

Government accountability

Mr. John Fraser: Yesterday's AG report—if I wanted to describe it in one word, I'd say “waste.”

At the top of that list is Supply Ontario. They literally took \$1.4 billion, put it in a pile and set it on fire—literally set it on fire. That \$1.4 billion is a lot of money, folks. Maybe it isn't to you, but our hospitals are asking for a billion dollars because they don't have enough money; they're being starved.

So my question to the Premier is, why did he light \$1.4 billion on fire instead of spending that money in our hospitals?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: First, let me thank the Auditor General for the report that she brought out. As the President of the Treasury Board just mentioned, it was our eighth clean audit by this government—every single audit, clean bill of health. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for when we took office from the previous Liberal government with the Auditor General's reports on their particular audits.

Having said that, Ontarians deserve a supply chain that is resilient, strong and domestic. When we took office in 2018, the former Liberal government had left Ontario with expiring PPE that was foreign-purchased from China, of all places. We acted swiftly to fix this mess and start building a domestic supply chain where we save jobs and are protecting the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: You can still smell those \$20 bills burning right now. I'll try to put this in language that the Premier would understand: This would be like taking 135 football fields—135 American; 89 Canadian—lining them with \$20 bills and lighting them on fire. It would be the CN Tower 14 times. That's how much money you burned.

Think of what \$1.4 billion could have done for our schools. It could have made class sizes smaller, which the minister doesn't think is important. It could have helped kids with special education needs who aren't getting the help that they need. It could have helped the mental health crisis in our schools.

So I guess the question I have for the Premier is, why did he choose to burn \$1.4 billion instead of investing in our kids and our schools?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: There was an election this February, and the overarching theme of this election was Protect Ontario. That's exactly what this government is doing: protecting the businesses and the people of Ontario.

Actually, you speak to the Auditor General. We have great respect for the Auditor General, as I think you do as well. If I can quote from the Auditor General on her question about the PPE supply—this is a direct quote from the Auditor General of Ontario when asked about the oversupply of PPE: “I was not surprised. It was like The Hunger Games. I do not blame the government.”

Speaker, when we inherited office in 2018, we inherited outdated Chinese and foreign supplies of PPE. We acted quick during the COVID pandemic to make sure the people of Ontario had the supplies they need.

My question to the opposition is, would you prefer that we give this PPE to your children?

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

Mr. John Fraser: Judging by the response to the Auditor General's news conference by the government yesterday, I'm not sure how much they actually respect the Auditor General.

But here's what I know they don't respect: taxpayers' money. The CEO of Supply Ontario—guess who he is? The Premier's former chief of staff. All roads lead to the Premier's office.

Here's the thing: If you know the Premier, you can burn 1.4 billion taxpayer dollars and everything is okay. Nobody says anything.

I don't understand why this government doesn't understand that \$1.4 billion could have helped everyday Ontarians with the things that matter most to them: their schools, their classrooms, their hospitals, their primary care. I don't understand why nobody is paying the price for spending—or burning—this \$1.4 billion.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Let's go back in time: During the COVID pandemic, that member was accusing our government of not acting swiftly enough to get PPE to the people of Ontario to protect them. That's what we did. The only reason Ontario had to fight tooth and nail during this time period to get the PPE—and it was like The Hunger Games—was because the Liberals left us with a warehouse full of expired, foreign-bought PPE junk that would not pass basic safety checks, sitting in facilities that were literally falling apart. We will not take lectures from the very people who created this disaster. When the crisis hit, we didn't hesitate. We cleaned up their mess, secured Ontario-made supplies and protected front-line workers and families.

Let me be absolutely clear: We will not apologize for putting Ontario businesses and families first. We will not apologize for following Health Canada guidelines and destroying medical waste. Speaker, the people on this side of the House stand for protecting the people of Ontario.

Academic testing

Ms. Chandra Pasma: The Minister of Education finally released the EQAO scores, and it's clear why the minister was hiding them. The impact of the government's \$6.8 billion in funding cuts is clear: Two in five grade 9 students aren't meeting the provincial standard for math; half of grade 6 students are failing to meet the standard. Our kids don't need an advisory body that pays more unqualified Conservative insiders lucrative salaries: They need smaller class sizes and more caring, qualified teachers.

Will the minister quit finding ways to give Conservatives high-paying jobs and fund our schools?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, clearly, I obviously disagree with the member opposite because we know the NDP would rather see our students failing. That is quite clear, because it is NDP trustees, in part, who have brought our system to almost complete collapse.

Look, these EQAO results were not what we expected. You know why? Because Conservatives believe that our students should have the best opportunity to succeed, and we are going to find

out why that is not happening in a ministry that spends over \$43 billion. I think students, parents and teachers should expect that their kids get the best opportunity to succeed. So we're going to double down on making sure that our students can succeed by making sure that our teachers have the resources that they need and that parents also have the tools that they need to help their children.

Am I going to stop working hard to give our students every opportunity to succeed? No. Is the NDP going to continue to try and frustrate our mission to give our students the best opportunity to succeed? Yes. But you know what? We'll get the job done for our students.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: No parent and no teacher in the province is asking for jobs for Conservatives; they are asking for funding.

The results show just how badly the government is failing kids with disabilities and learning exceptionalities. School boards are spending \$850 million more on special education than what they're getting from this government, but less than one third of students are meeting the provincial standard for math, and the scores for reading and writing aren't much better.

Will the Premier stop failing our most vulnerable kids and properly fund special education?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, as I said this morning at the news conference, for 50, 60 years, the Minister of Education has come before people and said, "We're spending more than we ever have before in education." The unions and the NDP have said, "You're not spending enough."

I think that parents just simply don't care about that messaging. What they care about is—"How are my kids doing? Are they getting the tools that they need to succeed?"

So what I'm going to do and continue to do is build on the work that was done by the previous ministers—a back-to-basics approach, which has seen some very good results with respect to standardized testing in literacy, frankly. We've seen some good results. We need some more help on math.

Just a couple of days ago, I took over another school board, the Near North District School Board, using the tools under Bill 33. The opposition voted against Bill 33. They said it would end democracy across the province of Ontario. But do you know who supported me taking over the near North District School Board? It was the Leader of the Opposition, who said it was the right thing to do. That explains to me why, when it was time to stand up, as opposed to doing what the rest of her party did—voting against it—she got kicked out of this place fictitiously and took her time to get out of here. She didn't want to be on the record as voting against what parents—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month Act, 2025

Mr. Blais moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to proclaim the month of October as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month /

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for their presentation.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and good evening, colleagues. It's an honour to rise today on behalf of the people of Orléans to speak to Bill 66, the Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month Act, 2025. I would like to first acknowledge and thank my colleague the MPP for Ottawa–Vanier, Lucille Collard, for her tremendous leadership on this project. Her dedication to protecting children is without equal, and I can say without hesitation that in this House, nobody does it better or cares more than she does.

Je voudrais d'abord reconnaître et remercier ma collègue la députée provinciale d'Ottawa–Vanier, Lucille Collard, pour son remarquable leadership dans ce projet de loi. Son engagement envers la protection des enfants est incomparable et je peux dire sans hésiter que dans cette Chambre, personne ne fait un meilleur travail et personne ne se soucie plus que M^{me} Collard par rapport à ce projet important.

This is a simple bill with a clear purpose: to shine a spotlight every October on the safety, privacy, and well-being of children growing up in an increasingly digital world. This bill creates a dedicated moment every year—an opportunity for parents, educators, community organizations, members of government and lawmakers to come together—to talk honestly and openly about how we protect children online.

Ce que ce projet de loi permet, c'est de créer chaque année un moment consacré—une occasion pour les parents, les éducateurs, les organismes communautaires, les membres du gouvernement et les législateurs de se réunir—afin de discuter ouvertement et honnêtement de la façon dont nous protégeons les enfants en ligne dans notre province.

Mr. Speaker, that conversation is urgently needed. Our young people today are the first generation to grow up fully immersed in digital, online technology. Young people don't step into the digital world; they live in it. It's where they learn. It's where they socialize. It's how they explore new ideas and express themselves.

In 2022, 99% of young Canadians aged 15 to 24 used the Internet, and 91% were active on social networking sites. What's most alarming is what our kids encounter while navigating the Net. We cannot discuss online safety without confronting one of the most disturbing crimes in our country: the online sexual exploitation of children and efforts to radicalize them online with exposure to hate of all forms.

The Internet has opened remarkable opportunities for learning, for connection and for creativity, but it has also become a weapon for predators to exploit children and for extremists to spread hate.

Nous ne pouvons pas parler de la sécurité de nos enfants en ligne sans aborder un crime des plus dérangeants dans notre pays : l'exploitation sexuelle des enfants sur l'Internet et les efforts de les radicaliser en ligne par l'exposition à toutes formes de haine.

L'Internet a ouvert la porte à des possibilités remarquables d'apprentissage, de connexion et de la créativité, mais il est aussi devenu une arme qui permet à des prédateurs d'exploiter les enfants et à des extrémistes de propager la haine.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection, one of Canada's most important advocates in this area, now receives more than 100,000 reports every month related to online sexual abuse of children and their exploitation.

Statistics Canada reports that 71% of young Canadians saw online hate content in 2022.

And police-reported data collected between 2018 and 2022 shows that more than one third, or 36%, of victims of cyber-related hate crimes were under the age of 25.

For many young people, the online world exposes them to things that no child should ever have to see or experience.

A recent Stats Canada report shows an equally troubling trend. Police-reported incidents involving children harmed in digital spaces increased from 50 incidents per 100,000 in 2014 to 130 by 2020. That's an increase of more than 160% in just six years.

Lianna McDonald, the executive director of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, summarized the crisis clearly when she said, "Canadian children and adolescents are being targeted and victimized through their daily use of technology and social media platforms. There is an urgent need for all levels of government to ensure they regulate and protect minors in digital spaces with the same level of care as they do in the offline world."

That urgency is why we are here today debating Bill 66.

Mr. Speaker, we know that online victimization does not happen in isolation. Stats Canada data on child sexual offences reveals that luring a child accounts for 77% of all online sexual offences against children; 65% of victims were targeted by a stranger or casual acquaintance, while nearly a quarter were exploited by someone they knew—a friend, a family member, or an intimate partner. What's also challenging is that less than half of cases, roughly 44%, are cleared by police.

And while charges are laid in the majority of those cases, the lasting impacts remain with survivors for their entire lives, and those impacts are profound. Children who experience sexual exploitation often suffer from psychological harm, challenges with development, substance use disorders, depression and trauma that impact their relationships well into adulthood.

This is a public health crisis, a public safety crisis, and a children's rights crisis.

Ontario and Canada have long recognized that children possess their own agency as individuals. At one point in our history, children had no rights at all; they had only obligations. But now children are recognized as full people with their own inherent rights, deserving of special protections because of their developmental stage and their vulnerability.

This principle is the foundation of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by Canada in 1991. The CRC remains the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, and two articles speak specifically to what we're debating tonight. Article 19 states that states must take all appropriate measures to protect children from abuse, injury, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. Article 34 states that states must protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

Madam Speaker, adopting Bill 66 sends a clear message: Ontario is committed to upholding these obligations, not just on paper, but in practice.

I would also like to recognize the meaningful steps being taken by the federal Liberal government to help keep our kids safe online. Earlier this year, the Minister of Public Safety announced \$39.7 million in federal investments to protect children and youth from online sexual exploitation. That was \$21.5 million for provincial Internet child exploitation units, helping support their investigative capacity, including \$7.5 million for the Ontario Provincial Police and \$18.2 million for the Canadian Centre for Child Protection to expand their critical work and respond to an overwhelming rise in demand.

But, Madam Speaker, no single government can solve this alone. Around the world, governments are grappling with the same challenge. In Australia, the federal Parliament has passed the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill, which will come into force next week on December 10. Under that law, children under the age of 16 will no longer be allowed to create or maintain social media platforms, including on Facebook and X and YouTube, Instagram and Reddit. Social media companies must take responsible steps to enforce the rule or face fines of up to \$50 million. Parents cannot override the restriction. The purpose of that legislation is simple: to protect the mental health and well-being of Australian kids.

Now, whether one agrees or disagrees with that approach—and it is, perhaps, extreme—the message is the same worldwide: We must act. Doing nothing should no longer be an option. The hope with this bill is to bring awareness to the issue because awareness drives action, because conversations create cultural and societal change.

Designating a month allows us to highlight safety resources for families, promote digital literacy in schools, partner with community groups, support law enforcement and child protection agencies and speak directly to young people about their rights, safety and privacy online. It creates a space for all of us, no matter the political stripe, to work together and, Madam Speaker, that is exactly what the kids of Ontario need and deserve.

The digital world is evolving faster than any generation or government can keep up with. Our laws, our education systems and our public awareness must evolve with it, or else we risk further harming our children. Bill 66 won't solve all of these problems, but it will ensure that Ontario sets aside a time every year to confront them head-on, to learn from experts, to hear from survivors, to empower parents and educators and, most importantly, to protect children. This bill is about recognizing that every child in Ontario has the right to grow up safe, supported and free from exploitation, both online and offline.

Le projet de loi 66 ne va pas régler tous les problèmes, mais il va garantir que l'Ontario consacre chaque année un mois entier pour affronter ces enjeux, pour apprendre des experts, pour écouter les survivants, pour donner aux parents et aux éducateurs les outils nécessaires pour agir, et surtout pour protéger les enfants en ligne. Ce projet de loi se concentre sur la prévention et la sensibilisation. Il s'agit de reconnaître que chaque enfant en Ontario a le droit de grandir en sécurité et libre de toute forme d'exploitation, tant en ligne qu'hors ligne.

So thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, colleagues and friends. I hope that you will find it appropriate to support this bill this evening.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Mr. Brian Riddell: I rise today for the second reading of Bill 66, the Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month Act, 2025. This bill seeks to proclaim October as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month in Ontario, raising awareness about the importance of digital safety for children and encouraging parents, educators and communities to prioritize online protection.

As we consider this bill, it's important to recognize that Ontario already is a national leader in cyber security awareness and action, especially when it comes to protecting our youngest citizens. This October, Ontario hosted the 2025 Cybersecurity Summit, bringing together executives, IT professionals and public sector leaders to share strategies and resources for building a resilient digital province. The summit focused on the most pressing issues in Ontario's cyber landscape, including how to protect the data and privacy of Ontarians, combat cyber threats and enhance cross-sector collaboration. A major theme was the need to safeguard children and students in the K-12 sector. The summit highlighted the Ontario K-12 Cyber Protection Strategy, a province-wide plan launched in 2022 to strengthen digital safety in schools.

Ontario's leadership in cyber security is reflected in our commitment to education and awareness. Throughout Cyber Security Awareness Month, the summit promoted campaigns, student tools and standardization of cyber security policies developed with expert partners like the Educational Computing Network of Ontario. These initiatives directly support the goals of Bill 66 by raising awareness and providing practical resources for kids, parents and educators.

Speaker, while Ontario's cyber security summit and ongoing programs already achieve the aims of Bill 66, this bill serves as a powerful symbol. By proclaiming Ontario as kids' online security and privacy month, we reinforce our commitment to digital safety, encourage ongoing dialogue and ensure that every year we renew our focus on protecting children online.

Awareness is not a one-time event; it's an ongoing responsibility. Our government has already put in place strong legislation and programs to safeguard children's state of privacy and well-being. Bill 66 complements our existing efforts, amplifies the visibility of cyber safety initiatives and reminds us all—government, parents, educators and industry—that protecting kids online is a shared priority.

For these reasons, I am pleased to support the aim of Bill 66. Let us use Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month as an opportunity to renew our commitment to digital safety, to empower parents and educators, and to ensure that every child in Ontario can navigate the digital world confidently and safely.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate here tonight. The member from Orléans has brought forward a bill to declare online security month being in October. I don't know how else to get the attention of this government on this issue; at least this month would shine a light on what's actually happening to youth.

There is a motion at social policy to take on this work together, to actually have a strategy and implement some safety measures around online use of social media for youth. I want to tell you that I've been working with a doctor named Alison Yeung in Waterloo region. They're doing a massive amount of research, but the body of evidence already exists to protect youth. Because

the algorithms are designed to be addictive, right? This is a fact. The research and evidence say it.

It's important to note that 15- to 24-year-olds are the most likely cohort to see violent content online because there are no protections in place. According to Stats Canada, 52% encounter content that may incite hate or violence once a month or more and 12.6% see such content daily. This is not helpful for the social discourse in the province of Ontario. The research is very strong, and Dr. Yeung actually goes on to say, "It's hard for kids to control their use." We have to be honest about what's happening here. "Almost one in two youth had a high addictive use trajectory for mobile phones. More than 40% had a high addictive use trajectory for video games."

The algorithms are designed to be addictive. The government of Ontario is doing nothing to stop this and to protect youth online.

"Take-away 2: More problematic use led to increased suicidal behaviours.

"For social media, mobile phones and video games, both the high and increasing addictive use trajectories were associated with greater risks of suicidal behaviours and suicidal ideation compared with the low addictive use trajectory."

The stakes are high, and for some reason, the government seems paralyzed—paralyzed—to deal with this issue. I did, because we've been presenting—because we have thousands of names actually asking the government to do something, to review the addictive nature of social media platforms, to clarify the responsibilities of social media companies regarding the moderation of use of youth under the age of 13, to require the Ontario public health units to issue a health warning on social media platforms about the risks of excessive social media use by youth.

Because this petition has generated a lot of attention, the Ministry of Health did get back to me about this issue. They say they've got some programs and services that address child and youth mental health—after the fact. They have a youth program for gambling and technology use treatment that is available for 11-year-olds to 21-year-olds, but after the fact. They're collecting relevant data, after the fact. Nobody in this province is being proactive about protecting youth from seeing these violent images and from being exposed to the hate and crimes.

I just want to point to the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. This report just came out on November 25. Listen, this was a survey of 1,300 youth in Canada. "Nearly nine in 10 ... participants were sexually victimized in private communication environments" around private messaging. "Over nine in 10 ... teen victims think that Canada should legally force apps and platforms to prevent harm online. Most also thought safety measures would help." These are the voices of people who have found themselves victims in this space, because it is an unsafe space by design. They are asking us to take action, so of course His Majesty's official opposition will be supporting online safety month.

For the love of humanity, can we actually do something about this issue? And not just to inspire one month, we need to inspire action. We need police to get involved. We need the committee to do the work. Let's do something for the people of this province.

And some people will blame parents. They say, “Oh, this is a parent issue.” Parents aren’t failing; the tech billionaires are winning. Let’s put children and their safety above everybody else in this province, and let’s get this bill passed. But let’s get to work, for the love of God.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I want to begin by thanking the member for Orléans for actually re-tabling this bill, a bill that I tabled in the last Parliament, which I debated and which passed second reading but didn’t get any further. I am proudly co-sponsoring this bill and I want to thank the member for recognizing the urgency of this issue and for allowing us to debate it tonight on his own ballot date. I think I owe him one.

Kids’ online safety is one of the topics I discuss the most with people in my riding, from educators to parents to front-line service providers. I recently organized a round table on all the PMBs I have tabled, and there was unanimous agreement that this bill deserves high priority.

As lawmakers, we have all become increasingly aware that the digital world, while full of innovation and opportunity, has also become one of the most complex and consequential challenges facing young people in Ontario and beyond. Online safety is not abstract; it’s real, and it’s part of our family life. Technology is now unavoidable. It is the environment in which kids grow up. Parents worry that their children may be exposed to violent or sexual content, targeted by predators, manipulated by algorithms or pressured by impossible standards of perfection.

Teachers see cyberbullying spill into their classrooms. Health care providers see the connections between social media, anxiety, depression and body image issues at unprecedented levels. Young people themselves tell us clearly that they feel overwhelmed, unprotected and unheard.

But we must also speak plainly about the dangers. Children are being approached by strangers through direct messages, gaming chats and live streams. Some are lured into exchanging photos, only to become victims of sextortion, a crime that is growing rapidly across Canada. There are documented cases in Ontario of youth being groomed online and recruited into human trafficking by people who first showed up as friends in their inbox.

Many young people are falling into gaming addictions, where online games are deliberately designed to keep them hooked, impacting their sleep, their mental health and their academic performance. These situations are not theoretical. They are happening today in our communities to children who believed they were safe at home.

The act does not pretend to solve every one of these challenges, but it does something meaningful. It creates the time and space for awareness, for education, for honest conversations and for coordinated action. Declaring a Kids’ Online Safety and Privacy Month is not symbolic; it is strategic. It builds a structured annual opportunity to mobilize parents, schools, tech companies, law enforcement, mental health experts and community organizations around one shared purpose: keeping kids safe.

Speaker, we already designate awareness periods for bullying prevention, mental health, domestic violence and road safety. Why? Because awareness changes behaviour, awareness shifts culture and awareness empowers people to protect themselves and each other. In the digital world, where technology evolves faster than policy and where children encounter risks long before adults fully understand them, awareness is not optional; it is essential.

This act gives Ontario a mechanism to keep public understanding current. During this month, stakeholders could:

- highlight best practices on privacy settings;
- teach kids about digital footprints;
- support teachers with updated resources;
- host workshops on misinformation, online grooming and compulsive gaming; and
- equip parents with the tools they need to guide their children in a world where the boundaries between safe and unsafe are increasingly blurred.

It also strengthens partnerships with experts: cyber security professionals, mental health practitioners, youth advocates and academic researchers. These are the voices we need at the table, and this act ensures they have a recurring platform.

The Educational Collaborative Network of Ontario, ECNO, has already developed strong tools and resources for schools and parents on online safety for students of all ages. This bill builds on that foundation and demonstrates that the Ontario Legislature supports and values this work.

Et permettez-moi d'insister : la sécurité en ligne n'est pas partisane. Le bien-être des enfants n'est pas politique. Protéger les jeunes en ligne ne doit jamais dépendre de qui est au gouvernement. En appuyant ce projet de loi, nous affirmons que la protection de l'environnement numérique dans lequel nos enfants évoluent chaque jour est une responsabilité partagée.

Nous ne pouvons pas non plus ignorer les répercussions sur la santé mentale d'une exposition numérique non réglementée. Les données sont claires : la cyberintimidation, le harcèlement et les contenus nocifs ont des conséquences à long terme. Et lorsque les jeunes ont l'impression de devoir affronter seuls ces pressions, les impacts peuvent être dévastateurs.

Un mois annuel de sensibilisation nous permet de mettre régulièrement en lumière les soutiens disponibles, de normaliser la recherche d'aide et de créer un espace pour des conversations qui protègent le bien-être mental des enfants.

We debate the future of Ontario often—its economy, its infrastructure, its services—but the truth is that the future will be shaped by the children who are growing up right now. Their ability to participate safely in the digital world will affect their opportunities, their resilience and their well-being for the rest of their life. We cannot ask them to navigate that world alone. We owe them guidance, protection and leadership.

The Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month Act is an important step. It builds awareness, fosters collaboration, strengthens community and ensures that, every year, we pause to ask, "Are we doing enough to keep our children safe?" Tonight, Speaker, we can answer "yes." We can act. We can unite around that simple truth that nothing matters more than the safety of our children in Ontario.

I am proud to support this bill, and I urge all the members of this House to do the same.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Mr. Chris Glover: It's an honour to rise and speak in favour of this Bill 66, the Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month Act. Obviously, we in the NDP will be supporting this. This is an important first step in actually making sure our kids are safe online. I want to thank the members from Orléans and Ottawa–Vanier for bringing it forward.

The Internet provides all kinds of incredible opportunities for connection and learning, but it's also a place where people can be exploited and, particularly, children are vulnerable to that.

I'm one of those annoying, proud grandparents who is always showing pictures of my grandson. I was online with him a little while ago—he's three years old, and he got his first pair of skates. He was showing me, on a video call, this pair of skates, and he was just gushing about them. He was so excited. He said, "They're delicious," and my daughter said, "You're going to eat them?"

It was one of those mistakes that children make that are just so adorable because they are so innocent. They're still figuring out—like, "delicious" to him meant something that was really wonderful, but he didn't realize that it only really applies to food; that you don't actually use "delicious" for skates. It shows just how innocent kids are.

The Internet is full of all kinds of wonderful things, but all kinds of terrible things. Cyberbullying, online grooming, exploitation and trafficking are just some of the dangers that our children are exposed to that can cause long-lasting harm. There are things online that appear to be innocent. There's deceptive programming. On YouTube, you can see accounts that seem to be for kids that produce bright, colourful content. When you watch them carefully, though, you realize that the themes are not appropriate for kids, and the language can be quite foul at times. So you have to be really, really careful about what children are watching.

There's also exploitation. There's a company called Roblox that is being sued many, many times over for the exploitation that happens on their site for children. An Iowa family is among those suing this multi-million-dollar gaming company, alleging that a 13-year-old girl was trafficked and sexually abused after a predator on Roblox groomed the child and abducted her from her grandmother's home in May, according to the legal petition.

A 12-year-old from British Columbia recently sued the platform, alleging that its games are addictive, manipulative and financially exploitative, leading the child to anxiety, depression, irritability and mood swings, according to a CBC report.

Children are often using their parents' money. They get their parents' credit card, they're asked to put the numbers online and then the parents are exploited. So they're being financially exploited as well.

There are also cases of extremism. In Thunder Bay, there was a 13-year-old boy who has been charged for an alleged online plot to commit a violent school attack, according to the Thunder Bay Police Service. They determined that the youth had been communicating online with another person who was believed to be outside of Canada, and they communicated about ways to conspire and counsel each other regarding a potential attack on the school. The police said that they believed that the attempt would have been carried out on that child's school in the near future. So there's also this extremism recruiting that is happening online.

There's a Canadian Centre for Child Protection. The director, Jacques Marcoux, has said that while some youth may appear to be more vulnerable than others, the reality is that "just about

all kids are potentially vulnerable to these tactics.” He said that you have people who are experts at exploiting children. There are online training manuals that get exchanged between offender communities where they discuss the tactics to exploit children online. They know exactly what steps to take and how to identify kids who might be easier to groom.

So there is incredible danger out there. This bill to create the online safety and privacy month is a good step because it starts us on the road to dialogue, but dialogue is not enough. We need action. We need regulation. We need to protect our children from this exploitation that is happening online. I want to thank my colleague from Waterloo for talking about that, about the work that’s being done in committee, where we need all-party support to actually bring in real, tangible protections for children in the province of Ontario.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

MPP Tyler Watt: I’m proud to rise today in full support of my colleagues, the members from Orléans and Ottawa–Vanier, and this important bill, Bill 66, which would proclaim October as Kids’ Online Safety and Privacy Month in Ontario.

Speaker, every generation of parents faces new challenges, but today’s parents are navigating something entirely new. Children are growing up in a digital world that most adults never experienced at their age. The Internet is no longer a place that you log on; it is woven into learning, friendships and entertainment.

In my riding of Nepean, I hear from families constantly about the struggle to keep their kids safe in that world. They know the Internet can empower kids, but they also know the risks are real: cyberbullying, online grooming, scams, trafficking and exploitation. These aren’t distant possibilities; they’re happening right now to young people across Ontario.

When I visit schools like Mary Honeywell and St. Mother Teresa, students tell me themselves how overwhelming the digital world can be, how fast misinformation spreads, how hard it is to protect their privacy and how impossible it can feel to escape online cruelty. These are bright, tech-savvy kids and teenagers, but being tech-savvy is not the same as being safe. This is why this bill matters. Awareness is not a luxury; it is the first layer of protection.

By proclaiming October as Kids’ Online Safety and Privacy Month, we create a yearly opportunity to talk openly about online risks, promote digital literacy and equip parents, schools and communities with the tools they need. This isn’t about fear; it’s about empowerment—empowerment for kids to understand their boundaries and their digital footprint, and empowerment for parents to know what signs to look for and where to turn for help.

I also want to speak personally, as a millennial who grew up right in between these two eras. I spent my childhood without Internet in my pocket. I remember when MySpace arrived. I remember when Facebook suddenly became the place everyone joined. We were teenagers figuring out something brand new.

Yes, bullying existed, but you could escape it, at least when you went home. I’d have to get permission from my mother to use dial-up and hog the phone line in order to get on the Internet. It wasn’t as accessible back then and I’m grateful for that. I’m grateful my generation didn’t grow

up under that weight of anonymous comment sections, viral harassment or the pressure to be perfect online.

Kids today face a level of constant scrutiny, comparison and pressure that my generation never knew. Their entire social world follows them everywhere, at every hour of the day. This is exactly why bills like this are so important. Kids should not have to navigate the world alone.

I also want to address the role of artificial intelligence, which is reshaping this landscape faster than any of us can keep up with. AI is already creating new risks: deepfakes, voice cloning, image manipulation, personalized scams, automated bots—these tools can be used to exploit, deceive and target kids in ways we couldn't have imagined five years ago.

And yet our legislative framework is far behind. Technology is sprinting while our laws are jogging to catch up. Kids can now be impersonated, manipulated or targeted with frightening accuracy. We need modern protections to keep pace with AI, demand accountability from tech platforms, and centre children's privacy and safety every step of the way. AI isn't slowing down and neither can we.

Speaker, online risks don't care about political lines. Every child deserves to be safe. Every parent deserves peace of mind. Every school deserves the tools to teach digital safety effectively.

Proclaiming October as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month is the start, and it will create that annual commitment to action. It tells families that this Legislature understands their reality and is ready to support them.

I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Vanier and the member from Orléans for their leadership, and I encourage all members in this Legislature to support this bill, because our kids deserve nothing less.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I just want to say how proud I am of the members from Ottawa–Vanier and Orléans—the member from Ottawa–Vanier for creating this bill and the member from Orléans for sharing his spot about something I know is important to both of them. They both come from school boards; they know how important this is.

I just want to say, if we're not worried about our kids being addicted to these things, just look across the way every day.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

The member now has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'd like to thank the members from Cambridge, from Waterloo, from Spadina–Fort York, and of course, my friend from Nepean, who is younger than I am, and my colleague and friend from Ottawa–Vanier for the amazing work she did putting this together and all the advocacy.

As my colleague from Nepean mentioned, I don't think any of us in this room are young enough to have grown up in this environment—maybe over there in the corner. But most of us probably would be leading a slightly different life if a computer and a phone were in our pocket when we

were growing up. If we had had Facebook, YouTube, Reddit, Roblox and all those things as we were kids, our lives would have been different, whether that was because of online pressure and bullying or perhaps some photographic evidence which we are lucky doesn't exist that our kids currently would have to deal with.

I think it's important for all of us to recognize the modern reality that kids are living through. I've got a 16-year-old at home. We've got locks on his iPhone, his Instagram, his computer, the Xbox, and I'm sure he's still seen and done things online that my wife and I would not be too happy about. I think many of us still have kids at home, or grandkids. Some of them are probably not old enough yet to be online, but they're going to get there soon if they're not there already.

So we need to make sure that our kids are equipped, that families are equipped, that educators are equipped, and we have to absolutely ensure that law enforcement agencies and social agencies are equipped, to deal with predators when they do infect our communities and our homes.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity. Thank you, colleagues, for your remarks tonight. And above all, thank you, Madame Collard, for your leadership.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Blais has moved second reading of Bill 66, An Act to proclaim the month of October as Kids' Online Safety and Privacy Month. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Pursuant to standing order 100(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I would like for this to go to the Standing Committee on Social Policy, please.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed.

The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.