

Accessibility for persons with disabilities

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Speaker, the government has been warned repeatedly that the lack of accessibility throughout the province is at a crisis level, yet we learned this week that the Human Rights Tribunal has dismissed 97% of its cases without holding any hearings. The requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act are useless if there is nowhere to go for redress. The rights of people with disabilities are not being protected.

So I ask: What will the government do to end this discrimination?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Under the leadership of Premier Ford, the AODA is driving change in Ontario every day. Our government has made more historic investments into accessible infrastructure, transportation, subways and GO stations than any other government.

This includes 2,200 accessible buses we've delivered to municipalities. And \$275 million is being dedicated to making schools accessible this year alone. We built AODA standards into the Ontario building code. All new GO transit stations, train platforms, bus stations adhere to AODA. These investments are making Ontario more accessible every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The failure to provide access to education for children with disabilities is a crisis that goes beyond the failure to implement the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The kindergarten to grade 12 disability recommendations made in 2022 have still not been implemented and, shockingly, under this government's watch, parents have been given a survey suggesting that disability supports are optional in schools if there are more urgent needs for the money.

Will the Premier ensure that students with disabilities are not shut out and receive the supports they need to succeed?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): That is a stretch, but I will allow it.

I recognize the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Ontario is meeting, achieving and exceeding the AODA standards each and every day. All 444 municipalities in Ontario have accessibility plans to meet the goals of the AODA in their communities.

In 2025, our government worked with more than 400,000 organizations across Ontario and has performed 1,349 attestation audits, 834 verification audits and 61 director's orders issued. I'm sure the member's happy to hear that 99% of audits conducted were resolved as compliant. With our work, Ontario is more accessible than ever before.

Autism treatment

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Speaker, kids like Nico have been waiting more than five years on the wait-list for the Ontario Autism Program. That's more than half their lives—more than half their lives—waiting for support that could help them speak, learn and thrive. Parents like Nadine are still waiting to hear their child speak their first words and learn the social skills that they need in school.

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Meanwhile, in schools without this early intervention, classrooms are under strain. We are seeing dysregulation escalate into crisis. We're seeing evacuations and lost learning for everyone.

Today, 67,500 children are still waiting. Why didn't this budget commit the funding needed to finally clear the wait-list and give children the services they need?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I guess maybe the NDP hasn't gotten around to looking at the budget and, in particular, the record investment that was announced in the budget for the Ontario Autism Program. The funding of this program has increased by 232% since we formed government in 2018, including that recent investment of \$186 million. I want to thank the President of the Treasury Board, I want to thank the Minister of Finance and I want to thank the Premier for continuing to support this important program in this incredibly important ministry so that we can improve outcomes for children and youth across the province.

Earlier today, the leader of the official opposition said budgets are about choices. I agree with her. I hope that after voting against the doubling of the budget in 2019, after voting against an increase of \$60 million in 2024, after voting against \$175 million last year, they come around and actually support this increase this year.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Indeed, budgets are about choices, and this government is taking a spoon to empty a bathtub while the tub is still running and filling.

There are 67,500 children waiting for help—and families are not just waiting; they are navigating a system buried in red tape. They tell us the determination-of-needs process is time consuming, costly and delays access to the actual care their children need. Too much money is being spent on outsourced administration and not enough is reaching the children. The pillar programs are not solutions. They're a bandage on a growing wound.

Speaker, will the minister commit to cutting the red tape so that every single dollar goes directly to core clinical services and every child gets help now, not years from now?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Again, I thank the honourable member for the question. Of course, with the NDP, they know best, not the families.

Madam Speaker, the program that the NDP is knocking was developed by the autism community. That's the program that they're knocking. This is a program that was developed by clinicians, experts, family members, those with lived experience. But of course, the NDP knows more than them. That's the NDP, right? They always know more than them. This is a program that they developed. And if the member would like—she knows I do: I talk to families every single day. Why don't you call some of the families and ask them about the impact of entry to school? Ask them about the impact of Urgent Response, a program that was developed by families, by experts.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: We'll continue to support these important programs with or without the support of the NDP, Madam Speaker.

University and college funding

MPP Tyler Watt: My question is for the Premier. Last week, this government tabled their so-called Protect Ontario budget, but there is nothing protective about turning your backs on students and their futures. Over the weekend, George Brown College filed for massive layoffs: 51 employees laid off, all while student enrolment is down 30% and courses continue being cancelled across this province.

Let's ask ourselves: Why is student enrolment down? Why are courses still being cancelled today? Perhaps it's because this government has starved post-secondary for eight years and this last-minute funding is too little, too late. Perhaps it's the cuts to OSAP that are forcing more debt burden onto students.

Speaker, my question for the Premier: After eight long years, how can this out-of-touch Conservative government continue pretending to protect Ontario, all while shutting the doors on students and making their lives more unaffordable?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: The member actually stated enrolment is down 30%, so I'm not sure if he wants us to keep empty classrooms that the students aren't actually enrolling into.

But, Speaker, ultimately, they broke OSAP. The leader of the interim party—third time's a charm—he said, "They broke OSAP," but the reality is, we are fixing OSAP. In 2017, the Auditor General made it very clear: a desperate Liberal government trying to hang on to power increased our grants to an unsustainable level of 85%, which was not in line with any other jurisdiction across Canada. We have aligned our grants-to-loan ratio, right in line with every other jurisdiction across Canada, including the federal Liberal government.

I know sometimes on TikTok he meets with the Prime Minister. Maybe he should suggest to the Prime Minister all the unilateral decisions they made on international students have decimated post-secondary, not only in Ontario, but right across Canada.

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

MPP Tyler Watt: I'm so glad the minister follows me on TikTok. It's a great way to talk to young people; I suggest that you do the same.

You talk about OSAP as unsustainable and that's why you have to do this? You are forcing them into more debt. You are preventing people from getting into a workforce where we desperately need people to get into colleges, to get into universities, to get into training. You're stopping them from doing that and you stand proudly here today, saying that.

But why don't you tell that to Sabine from Nepean? This is a high school student who wants to go on to become a psychotherapist in my riding. But with these cuts to OSAP, she doesn't know what her future is going to look like. It's now uncertain. Does she take on all this debt and pursue this dream of hers, or does she have to do another path? She should be celebrating this milestone in her life, but you guys have ripped the carpet out from under her.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Through the Speaker.

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MPP Tyler Watt: Speaker, this isn't just Sabine's story. This is the reality facing students and families across this province because of this government's direct cuts to OSAP and post-secondary. How can this government claim to be looking out for students like Sabine when your choices are forcing them to take on more debt just to access the education and training they need?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: There you have it, Speaker; that's Liberal math. Cuts to post-secondary—\$6.4-billion investment into post-secondary and he's calling it a cut. It's challenging and frustrating on this side of the House, because ultimately, we have a more generous grant-to-loan ratio than the whole time the Liberals were in power. They were very desperate to cling on to power and to stay in government, so they hiked the grants to an unsustainable level. The Auditor General clearly articulated that they were desperate and made unsustainable moves with OSAP.

We are ensuring OSAP will continue to be sustainable, not just for today's students but for the next generation of students, Speaker. We are the government that cares about affordability. We cut and froze OSAP in our first year in office, because over the last two years of a Liberal government, tuition went up over 12%. That's why we cut OSAP by 10% and froze it since 2018.