

Remarkable Women at Queen's Park

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Colleagues, the Remarkable Women in the Workplace initiative is a monthly recognition program celebrating the outstanding women who work for the Office of the Assembly. This initiative is a small but meaningful way to recognize individuals who exemplify dedication, professionalism and leadership in their roles, and who contribute daily to the work of the Legislature.

Today, I'm pleased to announce our newest honouree: Cavelle Barnes, training and development specialist with the human resources branch. Ms. Barnes's creativity, leadership and commitment to professional development have transformed training and onboarding across the assembly. Through the implementation of the assembly's learning management system and mentorship initiatives, she has created meaningful opportunities for staff growth, collaboration and connection. Her innovative approach, professionalism and dedication to supporting colleagues exemplify the assembly's values and make her highly deserving of this recognition.

On behalf of all members and staff, I extend our heartfelt congratulations and gratitude to Cavelle. Thank you for your remarkable service to Ontario's Parliament.

Local Food Week

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

Hon. Trevor Jones: Good morning, colleagues. Today marks the beginning of Local Food Week. To help celebrate, my team at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, also known as "farming, food and fun," have assembled some nutritious treats and promotional Foodland materials for everyone to enjoy. So please pick up your packages—customized—in the east and west lobbies, directly after question period.

National Indigenous History Month

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent of the House for the member for Kiiwetinoong to make a five-minute statement about Indigenous history month.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane is seeking unanimous consent of the House for the member for Kiiwetinoong to give a five-minute statement about Indigenous history month. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Kiiwetinoong.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Remarks in Anishiniimowin. This report will be republished to add the transcribed remarks once available.

Freedom of information

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for the Premier.

Madam Speaker, what do these three things have in common: the Premier's luxury private jet, the secret Metrolinx air rights deal and the government's attempt to hide records from freedom-of-information requests? Well, I'll tell you. In every case, the public is being told to stop asking questions. So my question is, what exactly is this government so afraid Ontarians will discover?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: We brought changes to Ontario's privacy and access-to-information laws to bring them in line with jurisdictions across Canada. We've talked about that here for quite a few months in the Legislature. But what I'm hearing people want to talk about, Speaker, is about building an economy that works for generations to come. That's what we are squarely focused on. We're focused on bringing jobs to the province of Ontario. We're focused on bringing investment to the province of Ontario, and we are seeing that in multiple sectors.

While the opposition talks down our great province, we're talking it up. We're out there meeting people, meeting companies, talking about the investments, talking to different industries, Speaker, and we're seeing record investments. In fact, since 2018, \$222 billion in the private sector has been invested in this province to keep Ontario strong and keep growing. We're proud of that record, Speaker.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: Back to the Premier: Taxpayers paid for the jet. Taxpayers paid for the Carmine Nigro settlement. Taxpayers paid for this government's record debt. Madam Speaker, why does the Premier think taxpayers deserve the bill but not the information?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Again, Speaker, I want to reiterate what Ontarians are focused on. They want to ensure, in the threat of tariffs—we've got CUSMA coming up for negotiation on July 1. People are worried. They're worried about their jobs. They're worried about the economy. We understand that.

That's why we're focused on building these strong tenets to our economy, Speaker. We're doing it in the energy sector, with the Minister of Energy, with the largest nuclear build in the province's history, the first small modular reactor in the G7. We're proud of that, and we thank Minister Lecce and his team for putting this at the forefront of the people of Ontario.

Secondly, we're building a resilient tech sector. We know AI is changing the world. We are the second-largest tech cluster in North America, Speaker. We're seeing record investments into this space in the province. We're proud of that.

Third, Speaker, we're seeing record investments in manufacturing. In fact, in the month of April, 8,200 manufacturing jobs were created in the province of Ontario, 44,000 in aggregate. While Canada lost jobs, Ontario's growing.

We're going to continue focusing on what the people care about, and that's creating a healthy economy and getting jobs for the people.

Post-secondary education and skills training

Mr. Aris Babikian: My question is for the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security.

In the face of growing global economic uncertainty and rapidly changing employer demand, it has never been more important to ensure Ontario students are receiving the relevant education and training they need to succeed in an ever-evolving workforce.

We know that our colleges, universities and Indigenous institutions play a critical role in preparing the next generation of workers.

That is why our government is continuing to make historic investments in post-secondary education, including a recent announcement to expand space in high-demand programs across Ontario.

Speaker, can the minister explain how this targeted investment will help prepare students for the jobs of tomorrow while protecting Ontario's long-term economic competitiveness?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the member for that important question and thank you for those amazing answers as well. Our government knows there is one thing our students want—that is, a good-paying, in-demand job after graduation. And our government is proud to be making the investments to ensure our students get the hands-on skills they need to thrive in their future careers.

Just last week, we announced an investment of \$1.7 billion to fund 70,000 more seats in key, economy-driving programs at colleges and universities across the province.

This investment is part of our government's new long-term funding model that will bring \$6.4 billion into the post-secondary sector—the largest investment in the history of both Ontario and Canada.

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(FOI, Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training)

Since announcing the funding model in February, we funded an additional 30,000 more seats and, last Wednesday, announced a call for proposals to fund 40,000 brand new seats in STEM, health care, teaching and the skilled trades.

This investment means more mechanical engineers for North Bay, more teachers for Windsor, more welders for Ottawa and more nurses for Toronto, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Mr. Aris Babikian: I thank the minister for his response. It is great to hear about the actions our government is taking to strengthen Ontario's workforce, protect our economy and create new, rewarding opportunities for students across our province.

Speaker, Ontario's colleges, universities and Indigenous institutions are essential to building the skilled workforce of our province which we need to remain competitive.

But we know that if we want Ontario to truly prosper, we must ensure that communities across Ontario have the skilled talents they need to thrive.

Can the minister explain how this investment now in new student seats will build a strong workforce throughout our province?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: We know that protecting Ontario's economy starts with strengthening our communities, and our colleges and universities play a critical role in ensuring every part of Ontario has access to a highly skilled talent pipeline.

That's why our \$1.7-billion investment requires our institutions to work with their local communities, the businesses and students to identify the workforce that their region needs. Once they've done this important work, they will submit a proposal to our government to fund brand new seats to meet that need.

While the NDP and Liberals demand blind investments of taxpayer dollars, it is this government who has ushered in an era of strategic, responsible growth at our colleges and universities that is laser-focused on Ontario's economic prosperity.

Our colleges and universities are the windows into Ontario's future, and with this investment, we're safeguarding that future to ensure that it is one where our communities are prosperous, our industries are thriving and our economy is self-reliant.