

Road safety

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As the official opposition shadow minister for infrastructure and transportation, I support the use of speed cameras to keep roads and communities safe. The Ontario NDP has consistently been on the side of community members, road safety experts and municipal leaders demanding that Premier Ford back off from his absurd vendetta against speed cameras.

Ontarians will recall that it was this Premier and his government that rightly gave decision-making powers to local municipalities about whether or not they would use automated speed enforcement as a tool—or not—and where within their own municipalities. Now, years later, Premier Ford has done an about-face for no discernible or evidence-based reason.

Micromanaging local municipal decision-making is not appropriate. Removing tools from local leaders who are trying to keep their roads and communities safe is not appropriate or the right thing to do. Forcing municipalities to bear significant costs for the removal of speed camera infrastructure is not fair.

It is clear that this Premier doesn't like speed cameras, and since at least 20 of his cabinet ministers have been caught speeding in safety zones, I imagine they don't like them either.

This ploy by the Premier is a very engaging distraction from what issues are actually provincial responsibilities, such as housing, health care, education and protecting jobs and the economy. I will oppose the Premier's ban on speed cameras and will fight for safer roads as well as for the many provincial priorities that this government is neglecting to address.

Child care

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Today marks the 25th annual Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day, a time to recognize the vital work early childhood educators do in caring for and educating the next generation, yet nearly half of ECEs leave the profession within three years, citing low wages, lack of benefits and unsustainable working conditions. The AG reports our ECEs make up 59.5% of program staff, and up to 10,000 additional RECEs are needed by 2026.

This government has failed to meet its own workforce targets. Will the Premier commit to a real plan that ensures fair wages, improved working conditions and career stability for this essential workforce?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I do applaud the ECE workers. I spent a lot of time over the summer visiting daycares and child care centres across the province and really reflecting on the extraordinary work that they do.

The member will know, of course, that we are expanding access to child care. That means more ECEs. We are, unfortunately, in a bit of a holding pattern right now as we wait for the federal government to come to the table with respect to the next five years of the CWELCC program. We honestly have been asking the federal government to meet since last April; we have yet to hear back from the federal government.

It's not only the province of Ontario; our friends in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are also asking the federal government to come back to the table. In their last offer to us, the federal government acknowledged that they were \$10 billion short of sustaining the program as it is today, but we are hoping that eventually they will come to the table.

Time is running short and parents need to have some certainty, but so do the workers who do such extraordinary jobs on behalf of getting our children ready for the future, getting them ready to be in our schools. So I'm with the member, I'm with the ECE—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, appreciation must come with action, and without a stable workforce, there is no child care system. Uncertainty extends beyond the workforce: Families and operators are worried too. The Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care program is set to expire in March. Over 300,000 families rely on affordable child care under this program and 70,000 more are waiting, yet the government is one of two provinces that hasn't signed a deal for this program.

Premier, the clock is ticking. Will the Premier commit today to get his ministers to the negotiating table?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Not only is the province of Ontario willing to get to the negotiating table, so is the province of British Columbia, which signed a deal and is now regretting that deal they signed—so is the province of Alberta, so is Saskatchewan, so is Manitoba.

We have been begging the federal government to come to the table so that we can begin talking about an extension of the CWELCC program. We have sent letters to the federal government, we have called the federal government. We understand that the new minister does not yet have a mandate from her Treasury Board to begin negotiations with us. It is hard to negotiate with yourself at the table.

We want an extension of the program. That is why I sent out a letter last April to parents—a year in advance of the expiry of the program—warning them that unless the federal government committed funding to their program that fees would go up. That's why Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia are joining us.

I hope the federal minister will come to the table with us so that we can resolve some of the issues that we have and we can give parents certainty, we can give operators certainty and we can give those ECEs workers who do such a great job the certainty that they need as well.

Education

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This government's record cuts to education funding have taken more than \$6 billion out of our education system, and our kids pay the price every single day: large class sizes, lack of mental health supports, cuts to special education, crumbling schools. And now, instead of reversing his cuts and investing in our kids, the Premier is attacking the right of parents and communities to have a say in our local schools.

Will the Premier please explain to parents across Ontario: Why does he think it's okay to shut us out of decisions that affect our kids?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, I don't believe that we should do that at all. You talk about education funding. Colleagues, they just had an opportunity to vote with us to remove a trustee who took over \$100,000 out of the pockets of our schools, out of the pockets of children. Teachers—we have ETFO here—imagine those ETFO teachers: Every day, a teacher goes to school and they want the best for their students, and we have trustees flying to Italy, dining at Michelin restaurants, taking limousines. Today we had the opportunity to get that money back, to exact accountability, and the NDP, what did they do? They decided, "No, we're going to continue to support trustees like that who take money out of the classroom."

Madam Speaker, we're going to stand up for teachers, we're going to stand up for parents, we're going to stand up for students so that they get the best out of a \$40-billion education budget.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: If only the minister brought that attitude to the Skills Development Fund, Speaker, we'd have a bill to remove the Minister of Labour from office.

Through the Speaker, Minister, you've already appointed supervisors who are giving us a glimpse of our future if Bill 33 passes: cuts to special education supports for our most vulnerable kids, supervisors who hide from the public and refuse to answer emails, decisions made behind closed doors, restricted access to public meetings and misleading statements from supervisors who say publicly that they do not need to answer questions from anyone.

Does the Premier think this is okay, or will he show parents the respect we deserve by withdrawing Bill 33?

Hon. Paul Calandra: No, I'm not going to withdraw Bill 33. You know why? Because this government wants to ensure that there is accountability in the education system.

What I'm trying to do, what we're trying to do, what the Premier has asked me to do is build on the work of the previous ministers so that we can ensure that our students have the best quality of education possible. What does that mean? That means giving teachers the resources that they need to ensure that our students succeed. That means respecting parents, because when you do that, you build an education system where our students succeed.

It doesn't matter that we have record levels of funding—that doesn't matter. What matters is that our teachers can give our students the best possible education. You know what we're going to do? We're going to remove obstacles when that happens. When trustees go off the rails and start focusing on anything other than student achievement, I'll fire them. When school boards don't do the right thing and put money in the classroom, I'll remove them and put a supervisor in place, Madam Speaker. You know why? I want students to succeed, and for students to succeed, I need teachers to have the resources and the tools that they need. I'll stand up for those teachers, students and parents every day.

Bill 57

Hon. Paul Calandra: I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House, the order for second reading of Bill 57, An Act to vacate the office of the member of the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board who represented Haldimand county between July 8, 2024 and July 15, 2024 be immediately called; and

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That the Speaker shall immediately put the question on the motion for second reading of Bill 57 without debate or amendment; and

That upon receiving second reading the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order shall immediately be called; and

That the Speaker shall immediately put the question on the motion for third reading without debate or amendment; and

That the votes on second and third reading of the bill shall not be deferred; and

That if a recorded division is requested on the second or third reading votes on the bill, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.

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That if a recorded division is requested on the second or third reading votes on the bill, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes. Agreed? I heard a no.