

### **Student Start Up Program**

**Mr. Joseph Racinsky:** Today, I would like to highlight a great opportunity for young entrepreneurs in Wellington county. Wellington-Waterloo Community Futures is organizing a Student Start Up Program for youth in grades 6 to 12. This is a four-week program starting on June 3, where students will learn essential business concepts, problem-solving skills, as well as how to manage a budget, provide customer service and market their business. Students apply to the program with a business idea, and by the end of the program, they will take that idea and turn it into an actual business.

Ontario's entrepreneurial spirit is one of the reasons why this is the best place in the world to live, work and play. It is so important that we continue to foster that spirit.

I want to thank Wellington-Waterloo Community Futures for providing this opportunity to our youth.

I especially want to thank Jane Shaw for helping to organize this program and for the tremendous job she is doing as the board president of the Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce. If you'd like to learn more about the Student Start Up Program, you can email [jane@wwcf.ca](mailto:jane@wwcf.ca).

Let's all continue to make sure that Ontario is the best place for someone to start, run and build a business. We know that businesses and entrepreneurs drive our economy, and a strong economy means a better Ontario for everyone.

### **Graduation ceremonies**

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Good morning. We are heading into that crazy time of year: school graduation time. We've all probably attended many where we saw our local MPPs addressing the students, congratulating them, wishing them well in their futures. It's a really special time of year.

But now, Ontarians are learning that school boards have been told to stop inviting local MPPs to school graduations. This is an age-old tradition, where MPPs from all parties have attended grads for years to celebrate students, the families, the educators. This is not political at all.

In fact, the only people making graduations political are this government. This government is so obsessed with controlling every room and every microphone that they're now targeting school graduations. It's ridiculous. Democracies don't function by shutting electoral representatives out.

To the education minister: Will you admit this is wrong and reverse this direction immediately?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The only thing that's wrong is the question from the member opposite, frankly, Madam Speaker. There's no such directive that says MPPs or elected government officials can't go to graduation ceremonies, but there is a directive to say to all of those planning graduation ceremonies that they should focus on student achievement, focus on the kids that are graduating, focus on the great things that they have done, focus on the teachers that have helped those kids succeed.

If the member opposite isn't getting invitations to graduations, I can't comment on that. I know a lot of members on this side and some members over there are indeed getting invitations to them. While I'm up, I'll be attending my daughter's. She's graduating this year, Madam Speaker.

Hansard Monday, May 11, 2026  
(Grad Ceremonies, Municipal Code of Conduct/Bill 9)

I will say as a parent, I didn't often like hearing politicians at graduations. They were often in hot gymnasiums. I always thought they went on a little bit too long, the politicians, but there is absolutely no such directive.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Well, I understand a certain MPP told us that they're not there to speak whatsoever, but the focus is now strictly on curriculum and operational school priorities. I don't know if that means it's fixing schools or class sizes; it seems to be a focus on whether we're talking there.

We are seeing attempts now to block elected MPPs from speaking at graduations in their own communities. Graduation ceremonies are not partisan events; they are about celebrating students and their futures. This government doesn't own public institutions. It does not get to decide which democratically elected representatives are welcome in community spaces.

Speaker, will the minister stop this censorship, respect democratic traditions and allow MPPs to continue speaking at graduations as they have?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I don't know what to tell you. There is no order that says MPPs can't go to graduation ceremonies. I suspect if members aren't getting invited to graduation ceremonies, it's because the schools don't want them there. That's it. It's members on all sides, quite frankly.

I have never been invited to a graduation ceremony in the York Region District School Board or the York region Catholic school board because they didn't want politicians at the ceremonies. They wanted to focus on student achievement—

Interjection.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I'm going this year because my daughter's graduating.

There is no order. What the order is, Madam Speaker, is to make sure that graduation ceremonies focus on what is important: student achievement. If the member opposite is incapable of going to a graduation ceremony and not making it about the student and their achievement and the parents and the teachers, then I suspect that's why the schools don't want that member to be at a graduation ceremony.

Colleagues, if you can focus on students, if you can focus on teachers, focus on student achievement, I allow you to go to graduation ceremonies if it will make you feel better—but don't go unless you're invited.

### **Government accountability**

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** My question is for the Premier. I first raised the issue of abusive and harassing behaviour by municipal politicians at the end of 2020, following heinous behaviour in Ottawa. I've introduced the Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act over and over again. This government voted for those ideas and then let them die on the order paper. Then they voted against them. Then they recycled them into Bill 9.

And now, Madam Speaker, more delay, more stalling, more waiting. It has been more than a year since the government introduced Bill 9, and victims, municipal staff and councillors across Ontario are still waiting for the protections they needed years ago.

Hansard Monday, May 11, 2026  
(Grad Ceremonies, Municipal Code of Conduct/Bill 9)

Why does this government move faster to protect its own secrets than it does to protect people from harassment and abuse at city hall?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Rob Flack:** Speaker, let me be clear: Nobody should tolerate workplace harassment, whether you're elected or not. Having a unified code of conduct across the province is better for everyone, especially in the municipal arena.

Our government is committed to passing Bill 9, the Municipal Accountability Act, before the end of the session. I know the member opposite has been persistent in trying to get this bill passed and working through committee etc., etc., and I hope we can achieve all-party support and pass this legislation.

The supplemental, the government House leader will handle.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the member for Orléans.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Madam Speaker, the contrast could not be clearer: When it came time to change freedom-of-information laws to shield political records from the public, this government moved at lightning speed. But when it comes to removing toxic councillors, protecting municipal workers and stopping harassment and intimidation, suddenly the government says government is slow. Bill 9 has dragged for more than a year. The secrecy bill was rushed through in weeks.

My question is simple: Why is protecting government secrecy more urgent to the Premier than protecting people from harassment and abuse at city hall?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the government House leader.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Speaker, through you to the member, I just don't know who I'm looking at. You complain things move too fast. You complain things move too slow.

Speaker, through you, we've got three weeks left in the session. The minister stood in his place and said there's a priority. By June 4, we will ensure that the bill moves through the process. It's gone through committee hearings.

The minister confirmed that we were going to take our time with this bill, we were going to study it, there's been committee. It's now reported back to the House through the committee, and I can say, depending on co-operation from the Legislature, that in three weeks we have lots of time to make sure that third reading can be given to Bill 9.

Interjections.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** The Minister of Education and the member for Orléans will refrain from talking across the floor.