

## **Indigenous rights**

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ

I saw a lot of families out on the land this fall. For families across Kiiwetinoong, hunting is a way of life, and it's an important source of food. The people of Kiiwetinoong understand how to live on the land. The land is where the teachings are, the land is where the history is, the land is where the languages are learned. It's where the identity comes from. Hunting is one of our inherent rights, given to us by the Creator, and it is part of our treaty rights. These rights and the land must be protected. We uphold these rights through our traditional hunting and fishing practices. Going on the land is part of who we are.

Growing up, I spent a lot of my time out on the land—until I had to go to high school—hunting, fishing, trapping, learning my language, the history and the teachings. I continue the ways of life, passing them down through my children, grandchildren and the next generation, and to learn the way of the land.

It is vital that our ways of life are respected and that our treaty rights are upheld.

## **Tragedy in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound**

**MPP Paul Vickers:** I rise today to pay tribute to the victims of a tragedy in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. On November 11, around the noon hour, three students from John Diefenbaker secondary school in Hanover tragically lost their lives in a single-vehicle accident in West Grey. One other was airlifted to hospital and has since been upgraded to stable condition.

Madam Speaker, these are tough times for students in Grey and Bruce. JDSS is located a mere 10 minutes away from Walkerton District Community School, where just this spring, four students and a teacher passed away in an accident near London while they were away at a school event.

I want to rise today to recognize Damon Davis, an aspiring auto mechanic and volunteer for the St. Matthew's Lutheran church; to recognize Haley Keffer, the spunky 16-year-old daughter of Stacy and Sarah; to recognize Tyson Varley, a big brother who loved anything with an engine; and I wish Landon Preiss-Hillier the best on his road to recovery.

These teens were beloved community members and cherished by their families. Their stories captivated the hearts of Grey and Bruce counties.

Madam Speaker, my heart goes out to the Hanover community as they mourn Damon, Haley and Tyson. May their memory be a blessing and may they rest in peace.

## **Autism services**

**Mr. Jonathan Tsao:** My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Speaker, a month ago, I asked the minister when will the more than 64,000 children stuck on the Ontario Autism Program wait-list finally receive core clinical services. One month later, still no answers.

Speaker, how much longer will parents be forced to watch this government use the \$2.5-billion skills development slush fund like a personal piggy bank for friends and family instead of using those tax dollars to end the autism wait-list?

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** I thank the honourable member for the important question. Madam Speaker, 8,000 families: That was the total number across the province who were receiving supports and services under the previous government. For us, that was unacceptable. For the people of Ontario, the families, the parents, that was unacceptable.

What did we do? We listened to families. We took action. We backed that action by record investments. Madam Speaker, 8,000 families in total under the previous government—today, more than 23,000 families are receiving an expanded core service. This is in addition to the tens of thousands of families who are accessing supports through other streams, which were never provided under the previous government.

So, Madam Speaker, let me make it very clear: We'll continue working with families, with service providers to ensure no child and youth in this province is left behind.

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

**Mr. Jonathan Tsao:** Speaker, while I hear the minister's attempt to string together some sort of answer with various numbers, the number that he continues to ignore is the 64,000 children stuck on the Ontario Autism Program wait-list.

Speaker, let me offer the minister a different number—and this really should be a very simple yes or no response: Do you support your government's decision to give \$10.5 million to the owner of a downtown strip club instead of using that money to end the autism wait-list?

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** Again, I thank the honourable member for the question.

Madam Speaker, let me make it very clear: It's the children and youth in this province—that's our top priority.

Let me just get this straight so that everybody can hear: Under the previous government, 8,000 families in total were receiving supports, because they were investing only \$300 million across the province. Today, we're investing \$779 million in the Ontario Autism Program.

I'm going to read a quote from a mother who has sent us—as a result of one of the programs that we brought in, as a result of listening to experts, to clinicians, to family members, to those with lived experience. Here is what one mother shared with me, on the entry to school program: She described the entry to school program as the program that has been most helpful to her son. The results? "He has begun speaking, after being told he would never talk again. Can you imagine the joy I felt as a mother? The fact that he began speaking words"—

Interjections.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the member for Perth–Wellington.

### **School boards**

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** My question is to the great Minister of Education. Less than three weeks—  
Interjections.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Yes, yes, I know. I've got to get to the question, colleagues.

Less than three weeks ago, following a scathing government report into the Near North District School Board, the minister took decisive action and issued binding directions to that board.

Since then, Near North's director of education has failed to attend multiple community meetings, and the board has failed to comply with the minister's clear directives.

To make matters worse, the Leader of the Opposition has suggested that students and families should wait until the next election to expect accountability. Colleagues, maybe this is what she told her members at her leadership review. But our government finds this unacceptable. Students and families at Near North cannot afford to wait years for an election while their education is put at risk.

Through you, Speaker: Will the minister sit back and wait for the next election to get them back on track, or will he take action right now?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** What a good question from the member opposite.

I can assure him that the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka wouldn't let me sit back and not take action for four years, nor would the people in his community.

Let's keep in mind, that is a community that, for over 10 years, has been waiting for this school and has not been able to get that school done. The children in that community are right now being educated in a partially demolished high school, because of the ineffectiveness and the inability of trustees to put students, parents and teachers first.

Imagine the Leader of the Opposition suggesting that I should wait four years, at the next municipal elections and trustee elections, to take any form of action. That's completely unacceptable.

I expect that is why the Leader of the Opposition, yesterday, chose a silly stunt to get kicked out of this place, to avoid the accountability of voting against parents and teachers and students. She didn't want to be on the record voting against Bill 33 because she knows parents, students and teachers support it. That's why she chose a silly stunt to get kicked out of here, but left her—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member from Perth—Wellington.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Maybe the Leader of the Opposition will stand in her place today and ask the Minister of Education—but I won't hold my breath.

Waiting for the next election to hold school boards accountable is simply not good enough for students.

We have seen what happens when school boards are not held accountable for their failure to students. A clear example is the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board where trustees spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on a luxury trip to Italy to buy art. They stayed in fancy hotels, rode in luxury cars and ate at Michelin restaurants, spending taxpayer money that should have been in the classroom supporting students.

Speaker, can the minister tell the House what he's going to do to make sure that trustees stop failing students and how our government is building an education system that puts students first?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** It's not even just that. Consider this: In Brant—what you just referenced—these are a group of trustees who called themselves back into a special meeting so that they

could change the rules to allow themselves to go on this high-priced Italian vacation to look for artwork.

Now, it gets even worse, because the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, we support them to the tune of about \$275,000 for trustees; they chose to give themselves more. They actually spent \$1.3 million in Ottawa supporting trustees and direct expenses of over \$444,000. It gets even worse than that: Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic board—multi-year surpluses into multi-year deficits.

When you look at what the actions of these boards are doing, it's not putting parents first, it's not putting students first and it's certainly not putting teachers first.

The opposition Liberals and NDP had an opportunity to vote in favour of students, parents and teachers yesterday, they said no. We will take action, we will put them back on track and we will live up to our responsibilities.

### **Royal assent**

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I beg to inform the House that in the name of His Majesty the King, the Administrator has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in Her Honour's office.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas):** The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to amend various Acts in relation to child, youth and family services, education, and colleges and universities