

Government accountability

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The Premier wants bail hearings to be livestreamed—a move that will cost the public millions because it is likely unconstitutional. Meanwhile, the Minister of Education has banned what should be public: the livestreaming of special education advisory meetings. Does anyone else see a glaring contradiction here?

And now, because the Premier has been ordered to share records from the phone he uses to make deals with public money, that he doesn't want the public to know about, this government is retroactively killing off access to information so that we never find out what other scurrilous, self-serving and reprehensible deals he is making with public dollars. Given how many times this government has been caught using public dollars to enrich their friends or finance the Premier's pet vanity projects, there must be a lot in those records they want to hide.

If this were a sketch on *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, it would be hilarious to watch the Premier claim there is nothing political about hiding his government's records while accusing the privacy commissioner of being politically motivated for protecting the public's right to know.

Unfortunately, this is not a comedy sketch, and we are dealing with a government that is determined to hide from accountability while doing everything in their power to undermine our democracy.

Education funding

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Supervisors appointed by the Minister of Education are making cuts that are taking supports and resources away from our kids and taking educators out of our schools.

The latest cuts to be announced are in the Toronto Catholic District School Board, where kids are losing access to language classes and reading support programs. Some 77 front-line instructors are losing their jobs because of these cuts.

Can the minister please explain why his hand-picked supervisor is earning \$350,000 a year to fire educators and cut language and literacy classes?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, international language will continue to be offered at the Toronto Catholic District School Board. They had a unique program that no other board in the province of Ontario had. But we'll continue to support those programs on weekends. The TCDSB has also decided to update its literacy programs to be more in line with the program that is offered across 71 other school boards across the province of Ontario that is also funded by the Ministry of Education. They have decided to come in line with those two programs.

At the same time, we're seeing some positive things. This budget, of course, has an increase in funding, but, ultimately, what we're seeing is the highest graduation rate in the history of the province. Thanks to this Progressive Conservative government, we're seeing literacy, reading and writing scores at their highest level ever because of the changes that were brought on by this government. And we're seeing math scores starting to finally go in a positive direction, albeit not as fast as we would like. That's why this budget is doubling down and putting more money into that.

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At the same time, there's a historic investment to bring back safety into our schools by inviting our police officers back in and connecting students and teachers with community policing.

It's a good-news budget.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: The minister's appointee, Frank Benedetto, told families that all school-day language programs will be gone as of September. The Minister of Infrastructure said no, Ukrainian schools—two of which are in her riding—will still have language instruction and “very little will change” for those students.

Can the minister please tell parents, are their language programs being cut because the Minister of Infrastructure didn't pick up the phone for them?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, in that instance—as you would know, and I'd assume the member opposite would know, there is a significant amount of Ukrainian students who have come, fleeing the war in Ukraine. At the same time, the churches and the community have decided to pick up some of the responsibility for that international language program because there are so many people who have come and still need some additional help. That's what it is that we're supposed to do. But, at the same time, the program itself will continue to be offered across the system, as it is in 71 other boards, on weekends. That is something that is supported by the Ministry of Education. We're quite proud of that program.

I myself, as a student, learned Italian on weekends at the York Catholic District School Board. I went to St. Patrick's every Saturday morning between 9 and 12 o'clock. My mom used to drop me off there, and that's how I relearned Italian.

This happens all across the province of Ontario. The TCDSB is coming in line with what happens in 71 other school boards across the province.

University and college funding

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier.

Thursday's budget revealed the truth behind this government's so-called investment in post-secondary education. Not only does the budget cut \$70 million from PSE this year and \$1.5 billion by 2028-29; it also shows that \$385 million was left unspent last year while 10,000 college workers were laid off, student services were reduced, and at least 700 programs were cancelled.

Speaker, how can this Premier justify cutting funding and leaving money on the table while our post-secondary system was crumbling around us?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: As that member knows, the federal government made many, many, many changes to the international student allocations, which—our government stepped up with historic funding: \$6.4 billion. I know it will never come out of the lips of the opposition, but \$6.4 billion is an historic funding amount for not only Ontario, but for Canada. Part of that is \$3.3 billion for high-priority programs that are going to ensure that our economy keeps growing the way it wants to go.

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I won't take any lessons from the opposition about how to run an economy.

There's \$1.7 billion for 70,000 newly funded seats to ensure that we have access for our post-secondary learners. That's on top of the 20,000 seats we funded with budget 2025 and the \$750-million investment into STEM.

We also have \$1.1 billion to increase the student funding rate across the whole board and another \$284 million for small, northern, rural and French institutions, because we understand the economics of having post-secondary in smaller communities. It's a little bit more expensive.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, the numbers don't lie. A cut to PSE funding is not an investment, and the fallout is being felt across this province.

Since this government's historic funding announcement, we have seen more program closures, more job cuts. Algonquin, Fanshawe, George Brown and Humber just issued mass layoff notices.

What's worse, it is students from low- and moderate-income families who will be hurt the most as money is moved out of OSAP grants to pay for any increases in operating. This government's shell game will drive down domestic enrolment in whatever in-demand or high-priority programs are left.

Speaker, why is this government denying Ontario students the post-secondary opportunities that they deserve and our economy depends on?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Speaker, the only shell game I can see is the opposition leader trying to hang on to her job when the deputy leader is going over to the Liberal Party.

Speaker, that \$6.4-billion investment is stabilizing the sector. We understand that the sector has been destabilized because of the federal government's decisions.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's a grade 7 answer. Do better.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I hear the member from Waterloo yelling, "Do better."

Let's talk about the time when the Rae government was around. I know that's a long time ago and our students weren't even alive at that point, but the reality is, tuition went up three times the rate of inflation under a short amount of time with the Rae government. If you were in power or the Liberals were in power, inflation would be almost \$15,000 right now—so let's not talk about accessibility or affordability, because you are the government that inflated tuition to rates that are not even acceptable for everyone.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order. A reminder that we go through the Speaker and a reminder that we act respectfully in the Legislature.

Fair and Free Elections Act, 2026

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

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Bill 99, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act with respect to electoral matters

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry?
Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Would the member like to explain the bill?

Mr. John Fraser: I'd first like to say I really love the support of my colleagues.

Quite simply, the changes to the fixed election date require that we make some changes to the length of the writ. We have to give the people who prepare our elections enough time to be ready. That's the first thing.

The second thing is to allow the electoral officer to make appointments of returning officers like they do in other provinces, simply because it's not getting done. The OIC method of doing it is not fast enough. Things are happening at the last minute.

The third thing is we have to give the Chief Electoral Officer some more power in terms of being able to combat misinformation.