

Hansard Monday, May 25, 2026  
(FOI, Education Funding)

### **Freedom of information**

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, this question is for the Premier.

This morning, Global News reported that the Premier just lost in court, again, while he was trying to hide his personal cellphone records. The Information and Privacy Commissioner told the government on Friday to start preparing to release the records within 30 days.

So, will the Premier comply with the courts?

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

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** Speaker, the FOI requests are proceeding as normal through our process right now, as we're updating our privacy and access to information act, which was included in the budget just passed a few short weeks ago. What that budget was focused on is what the people of Ontario are really focused on: economic growth, affordability and jobs. This budget that passed a few weeks ago is focused on ensuring that the people of Ontario have affordability at the top of their mindset.

A 13% HST reduction on new homes is a game changer to the housing industry and the real estate sector in the province of Ontario. We had so many calls—people calling in from industry, individuals looking at buying a house that they couldn't afford for years. They are excited about what we're doing in this budget. That's what they really care about.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Do you know what would be a game changer? If this government actually listened to the questions they're asked.

Back to the subject of transparency, and back to the Premier: Not only did the Premier waste taxpayer dollars fighting in court to keep his phone records hidden, but we've also learned this morning from Canadian Press that they are in court fighting the release of more documents—this time, about the government's blue licence plates. Remember those? I do. The plates that you couldn't see in the light or the dark—remember?—and the plates that the government spent millions of tax dollars on.

Why is the Premier spending hard-earned tax dollars trying to hide his tracks once again?

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** Again, I want to talk about what the people of Ontario really care about right now in this province. They are focused on jobs and affordability.

In the month of April, Ontario created 42,000 new jobs. That is an incredible track record we can speak to. At the same time, Canada actually lost 18,000 jobs.

People care about their paycheques. They care about being able to have the money to take their families out to dinner, to take them to sport events. This is what they're focused on.

Not only that, 8,700 jobs in the manufacturing sector—was a record month for Ontario—a 680% increase per capita over what the entire US has created in manufacturing.

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Speaker, the previous government gave up on manufacturing. They said, “Manufacturing doesn’t matter. It’s all going to be a service economy.” Nothing could be further from the truth.

We’re reinvesting and rebuilding our manufacturing sector in the province, and we’re proud of that record.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Final supplementary.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I get it, Speaker. I get that the members opposite want to talk about literally anything else other than this. But I’m going to go back to the Premier again.

We know life is not getting any easier for the people of Ontario, but while they are focused on just getting by, this Premier is laser-focused on one thing and one thing only, and that is covering his own behind.

The people of Ontario deserve accountability, transparency and, actually, honesty from their government—at the very least.

Back to the Premier of this province: What is so bad in those records that the Premier is ready to put our province’s future at risk to hide it?

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** The only way I could think of our province being at risk is if that leader and that party were in charge of this province right now.

I can assure the people of Ontario that we are focused on job growth—42,000 jobs in the month of April, 8,700 manufacturing jobs, \$222 billion in new investments landed since 2018. That’s what we’re focused on—protecting Ontario. That’s what we were elected on last February. We’re doing exactly what we said we would do.

Here are examples of some of the investments that have been made. General Motors: \$691 million in investment to build the next generation of V8 engines in St. Catharines. Coca-Cola: a \$141-million investment in Brampton, 500 new jobs—Toyota, Marvell, Chapman’s, and AstraZeneca.

Speaker, what we are doing is setting the right environment for companies to invest in this great province, and we’re going to continue on that track.

### **Government accountability**

**Mr. John Fraser:** My question is for the Premier. The last week we were here, there was a lot of hot air going around. We were talking about airplanes, airports.

But I want to talk about air rights this morning. Let’s talk about a guy who got a whole bunch of money for air that he never owned: Carmine Nigro. He’s also the Premier’s appointed chair of the LCBO.

So here’s a really simple question for the Premier: How does a Premier’s appointee sue the government for \$500 million and still have that appointment?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

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**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Our team is committed to the largest expansion of public transit in not only this province's and Canadian history, but North American history, with \$70 billion over the next 10 years. That includes getting shovels in the ground on the Ontario Line—the first time in 60 years that we have tunnelling under downtown Toronto, because this Premier, our government, has the vision to build for the future. We're moving at record pace, and we're building the transit that this city needs and was neglected for 15 years under the previous Liberal government. We've got shovels in the ground. These projects are creating thousands of good-paying jobs for people across this province.

We're going to continue to move forward on this historic expansion of public transit to ensure that we change the way people travel across this province.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** Let's look at who Mr. Nigro is: He is the appointed chair of the LCBO. He's on the board of Invest Ontario. He was appointed the chair of Ontario Place Corp. He was vice-president of the Ontario PC fund—which is also known as a “bagman,” as in “bag of money.” The Premier also gave him an MZO for his project in Kawartha Lakes. And he sat at the family table at the family wedding. That's pretty tight.

Now he's suing the government for \$500 million—\$500 million. Metrolinx has settled, and none of us know—not one of us, except for, maybe, the Premier and the Minister of Transportation.

So, Speaker, through you: Did the Premier instruct Metrolinx to settle with Mr. Nigro's company?

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Madam Speaker, that member knows that neither the Premier nor myself, nor anybody in this government, have any knowledge of this. This is a private matter conducted by the independent agency of Metrolinx.

What we've been focused on is delivering public transit, which includes the launching of the Finch West LRT, the Eglinton Crosstown, and also making transit more affordable—like the One Fare program. Over \$200 million of savings for hard-working transit users across this province is something that we've executed and has made a significant difference in the lives of everyday transit users. Whether you're trying to get onto the GO train and then use the TTC, or if you're travelling within the participating regions of York region, Durham region, Peel region or the city of Toronto, we're putting \$1,600 back into the pockets of hard-working Ontarians, because that is what we are focused on—a transit plan that works for everyone.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** People have to ask themselves how a close family friend of the Premier, the Premier's go-to appointee and number one bagman can sue the government for \$500 million and still be all of those things. You have got to ask yourself that. There's a word for what we see here, but I'm not allowed to use it in here, so I won't.

Speaker, will the Premier come clean and just tell us how much money Mr. Nigro got?

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** I'll continue to speak about our historic transit plan that the Liberals and NDP have voted against every single step of the way, whether it's getting shovels

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in the ground on the Scarborough subway extension—a part of the city that the members opposite ignored for 15 years, when they were in government. Rapid transit wasn't built there. It was this government that got shovels in the ground and is now moving at record pace to get that line open for the residents of Scarborough. Over 100,000 people will use it every single day.

The Ontario Line: 400,000 people will use that line every single year.

For 15 years, nothing was built in this province, when the Liberals were in charge. They were building upside-down bridges.

We've got shovels in the ground on transit projects, on the Highway 413. We just launched the main line construction of the Bradford Bypass. That is a record and historic pace that we're moving at to build Ontario.

### **Government accountability**

**Mr. John Fraser:** Back to the Premier—but I guess the cat has got somebody's tongue.

We know that in November 2018 Mr. Nigro's firm started trying to purchase the 35 acres of air rights. But he then deferred paying for it and closing the deal twice. It's like they were waiting for Metrolinx to expropriate those air rights. Why? So they could sue? How did Mr. Nigro know that Metrolinx was going to need those air rights? How did he know? In November 2018—or October—who the heck told him?

Speaker, through you: In 2018, did the Premier or anyone in his office tell Mr. Nigro about Metrolinx's plans?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** What I can tell you is, that member from Ottawa has voted against every single one of our investments into public transit in the Ottawa region. When we struck the historic Ontario-Ottawa new deal—hundreds of millions of dollars of support for that member's riding—they voted against it.

When we talk about Highway 174, when we talk about—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** The member for Orléans will come to order.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Speaker, at the Barnsdale interchange—those are investments that their leader should support.

In fact, the members of the third party, the Liberal Party—that member—wanted to toll Highway 174. That's a shame. Shame on that member. That's why we introduced legislation to say "no more tolling." We're uploading that highway because we need to continue expanding it and growing our province—not just in the GTA, all across the province.

That's why we're committed to over \$100 billion in expansion on highways and transit across this province.

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

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**Mr. John Fraser:** The minister shouldn't be so cheery, because he's the guy who signed off on that settlement, right? He's in this too.

We'll never know if the Premier called Mr. Nigro, because the Premier is hiding all his cellphone records.

That's why we passed that legislation inside the budget, Minister of Finance.

Let's recap this thing: A family friend of the Premier negotiates a deal for air rights that he couldn't even build on, and he wanted them for some other reason. He entered into a deal to buy them because he knew that Metrolinx would need them. That's information that only somebody on the inside would know.

Speaker, back to the Premier: Did the Premier call or instruct anyone else to call Mr. Nigro to give him a heads-up on Metrolinx's plans? This is a simple yes or no, Premier.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Speaker, that's an absolute no, and that member knows it. I've answered that many times in the House, in the Legislature.

What I want to talk about is our historic ridership that we are seeing across our GO lines. Speaker, 76 million people used GO Transit and the UP Express last year. That's up over 10% from the year before, and that's a record and historic number that we've never seen before. Why? Because we're putting the investments into public transit. We're increasing service across many of our lines. We're ensuring that we're getting these projects built.

But guess what? That member—whether it was the 15 years that he served in the previous Liberal government, or even today, with the NDP—continues to vote against every one of our projects.

Whether it's increasing services on the Lakeshore East or Lakeshore West lines, the Kitchener line, the Barrie line—they voted against every single one of those increased investments. Whether it's about putting shovels in the ground on key projects like the Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Final supplementary.

**Mr. John Fraser:** The minister knows how much Mr. Nigro got, and he's not saying anything, and neither is the Premier.

Let's recap: The close family friend of the Premier—a multiple government appointee, PC Party insider and the Premier's number one bagman—gets insider information, engages in a deal that's never closed, and then, without ever paying, has legal standing to sue the government for \$500 million. Stay with me, at home—it doesn't make any sense. He's offered \$75 million to settle, he turns it down—\$75 million is a lot of money for something you don't own. In the Premier's math, that's like two luxury private jets that he doesn't actually own right now either.

Then there's the secret settlement that you've got to know is north of \$75 million, Premier, right? You're a businessman. You know, right? You don't settle for less than what you got offered.

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People can't afford groceries and gas, and the Premier is giving multi-million dollar secret deals to his close personal friend. Just what planet is that okay on?

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Madam Speaker, do you know what was not okay? When the Liberals were tolling hard-working Ontarians across this province—Highway 412, Highway 418. Those were policies put in by the previous Liberal government that were hurting the pockets of hard-working Ontarians, and something that we removed.

Let's talk about policies like One Fare. The implementation of One Fare is saving transit users over \$1,600 every single year. Whether you're trying to commute in from the GTHA into the city—you're going to save that \$3 per transfer every single day. If you're doing that five times a week, that is significant savings for you and your family.

We're going to continue to build this province. Whether it's getting projects like the Bradford Bypass started on main line construction, which we marked last week, on Thursday—historic projects like that are going to continue to change the way people move across this province. We're committed to getting more shovels in the ground and building Ontario.

### **Freedom of information**

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Speaker, the Premier continues to fight to keep his government-related cellphone records secret, spending taxpayer money dragging this through the courts instead of investing that money in hospitals, in schools, in seniors, or housing. And today, Ontario's highest court told him to hand over the records.

But every time accountability catches up to this government, they change the rules, avoiding anything that gives transparency. We're seeing that now with the blue licence plates just today.

What is the point of courts and independent oversight if this government just legislates itself out of accountability every time it doesn't like the ruling?

To the Premier: What are you so desperately trying to hide with taxpayers' hard-earned dollars?

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

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** As I mentioned earlier this morning, privacy and FOI requests are proceeding as normal. That's why we made changes to the legislation—very little change; 95% of FOI requests will still go through as is.

But what I'm hearing, talking to my constituents this week, is they care about Ontario's place in this world economy. They care about protecting jobs. They care about affordability.

And I'm proud of the record that our team has put together in the province of Ontario, which the Minister of Economic Development mentioned earlier: 44,000 jobs created in the month of April alone in the province; 8,700 jobs in manufacturing.

That is what the people of Ontario care about—getting our economic footprint back in line to be the leader in Canada. We'll continue to do that.

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

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Speaker, I think that the people of Ontario also care about and are really clued into the fact that, just weeks ago, this government buried FOI legislation in a budget bill, and today we can see exactly why. When the rules no longer protect them, this government rewrites them.

To the Premier again: Why are you always willing to fight transparency instead of just telling Ontarians the truth?

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** The member opposite should know, being a past member of the media, that what we've done with our legislation is bring what we are doing here in Ontario in line with the rest of the country, including, I might add, your federal cousins in Ottawa. So I encourage you to pick up the phone, call Prime Minister Carney and ask him about what they're doing in the privacy and FOI framework at the federal level.

Speaker, what the people of Ontario care about here is investments in getting our province back on track. We are now the manufacturing engine, the economic engine of Canada. That government threw away that title to another province. We're bringing jobs back. We're bringing manufacturing jobs back. We're bringing jobs back in the energy sector. We're investing in health care. We're investing in colleges and universities.

We are focused on protecting Ontario. That's what we were elected on last February, and that's what we're going to continue doing.

### **Education funding**

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** My question is to the Premier.

Laura, a parent in Toronto Centre, is literally at her wits' end. She has a message for the Premier:

"Classrooms are overcrowded, teachers are burning out.

"Students would receive more support and guidance, and teachers would be better positioned to do their jobs if the class sizes were smaller."

The Auditor General confirmed Laura's observations and has called on this government to fix the problem.

Speaker, will the Premier explain why he is forcing students and educators into unsafe and overcrowded classrooms?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I can assure the member opposite I'm doing no such thing—in fact, just the opposite: One of the reasons why we assumed responsibility for the Toronto District School Board was because they weren't putting enough resources back into the classroom. There were a number of pet projects that these trustees were involved in. Previous Ministers of Education before me poured millions of dollars into extra resources for the school board. The people of the

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city of Toronto, the parents in the city of Toronto expressed their frustration by removing their kids from Toronto schools, because they did not like the direction that the Toronto District School Board was going in.

So we're going to continue to provide additional resources for our educators, because when the educators have the resources that they need, when the school is focused on doing what is right for parents, students and teachers, you will see more kids come back into the system. And that is what we're going to continue to build.

I can appreciate that the opposition likes a system that is fractured, that is divisive. It fits their narrative. It's driving them crazy that we're bringing stability back to our school system and that the results are showing educators, parents and students are buying and liking what it is that we're doing.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member for Toronto Centre.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Speaker, I'll tell you what's driving these educators and parents crazy: It's this Minister of Education. Smaller class sizes are not a luxury. They have seen first-hand how crowded classrooms affect the quality of children's education. Teachers are managing too many students to give the children meaningful attention.

The Auditor General reports that students with special needs are being ignored and placed on a year-long wait-list for service.

The Premier's own constituents have written to him with the same concerns. They know that with the recent round of teacher layoffs, the schools are expected to be even more crowded and dangerous this fall session.

Speaker, why does the Premier continue to ignore Ontario families and their calls for smaller, safer classrooms?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** To be clear, the failures that the member opposite talks about are failures that occurred when trustees were running the Toronto District School Board, full stop.

That is why we assumed responsibility for the Toronto District School Board; that is why we put in a supervisor—to ensure maximum resources are going back into the classroom to support our educators. That is what we're supposed to do. We're supposed to have a system that is less divisive—one that focuses on student achievement. And that's what we're doing. I know it drives the Liberals and the NDP crazy because, again, what they like is division, when people are angry at each other. They think people learn when they fight. We think people learn and a province prospers when you bring it together, when you bring people together and you unlock the potential that is in every single Ontarian, and it starts with our education system.

So, no, we're not going to continue to allow divisive trustees to ruin education for our students. We're going to support students, parents and teachers, and we're going to give them the best possible education that they can have.

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**Member for York–Simcoe**

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the President of the Treasury Board on a point of order.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Thank you, Speaker. I rise on a point of order, although I confess that it is not actually a point of order, but I hope that after eight years you will indulge me.

I rise today to say thank you and goodbye. Yesterday I informed the Premier, and then this morning I informed my constituents that I will be resigning my seat as the member for York–Simcoe, effective June 5. This was not an easy decision. It was one of the hardest decisions I've made in my life, but it is the right one, as it's time for me to begin a new chapter.

Serving in this House has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. To the people of York–Simcoe: Thank you for your trust and for your support.

To Premier Ford: Thank you for your friendship, your leadership and the opportunity to serve with you. I am so proud of all the important work we have accomplished together on behalf of Ontarians. I will continue to support you and our government in this next chapter of my life.

To my caucus colleagues: It did not take me long to understand why my father loved his caucus so much. I will miss you. We are family. We will always stay in touch.

And to all members of this House: Thank you. We may disagree from time to time, but there is a shared sense of purpose in this place that Ontarians do not always get to see. I have learned from all of you, and I will miss all of you—well, most of you. Laughter.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** To you, Speaker, to the Clerk, to the table, to the pages, to the interpreters, and to the security officers: Thank you for the professionalism, for your patience and the commitment that you make to this institution every single day.

À la communauté francophone de l'Ontario, merci de m'avoir accordé le privilège de travailler à vos côtés. Les progrès que nous avons réalisés ensemble perdureront, et je continuerai de soutenir notre communauté dans les années à venir.

To my extraordinary teams at Treasury Board and the Ministry of Francophone Affairs: Thank you for your dedication, for your counsel, and for your friendship.

And finally, to my family—my daughter Thea is here today: Thank you for your enduring love and support.

Theodore Roosevelt said it best: “Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing”—and serving the people of York–Simcoe and Ontario has been exactly that.

Merci, madame la Présidente. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Applause.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** We will miss you. I'm going to cry.

There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.