

**Mr. David Wai:** Absolutely, we are very aware of the changes in the federal access. But to the minister's point, we think about both the tuition changes that we've made as well as the OSAP funding.

I'll pass it to ADM Jeff Butler to talk further on both the increase and the split between federal and provincial.

**Mr. Jeff Butler:** Thanks very much.

I'm Jeff Butler, assistant deputy minister, operations, at the ministry.

Just to pick up on a point that the minister made: OSAP is a needs-based entitlement program, so students are entitled to the amount of support that they're eligible for based on their needs. We do look at all of the costs that a student faces as part of calculating their OSAP. That includes their direct educational costs—tuition, books, mandatory fees—as well as a variety of different living expenses. As you mentioned, it is a shared federal and provincial program. And when there are changes in the federal program, they do have impacts on federal expenditures, particularly if changes that are made by the federal government are not proportionate to changes in student needs. So, again, we do look at the total need that the student has, and then the combined federal and provincial support.

With respect to specific changes in expenditures between 2023-24 and what we're projecting for 2024-25, we are expecting higher expenditures on the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant, offset by lower expenditures than what we had seen in OSAP for micro-credentials based on uptake, as well as lower expenditures on loan interest relief because of changing interest rates.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I have another question about one of the budget lines in vote item 3002.

The estimates show a \$49-million student assistance interest expense reclassification in 2023-24; the same amount, \$49 million, is projected for this year.

Can the minister explain what that student assistance interest expense reclassification is?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I will pass that to Deputy Minister Wai to be able to provide further context.

1540

**Mr. David Wai:** Yes, and I'll pass it to Jeff to provide more colour on that.

**Mr. Jeff Butler:** Yes—apologies. I'll have to take that question back. There are, sometimes, accounting changes made to the classification of interest by the Ministry of Finance, so I'll have to take that question back.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Okay.

How much time do we have?

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** You have two minutes.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Perfect.

I now want to ask some questions related to capital expenses, so vote item 3002-3.

I asked the minister last year what the accumulated backlog was in deferred maintenance at colleges and universities, and she told us that there was \$6.3 billion.

Can you tell me what the current deferred maintenance backlog is at Ontario's universities, colleges and Indigenous institutes?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I'll pass it back to the deputy minister to provide that number.

**Mr. David Wai:** I'll ask Josh Paul to come forward and talk about the backlog further.

I would say we do share the responsibility for capital investments—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** You've got about one minute left in this round.

**Mr. David Wai:** —but in terms of—it is generally—capital investments are for institutions to take care of their administrative matters, including capital investments.

I'll pass it to ADM Josh Paul.

**Mr. Josh Paul:** I don't have any up-to-date information about the backlog at hand, but I understand it's roughly in the same ballpark as what the blue-ribbon panel cited.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** That was \$6.3 billion last year. There was \$167 million announced over three years toward capital repairs and equipment. So at that kind of a pace, when do you expect the deferred maintenance backlog to be cleared?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Well, I think it's important to note that, since 2010, the Ontario government has invested \$4.2 billion into the total capital grants. And as the deputy minister did mention, the publicly assisted colleges and universities are—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Thank you, Minister. That ends the first round for the official opposition.

We'll now do a 10-minute round of questions for the independent member. MPP Clancy, you can begin.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I did also want to congratulate you on your new role, Minister—honourable. They'll call you "honourable" from now on; no more "dishonourable." I'm just kidding. And I do know that the sector appreciates the \$903 million that was announced in the spring.

In my community, there are three very different institutions: one that relied more heavily on international students, that has a surplus; one that didn't rely as much on it, that has a massive deficit, and I think that tells a big story about the recent years in the sector; and we have a regional university that I think is finding its way to compete in this context.

My question is—the number that I have is that there are 10 universities alone that will have \$175 million in deficits this year and \$273 million in deficits next year, and I know one of our locals has a \$75-million deficit. What is your approach to these universities that are struggling? I think it's stressful times—and they're one of our best. I know University of Waterloo is—you say you care about STEM, you care about EI—AI, not EI—EI too, but that's another day. Yes, you care about AI and STEM, but here we have one of our leading tech universities in the province with a massive shortfall.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** In the \$1.3-billion announcement, \$100 million went directly to STEM in 2023-24 to be able to help universities and colleges with unfunded enrolments. As you did mention, the \$903 million—\$700 million of that is across-the-board increases for all institutions, as well as \$203 million for those institutions, like you've implied, that have greater financial risk or financial need, to be able to top them up to ensure that they're viable and sustainable.

I'll pass it over to Deputy Wai to provide some more context.

**Mr. David Wai:** I would say we work with all the universities and colleges very closely to understand their financial position and financial situation. I do think things have evolved and things continue to evolve as the external environment changes.

In addition, I would say the institutions themselves are thinking about and considering how to go about running their business and what the right cost structure is for that. We've worked very closely both with the \$903 million that we provided and with the institutions around the \$15 million around the Efficiency and Accountability Fund as well to allow, enable and support institutions to think about how they go about operating their operations and continue to support students well. So we are aware and work very closely to understand where their business plans and financial plans are going forward, to understand where situations might crop up.

The other thing I would say is, we've introduced the University Financial Accountability Framework, which is a really important framework for us to monitor and understand the positions of where institutions are—and be a bit of a forward-looking view on where the opportunities and where the challenges may be.

I may ask ADM Josh Paul to talk a bit about how we're working with institutions to address some of the shortfalls that you mentioned and some of the opportunities we—

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** Can I ask that he elaborate—because you referred to them as businesses, but here we are saying, “You can't charge more,” and then the way that they would make more money, by having international students subsidize our institutions, has been capped and cut. There are differences between a college, a university, an Indigenous institution and a business. Businesses can raise their costs to make sure that they can break even; as an entrepreneur, you'd know, right? But this is a very different situation, where we have a cut and a freeze to tuition, and then not a commensurate amount of funding—so just sensitivity around financial accountability. I know when people are starving, they don't want to be told that they didn't manage their money well.

Sir, please elaborate with that in mind.

**Mr. Josh Paul:** On the University Financial Accountability Framework: It is something that looks at deficits, but not only deficits; it looks at a wide variety of metrics, including liquidity—how much cash is on hand to manage operations—the ability of the institutions to manage their overall debt, and it also looks at credit rating. There are nine various technical metrics that the province uses to track financial health.

The other point to emphasize is that, as part and parcel of the sustainability and the Efficiency and Accountability Fund rollout, we are providing those institutions in high need, as the minister mentioned, with the opportunity to work with a third party to review all aspects of their budget. That would include governance, administration and student supports; to look at academic programming, to look at opportunities for collaborative procurement, to look at efficiencies that could be wrought out of their physical space, and to look at areas where they might be

able to increase revenue—obviously, except that there are some limitations to that given the overall financial frame. But there are still some ways in which universities could potentially increase revenues through other types of fees and through leveraging their physical space.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** Thank you. It's good to have detail.

One thing I'm concerned about in the reports that I've read coming out from colleges and universities is that an area that gets cut to try to deal with these deficits is student supports. One of the biggest concerns I know I had and my colleagues in opposition had was that with the new mandates around combatting racism and hate, that would lead to the need for more student supports. I think we heard from some students that they wanted a response, they wanted more support from their college and university, and here I'm reading that because of budget deficits, those services are getting cut.

Can you explain how you aim to improve student services while they're being cut?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** The ministry provides a \$6.1-million annual grant to publicly assisted colleges and universities in the Campus Safety Grant, which totals, on the mental health and addictions side, about \$35 million that we're investing this year alone.

I do hear your concerns. I was here at committee when Bill 166 was going through, and there were two young ladies who were very concerned at the safety on their campus, being that they were Jewish—but understanding that's where Bill 166 will come into play and be able to help ensure that we raise the bar of all institutions to make sure that all students feel safe on campus.

I'll pass it to Deputy Wai.

**1550**

**Mr. David Wai:** Thank you, Minister.

I would just underline that the changes as a result of Bill 166 do require all institutions to have student mental health policies that will be publicly available, as well as policies around anti-racism and hate, to ensure that there is that support.

As the minister articulated, we have the \$6.1 million in the Campus Safety Grant, but in addition, in 2024-25, we are funding \$35.6 million in mental health supports, to provide institutions with the support they need to provide individual students at their campuses.

I'll ask ADM Zoë Kroeker to talk more about the mental health supports to ensure that students are being supported properly.

**Ms. Zoë Kroeker:** Thank you very much.

I'm Zoë Kroeker. I'm the assistant deputy minister for strategic policy and planning.

As the deputy noted, the ministry does have a variety of grants going to the publicly assisted colleges and universities. These are there to support students. They are for services, workers, specific mental health supports, as well as for Indigenous institutes.

The \$35 million annually that the deputy mentioned covers a variety of different grants; as I noted, one is the Mental Health Services Grant. This is there to support the

institutions to build mental health awareness, counselling therapies and other specific supports for at-risk or other groups.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** There is one minute left in this round.

**Ms. Zoë Kroeker:** Okay.

There is the Mental Health Worker Grant that supports the institutions to have workers on hand to support mental health services.

There is also support that goes into things like Good2Talk or Get A-Head. Good2Talk is a phone service that provides mental health supports. Get A-Head is there to provide online services as well.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I'd just give one suggestion, which is that I'm finding that with folks trying to hire and retain staff—grants really are going to fall short to getting well-trained individuals to come and then stay, because I know as a social worker, people want permanent full-time. So I hope that you can consider that in the funding model going forward.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** We'll now move to the government's first 20-minute round. MPP Pierre.

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Thank you, Minister, for your remarks earlier today.

I want to ask you a question around investments in research. I listened to your remarks, and I was thinking back about our government's investment into infrastructure and refreshing Ontario's advanced research computing systems, and what that means not only in terms of the programming that we deliver in colleges and universities but also in terms of our economy.

We know that advancements in the fields of computing, AI and the life sciences, amongst many others, are occurring at a rapid pace, not just here in Ontario and across Canada, but really around the world. In order for Ontario to remain competitive in the global economy, we need to make sure that our post-secondary institutions and research institutes have the resources they need to continue producing highly skilled workers to make those discoveries that drive so much of our economy. We're hearing more and more about those types of investments here in the province of Ontario.

I'm hoping you can tell us a little bit more about the steps our government is taking to ensure that these types of tools are available to students and researchers so that we remain at the cutting edge of technology.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Thank you, MPP Pierre, for that question.

Although I've only been at the Ministry of Colleges and Universities a very short time, through briefings and tours, I've had the opportunity to participate, and over the last few weeks, I've been really impressed by the incredible work that's being done in our research community. Ontario is home to some of the best and brightest minds in the world, and it's one of the reasons why our province is one of the top jurisdictions globally when it comes to research and innovation.

The research sector is a key source of innovation and commercialization in the province, making it one of the

leading contributors to Ontario's global competitiveness and productivity. Having world-class talent is critical to competing and thriving in today's global economy, and to the advancement of technologies and practices within education, health and business. However, we know that our researchers cannot do it alone. To ensure Ontario stays at the forefront of innovation, we need to regularly update research laboratories with the latest equipment and technology. That's why funding from the government at all levels is so important, and it's one of the reasons why we've made strategic investments to support Ontario's publicly assisted universities, colleges and research institutes, as well as academic hospitals. One of the key ways we're doing so is through the province's three competitive research funding programs: the Ontario Research Fund—Research Excellence, the Ontario Research Fund—Research Infrastructure, as well as the Early Researcher Awards.

In 2023-24, the ministry announced multi-year investments of \$48 million in the Ontario Research Fund—Research Excellence program, which promotes research excellence by supporting leading-edge, transformative and internationally significant research of high strategic value in Ontario. To really understand the incredible work of this program, we need to go back and look at what the researchers have accomplished with this funding in the past, as it takes a few years to truly show tangible results. A great example is a research project that is being led by Dr. Aaron Fenster at Western University in London, Ontario. He received a grant of over \$2.6 million from this program in 2020. Dr. Fenster and his team at Western and Lawson Health Research Institute were able to create a new system that uses ultrasound to construct 3-D images—images that could make the treatment of liver cancer more accurate. Under this new system, thermal ablation, which uses heat to destroy the cancerous tumour, is used as an alternative to surgery. Dr. Fenster and his team have found that using thermal ablation instead of surgery to treat liver cancer is more accurate, more precise than conventional techniques, and their research has shown that patients have fewer complications and shorter recovery times. If this new system is proven to be effective in clinical trials, the robotic ultrasound system's portability could potentially allow for more widespread use of 3-D ultrasound imaging, including in smaller health care centres. Based on Dr. Fenster's research, this new system can reduce imaging wait times and could lead to better outcomes for patients with liver cancer. It's health care advancements like this that can truly make a difference for Ontarians living in smaller and rural communities.

I'll now move on to the province's second competitive research program, the Ontario Research Fund—Research Infrastructure. This program helps ensure that the province's research infrastructure continues to be competitive so that we can engage in global research and development. In 2023-24, I'm pleased to say that the ministry announced multi-year investments of \$223 million into this program. Importantly, for those researchers who receive funding through this program, the vast majority were also able to leverage matching federal funding through the Canada

Foundation for Innovation. A great example of how this type of funding has been used in the past is a recent research project that has been led by Dr. Burak Kantarci at the University of Ottawa, thanks to a grant of nearly \$300,000 from this program in 2020. Dr. Kantarci and his team were able to establish the Smart Connected Vehicles Innovation Centre at the University of Ottawa's Kanata North campus, which is located in the heart of Canada's largest technology park. Since the centre was established in 2021, it has made notable achievements, such as facilitating numerous research and development collaborations, partnering with 18 research partners and generating six patents. Due to these industry partnerships, the centre was able to pioneer advancements into 6G and artificial intelligence and develop seamless and secure communication systems for smart vehicles. Centres like this are the key to ensuring Ontario remains at the forefront of innovation and continues to make advancements in new technologies such as self-driving cars, robotics and AI.

Our third competitive research program, the Early Researcher Awards, is one of the ways Ontario is driving innovation across the province, helping early career researchers to build on research teams, and improving Ontario's ability to attract and retain the best and brightest talent in a variety of disciplines. In 2023-24, the ministry announced multi-year investments of \$7.4 million into this program. A great example of the incredible impact of this program can be seen through a recent research project that was led by Dr. JoAnne Arcand at Ontario Tech University in Oshawa, Ontario. Thanks to a \$140,000 grant from this program in 2018, Dr. Arcand's research has significantly advanced the care of individuals with hypertension by developing new e-health interventions that help reduce dietary sodium intake. These new interventions have not only improved the health of these individuals, but they've also enhanced patient care and minimized health care costs associated with hypertension management. Thanks to this research grant, Dr. Arcand and her team were also involved in national and international research projects that were aimed at reducing the amounts of sodium in packaged foods in Canada and the Americas to make them healthier for millions of people.

#### 1600

These success stories are just a few examples of the far-reaching impact of the impressive work being done by researchers across our province. When we look at the 2023-24 fiscal year, our government announced a \$278-million investment through these three core programs in support of over 400 research projects. And importantly, these projects are supporting multiple provincial priorities, including Ontario's Life Sciences Strategy, the Critical Minerals Strategy, a Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan, an Advanced Manufacturing Strategy, and Driving Prosperity: The Future of Ontario's Automotive Sector.

Frankly, it's hard to argue with the numbers when it comes to return on investment. Since 2018, Ontario has invested \$740 million in more than 1,300 research projects through these three through research programs—projects

that have leveraged more than \$1.18 billion in funding from federal and third-party contributions.

Our research program investments have also supported the creation of more than 120,000 training opportunities for researchers and students across the province. Moreover, they've contributed to more than 40,000 publications that were cited more than half a million times. They also supported 421 patents being granted and helped create 76 spinoff companies, resulting in close to 600 new jobs.

These numbers not only show that our province's research sector is a key source of innovation and commercialization in the province, but it's also a leading contributor to Ontario's global competitiveness and productivity. Our province's long-term economic growth and so much more is included.

In addition to these competitive research programs, our government also supports groundbreaking work at leading research institutes across the province. In 2023-24, Ontario invested almost \$125 million to support 10 leading research institutes, including the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research, the Ontario Brain Institute, the Perimeter Institute, the Centre for Aging + Brain Health Innovation, Ontario Genomics, the Fields Institute, Clinical Trials Ontario, Compute Ontario, SNOLAB, and the Vector Institute. These institutes each have a unique mandate, and many are internationally recognized centres of excellence. Collectively, they carry out research of strategic importance to the province. They support research collaborations and focus on building talent and commercialization.

A great example of the incredible impact of our research institutes can be seen if we look at the Ontario Brain Institute, or OBI for short. If you can recall, in 2023, our government's provincial budget announced a \$5-million investment over three years for OBI's new centre for analytics. Although this new centre just opened a few months ago, it has already proven to be a valuable resource for labs and start-ups as it provides key training and support for the data that is used to foster the development and testing of advanced analytics and AI tools. The centre also offers a fellowship program to attract, develop and retain Ontario expertise in AI and neuroanalytics. Thanks to this new centre, labs and start-ups are able to get access to new talent and validate their brain health solutions in real-world scenarios. This work is extremely important as it can help improve the quality and outcomes of research so our loved ones impacted by brain disorders have the hope of a better future.

In addition to supporting our research institutes, we're also investing in advanced research computing. While most people have access to a laptop or a desktop computer at work or home, these devices don't have the required computing power that is needed to conduct academic research. That's why our government has made significant investments in advanced research computing, which is the ecosystem that consists of high-speed networks, computing power, data storage, as well as computer experts and software. Advanced research computing, or ARC for short, is essential for powering AI, advanced research and high-tech industries. It has become a necessary component

of modern research, as it is being applied in every field. ARC-based research fuels profitable academic and industry joint ventures, innovative tech start-ups and the transformation of sectors such as mining and manufacturing, creating significant economic benefit and building and attracting expert talent to the province.

Ontario's shared ARC systems consist of two main national platforms: the Graham supercomputer located at the University of Waterloo and the Niagara supercomputer located at the University of Toronto. While these supercomputers are distributed across these institutions, they function as one of the integrated shared systems that researchers across the province can access. These ARC systems are used annually by more than 6,000 Ontario-based researchers and 4,000 trainees as well, which includes undergraduate and graduate students and post-doctoral fellows from 46 academic organizations in Ontario.

Due to the importance of these ARC systems, over the next three years, our government is investing an additional \$18 million to support ongoing operation and maintenance of these systems. This is on top of the \$47.4 million we're investing in the infrastructure refresh of the aging ARC systems at the University of Toronto and the University of Waterloo. Through these investments, we're ensuring that these ARC systems can continue to play a pivotal role in meeting the growing computational needs for research in fields such as AI and the life sciences for years to come.

Ontario's research programs and institutions are recognized globally for having a reputation of excellence, and we owe it to students to do everything we can to uphold that reputation. I think it's clear, based on the information I've shared, that our government's significant ongoing investments in research are critical to the strength of this province. We need to ensure that our post-secondary institutions and research institutes have the resources and tools they need to continue producing the highly skilled workers and discoveries that drive much of our economy.

Through our investments in research and ARC, our research community has access to state-of-the-art labs, technology and equipment. These resources are absolutely necessary to ensure that they can continue their cutting-edge research and make new discoveries that have a real impact on the lives of our families, friends and all our loved ones.

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** I'll pass it over to my colleague MPP Grewal.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** MPP Grewal.

**Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal:** I first want to thank the minister for this great commitment he has shown in investing in research and innovation, and I also want to congratulate him on his new role as our Minister of Colleges and Universities.

We know you're going to do an amazing job.

One thing that concerns me is theft of intellectual property, whether that be the way of cyber attacks or espionage, and I wanted to ask you about what we're doing to safeguard our publicly funded research. That's just not about protecting our intellectual property but also about

ensuring that our taxpayer dollars go to benefiting Ontarians and our economy.

What is the ministry going to do to strengthen our intellectual property protection and ensure taxpayer dollars don't go to waste? All the innovation that we're doing in various universities across the province—let's say in our tech sector capital in Waterloo or Kitchener, and all of the great new ideas that we're developing, the technology that we're developing. What are we doing to protect all of that?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Thank you for that question.

As a ministry, I'm proud to say that we've taken concrete action to both protect and commercialize our province's intellectual property, or IP, developed through our publicly funded research.

As I mentioned earlier, our government is making major, ongoing investments in research each year through its three competitive research programs and its investments in leading research institutes. In 2023-24 alone, these investments totalled over \$270 million and included research projects at most of Ontario's publicly assisted post-secondary institutions, as well as research institutes and academic hospitals across the whole province. These research projects span a number of fields and are a key source of innovation and commercialization in our province. They also help make our research sector one of the leading contributors to Ontario's global competitiveness and productivity.

Research security and IP protection go hand in hand, and it's the reason why our government has made both a priority. Given how we invest in research, we must ensure those taxpayer dollars are spent in a way that directly benefits Ontarians and the whole economy. That's why the ministry has made a number of strategic investments and enhancements over the past few years to protect the national and provincial security of our world-class research ecosystem and to strengthen IP protection for Ontario researchers, entrepreneurs and businesses.

I want to be clear: This ministry takes research security very seriously because, without the proper protections, the discoveries and innovations made by Ontario's researchers are under threat within an increasingly complex, globalized research community. Cyber attacks, espionage and theft of financial and research data can prove to be very costly, dangerous and disruptive to research projects. That's why research security is a shared responsibility. Researchers, their institutions and the provincial and federal governments all have a role to play in ensuring that our publicly funded research is adequately protected.

**1610**

While post-secondary institutions using federal government resources establish their own protocols and frameworks to avoid cyber attacks and other threats, the ministry is also doing its part through its research security framework that was initially implemented in 2019, and which has been further enhanced this year.

For example, when a researcher applies for funding through one of the ministry's three competitive research programs, such as the Ontario Research Fund or Early

Researcher Awards, they need to meet certain requirements that are designed to protect the research and safeguard it from foreign interference. This includes the requirements to follow the ministry's new research security guidelines, submit an application attestation form and complete a checklist on mitigating economic and geopolitical risk. If a researcher's application is accepted and the ministry decides to award them research funding, we also have additional requirements in place, such as a cyber and information security plan and an ongoing requirement to assess and manage any potential economic or geopolitical risk, to actively mitigate risk and protect data. If the ministry determines that a research project is high-risk, the institution needs to take part in an extra risk mitigation process. Once the transfer payment agreement is in place, the ministry's work doesn't end there, as ministry staff will also conduct spot audits to confirm if the funding recipient is upholding certain risk reduction and mitigation measures.

In addition, there is also a new annual requirement for institutions to disclose if they have any active research agreements with any foreign entities.

Based on these examples, I think it's clear—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Minister, you have one minute remaining in this round.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:**—that the ministry takes safeguarding our publicly funded research very seriously. Thanks to our enhanced security framework, we are ensuring that Ontario's research, for which we provide significant funding support, stays safe from a variety of thefts, both domestically and internationally.

In this regard, I would like to talk about how our government is working to strengthen IP protection for Ontario's researchers, entrepreneurs and businesses. But first, I'd like to speak about some of Ontario's IP challenges.

According to data from the Association of University Technology Managers, between 2010 and 2019, Ontario consistently ranked among the top 10 jurisdictions in the world when it came to research spending and total innovation disclosures. However, despite these strengths, statistics showed that Ontario and Canada were still behind many of its peer jurisdictions when it came to protecting IP and generating economic returns from IP licensing and commercialization activities.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** That concludes this round. We'll now go back to the official opposition. MPP Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thanks to all the staff who are here and to the minister.

I listened to your opening comments around the importance of research. You'll know that I'm the MPP for Waterloo. We have the University of Waterloo, we have Wilfred Laurier, we have Conestoga. Education is a core value of our community, and research is a major economic driver for our community. We kind of regard ourselves as the Silicon Valley of the north. The commercialization of that research has been profound in the past. I will tell you, Minister, though, that we are seeing research stalled because

of a lack of leadership from your government and a lack of funding.

I do want to say that research and development is key to our success. When a university or a college has a strong, well-supported, well-funded research program, it draws excellent teachers and excellent professors; it draws students; it draws investment from the private sector for collaboration.

When I look at the estimates for this sector—I'm looking at vote item 3005—page 25 shows a \$30-million cut from research programming. There is a \$5-million cut from research program capital expenses. On page 44, the ministry says, "A thriving research sector is a central pillar of the province's innovation system." But we do see a breakdown of those cuts on page 103, including 45.2% cuts to wages—which, in this environment, in this climate, is fairly unconscionable—53% cuts to employee benefits, 83% cuts to transportation services, supplies and equipment. So you can see that I see—and I know that the universities and colleges are feeling this in real time—that there's a disconnect between the words that you say about how research matters to your government and what's happening on the ground.

I want to give you an opportunity to explain how you can talk about how important research is, but when it comes down to the funding, you are failing in that regard.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Before I pass it over to Deputy Wai to provide some of the context on the ministry reorganization, I'd just like to clarify and repeat that since 2018 Ontario has invested over \$740 million in 1,300 research projects—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** No, no.

I'm sorry, Chair.

We're not playing that game here today. I'm sorry. I'm asking you a specific question. This is my time. I'm not here to hear you repeat the same things over again or to read your notes. This really matters to the sector, so I'm asking you, Minister, to answer the question that I just posed to you.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I think if you'd allow me the time to actually answer the question—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I'm not interested in 2018. I'm interested in 2024.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Since 2018, there has been \$740 million invested, which has provided over 120,000 training opportunities for researchers and students across the province.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Chair, I asked a question about the cuts, right?

I'm asking you a genuine question. This is estimates. This tells the real priorities of the government.

Why do you talk about research being so important to the sector when you have a \$30-million cut on vote item 3005?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** You've implied three times that you wanted to talk about the real-life experiences, and that's why I was bringing up our investments since 2018. They're pretty significant—almost \$1 billion, with 120,000 training opportunities.



**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I think \$30 million—

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I will pass it over to Deputy Wai to provide further context.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** No. I want you, as the minister, to explain why there is a \$30-million cut. That's a real cut, okay? And I'm not implying that there's a disconnect; I'm stating it very clearly. There is a disconnect between the words that you're saying about the importance of research and innovation and then the actual dollars that are going towards that sector. I would like for you to answer the question, Minister.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** As I mentioned, there was a recent ministry reorganization; files were shifted to other areas, affecting the overall research operating line budget.

As I am only seven weeks into this job, I'll pass it over to Deputy Wai, who understands some of those finer details, because I don't want to necessarily lead you down the wrong path with some of the numbers.

**Mr. David Wai:** As the minister stated, there were a few different things that came into play with the reduction, and I can ask ADM Jeff Butler to elaborate further, but I would say there were—as with any of these research projects, they are very long-term in nature, typically five-plus years, and there are puts and takes as to how research projects happened. As a result, we move funds around from year to year depending on the situation with those individual projects. There were also delays as it related to COVID through the years, as to how quickly research projects could happen—so that was also a further delay, as well as some of the reorganization issues that the minister had indicated.

I will ask—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you very much, Deputy Minister. You have explained that there was some reorganization, there were some adjustments.

Certainly, Bill 124 created a lot of chaos around compensation. We all know that was an unconstitutional piece of legislation, which really did a lot of damage in Ontario.

Also, you've indicated that some of these cuts are at the ministry level. Is that correct?

**Mr. David Wai:** I didn't say they were cuts. What I'm saying is, they were a movement between different vote items, in this case, and in different projects between different years.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** But to the total of \$30 million?

**Mr. David Wai:** The impact, as you said, in estimates is this year.

I can ask my ADM Jeff Butler to elaborate further and provide more understanding about how they move between the years, if that's helpful.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** No, that's okay.

I do want to get down to—because, for me, as the finance critic, it is about following the money. I'm sure that the ministry resources are an important part of the system—of course they are—so that, in itself, is concerning for me.

I do see also a 10% cut to transfers for research operating costs. Can you speak to that, or can the minister speak to the 10% reduction in research operating costs?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I'll pass it to the deputy to provide context on that.

**Mr. David Wai:** Thanks, Minister. I'll ask ADM Jeff Butler to provide that further colour.

**Mr. Jeff Butler:** Thank you for the question.

With respect to the overall vote item, as the deputy noted, if you look at the \$30 million, with respect to the direct operating expenses related to that vote item—that's salary and wages, employee benefits, and other services and transportation—a portion of ministry staff that were accounted for in that vote item, because of ministry restructuring, are now accounted for in the post-secondary education vote item. So there haven't been—that's a change to where those salaries and wages are accounted for between 2023-24 and 2024-25.

1620

Similarly, the Intellectual Property Ontario transfer payment amount—which, in 2023-24, was about \$7.6 million, and in 2024-25, I believe it was about \$13 million—is now accounted for in the post-secondary education vote item, rather than the research program's vote item. The remainder—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** The \$7.8 million—was it \$7.8 million, you just said?

**Mr. Jeff Butler:** It was \$7.6 million.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** So \$7.6 million—thank you.

**Mr. Jeff Butler:** Yes, \$7.68 million, which is now accounted for in the post-secondary education's vote item.

The balance of the \$30-million difference, about \$18 million, is changes in planned expenditures for programs. As the deputy noted, research is a long-term enterprise. Most of the projects that we fund can be five to seven years in duration, and over the course of a project, expenditures may roll out differently than we had initially planned. We did see significant delays during COVID in timing of procurement and timing of research expenditures that are still sort of working their way out through a multi-year basis.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I will note, I did know that you were going to mention the adjustments piece, but I also see that the ministry underspent on transfers for research by \$15 million last year. I'd like to know why that happened. I'm a former university researcher, so I do know that there are ebbs and flows, but if there's \$15 million that could potentially be invested, I know that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of applications from universities coming into the government to try to actually strengthen the research core at those sectors. Can you address the \$15 million in the last year that was not transferred?

**Mr. Jeff Butler:** The estimates are our forecast for the year of what we think we're going to be spending on research programs. Throughout the course of the year, things can evolve differently than we had anticipated at the beginning of the year. Many of our programs are co-funded programs with the federal government. They have to go through federal government adjudication, and the timing of when the federal government makes its award decisions may end up different than we had planned on. Again, as I noted, throughout the year, projects may face

delays and need a re-profiling of their expenditures across years. Changes in the transfer payment operating expense over the course of the year may be influenced by those things, and that's what's sort of happening.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** That is good to hear. I will tell you, though, that what I'm hearing from the sector is that when there are inconsistent investments and a lack of clarity around research dollars, that has a cooling effect on research applications. People don't necessarily want to go through the effort of soliciting and submitting applications. Obviously, estimates are forward-thinking, so I want to make sure that the minister—new, seven weeks into the role—understands that when there are inconsistencies in how the funding flows, it has a cooling impact on the sector as a whole. But I do thank you for those answers.

I'm going to pick up where my colleagues started on the OSAP, because I do note that the DM and the ADM also talked about OSAP as an entitlement program, and I guess some of us are more entitled to our entitlements than others. The fact of the matter is, though, when the Ontario government did cut OSAP by \$400 million, the federal government actually picked up the slack on that, but the students themselves didn't get any further ahead. So the clawback from the province meant that students who were struggling felt no impact of the increased federal contribution to OSAP.

I will note to the minister, who said that you're proud of the 400,000-plus who actually were able to access OSAP—but there were 11,454 students who did not qualify. Then, this leads to how we are funding post-secondary institutions and colleges. I was encouraged to hear the deputy minister say that a funding review will be forthcoming, because the sector desperately wants a new funding formula for the post-secondary sector. So I wanted to get some clarity on the framework of that review, the timing of that review, and who's going to be involved. The blue-ribbon panel was your panel—it was your report—and at the end of the day, you didn't listen to those experts. I don't want us to go through the same exercise again, so I'm looking for some assurances from the new minister and the deputy minister and the assistant deputy minister about this process.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I know you mentioned the 400,000 students; I would like to bring that up. I am very proud of that. Obviously, understanding that not all students are going to be able to qualify for OSAP—that's why, in 2018-19, we decreased tuition by 10%. Understanding that we had the highest tuition in Canada—we are now the fourth-highest tuition in Canada. Our government has taken a whole-of-government approach to ensure that student affordability is top of mind.

I'll pass it to Deputy Wai to provide more detail.

**Mr. David Wai:** I apologize, Chair; I didn't quite understand the questions about the funding. When we were talking about the funding formula, that was in particular for institutions—so colleges and universities, not particularly about OSAP. So—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** No, no. I connected OSAP. I'm looking at the barriers to universities and colleges—

having access to a grant program, or not, is a barrier. Then, obviously—and I'm glad that the minister pointed this out—Ontario has the highest levels of tuition in the country. So that's a barrier.

When you mentioned, to answer my colleague's question, around reviewing the operational funding for post-secondary institutions, I was interested in hearing more about that.

**Mr. David Wai:** Thank you for the clarification.

I'll ask ADM Josh Paul to come up and talk a bit more about the discussions we're having with the institutions about the funding formula and some of the discussions we plan on having going forward.

To your point, the minister has said already that Ontario was the highest when the government started. We are now the third highest, I believe, as a result of the cut and freeze. So we are no longer the highest from a tuition perspective.

Josh?

**Mr. Josh Paul:** Thank you very much.

The short answer is that we don't yet have all of the details of the funding formula review sketched out. The government has committed to colleges and universities, as part of the strategic mandate agreement round 4 process, to review the funding formula. Those details will come forward in the coming months. The review itself is not scheduled to be engaged in earnest until such time as the SMA 4 agreements are signed, which is anticipated sometime, hopefully, in the January-February-March time frame.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** There is great interest, though—I'm sure that you know—from the sector to review how post-secondary institutions are funded, so I know that there will be a lot of interest to participate. I hope that it's a public process, and I hope that it's a transparent process.

My colleague actually just pointed out that Ontario, though, has the lowest investment in per student funding in the country. That is why I'm just connecting it to this call for a review. It is worth noting that universities are receiving the lowest per student government funding in Canada, with Ontario receiving \$8,647, while the Canadian average was \$12,215 in 2020-21. Provincial operating funding per student has declined in real terms since 2006-07 and currently represents about 30% of total university operating revenue.

I will share a story with you. When we were doing finance review for the last budget, we were in Oakville, at the Holiday Inn, and Steve Orsini, who's president, obviously, of the Ontario universities, was presenting to us. At the beginning of his comments, there was a small leak in the ceiling, and then the leak began to grow and grow. We all sort of tried to ignore it, except for the tech staff, because everything was getting wet. Just as he started to talk about the capital funding deficit in the sector, the ceiling in the Holiday Inn literally collapsed. It was very interesting timing. It was a very interesting metaphor.

1630

This is one of the areas where colleges and universities are really anxious to see something new on the table around capital investment.

One fellow from University of Waterloo who came to visit me here at Queen's Park on a lobby day noticed that there has been a bucket in a hallway in the university for eight years, and they finally just put a sign up that said, "This is where the bucket goes."

We can agree that this is not sustainable, and that our institutions in and of themselves need to be funded in such a way that it reflects the good work that is happening and the potential of those institutions.

I want to move over to Colleges Ontario right now. Minister, Colleges Ontario has stated that they are projected to see a decline of at least \$1.7 billion in revenue due to the restrictions that have been placed around international students.

I want us to have an honest conversation about how we got here. Colleges and universities have been underfunded systemically for years now. The fees for international students are not regulated and can be quite high. I think universities and colleges looked at a way to generate some revenue to fill the gap of provincial funding. Ontario's investment in public college students, as I've said, is already the lowest in Canada.

So as a new minister and as you engage on this file, because it's a complicated file, with international students—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** MPP Fife, you've got one minute left.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** —I was just wondering, what is your vision for how we will be making up for that lost revenue in real terms so that we don't fall further behind in the sector?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I will go back to our \$1.3-billion investment. The \$903 million: \$700 million of that is across the board over the next three years, as well as the \$203 million for top-ups for institutions that have a greater financial need. That will be included in that \$203 million.

I'll pass it to the deputy for further context.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I would just like to say—sorry, Deputy Minister—the sector has already told you in many ways, in writing, in person, through media releases, that that is not going to suffice. So there needs to be a different vision for how we're going to be funding—I noticed you called them "publicly assisted universities." This is a fact, and we'll get that in our next—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** I'm sorry, MPP Fife. We're out of time for this round.

MPP Clancy, you have 10 minutes.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I might piggyback on the line of conversation that just happened.

I do have concerns about how much our institutions have had to rely on international students. The stat I saw was that students from India paid more to support our colleges and universities than our government.

What's your reaction to how much the sector has had to rely on international students in order to pay the bills?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Being a human resource professional myself and understanding that the labour market needs are significant—we need our international students to be able to fill the labour gaps that are there, whether it's in health human resources, STEM, skilled trades. Ultimately, I look towards our international students for being able to fill a gap in our labour market that—ultimately, we don't have enough skilled trades in our domestic students, and our international students are a solution to be able to help some of our gaps in health care and STEM and skilled trades.

I'll pass it to the deputy to provide context.

**Mr. David Wai:** As the minister said, I do think that international students play a really important role in the system and play a really important role for the community. They're an important part of both the cultural assets they bring to the community, but also to the labour market needs that are needed within each of the communities. So I think that we were disappointed by the action the federal government took on international students, but I do think we continue to believe that they're an important part of our institutions going forward.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** My concern is that it wasn't always a good fit labour-market-wise.

In my community, we had one institution that went from 763 students to over 30,000 students, and now we're addressing the housing issue, but you can imagine, as a community, how the impact is. And when I go door to door—unfortunately, the story hasn't been told that we need to value and thank our international students for keeping our institutions afloat. There are a lot of misconceptions around immigration—that they're getting free things, they're getting free this, they're getting free that—rather than thanking international students for actually keeping our institutions alive.

Not only that, but I've talked to many international students—I have one who lives with me—and we haven't done a very good job of fitting the labour market needs with students going in. Obviously, I can't make blanket statements. I know there are lots of ways in which we're recruiting for certain professions like health care, but there are a lot of other areas where we haven't done very well, to be honest, to make sure that people coming in are studying something that can lead to a meaningful job.

My roommate, for example, took HR and project management. She's a teacher back home. We need teachers here. We didn't do a good job. It turned into a bit of a misleading pipeline between what the story was told abroad and what partnerships are happening and what the reality is in the labour market.

Can I ask you, Minister, to please consider a discussion with our labour minister to ensure that the programs and the recruitment that we're doing are connected to the labour needs in our community, like child care, for example?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Absolutely. I'm always having conversations with all ministers. We take a whole-of-government approach on understanding the labour market needs right across all sectors in that regard.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** One point I'll ask that you talk to him—we lose people. At Conestoga College, for example, students get trained as child care providers, but because we don't provide proper immigration points, they leave to go to other provinces where they have a better chance of becoming permanent residents. So we train them here and then they leave the province, and this happens in other categories as well.

My hope is, too, that we can recognize the impact when it comes to housing. I know colleges, in the past, weren't funded for housing, but because of budget shortfalls—I know you've cut the red tape for housing, but I think we need better than that. We need a lot more housing—30,000, right? That's a lot of people who need a place to live.

Can you speak to the investments you can make to ensure that people have a place to live?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** As I'm sure you're well aware, publicly assisted colleges and universities are responsible for their student housing. The ministry does not fund housing projects.

My first week on the job—I don't even know if it was a week—I was at Humber College Lakeshore. They brought on 336 new residence spaces.

Since 2020, there have almost been 3,000 new units across the province being developed, 1,448 of those being at our publicly assisted colleges.

Obviously there is a shortage of housing, but I'd like to think that the system is functioning fairly properly. That's why we're trying to get some of the red tape out of the way.

To quote the Ontario's Universities' 2023 report, A Plan for Prosperity—it is projected that there are over 9,000 new spaces added over the next five years in our university sector.

As well, Colleges Ontario stated in August of this year that there are thousands of residences at different stages of development right now.

I'll pass it to Deputy Wai to provide further detail.

**Mr. David Wai:** I just want to provide one comment on your previous comment on labour market needs. That is a federal responsibility—the points system. We don't really have any role to play in that. It is certainly something that the ministry has advocated for—to your point—that those who have been trained in particular areas that are of labour market need be reflected in how the points system worked.

With regard to student housing, absolutely, as the minister indicated, we continue to work closely with colleges and have their student housing plan that we put in place. We require all institutions to publish this housing plan for their students. That's an important way of providing that visibility on what is available to students and that they're making steps towards addressing some of those housing issues as well.

I would comment also that we're working closely with the Ministry of Finance on the Building Ontario Fund and the potential for that to be helping to fund student housing in the future.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I would appreciate that because, again, 30,000 people into a community has a big impact when the institutions don't have the capital money sometimes. When I go to campuses, yes, there are some new spaces, but a lot of old spaces that need refurbishment—even to renovate existing dormitories, let alone to build new beds.

So I'm curious why there isn't a move to index more things to inflation. We've seen a big spike in inflation, and that's affecting hiring, recruitment and retention of folks. It's affecting the cost of living. I know when I talked to students from Conestoga College, the cost of living was their number one concern. So I'm just curious why we can't—or could we perhaps index more of our per student funding, OSAP eligibility and such, to inflation.

1640

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** On the tuition side—we definitely would not want to index that to inflation at this point in time. We have frozen tuition, and we reduced it by 10%. Understanding that's part of our \$1.3-billion investment—is to ensure that the post-secondary education system is viable and financially stable.

I'll allow Deputy Wai to provide further details on that.

**Mr. David Wai:** Thank you, Minister.

As the minister said, as part of the \$903 million that we're providing—that is aligned with inflation increases that are expected over the next few years, and so the percentages that we are providing to those institutions at a minimum are related to the inflation rate going forward.

I would say on OSAP, in particular—maybe I can ask Jeff Butler to come and talk a bit about OSAP—that is part of the considerations that we provide into how we assess student need. I'll ask Jeff Butler to come forward and talk further about that as it relates to inflation.

**Mr. Jeff Butler:** With respect to OSAP, there are a number of costs that are recognized in the determination of need, including living expenses—things like housing, child care, other living expenses that a student may have—and those components are indexed to inflation. So the amount that's recognized as part of the needs assessment does increase with inflation.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** You've got about one minute left, MPP Clancy, in this round.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** Yes.

I guess my concern is growth. I think our sector really wants to innovate, and I'm hearing that because of budget deficits, it's hard for them to do that. With the per capita—I guess you're doing the review, so we'll have to wait and see, but yes, that's a big concern.

What would you say to universities that are holding back on growing and innovating because of the budget constraints?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** The numbers don't lie. Most universities are growing. In the last five years, full-time domestic enrolment grew by 4%; in the last 10 years, it grew by 7%.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I hope that doesn't also mean that we have big class sizes. Have you been checking in with the amount of student-to-professor ratios that are commen-

surate with that? We do care about quality, and I do believe, as someone who worked in the school system—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Thanks, MPP Clancy. That is all the time we have for your round.

We'll now move to the government for a 20-minute round. MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Through you, Mr. Chair, I want to thank the minister and his team for being here today.

I would be remiss—this is October 7, and I want to talk to the minister about the new directives that you recently issued. Obviously, with the passing of Bill 166 earlier this year, the government took major steps forward in putting in place processes for students to feel safer on campus, and I know my community greatly appreciates the leadership from our ministry and our government on this matter.

My question to you is, can you provide the committee with an update on what has transpired over the summer and how the ministry is continuing to support students and the safety of campuses as a whole?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Thank you, MPP Smith, for that question.

Indeed, this last year has been very challenging right across all of our campuses, not only in Ontario, but across the world, as well as our communities. I spoke about it earlier with MPP Clancy, but, ultimately, being here at this committee and hearing the stories and the worry of those two young ladies who presented to committee—that resonated with me. I've heard the stories of many students, and they talked about how more could be done and more should be done, to be honest with you, to be frank. Any instance of hate should be properly reported and investigated. And that's something that resonated with myself and I'm sure everyone else who was here—that they did not believe anything happened; they didn't believe there were any repercussions; they didn't believe that it was investigated, as well. So that's part of the reason why we brought forward Bill 166—to ensure that all institutions do a better job at ensuring that any instance of hate or racism on campus is recognized, that it's also recorded and reported and there is something done about it.

Some of the objectives of the directive that we sent out are, obviously, to promote safe, inclusive and respectful campuses free of harassment and discrimination.

We also want to improve the transparency and the consistency of the policies, as I mentioned, in response to instances of racism and hate in post-secondary environments.

We want to increase awareness of and ease of access to institutional policies and processes. That was one thing, again, that stood out with the two young ladies—they didn't know the policies and they didn't understand the processes because they weren't clearly listed.

We want to ensure that complaint mechanisms are responsive, that they're also effective and they're also safe for the complainants.

We want to foster positive student experiences and thriving campus communities to support learning and optimize academic and, ultimately, labour market suc-

cesses. That is what our universities and colleges are about—to ensure that our labour markets are well looked after in the future.

We want to preserve integrity and public trust in Ontario's publicly assisted post-secondary institutions.

School policies and procedures are also required to be posted on publicly accessible platforms to ensure that everyone can stay informed. As I mentioned, those two ladies did not know there were any policies. They weren't posted. They weren't clear.

They also should have immediate access to the supports that they may need, understanding that each individual community does have nuances and differences in them. That's why the institutions are creating their own anti-hate directives on their local campuses.

I'll also note that these policies will not only apply to students, but they also apply to faculty, staff, management and any visitors to the campus, including any individuals such as guest speakers. I think it's really important to know that that directive and policy is all-encompassing on anything that happens on the campus. This decision was made with the belief that our campuses need to be places of free speech, not hate speech, not intimidation, not bullying and not harassment, and that not being part of the official college or university campus shouldn't give you the ability, as I implied earlier, to be able to be held to a different standard, to come on campus and to start harassing and start hate speech on the campus.

As you mentioned, on Friday I sent a memo out to our presidents reminding them of their obligation to keep students on our campuses safe and to keep respectful environments on the campus. While the school policies are still being developed and are due by the end of January 2025 to align with the new directive, there still is no excuse for allowing anyone on our campuses to feel attacked, unsafe, in any way, like those two ladies felt. I've also let the presidents know that my ministry will be following up on any instances of concern to ensure there is an appropriate response by the institution that aligns with our new directives. Regardless of them being in place, we still believe that the message of the directives is heard, and we expect it to be followed.

It's my view, as the minister, that the focus on college and university campuses should first and foremost be about giving students a world-class education that prepares them for the future. That's the standard that I set and that I expect schools to follow.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you so much, Minister. I'm now going to pass the rest of my time to Minister Kusendova-Bashta.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Minister?

**Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Thank you, Minister, for being here. I was in your same hot seat about a week ago, so I understand.

In any case, it's music to my ears to hear about nursing education in Ontario, maybe a little bit for selfish reasons, and not only because I'm a nurse but also because, as the Minister of Long-Term Care, it's in my vested interest to

ensure that we continue funding and expanding nursing education in our province.

We did have a historic amount of enrolment in our nursing schools, both colleges and universities, last year—30,000 nursing students. That’s phenomenal and a historic number, and I hope to continue seeing that number growing.

You mentioned in your remarks that the government is investing \$128 million over the next three years to expand nursing student seats to even more registered nurses and registered practical nurses across our province.

I do also want to note that it was this government that made it possible for colleges to actually offer stand-alone nursing baccalaureate programs. I thought that was a step in the right direction. We have all kinds of learners in our province. For some, going to university is their choice, and for others it’s college, because college is a more practical and hands-on education. Frankly, we need everyone at the table. Whether it’s colleges or universities, we need to be graduating nurses.

Can you speak a little bit more to your investments into nursing education and also to the programs at large? I know we have the Learn and Stay program, which is also very helpful, especially to our people in the north, where the government funds the cost of tuition and books for nurses and other professionals. I just want to say that I wish that program, Learn and Stay, was available when I was a nursing student because that would have certainly been something I would have been very, very interested in. So if you could just expand on those two, that would be great.

1650

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Thank you for this important question. Our government recognizes and truly appreciates the important role that health care professionals play across this province, including yourself, so thank you.

This is also something that really hits home for me, having worked in health care shortly after I graduated, for a couple of years at Saint Elizabeth home care, and as a passionate advocate for bringing convenient care close to home to our communities, as well as having aging parents myself and young children also—so all ends of the spectrum, I think, are very evident in my life, with my parents getting into their late seventies.

Health care professionals keep the heart of this province and its people healthy. While our government has been focused on how to improve nursing, medical education and, really, post-secondary education as a whole since we took office, we’ve also recognized that more truly needs to be done to strengthen the supply of health care professionals across the province, connecting them to better care experiences closer to home. It starts with expanding high-calibre education for those on the front lines. I’m extremely grateful for every single person working in the health care system across the province. We remain committed to growing Ontario’s health care capacity both now and for years to come.

To answer your question, I want to first speak about the groundbreaking work this government is doing to expand medical education, and then touch on the many steps we’re

taking to build up our workforce of health care professionals, including doctors, nurses, paramedics, personal support workers and other allied health professions like medical laboratory technicians as well, all of which contribute to keeping this province and its people thriving and healthy.

To continue to support a strong health care workforce in the years ahead, Ontario’s post-secondary institutions are training more doctors than ever before. Building on investments announced in the 2022 budget and the 2023 budget, our government has invested over \$133 million to add another 260 undergraduate medical seats and 449 postgraduate medical training positions—a pretty significant expansion. This expansion investment was part of the government’s Your Health plan, which includes initiatives to hire more health care workers. As Deputy Wai mentioned earlier, these investments mark the largest expansion of medical education in over 10 years and support every single medical school in this province. With the addition of York University’s new medical school, these investments will bring the total number of undergraduate medical seats to 1,212 and postgraduate medical training positions to 1,637 by 2028. As a direct result of these expansions, we will see more physicians ready to practise and ready to care for the people of Ontario as early as 2029.

Numbers and investments aside, what does this mean? For me, as a father of three young children, it means that when people and families like mine need access to a health care provider, they can find the care they need closer to home. It means that whenever a teacher like my wife, Kim, asks their students that age-old question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?”, and the students respond by saying “a doctor,” the capacity will be there for them to follow their dreams. I’d like to think that because of this government those students are that much closer to turning that dream into a reality.

You will recall that Deputy Wai mentioned, in addition to these expansions to medical education, our government is also supporting brand new medical schools, including Toronto Metropolitan University School of Medicine located in Brampton and York University School of Medicine located in Vaughan.

Last year, our government provided over \$9 million to TMU to support planning activities for the new medical school. As part of the medical education expansions I mentioned earlier, TMU will begin their medical program in 2025-26, with 94 undergraduate seats and 105 postgraduate seats. TMU’s new school of medicine will take a unique, community-driven and intentionally inclusive approach to medical training and growing Ontario’s supply of doctors. Set to open in 2025-26, it will be located in Brampton’s Bramalea Civic Centre. The site will provide 250,000 square feet of space for classrooms, offices, research facilities and an integrated health clinic. The William Osler Health System, as one of TMU’s clinical partners, will support the school of medicine in providing the clinical learning environment needed for undergraduate medical education, residency training and

professional development. After the initial start-up funding, we will continue to provide TMU with ongoing operational funding, as we do with all medical schools in Ontario, to support them in maintaining their medical education programs.

We're also supporting York University's new school of medicine by providing an initial investment of \$9 million. This will help York University begin the design and planning for its new medical school and new three-year compressed undergraduate medical program. Proposed to launch in September 2028, York University's new medical school is anticipated to have 80 undergraduate seats and up to 102 postgraduate positions. Once the school is operating at full capacity, it will have up to 240 undergraduate medical seats and 293 postgraduate training positions on an annual basis. Founded on a patient-centred, community-based approach, the York University School of Medicine will be the first medical school in Canada to primarily focus on training family doctors. The new medical school will be built within the Vaughan health care centre precinct and work with Mackenzie Health's Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital as its clinical partner. Our government will continue to support York University with the establishment of the new medical school and will provide operating funding once the school enrolls its first cohort in 2028-29.

By training more doctors in Ontario, these new medical schools will improve the province's overall primary care capacity. They will help alleviate pressures facing the health care system, attract and retain more doctors in Ontario and lead to better health outcomes for communities across the province.

Another step our government is taking to grow the province's health care capacity is to expand nursing enrolment. The ministry works closely with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care to support nursing education in Ontario. Since 2021, these three ministries have worked in close partnership to launch three nursing enrolment expansion initiatives, adding up to 6,500 additional nursing education spaces. As we've mentioned, our government has invested an additional \$128 million over three years to sustain 2,000 bachelor of science nursing spots and 1,000 practical nursing program spaces across Ontario.

As a relatively new minister, I'm proud to be part of a post-secondary sector that truly values the nursing profession; so much so that all 24 publicly assisted colleges as well as 14 publicly assisted universities and six Indigenous institutes in Ontario offer some form of nursing education.

The Ontario government has introduced new pathways for nursing degree education, including stand-alone bachelor of science nursing programs at both universities and the college institutions, giving students more options to pursue their education—closer to home, I might add. With continued oversight, support and investments from this government, in this school year alone there are 22 stand-alone nursing programs offered by either publicly assisted colleges or universities. There are nearly 20,000 domestic full-time students enrolled in nursing degree programs and

over 8,000 domestic full-time students enrolled in practical nursing programs in Ontario's post-secondary institutions.

Medical professionals are vital in keeping people in every corner of this province healthy, and training more nurses and doctors will give people in Ontario more access to health care that they need when they need it, wherever they may live.

Over the last few years, we've seen how crucial it is to build up a strong, robust health care system; no more so than during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, we saw an array of health care professionals step up to care for Ontario's people and their families, especially the paramedics.

To address the shortage of paramedics in Ontario, our government has been working to expand enrolment in college primary care paramedic programs. Over three years, starting in the 2023-24 school year, we're investing up to \$6.2 million each school year to expand enrolment for this program. With this investment, we've supported increased enrolment in PCP programs by adding 167 students in 2023-24, and, this year, we have a target of over 300 additional students enrolled in PCP college diploma programs, further bolstering Ontario's paramedic supply so that paramedics and ambulances continue to be available to respond to emergencies and care for people when they need it the most.

We're also working to train and recruit more personal support workers who are responsible for providing care to some of the most vulnerable people in our province and who are critical to our health care system.

#### **1700**

That's why, in 2023, we announced an investment of more than \$300 million over three years into PSW education, which builds on investments the government made between 2021 and 2022, including funding for two rounds of accelerated PSW training programs at public colleges, supporting over 12,000 students. With this investment, the province also added two rounds of the PSW challenge fund at career colleges in Ontario. The PSW challenge fund is a grant that helps students pay for their PSW training, including tuition, books, school fees, and costs during their internship. So far, this fund has supported a total of 8,425 new PSW students. That's over 8,000 future PSWs caring for our loved ones and giving them the daily physical and social support they need and deserve.

Our government is also providing up to \$8.4 million in funding to expand PSW programs at seven Indigenous institutes, funding approximately 247 students across 2024-25 and 2025-26. Likewise, in the 2024-25 academic year, we're providing over \$2 million in funding to pre-health programs at seven Indigenous institutes as well. This will help Indigenous students transition into health-related post-secondary programs.

We're also investing more than \$2.5 million over two years to train up to 90 French-speaking long-term-care staff, such as resident support personnel and dietary aides, to become PSWs through the Learn and Earn Accelerated Program, or LEAP.

Lastly, I'd like to talk about Ontario's allied health expansions, yet another way this government is building up the province's health care capacity. Just like it takes a village to raise a child—and I can very much appreciate that because I'm away from my children all the time—it takes a village of skilled health care professionals to support a health care system as robust as ours. That's why this government has also made significant investments into allied health professions, including providing funding to 10 colleges in 2024-25 to increase enrolment—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Minister, you have about one minute left.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:**—in key allied health programs by over 200 students. These programs include magnetic resonance imaging, medical laboratory technology, medical laboratory assistant and technician, and radiography. This investment is part of the government's broader strategy to expand access to high-quality health care right across our whole province. Increasing the number of trained professionals in fields such as medical radiation and imaging technology will help address current shortages, improve the overall capacity of the health care system, and make sure people in Ontario have better access to essential diagnostic and therapeutic services.

I'll close by reiterating that our government's investments into medical education and new medical schools and expansions to nursing, paramedicine, PSW and allied health professions—they all lead to one important outcome: More students will likely get the education they need to become highly skilled health care workers, to build up Ontario's health care capacity.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** We'll now move to the next round for the official opposition. MPP Sattler.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I want to go back to the issue of the underfunding of the sector, the challenges that institutions are facing with regard to their sustainability, and the impact of the loss of international student tuition dollars.

We know from the Council of Ontario Universities, earlier this year, that there were at least 10 Ontario universities projecting operating deficits for 2023-24. They reported that it's a combined total of more than a \$175-million deficit, growing to \$273 million in 2024-25. So that was that number. The 10 universities in deficit situation is unprecedented, really, in this province, and is likely to increase.

We also know from Colleges Ontario that the publicly assisted colleges are projected to see a decline of \$1.7 billion in revenue because of the new federal rules around international students.

We have a rapidly changing federal landscape with the international study permits and the work permits. There's a lot of upheaval, and people are trying to respond quickly.

I'm interested in hearing from the ministry if you can tell us how much international student tuition revenue has been lost at Ontario colleges and universities this year, compared to the international student tuition dollars that were collected last year, before the federal changes.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Absolutely. You've mentioned the federal changes. We're disappointed, as are the stake-

holders—both the college sector and the university sector—that they made a unilateral decision, after making a cap or an allotment in January, and eight months later, they've adjusted that cap, when they promised two years of the cap on international students.

I believe it's a little too soon to be able to provide the numbers for this current school year, but I'll provide Deputy Wai some time to provide those details.

**Mr. David Wai:** Thank you, Minister.

Just so I understand the question, you're talking about 2023-24 compared to the going-forward year of estimates, 2024-25?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Yes. How much was lost this fiscal versus last fiscal?

**Mr. David Wai:** This current fiscal, 2024-25—how much do we estimate?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Yes.

**Mr. David Wai:** As the minister said, we only have very early data in terms of enrolment for this academic year. It's very early in the term. It's still October. Courses can be dropped, and students can drop courses all the way to November. So we do not have final numbers, or even close to early numbers, quite frankly, from institutions around their enrolment. We continue to monitor and get some initial information from institutions. So it's difficult at this point to understand what the full fiscal impact will be, from a revenue perspective, in the current academic year.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** But it will be significant. We have Colleges Ontario saying that it's going to be \$1.7 billion in revenues lost. Across the sector, it's going to be a huge amount of revenue that institutions will have to try to look at how on earth they're going to be able to replace that.

I mentioned that we have at least 10 Ontario universities that are projecting deficits for 2023-24. Can you tell us how many institutions currently—is it 10 universities? How many colleges are reporting financial difficulties due to this combination of the chronic underfunding, the loss of international student tuition?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Part of the \$903 million, as you are well aware—I mentioned earlier, \$203 million is for top-ups for higher-risk institutions, including those 10 universities that you mentioned. Three of those universities are receiving an increase of 15% to be able to make them whole and financially stable, as well as seven universities are receiving an increase of 10% based on their 2023-24 base funding numbers.

I'll provide the deputy some more time to further expand on that.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Just to clarify—so every university that is currently projecting a deficit is receiving some funding from that new pot of money?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** This would have been based on their 2023-24 base level, so it would have been last year's numbers that we're looking at.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Okay. I want to understand the historical context that brought us to this moment with these federal changes. It goes back, as you know, Minister, to 2019 and your government's decision to reduce and



then freeze provincial funding to the sector, and the tacit, or even explicit, encouragement to colleges, in particular, to look at international students as an alternative source of revenue, given the underfunding from the province.

We had the Auditor General writing a series of reports warning about the impact of this decision, cutting that public funding, giving no replacement funding and opening the doors to these arrangements with international public-private partnerships that resulted in the skyrocketing rate of international student tuition.

1710

So my question is, why did the government not listen to and act on the recommendations of the Auditor General that were made in 2022 and in other reports that could have prevented this overreliance on international student tuition that has caused such financial instability in the sector at this moment?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** As I mentioned to MPP Clancy, the international students are filling a void. We have a significant skills and labour gap in the province of Ontario, as does the rest of Canada and North America, and those students are able to come in and allow the province to be able to grow the way we want it with some of the projects. But ultimately, with the skills gaps in health care, skilled trades and STEM, the international students are part of the solution to be able to get us out of some of the labour shortages we are currently in.

I will pass it over to the deputy to provide further context on that, but prior, I will mention that we do have the \$15-million Efficiency and Accountability Fund that's there to ensure that all institutions are working as efficiently as possible so that they can ensure that public dollars are spent wisely.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I actually did appreciate the deputy minister's earlier response to my colleague MPP Clancy, so I'll just move on to another question about the impact of the loss of international student tuition and the underfunding of the sector, which is cuts to programs.

Earlier this spring, Fleming College announced that 29 additional programs were going to be suspended. That means there have been 42 programs at that college that have been suspended in little over a year. The Fleming College administration said that this was directly related to lost revenue from international tuition. The problem is, Minister—when you talk about being responsive to labour market needs—some of the programs that Fleming College is being forced to cut directly lead students into jobs that are in demand in our labour market. Those are the programs that are being put at risk.

Are there any vote items in the estimates that would help colleges and universities keep their programs operating despite the loss of international student tuition? And will you be updating the estimates in light of the additional changes that you referred to, that the federal government just announced on the caps to the international study permits?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** At this point, it's too early to be able to comment on the changes the federal government just made about a week and a half ago.

Ultimately, I will go back to our \$903-million investment, with \$700 million in across-the-board increases over the next three years for all institutions, as well as the top-up fund of \$203 million—upwards of 10% and 15% for those institutions of greater need.

I'll pass it over to Deputy Wai to provide further context.

**Mr. David Wai:** Thank you.

Just to reiterate something: It is up to the individual colleges and universities to decide on how they run their administrative and academic matters, and which programs they choose to adjust or expand—those are within the colleges and universities to decide and be responsive to their local communities. There are different needs in different parts of the province, and they need to be responsive to their particular area, so we do leave that to the individual institutions to sort that out for their particular community—and what is most relevant to the community.

The other point I would raise is the \$15-million Efficiency and Accountability Fund that the minister has already raised. It's really an opportunity for institutions to think about how they go about operating their institution. As the blue-ribbon panel talked about, there's lots of opportunity for efficiency within the sector, for both administrative efficiencies and other opportunities—IT, back-office-type things—to ensure that the institution is running effectively and efficiently and able to run those programs for their students.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Yes, I understand from representatives I speak to from institutions in the sector that the choices that are being made are not being made on the basis of labour market need; they're being made on the basis of the lack of funding that's coming from the provincial government and the financial hardship that they're experiencing because of the federal changes.

Colleges Ontario has said that the programs most at risk are those high-cost programs that address workforce needs across this province in technology, health care, skilled trades—some of the things that the minister has already talked about. So this is a concern, when Fleming is predicted to be the first of many colleges that will be in an impossible situation of having to decide which workforce-relevant programs they're going to have to cut because they can't afford to deliver those programs anymore, because they don't have the international student tuition subsidizing the delivery of those programs.

You're new in the role, Minister. You have learned a lot in the short time that you have been serving. I'd really like to know how you feel about the fact that Ontario ended the 2023-24 fiscal year with a nearly balanced budget, but that was in large part due to the increased revenue from international students at Ontario colleges, because those dollars at Ontario colleges are consolidated on the government's books. Minister, do you see any kind of moral issue here, when the government is able to balance its budget because we've been bringing in unsustainable numbers of international students who are paying exorbitant fees to attend our institutions? So the first question is, do you think that this is right and ethical? The

second question is, how will adjusted consolidated revenues work in future years when there is reduced international student revenues—and the impact that that will have on government's future spending?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** So for the almost balanced budget, I'm very proud of the Ministry of Finance and Treasury Board, because there are multiple factors that come into balancing a budget and/or having a surplus or deficit, and it's not just one factor that's going to bring them close to balancing the budget. So our fiscal responsibility—I'm extremely proud of our government in that.

You did touch upon Fleming, and I think it's important to note that part of our SMA3 process, and SMA4 that's coming forward, has a made-in-Ontario performance-based funding model that has been designed to link a portion of post-secondary operating funding to the outcomes. Part of those outcomes—the priority is skills and job outcomes, and economic and community impact. So whenever institutions that are completely stand-alone institutions make those decisions, that may result in some differences in their SMA score ranking moving forward, because it's about skills and job outcomes, and the economic and community impact, and that will be part of SMA4 moving forward.

I will pass it over to Deputy Wai to provide further context on your question.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Actually, that was a great response, Minister. That provides the context I'm looking for.

I want to go to the issue of student housing, and you've already responded to some questions about that.

When we were at this committee last year, doing the estimates that your predecessor—the former minister told us that the government was engaged in a consultation on student housing, but we did not get any information about who in the sector was being consulted. As far as I am aware, there has been no public report issued, there has been no summary released about what was heard during that consultation.

So my question is—I guess it's two parts: First, has the consultation been completed? It has been a year since the minister talked about it. Will a report be released publicly on the results of that consultation?

1720

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Absolutely. Last summer, the ministry did consult with colleges, universities and other sector stakeholders to better understand what the barriers are to providing, accessing student housing. Ultimately, we're still gathering some of that information. As MCU we've worked with MMAH to develop part of the new provincial planning statement and related policies that will require planning authorities to collaborate with post-secondary institutions on student housing. All colleges and universities will be required to publish student housing policies publicly to ensure that students have access to and awareness of student housing options that are safe, affordable and within an easy commute to campus. In addition, MCU is collecting student data that will be used by MMAH to track Ontario's housing targets. This data will

also help MCU and the sector better understand the current state of student housing in Ontario.

I'll pass it over to Deputy Wai to provide further detail.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** You mentioned the importance of student housing that is affordable. One of the things that I have heard in talking to people in the sector, particularly at colleges, when they are building student residences—they actually have vacant spaces because they can't offer the residence rooms at a price that can compete with some of the, frankly, quite deplorable conditions that students often have to live in. The cost of a residence room is much more expensive than the cost of sharing, potentially, a kind of a boarding house off-campus, and that puts students at great risk.

I'm wondering if your ministry is planning any other strategies that would include an investment in purpose-built student housing that would actually make it affordable for students to choose—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** One minute remaining in this round.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:**—those housing options when they're attending our colleges and universities.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I fundamentally disagree with your comments that there are vacancies in the residences because of price affordability. Students do come with different backgrounds and demographics. Some of them in our college sector are 23 on average or older, and they may have a family, they may have commitments in the community—but understanding that supply and demand in our community does make a difference when it comes to student housing and the affordability of student housing.

I mentioned earlier that we have almost 3,000 units that have come online since 2020, about 1,500 of those being in our college sector, which, historically, has had lower amounts of student housing.

We are taking a whole-of-government approach, working with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to try to remove some of those barriers for the university sector, like the college sector has, on the planning and the costs and time frame associated with that.

I'll pass—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Thank you, Minister. That's all for this round.

I will now go to MPP Clancy. You've got 10 minutes.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I know it might feel like a broken record, but I think it's really important to bring focus on the funding gaps—it is really what we hear in every conversation we have with students and staff across Ontario.

Just to reiterate: Right now, Ontario ranks 44% of the average for their college funding across Canada—and for universities, Ontario is at 57% of the national average.

When we think about the blue-ribbon panel and the money that was invested and the expertise gathered to give the government recommendations—what's the plan to follow through on those recommendations?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I think the plan is that we invested a historic \$1.3 billion over three years. Obviously, the blue-ribbon panel was released in the fall of 2023, and just in the spring or winter—if you have it—we made that

significant investment of \$1.3 billion, including the \$903 million in the new Postsecondary Education Sustainability Fund, including \$203 million of that in top-up funding for institutions with greater need. As well, part of the blue-ribbon panel was to ensure that publicly assisted colleges and universities are working as efficiently as possible, so we've also topped up \$15 million over three years through third-party reviews to ensure that we drive long-term cost savings and positive outcomes for students and, ultimately, the communities they serve.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** The feedback I think you've probably heard is that it's not adequate, that it's a short-term relief, that it makes it look like you're doing something but it doesn't address some of these deep, critical issues. What's your response? I know there are numbers to say—but the feedback is still that that's only a short-term relief, that the gap and the financial stressors lead them to shortchanging a young generation.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** So I guess my comment is—it doesn't look like we're doing anything. I think \$1.3 billion to the taxpayer is a pretty significant amount of money that we've invested into our post-secondary education system. We also want to make sure that those institutions are efficient. That's why that extra \$15 million, a part of the \$1.3 billion, is going to ensure, with third-party review, that the outcomes for the students and the communities they serve—which is the most important part of why we have the post-secondary education system, to ensure that our students and our communities thrive.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I'm not hearing that from our experts, but that's okay. I don't disagree that it's a significant investment. I'm hearing that there's a lot of instability and insecurity in the sector.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I'll be honest, I'm hearing more from sector partners that the federal government unilaterally changed the game—well, changed the goalposts in the middle of the game.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I don't disagree that doing it without collaboration and consultation was improper. But I do believe that our colleges and universities had to rely on international students to pay the bills. They paid more than you did for universities and colleges. So there has to be a bit of accountability and onus—that we created a system that couldn't pay for itself.

I do agree that we have labour shortages. I know that we have an aging population. We have gaps to fill.

I was a settlement worker for seven years. I am deeply grateful for people calling Canada their home. But I am a direct witness of the reliance on international students in a way that was not in the true spirit of it sometimes—and it was meant to fit a funding gap that was created by the cut and the freeze.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Again, with my human resource background, I say that it's a skills gap, and we needed our international students to ensure that our economy can thrive, moving forward.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I hope you tell that to our community, because I think a lot of neighbours don't understand that. When I go to the doors, I do have to pair it with

the accountability of our government in underfunding our colleges—again, 44% of the national average.

One of the other blue-ribbon panel recommendations was about OSAP. The federal funding doesn't charge interest for six months after OSAP, after they graduate, whereas the provincial government does start charging interest right away. And there is feedback that we need to be increasing OSAP for folks who live in the north because of living expenses. Is that going to come at some point?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Before I let the deputy explain that one further—I am very proud of the fact that 82% of all Ontario-funded assistance is grants, whereas in the federal program, only 54% is grants and the rest is loans.

I'll let the deputy provide further context.

**Mr. David Wai:** Yes, just to reiterate, the emphasis on the Ontario side is on the grants. I'd ask ADM Jeff Butler to talk further about that—because your comment around cost of living related to OSAP is considered as we kind of go about the adjudication, understanding what the need is. So maybe Jeff Butler can talk further about that piece.

**Mr. Jeff Butler:** Yes, thank you very much.

As the minister noted, actually, for the 2023-24 academic year, about 85% of the support that was provided—Ontario's share of support—was provided in the form of grants, and the federal government about 35%. As the deputy said, that has been our focus.

I'll just say a couple of other things about the loan portion of OSAP funding. We have seen significant declines over the last several years in loan balances at graduation for students. For example, for four-year university students—down from about \$24,400 to about \$17,200. We've also seen significant declines in default rates on our loans over the last 10 years, from nearly 10% in 2012 to about 3.6% in 2022.

1730

Lastly, as I mentioned before, we do have indexation within the program on the living cost amounts that we do recognize for students, as well as increases in the aid maximums that are provided to students.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I do appreciate the amount that goes to grants.

I appreciate that feedback. I hope we can see an increase in the north and those interest charges addressed.

I just was curious, too—what is the process? So let's say, this year, because of international student rates dropping and a continued freeze and the low funding, more institutions find themselves in a difficult situation. Is there a bat phone? Is there a process? Is there a committee? How is it that we're going to catch some of these program cuts or crises before it's too late?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Every year, our ministry does do a review of both the college and university sector to ensure that they're financially stable.

I'll allow the deputy minister to provide more context to that.

**Mr. David Wai:** Thanks, Minister.

We are in regular contact with institutions all the time, from a financial perspective, and understanding their particular financial situation.

As the minister articulated, we do have the University Financial Accountability Framework that we implemented in 2023-24 to get a better understanding of the financial situation of particular institutions. I may have ADM Josh Paul come and talk further about that.

Similarly, on the college side, we do assess their financial situation based on both the historical and more recent financials as well as ongoing discussions about their forward-looking situation.

I think we are all looking to understand the enrolment levels in international and help understand and facilitate that kind of discussion on the financial side of things to help us address and make sure we're addressing before those situations happen—as you say, any financial weakness within the system of our particular institutions.

I'll pass it to ADM Josh Paul—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** ADM Paul, you've got about a minute.

**Mr. Josh Paul:** I would just say, in addition to everything the deputy just laid out, the University Financial Accountability Framework regularly tracks financial health, as I've outlined earlier in this committee meeting—and the college submissions to us on their overall financial health, that we track regularly. We are in constant contact with individual colleges and universities, but also the associations, to ensure that we understand if there are any particular urgent issues in the field.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** Is there some way we can ensure that low enrolment—classes that require a small number? I know psychology 101—we've all been there; it's 500 kids in a room, which has its own challenges. But what about—I'm hearing from some of these really high-complexity courses that can only handle a small number. They're not always regarded well by the government—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** I'm sorry, MPP Clancy. Unfortunately, that's the end of your 10 minutes.

We'll go to the government's final 20-minute round. MPP Pang.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Minister, it's great to hear all the investments our government is making to build up our health care workforce. While there is a need to build up health care capacity across the province, that is certainly felt more by some communities than others.

Could you please speak to the investments our government is making to train health care professionals in communities that need them the most?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Thank you, MPP Pang, for another important question.

We know that there are some communities in Ontario that have a harder time getting access to health care where and when they need it, including the north and the east and rural Ontario. That's why our government is taking concrete action to not only foster education and health care professionals but also address specific regional and community health care needs in every corner of this province. This includes significant investments like the

Ontario Learn and Stay Grant, which provides students in priority health care programs with funding for school and incentives to work in underserved and growing communities, like in the north.

We're also expanding medical education for all Ontario medical schools, including the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, or NOSM for short, and establishing two new medical schools: Toronto Metropolitan University—or TMU—School of Medicine, and York University School of Medicine as well, just in your backyard. Our government is training more doctors to practise in communities that need them the most. And through new programs like the micro-credentials, our government is helping health care workers quickly upgrade their skills to meet the needs of local patients.

I'll first speak about an initiative that I briefly touched upon in my opening remarks but that should be specifically highlighted for the way it's transforming the future of health care in Ontario.

I'll start at the beginning: In 2021, this government introduced the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant as part of the province's plan to stay open—a plan that was developed in response to the unparalleled challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought to light the many health care disparities across this province and Canada.

With the commitment to making sure every region in Ontario had the necessary workforce to support its people post-pandemic and after, we created the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant. This new grant will support the education of health care workers while bolstering the health care workforce specifically in growing and underserved regions. This grant provides eligible students full upfront funding for tuition, books and other direct educational costs, like supplies and equipment, receiving anywhere between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per year, depending on the program. Eligible programs focus on meeting the health care needs of underserved and growing local communities in certain regions. Those include nursing programs in the north, eastern and southwestern Ontario; medical laboratory technology programs in northern and southwestern Ontario; and paramedic programs in northern Ontario. That's the “learn” part of the Ontario Learn and Stay—the “stay” part of this grant is that students must commit to working in the region where they've studied after they graduate, committing to work six months for every year they receive the grant. This initiative is not only a career builder, but also a community builder.

For example, if Taylor is studying at Cambrian College's two-year paramedic program, receiving the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant for both years, after graduation their service commitment would be for one year, working in emergency services for any northern Ontario community. And if Jordan is starting the first year of their bachelor of science in nursing program at the St. Lawrence College Kingston campus and receives the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant for all four years of their program, they'll commit to working in eastern Ontario for two years after graduation, perhaps as a nurse at Kingston General Hospital or the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

As you can see, the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant makes it possible for more students to pursue health care education without the added burden of financial stress. Students applying for the grant can also apply for the Ontario Student Assistance Program, or OSAP, as we've talked about numerous times today, to support costs not covered by the grant, like living expenses. This makes an even bigger impact in the lives of students who would not be able to afford their education without support from the Ontario government.

By providing targeted financial incentives, the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant encourages students to learn and work in growing and underserved communities, while addressing health care shortages in these areas. With more health care workers in these regions, residents can have better access to the care they need and deserve.

In May 2023, the first round of applications for the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant opened, and the response was overwhelming. We far exceeded our target of 2,500 recipients that first year, with 3,800 students receiving the grant.

So far, this government has invested over \$34 million directly into funding the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant for these students, including 3,400 nursing students, nearly 400 paramedic students and nearly 100 medical laboratory technology students, with educational costs like tuition and books completely covered, thanks to this grant. And we'll continue to support every eligible student and these priority health care programs in growing and underserved regions of the province. It will be a game-changer for students and communities across the province, increasing access to post-secondary education while addressing local workforce needs, especially in underserved regions struggling to build and maintain their health care sector.

As I mentioned earlier, and as Deputy Wai mentioned in his remarks, Ontario's post-secondary institutions are training more doctors than ever before, by investing over \$133 million into the largest expansion of medical education in over 10 years. This investment will add undergraduate medical seats and postgraduate medical training positions to every medical school across Ontario, including both the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and TMU's new medical school to become operational in 2025-26.

For years, our government has been helping to grow the health care workforce in northern Ontario with its continued support of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, or NOSM.

**1740**

Since its inception in 2005, NOSM has been at the forefront of addressing the unique health care needs of northern, remote and Indigenous communities. The school plays an important role in solving the chronic doctor shortage in northern Ontario, with many of its graduates choosing to build their practices in the region—graduates like:

—Dr. Sarah Newbery, a family physician working in Marathon, Ontario, who previously served as chief of staff at Marathon's Wilson Memorial General Hospital; or

—Dr. Mike Kirlew, who is known for his advocacy for Indigenous health at Sioux Lookout and for developing culturally appropriate models for health care delivery; or

—Dr. Renée-Anne Montpellier, who is leading the innovative virtual emergency department at Health Sciences North, breaking down barriers for people looking for emergency care but who are unable to travel those long distances.

These doctors are among many NOSM graduates who are working to improve health care access for communities that have historically faced barriers in receiving timely and adequate care.

In recognizing the important work that NOSM does to educate future doctors and build up northern Ontario's health care workforce, the Ontario government is investing \$1.7 million into NOSM in 2023-24 for medical expansion initiatives, and continues to provide NOSM with a higher per student funding rate than any other medical school in Ontario. Also, as part of Ontario's historical expansions to medical education, the province is investing \$56 million to add 44 undergraduate seats and 66 postgraduate seats to NOSM by 2028. These additional seats and positions will be crucial in increasing the number of doctors trained and ready to serve in northern communities.

Another medical school I'd like to highlight is one of the province's newest, the York University School of Medicine. As I mentioned earlier, we're providing an initial investment of \$9 million to kick-start the design and planning of this new medical school. The York University School of Medicine, located in Vaughan, is anticipated to include up to 80 undergraduate seats and 102 postgraduate positions, starting in September 2028, eventually expanding to 240 undergraduate seats and 293 postgraduate positions annually once fully operational. What sets York University School of Medicine apart is its unique focus. It will be the first medical school in Canada dedicated to training family doctors, with 70% of new postgraduate training seats exclusively devoted to primary care. Family physicians are the cornerstone of our health care system. They're often the first point of contact for patients, managing everything from early-stage clinical problems and acute disorders to chronic diseases and emotional well-being for communities in York, Simcoe and Muskoka, which are currently facing doctor shortages. The new medical school will be critical in addressing the most pressing health care needs where they're felt the most. By investing in the planning of York University's new medical school and supporting the school once it's up and running, our government is adding to the province's health care workforce, while making sure the fastest-growing communities have the right supply of physicians for years to come.

On both of these medical schools, NOSM and York University, I want to raise another important point. Statistics show that doctors generally stay in the region where they complete their postgraduate training. By increasing postgraduate positions at NOSM, we'll see more graduates continue to live and practise in rural and northern Ontario. Similarly, the new medical school at

York University will help ensure that doctors stay and practise in communities that need more primary care providers.

Lastly, I'd like to talk about micro-credentials. It's another way our government is building up Ontario's health care workforce by expanding opportunities for health care workers, especially in rural, remote and underserved communities. Micro-credentials are rapid training programs created through partnerships between post-secondary institutions and local industry. For health care workers, these programs are designed to help them upgrade their skills quickly and efficiently to thrive in our ever-evolving health care sector. This year, we're investing another \$5 million into the Ontario Micro-credentials Challenge Fund, a call-for-proposals program to fund projects that accelerate development of micro-credentials and expand program offerings. We're also providing funding for 88 micro-credential projects at colleges, universities, career colleges and Indigenous institutes across the province—projects like the Oshki-Wenjack education institute's micro-credential, which provides Indigenous learners with training to enhance their role as community health representatives and to better serve Indigenous patients, or Lakehead University's series of five micro-credentials that address gaps in specialized skills for health care workers in northern, rural and remote communities. By empowering health care workers to quickly upskill in areas that improve patient care and wellness, these micro-credentials will provide health care workers with the tools they need to deliver care that is responsive to local patient needs, from urban centres to the most remote communities.

All of the investments and programs I mentioned—the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant, the medical expansions in support of NOSM and York University School of Medicine, and the micro-credentials challenge fund—are a testament to our government's commitment to addressing the unique challenges faced by remote, rural and underserved communities, and our efforts to actively build up Ontario's health care workforce in places that need it the most. By strategically investing in education and training for health care workers, we are making sure Ontario's health care workforce has the skills and knowledge to continue growing while providing exceptional care to all people in Ontario in every corner of the province, wherever they may live.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** MPP Bailey.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** It's an overwhelming file you've inherited, and I want to congratulate you, Minister, on being here today with your ADM and everyone else who is here to support you. It has been three hours of listening to all of the vast information that's available and what your two ministries are actually doing—very interesting.

I was with the president of Lambton College, Rob Kardas, the other evening in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, and he said, "Make sure you invite the minister down to Sarnia-Lambton. We want to have him come down here." You talked about research. They're well known across the province—and across Canada, as far as that goes—for the research that they do at that college.

They have about 4,500 students enrolled just at the Sarnia campus; about half of them are domestic, the rest international. They also partner with Cestar College in Toronto, where they have a great relationship as well. They're accomplishing great things. So I do want to get that on the record—that you're invited down there sooner than later.

You covered so many things. One thing I'd like—I think we talked about it earlier on, in the first hour, about the needs of schools for maintenance. There's a gap of \$6 billion. Maybe you could expand a little bit more on that, if you wanted to have some more on the record about what you and your ministry are trying to accomplish there and how you intend to do it.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Absolutely. Thank you, MPP Bailey, for the question and also for being my parliamentary assistant on a new file. I'm definitely leaning on you for some information and support.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Don't lean too hard.

*Laughter.*

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I don't know what to say after that.

Safe facilities and modern learning equipment are the foundation for a high-quality education. Our government knows that students need access to modern learning facilities so that they can feel confident that they are getting the best education and training. We know that post-secondary institutions need our support so they can continue to deliver a safe and engaging experience for those on campus.

That's why we have made several multi-million dollar investments, since we've been in office, that are helping institutions address their maintenance backlogs, make necessary repairs and modernize their facilities, all while improving their sustainability and energy efficiency.

Over the next 10 years, we're making significant capital investments in the province, including \$6.1 billion in the post-secondary education sector. In 2024-25 alone, we're providing \$246 million to publicly assisted colleges and universities, which is more than double the 2019-20 capital grant funding.

Ontario's employers across sectors need access to a skilled pipeline of workers, and our investments are providing institutions with resources they need to properly train students for the evolving labour market.

I want to take this opportunity to highlight three vital programs our government continues to invest in every year: the facilities renewal program, the College Equipment and Renewal Fund, and the Training Equipment Renewal Fund, which will allow institutions to address their deferred maintenance backlog, undertake critical repairs, modernize classrooms, upgrade technology and improve their environmental sustainability while continuing to deliver a safe experience for students.

Thanks to our government's continued investments, the facilities renewal program continues to grow and have a positive impact on institutions, students and staff. The funding provided through this program helps publicly assisted colleges and universities maintain, repair, renovate and upgrade their academic facilities. And while

students and staff may not notice every upgrade, it is this very program that allows institutions to do the repairs that are vital to the safety of those who are on campus. For example, it funds major building upgrades, roof repairs, and mechanical and electrical system upgrades. Additionally, the facilities renewal program supports accessibility-related projects. In 2023-24, approximately 17% of all projects focused on improving accessibility at post-secondary institutions. Our government understands the importance of these upgrades and the impact they have on students' lives. That's why the funding for the facilities renewal program has tripled since 2018 and why, starting in 2022-23, our government began investing \$546 million in this program over three years.

**1750**

Ensuring institutions' facilities are safe is a priority for this ministry, as well as ensuring students are prepared for the workforce. The College Equipment and Renewal Fund helps with just that. Established in 2022, the fund helps our province's 24 publicly assisted colleges buy and restore the learning resources and equipment needed to deliver relevant, hands-on training—training that will help build Ontario and our modern economy. That's why, starting in 2021-22, we committed to investing \$60 million over three years, and due to the tremendous success of the competitive stream, we have extended it beyond the initial three-year pilot.

Similar to the College Equipment and Renewal Fund, we also have the Training Equipment Renewal Fund for universities, which was created under this government three years ago. The workforce is constantly changing, and classrooms must keep up. That's why, over the last three years, we've invested \$30 million into this fund. When students have access to the best and latest equipment, more doors open and their job opportunities grow.

With new computers and the latest software, students can train for the many rewarding careers in IT and software development, artificial intelligence and advanced computing. Labs and shops with industry-grade machinery and tools prepare students for careers in booming sectors like manufacturing; science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM for short. Both funds have a direct, positive impact on students, preparing them for modern—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Minister, you have one minute remaining.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:**—thank you—workplaces, through the delivery of high-quality in-person and virtual learning.

I'm proud to say that our investments in these programs don't stop there. Our government knows that rising construction and labour costs have made it challenging to do building repairs and updates. To address these challenges, in February we announced \$167 million in additional funding over three years, starting in 2024-25. This includes \$90 million through the facilities renewal program and \$73 million through our two equipment and renewal funds. These types of investments will help improve our post-secondary institutions, which, in turn, will support our province's economy.

Our government continues to invest in post-secondary infrastructure so that institutions' facilities can evolve with industry trends and build a qualified and adaptable workforce.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** The final round for the official opposition won't be the full 20 minutes, but there are eight minutes and 15 seconds. MPP Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** You have spoken at length—for three hours now, which is a long time, I'll give you that—about the \$1.3 billion to so-called “stabilize” Ontario's cash-strapped universities and colleges.

The University of Waterloo is one of the best universities in the country—internationally well known, has one of the best reputations, especially around engineering and their co-op program. They really are an outstanding institution. This spring, they let us know—the public know, and you know—that they have a \$75-million operating deficit.

The \$1.3 billion was offered over the three years as sort of like, I guess, in theory, some bridge financing. But a global credit agency, Morningstar DBRS, said this about the \$1.3 billion: that the Ford government's three-year, \$1.3-billion funding plan to stabilize Ontario's cash-strapped universities and colleges was a mere stopgap. They went on to say that there is a fundamental lack of revenue for universities and colleges to conduct their basic operations—from the facilities deficit of \$6.3 billion to not being able to retain enough staff.

The University of Waterloo cited the negative impacts of Bill 124 and the fallout from that.

Of course, now we have another layer of pressure point for universities, with the international students, which, I have to say, should never have been part of the financial cure for an underfunded post-secondary sector.

This, to be fair to you, was before your time as minister, but the former minister said that universities and colleges could help bridge their budget shortfalls by finding efficiencies. I think some of us should know this by now, but you can't cut your way out of a structural deficit. It just does not work.

You gave several Ontario universities a mandate to perform third-party efficiency reviews. Is there any documentation that can be shared about these required reviews? Ultimately, do you just not believe universities are running efficient operations? What are you looking for with these efficiency reviews?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Coming from small business, I recognize that all institutions or organizations could find efficiencies.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Do you think that colleges and universities are businesses?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** They're institutions and organizations.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** They are publicly assisted organizations.

I'm asking you, do you think that universities and colleges are somehow sitting on big pots of money that they're not investing in their capital or their programming or their operations?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I guess I'll answer that by saying that not only do businesses need to worry about their efficiency, but also not-for-profits—I've dealt on numerous not-for-profit boards, and efficiency reviews are essential to ensure that dollars are spent well.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** This is really interesting. You are saying, then, that you think that these universities and colleges somewhere have some fat that can be cut—

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I did not state that. I'm stating that there are efficiencies to be had.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** And what are those efficiencies?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** That's what a third-party review will find. I'm not an expert in that.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** And these are not small businesses, I also want to say.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** That's why I mentioned not-for-profits as well, because for some reason, you discounted my small business comments. Not-for-profits also have to review their efficiency.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Actually, I want to say, it is not a fair comparator. You, as a small business, with two employees, versus universities with thousands—

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Actually, my payroll is \$1 million a year. So thank you for that.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** —and the ecosystem—this isn't about you. This is about students in the province of Ontario.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I know it's not about me. I'm just getting you to understand that every organization needs to have efficiency.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Maybe this is a good time for me to interject and remind everyone that we're dealing with estimates and to just keep our conversation regarding the 2024-25 estimates.

Go ahead, MPP Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Yes, let's talk about the money.

I do want to say, you have put out a call to colleges and universities across the province and you've said, "Find some efficiencies." We do know you cannot cut your way out of an operational deficit. Are you at least helping these universities and colleges with the cost of doing the review?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** Yes. We have \$15 million, part of that \$1.3-billion investment that we put in this year.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** So the insufficient \$1.3 billion, which is not going to stabilize the sector—you keep referencing this money as if it's going to save the sector. We know that the funding shortage that universities and colleges in Ontario face is structural and it's worsening.

Do you want to see our institutions continue down this path where they're not able to fulfill their mandate as institutions?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** There's a reason why international students want to come to Ontario. We have a world-class education system in Ontario.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** That's a strange direction to go.

What we do know about international students, Minister, is that when they were coming to Ontario, they were promised a certain level of education, they were promised a certain standard of living, they were promised

the potential of reaching their potential as students, and all that happened for many of them—my colleague from Waterloo region referenced going from 800 international students to 30,000.

Do you have concerns about that direction and that acceleration of having to rely on international students to make up for the funding shortfall that is the responsibility of this government?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I think I've stated it before: I do believe the students are fulfilling a skills gap, a trade gap that we have—a skills, trade gap—whether it's in health care, STEM or skilled trades. We need our international students and the skill set they bring to ensure that Ontario's economy can thrive.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** University of Waterloo cited the negative impact of Bill 124 on their budget line.

Just to recap: Bill 124 was an unconstitutional piece of legislation that this government brought in—1% at three years. This actually caused an out-migration of the very labour skill set that you're complaining about—

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Final minute, MPP Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** One minute?

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** One minute left.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Your government brought in legislation which made the labour shortage problem in the province of Ontario even greater. By underfunding the post-secondary sector, you by default look to international students to make up that gap, and with no regulations on the amount of tuition that could be charged.

Do you not see the connection with the actions that your government brought in with Bill 124 and the negative impact that it has had on the labour shortage issue and on the operational deficits in our post-secondary sector?

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I believe the pandemic caused a lot of labour shortages right across every sector, and ultimately, the international students will be able to help fill some of those labour shortages that we have across the sector. The pandemic really showed a lot of cracks throughout all of North America.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Well, the pandemic taught us some important lessons about valuing the very people who work in these institutions.

**The Chair (Mr. Steve Clark):** Thanks to all the members of the committee.

I want to thank the minister and the deputy and all the staff at the ministry.

I think this is the minister's second round of estimates. I think he sat there when he was Associate Minister of Forestry. I'm not sure if that's a record for the government—to have someone go through two different ministries.

Thanks for being here.

This concludes the committee's consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. Standing order 69 requires that I as Chair put, without further amendment or debate, every question necessary to dispose of the estimates. Are members ready to vote?



Shall vote 3001, ministry administration program, carry? All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Shall vote 3002, post-secondary education program, carry? All those in favour? Opposed? Motion carried.

Shall vote 3005, research program, carry? All those in favour? Opposed? Motion carried.

Shall the 2024-25 estimates of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities carry? All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Shall the Chair report the 2024-25 estimates of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to the House? All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

This concludes our consideration of the estimates for the ministry today.

There being no further business, this committee stands adjourned until tomorrow, October 8, 2024, when the committee will have public hearings for Bill 121.

*The committee adjourned at 1803.*





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