

Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025

Mr. Stan Cho, on behalf of Mr. Calandra, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to child, youth and family services, education, and colleges and universities

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Debate?

Hon. Stan Cho: Speaker, I'm actually thrilled to hear others debate this order, so I will leave it there. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm very shocked that the government is not actually going to speak to their bill that takes away the rights of parents, communities, students, and workers to have a say in their local schools. But perhaps that's appropriate, because they've done a lot of talking, but not very much listening. I think that's why we're seeing this bill rammed through today, why they haven't allowed the bill to go to committee, which is where the people of Ontario actually have the opportunity to come and share their perspective on legislation that the government is bringing forward.

It's very clear that they know this legislation is not popular, that nobody is asking for this, that nobody wants this to happen. They're hoping that they can just sneak this through without people actually paying attention. It is very clear that what people want is not this attack on the rights of parents and students and workers and communities to have a say in the decisions that affect our local schools across the province, in very different contexts, very different circumstances. What people actually want to see is investments; not the shutting out of perspectives and of the people who are actually affected by decisions in communities. And it's very clear that nobody is asking for this bill.

Just today, we had students, the Ontario student trustees, trustees from boards that have been put under supervision, who spoke very clearly, saying that students are not asking for this; they do not want this. Students do not want to lose their voice. They want more ways to participate in decision-making, not fewer. What they are actually looking for are investments that allow them to have smaller class sizes, mental health supports, and safer schools. That's what students want.

What we're seeing under the government's vision for education is a scenario where student voices are completely shut out. It's not just democratically elected trustees, who are adults, who have been sidelined; it's student trustees elected by their peers to represent student voices. What we're seeing in the boards that the government has already put under supervision is that the supervisors won't even talk to them.

In fact, at the TDSB, the supervisor promised he would attend at least one out of two student senate meetings. Do you know how many he attended, Speaker? Zero. That's the kind of value that that supervisor puts on the voices of students in decisions concerning their own education.

We had workers here today who were incredibly clear: This is not what teachers and education workers are looking for. They are not looking for people who come in, sweep aside the voices of community, make cuts to special education, appoint directors of education who send their kids

to private schools and who attack negotiated benefits—benefits that are collectively negotiated, which is a charter-protected right in the province of Ontario.

In fact, we know that workers are opposed to this legislation, because just one union—the Catholic teachers—had over 9,000 emails and petition signatures sent to this government saying this is not what workers want for education.

No parent is asking to lose their voice. I spent the last few months going to every school in my riding to talk to parents; not one of them said, “Please take away my voice. I would like to have less of a say in what happens in my child’s education.”

In just the last 12 hours, we know that there were over 4,500 emails sent to government members from every corner of the province, every single riding, because that’s how motivated parents are feeling to protect their right to have a say.

But what we’re seeing under this government’s vision for the future of education is that parents have no role. The supervisors they’ve appointed are making decisions in the dark, behind closed doors. They’re restricting public access to meetings. They are refusing to answer questions, to answer phone calls, to the point where the government is trying to create an additional layer of bureaucracy that will apparently be funded from money, once again, coming out of our classrooms—because these supervisors, who are getting \$350,000 of our taxpayer money each, can’t be bothered to pick up a telephone when a parent is on the other end.

We’re hearing from our communities that they don’t want this bill. There was a letter sent earlier this month, signed by over 40 leaders from many Christian denominations, saying that this bill is profoundly anti-democratic; that this bill does not respect Jesus’s teaching to honour the children, for they show the way to the kingdom of God; that this bill does not respect local wisdom and local context. Those religious leaders asked for this bill to be withdrawn.

We know—from the supervisors this government has hand-picked to sweep aside democratically elected trustees and the voice of parents in five boards already—that this is going to have a profoundly negative effect on education in the province of Ontario. These supervisors have zero qualifications in education. What they do have is close ties to the Conservative government—a former Conservative MPP; a former federal Conservative candidate; a former staffer to Stephen Harper who worked on Tony Clement’s leadership campaign; a Conservative donor who is buddies with the Minister of Education. Those are the kinds of people this government thinks should be given \$350,000 a year—that’s coming out of classrooms—so that they can do three and a half days of work, not listening to parents and to students.

The government knows this bill doesn’t have support, and that’s why they think they can ram it through, under the cover of darkness, with very little debate and no time for people to come and share their perspectives on this bill. But we’re not going to stand for it. We’re going to give government members one last day to think about this, before the final vote tomorrow. But the fight doesn’t end here, because the people of Ontario have a right to a say in the decisions that affect them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I do rise today to speak once again on Bill 33, the Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025. It’s a bill that, despite the promising title—like we see in many of the

government bills—represents yet another step in a troubling pattern we've seen from this government, that is the concentration of power at Queen's Park and the erosion of local democratic voices.

We have only a short, time-allocated debate on a bill that will affect the very foundation of how we educate our children and care for our most vulnerable youth, and that in itself speaks volumes. This government seems more interested in controlling education and child welfare than in listening to those who live and work within those systems every day.

As someone who served as the president of a school council, making representations to the school board, before becoming a school board trustee and the chair of a French-language school board, I think I can say I speak with lived experience when it comes to appreciating how local perspective matters. Local representations led to the opening of a new school in my riding, Trille des Bois, that has been offering an innovative learning model that has had students and parents excited about education for more than 15 years now—gone will be that kind of successful initiative if decisions are centralized and made uniform at Queen's Park.

Let's start with the government's justification for this bill. They claim that Bill 33 improves accountability, efficiency and consistency. Those are admirable goals, I'll agree, but the way this bill pursues them is actually deeply flawed.

Centralization does not equal accountability; in fact, history shows the opposite: When power moves further away from the people it serves, transparency decreases and responsiveness declines.

School boards exist precisely because education is not the same everywhere in Ontario. The challenges in Toronto are not the same as those in Timmins or Hearst. The needs of a large, urban board are not those of a rural or francophone board. Yet, this bill imposes a blanket, top-down approach, as if every community faced identical realities.

Speaker, elected trustees are the only people in our education system directly accountable to parents. They know the schools, they know the teachers, and they know the families. They attend the school concerts, they respond to parents' phone calls, and they face the voters every four years. When the minister replaces their authority with unilateral power, he is silencing those voices.

Local governance isn't about bureaucratic obstacles; it's democracy at work. It ensures that decisions about our children's education reflect local priorities, linguistic realities and cultural identities.

For example, for Franco-Ontarian communities, this is particularly dangerous. French-language education is not just a matter of instruction; it's a matter of identity and survival. Our school boards are more than administrative units; they are pillars of our culture, and their governance model is actually exemplary. They exist because generations of Franco-Ontarians fought for them, from the days of Regulation 17 to the creation of independent French-language school boards in the late 1990s. Those boards have their own identities and realities. They have smaller catchment areas, larger distances between schools, fewer resources, and a constant need to recruit qualified French-speaking teachers. They innovate daily to maintain quality and access, often on very limited budgets.

The same is true for rural and northern boards. Consider a rural community like Red Lake or Kapuskasing, where small schools are the heart of the community.

If the government or Queen's Park would dictate a uniform policy, it would ignore those realities.

For example, if a provincial directive might assume that boards can consolidate schools to save costs—that would be impossible when your nearest French-language school is 100 kilometres away. And a one-size-fits-all funding formula might not account for bilingual resources, dual-track facilities or minority-language recruitment. So, a decision, for example, from the government, to merge schools might make financial sense from Queen's Park, but it would devastate a small town's social fabric.

Local trustees understand those trade-offs; they live them. A centralized ministry cannot possibly capture that nuance from 500 kilometres away. And once you eliminate the need for local consultation, the human cost of those decisions disappears from the radar entirely.

We saw this clearly during the pandemic. When the Ministry of Education issued province-wide directives, many boards struggled to apply them. Some rural boards couldn't meet the same ventilation standards as urban ones, because their schools were decades older. Francophone boards had trouble delivering online learning platforms in French. Yet, there was little flexibility, little room for adaptation, because everything was centralized. The result was confusion, frustration and inequality.

Another problem with centralization is that it discourages innovation. Boards that once piloted new programs—mental health initiatives, STEM curricula or community partnerships—will hesitate to act if they fear ministerial override.

And trust, actually, does matter. When local stakeholders—teachers, parents, students—feel that decisions are imposed rather than co-created, morale drops, at a time when what we should be doing is really uplifting our education system.

Education is, at its core, about individual needs, yet this bill applies collective punishment. It ignores that equity sometimes requires difference.

The same applies to child welfare, another pillar affected by Bill 33. Each community faces unique challenges—Indigenous children, racialized youth, francophone families—and local agencies tailor their approaches accordingly. Central oversight may sound efficient, but it risks creating rigid protocols that fail to reflect cultural and regional realities. In child welfare, the absence of local knowledge can literally mean the difference between keeping a family together and tearing it apart.

Let's consider what happens when you remove local expertise from decision-making. A few years ago, a northern school board raised alarms about mental health support for youth in remote communities. Because they had local data and relationships, they proposed integrating social services directly in schools. That model became a success story, but it started locally. If that same initiative had required prior approval from Queen's Park under a centralized regime, it might have died in bureaucracy. How many innovations like that will now be lost?

This bill gives the minister broad new powers, to appoint supervisors to issue directives, to intervene in budgets, and to override governance decisions, all with minimal transparency. There are no clear thresholds for when those powers can be invoked—no requirement for

independent review, no mandatory consultation with affected communities or with linguistic-minority boards. Essentially, it asks Ontario to “trust us,” but trust in government is earned through accountability, not demanded through legislation.

This bill is part of a broader trend of centralization we’ve seen over the past few years—I’ll just list Bill 23, Bill 98, Bill 124—and now Bill 33 extends that pattern into education governance and child welfare. Each of these changes erodes the ability of local institutions to make decisions based on the realities of their communities. Taken together, they amount to a quiet but profound restructuring of public decision-making in Ontario.

What is particularly disappointing is that there was an opportunity here to strengthen our education system meaningfully. The government could have worked with boards to address teacher shortages, mental health crises and infrastructure needs—issues that every parent and student actually feels. It could have collaborated with francophone and Indigenous partners to ensure culturally relevant education. Instead, it chose to tinker with governance structures and concentrate power.

Ontarians need don’t more bureaucracy at Queen’s Park. They need classrooms that work, schools that are safe, and systems that listen.

Democracy doesn’t just happen here in this chamber; it happens in the school gymnasiums where trustees hold public meetings, in the community halls where parents voice concerns, and in the classrooms where teachers adapt lessons to local realities.

Every time we take that power away, we make our system less responsive, less equitable and less democratic.

Bill 33 may pass—time allocation ensures that outcome—but history will judge whether it strengthened education or weakened it, and I fear it will be the latter, because good government is not about uniformity; it’s about understanding diversity and empowering people to make decisions that reflect their communities. Ontario deserves that respect, our children deserve that respect, and our local voices deserve to be heard, not overridden.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: My presentation this afternoon is going to focus on the elements of Bill 33 that impact the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security.

Speaker, when students attend an Ontario college or university, like Ontario Tech or Trent Durham, to pursue their post-secondary education, they deserve to know where their fees are going and what criteria they need for admission. Our students deserve transparency, accountability and fairness when embarking on their post-secondary journey.

That’s why Bill 33 is so important. If passed, it will provide maximum clarity and information to students and their families, increase consistency—and is centred on the student experience. These proposed actions build on the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act and associated directives introduced in 2024. These directives required institutions to increase transparency of education costs—such as textbooks and other learning material—and required anti-hate, anti-racism and mental health policies.

Our government has consistently stood with Ontario’s hard-working students and their families, and that will continue to be the case going forward. Every dollar matters for households in

Whitby and across the region of Durham, so we want to provide full clarity on how each dollar invested in post-secondary education is spent.

We've heard from students and families who have told us that accessing detailed information on tuition and additional student fees can be challenging, particularly in understanding the purpose of these fees.

That's why, if passed, Bill 33 will empower our government to require publicly assisted colleges and universities to provide students with comprehensive details on tuition and ancillary fees, including how those funds are allocated, and make this information publicly available. And now we're taking it a step further by making sure information about tuition and ancillary fees is clear and consistent across institutions, and made available to students and the public.

Speaker, as we always have, we're going to be consulting with the sector to understand which fees are necessary, which fees may not be, and when that opt-out process could begin—making sure, in the process, there are no disruptions to student services or the delivery of our world-class education.

Students and their families deserve to know where their money is going and that every dollar is well spent in pursuit of their education. Through Bill 33, if passed, our government will make that happen.

In addition, we know that admission processes vary widely by institution and can be unclear to students and their families. That's why, through this bill, we would also increase transparency by requiring post-secondary institutions to have merit-based admissions and to clearly outline the criteria and processes for admissions. When prospective students are trying to better themselves through higher education, they deserve to know the standards they are being evaluated against, and those standards should be directly related to their academic achievements and potential for success in Ontario's economy. The intent is to ensure admissions processes are clear and fair for all students, and to preserve access for everyone pursuing a post-secondary education in Ontario.

We know our colleges and universities are already home to the best and brightest this country has to offer, but for many prospective students, the application requirements can be confusing. So, through this legislation, if passed, we would take the mystery out of applying for post-secondary education, ensuring our students know exactly what they need to begin achieving their full potential at a college or university.

But rest assured, there will always be pathways for students of all backgrounds and abilities to access post-secondary education. And that takes investments every year, like \$90 million for students with varying abilities and mental health services, \$40 million for programs enhancing post-secondary accessibility and employment outcomes, and more than \$18 million in the Indigenous student success fund to support Indigenous learners attending colleges and universities.

Speaker, we will be working with our sector to ensure that diverse pathways remain available. Should Bill 33 pass, we will engage the sector to support next steps and implementation, have consultations to understand which fees could or should be optional and what current admissions policies look like. We'll be doing that with universities like Ontario Tech in Oshawa as well as Trent Durham GTA because, at the heart of it, post-secondary education is about preparing

students to make successful contributions to our workforce going forward. What we're doing is working hard to create the right conditions for students to succeed, both during their academic journey and in their future careers.

Ontario will continue to build a strong, resilient economy, and part of that process requires engaging with students—and that will continue—as well as their families. It's often my case, in my constituency office, that we'll have families and students come in and talk about what choices exist at community colleges as well as universities. We want to make sure that when students attend an Ontario college or university to pursue their post-secondary education, they'll know where their fees are going and what criteria they need for admission and how they, going forward, can meet their aspirations.

I want to be clear—I want to be absolutely clear that our government will do whatever it takes to uphold Ontario's world-class post-secondary education and ensure students are ready for the jobs of tomorrow. But underscoring all that is ensuring that we continue the broad consultation process that we started earlier with earlier legislation, including hard-working families and their students.

Speaker, we believe in empowering all young people to reach their full potential, which is why I urge my colleagues to support Bill 33. If passed, it will provide maximum clarity and information to students and their families, increase consistency, and is centred on the student experience.

I spoke earlier about the earlier piece of legislation, the Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, and the associated directives. I want to assure those who are watching today or listening in that these directives require institutions to increase transparency of all education costs such as textbooks and other learning materials. That particular aspect has been a long-standing issue for students going forward.

Taken together, we believe, again, in empowering all young people to reach their full potential, which is why I urge my colleagues across the aisle to support Bill 33. Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on Bill 33.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I am proud to stand up here to speak about Bill 33, and I also feel a sense of dismay. For those who are listening, this bill, Bill 33—a significant bill that affects a lot of people, a million students—is being rammed through at record-breaking speed. It is not going to committee. The public cannot have a say in committee about this bill. We cannot introduce amendments. And this government has decided that we will only have two hours—just two hours—of debate for third reading before this bill moves to the next stage to become law. It is very undemocratic, and it's the latest in a whole series of undemocratic moves this government has made: ramming through omnibus bills; getting rid of school board trustees' power; moving forward with special economic zones, so there's whole areas of Ontario that are exempt from local rules, workplace safety rules. The list goes on.

The reason why I am so concerned about Bill 33 is because I'm a Toronto MPP, so we've already seen what happens when you get rid of school board trustees and their power to influence the school board and you replace them with an unelected supervisor with no experience in the classroom—not a vice-principal, not a principal, not a teacher—an accountant

whose background is working at Metrolinx, not an agency that we consider to be exemplary—and I know you agree with that as well—who is now responsible for running our school board.

That's what this bill intends to do. It gives the government the power to take away the powers of school board trustees across Ontario and the school boards across Ontario. And what we have seen in Toronto is a supervisor who refuses to respond to emails and answer basic important questions that parents have. Basically, it's a black hole. We have seen this supervisor decide to cut funding to special education. Kids who are the most vulnerable kids that are accessing our school board system, their class sizes are going to be seeing an increase.

In my riding, we have a few schools—we have Beverley, we have Heydon Park, we have Lucy McCormick just on the other border in a neighbouring riding. All of them provide high-quality education to kids that are so vulnerable, whose parents are struggling so hard. And the first thing the supervisor did was cut funding to special education. What a cruel and unethical thing to do. Who's that going to help? I don't know.

What I'm also concerned about with Bill 33 is that it gives the government—the Ministry of Education—the power to direct school boards to sell off school property. In our riding, we have a school, Heydon Park—it's a high school. It provides schooling to high school students that are at risk. The ministry has just directed Heydon Park to no longer take in grade 9 students. Enrolment has been cut for grade 9, which sends a very clear message that the ministry has some ideas on what is going to be happening to that school and that school property. And we fear it is going to be one of the many school properties that will be sold off to deal with an artificially created funding shortfall that this government has created by not properly funding schools. People are very worried about that.

Let's be clear, if school properties are sold off, we're never getting them back. In a city as expensive as Toronto, we're never getting them back, and it boggles the mind why we would want to sell off school properties at a time when over a thousand people are moving into Ontario every day and the city of Toronto is looking at building 285,000 more homes to house people in the next 10 years. Where are families going to be sending their kids if we are selling off school properties? It doesn't make any sense at all, and this bill allows the government to head down that very dangerous path.

I am very concerned about what the government is doing to post-secondary education. My riding—I represent the University of Toronto. I've spoken to the student unions at the University of Toronto about this government's move to gut funding that goes to student unions. And what that means is that the radio station, the local newspaper, the student union that advocates for students' interests, mental health supports, all of those programs will be under threat. All of them will be under threat. Students already decide how and what they're going to fund through a democratically elected process. It makes zero sense—it makes zero sense—to meddle in how they manage their own affairs.

What we are calling for is for the government to listen to what Ontarians are telling you and back down on Bill 33. If you want to fix education in Ontario, properly fund our schools. If you want to fix post-secondary education in Ontario, invest in post-secondary education. That's what Ontarians are calling for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Tyler Watt: I rise today to speak strongly against Bill 33, the so-called Supporting Children and Students Act. I say “so-called” because when you read this bill, when you look past the talking points and political theatre, it becomes painfully clear this bill does not support children, does not support students, does not support educators. This is just yet another power grab from this government. What it supports is centralized political control in the hands of the Minister of Education.

Let me get the typical Conservative talking points out of the way. There have been issues with school boards, and some people have abused their positions of power, but you can't paint an entire population with the same brush. I agree that we should be supporting students and I agree that we should be holding school boards accountable. But let's be honest: This bill continues the government's pattern of grabbing power, blaming everyone else for the mess that they created and pretending that heavy-handed oversight is the same thing as actually investing in public education.

Speaker, as someone who represents a fast-growing community with overcrowded schools, overworked staff and a post-secondary sector in crisis, I can tell you first-hand Bill 33 does absolutely nothing to fix the real problems.

Let's start with the central issue of Bill 33. Bill 33 takes decision-making away from local representation, from university and college governance bodies, and hands it all directly to one minister.

Let's talk about schedule 2, which I call “the education minister becomes the emperor act.” It rewrites the Education Act so that the minister can investigate boards whenever he feels like it, using a vague new standard called “matters of public interest,” issue binding directions to any board, overrule or reverse any local decisions. The minister can even oust an entire school board and vest control in himself without needing the Lieutenant Governor in Council's approval, something that used to be required for checks and balances. That is not democracy. That is not improved oversight. That is unprecedented ministerial control over public education, which is clearly this government's motivation.

The bill eliminates long-standing consultation requirements before the minister can declare a provincial interest. It removes independent oversight. It strips away the Divisional Court's ability to revoke a ministerial takeover order. It introduces ministry auditors who report directly to him and internal auditors who will now operate under his rules, not the boards'. This is dangerous, not only because it concentrates power, but because it creates the perfect environment for political interference in school operations.

Then we have the most bizarre clause in the bill. The minister now gets to approve or reject the names of schools—talk about priorities. Under the new section 174 of the Education Act, boards cannot name a school, new or existing, without the minister's approval. If the minister rejects a name, a board is forced to revert to a previous name or use a temporary street address as the name of the school.

Ask yourself, why does the minister need the power to rename schools? We already know that this government loves to create culture war distractions. They love to insert themselves into decisions that should belong to local communities, Indigenous partners, educators and kids. School names are deeply meaningful. They reflect local history, local heroes and local values. Now every one of those choices has to go through the minister's filter.

Moving on to the ministerial takeover of boards—no more checks and certainly no more balances. Schedule 2 gives the minister the power to investigate boards under wide, vague terms like “public interest.” Once that investigation happens, the minister can issue directives or remove the board entirely.

New section 230.3 says the minister can take over a board if he believes the board has “done, or omitted to do something, that could affect a matter of public interest.” This is subjective, undefined and open to misuse.

This bill lets the minister launch investigations into school boards not solely based on financial mismanagement, not necessarily on violation of the act but on public interest, whatever the minister says that that is on a given day. If the minister doesn’t like what the investigation finds, they can now issue binding directions and, in extreme cases, seize control of a school board without even needing cabinet approval anymore.

The Lieutenant Governor in Council is cut out entirely—one minister, one signature, one school board gone. When power becomes this broad, the real question is not, “Will it be abused?”, but when. That is not stability. That is not effective governance. That is politicization masquerading as accountability.

Let’s move on to schedule 3, where the government goes after Ontario’s colleges and universities with language that sounds harmless, but it is anything but. Schedule 3 requires colleges and universities to:

- assess applicants based on merit;
- publish admissions criteria;
- implement research security plans dictated by the minister; and
- comply with fee regulations set by cabinet.

Now, at first glance, who wouldn’t support transparency? Who wouldn’t support fairness? But let’s be honest about what’s actually happening here.

Let’s start with the research security plans and how they can and will, under this government, become political tools. The minister can dictate the timelines of developing research plans, what must be included or what’s to be researched, which partnerships are acceptable and which are not.

These could very quickly become mechanisms for political interference in academic freedom and research partnerships. You can’t convince me that the experts—people completing their PhDs and researchers in their own fields—don’t know what’s better than the minister from downtown Toronto about research in their own field. This government doesn’t seem to care about academic freedom or supporting the researchers of today. This is simply another power grab from this government. As an example: What prevents a minister pushing institutions toward private-sector partnerships aligned with his party donors? This isn’t exactly a new concept as we are deep into the Skills Development Fund scandal.

Next, fee regulations sound student-friendly, but this government has caused the crisis where we need these, where students’ governments use these fees to fill in the gaps. I have had

countless school governments and advocates reach out to me about how detrimental cutting these fees will be to their schools.

Ontario colleges and universities are collapsing financially because of this government. They froze tuition without replacing the funding; starved institutions for years; billions in cuts projected over the next few years; forced them into dependence on international student fees, then watched as the international student cap devastated their budgets. Now, they want to swoop in and regulate fees like they're the heroes cleaning up someone else's mess. This is like cutting the brake lines and then charging the mechanic with bad driving.

This government can blame the federal government all they want for the collapse of colleges and universities, but this is your doing. You underfunded colleges and universities with the lowest per-student funding in Canada and made these institutions depend on international students to keep these establishments afloat. Now that that's over, you're here pointing fingers and doing nothing to actually address the problem.

Here is the pattern: This government breaks the system and then blames everyone else. This bill fits perfectly into this government's established pattern of: cut funding; cause chaos; blame workers, boards and institutions; take away their power to govern themselves; and centralize everything in the minister's office. We've seen it with school repairs—\$21.7 billion in backlog ignored year after year. We've seen it with teachers—3,500 teaching jobs cut. We've seen it with CUPE workers with Bill 28—the unconstitutional attack that this government brags about. We've seen it with universities and colleges starved and then scapegoated. And now we see it here again in Bill 33.

Speaker, in my riding of Nepean, one of the fastest-growing in Ontario, we are desperate for new schools. Our classrooms are overflowing. Our post-secondary students depend on nearby institutions like Carleton University and Algonquin College.

What do my constituents need? New schools; smaller classes; better ventilation; more teachers, EAs and ECEs; mental health supports—a stable, well-funded college and university sector.

And what does Bill 33 give them? A minister who can rename their schools, a minister who wants to take over school boards and dictate from downtown Toronto, a minister who wants to control how universities admit students, and zero dollars to fix a single problem.

Nepean and Ontario deserve better than political theatrics. I believe real support for children and students means investing in them, not micromanaging them.

That's why we should clear the school repair backlog, double school capital funding, expand mental health supports in every school, fund colleges and universities properly, eliminate OSAP interest and raise the repayment threshold, and protect, not erase, the authority of school boards and academic institutions. That is what real support looks like.

Speaker, Bill 33 is not an education bill. It is a centralization bill, a power concentration bill, a bill that prepares our education system for political interference, not student success. It undermines trust, erases local autonomy and continues the dangerous pattern of one minister tightening his grip over every part of the education system, from child welfare, K-to-12 education and post-secondary.

Children and students deserve better. I beg this government to actually listen to the people on the front lines—the education workers, the parents, the students—about how we can actually make meaningful change in legislation for them. Ontario deserves better, and that is why I will be voting against Bill 33.

Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I do appreciate new school builds, but when it comes to education policy, I really wish the government would talk to the people who work in schools. I was a school social worker for 11 years, and I can tell you that I don't find any resemblance to what I need in education in this bill.

I have to say, ETFO, the education worker unions, CUPE, OSSTF, OECTA, all the French-language boards and unions—they work in these schools every day, and they deserve a meaningful partner in the government when it comes to protecting and investing in public education.

We should not be looking at public education as an expense. It is an investment. If we want a society with highly skilled people who can do the jobs that we need for our society, for our economy—if we want a healthy democracy—we have to be sure that we look at investments in our education system as beneficial for decades to come. If we get education right, everything else will fall into place.

I urge the government to pay their bills. Imagine you get invited to supper by a friend, and then they continuously refuse to pay the bill and say, "I'm saving money."

Hon. Greg Rickford: Well, what's for supper?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Exactly. I need the government to pay the bills. This is what I hear from people who are running school boards. We know so many school boards are starving.

What they need is enough money to pay for sick leaves. Teachers get 11 sick days a year, or 10. We pay them for four, so we're not paying those bills. We're not paying to make repairs to administrative buildings. We're not paying for cyber security fees. These costs go up every year and we need a government that can pay the bills, because they don't have other streams of income. They can't continually have bake sales to make up for the gaps in the budget that are real.

Bill 124: This government mandated on me an artificial wage freeze. Now that the courts have decided that that was unconstitutional, here they are left holding the bag on trying to pay for these costs. And do you know what happens with those costs? My local high school in Eastwood, for example, has gone from eight custodians to two—maybe. There are cutbacks to librarians; a lot of schools can't afford to pay for a librarian in their schools.

We see cuts in special education. I talked to a special education teacher who said once in the last two weeks, she was able to provide educational assistance to those students who are learning how to read—because we see the stats: 25% in elementary schools and 35% in secondary schools don't have teachers. On a daily basis, they are scrounging to find teachers to be in our classrooms, because they have these understaffing issues. We call them "fail-to-fills." I urge the government to get data on fail-to-fills. That's what I'm hearing from schools: They want

to make sure there's a teacher in every classroom and a special education teacher to deliver spec-ed supports.

And our EAs: This government took the EAs, the lowest-paid workers in our education system, and were mandating and kind of pushing them with strike action. We need to make sure we have more EAs. Think of the money we're spending on consultants: \$350,000 plus \$40,000 in expenses. That's a lot of money and that's a lot of EAs.

If any of you have been there at the end of a school year, you'll know it's like the Hunger Games. Every school wants to have supports for the students who need it most because the kids are not okay. What I see is kids arriving to kindergarten not potty-trained. Kids are arriving to kindergarten and they are not potty-trained, so we have principals doing potty training.

The kids are not okay. They're spending more time on screens, so they're not developing social skills. Attention spans have shrunk in half. Imagine trying to teach kids whose attention spans have shrunk in half. That's documented, because they're growing up in front of screens.

We need more supports for kids so they can regulate their emotions. I say, "Put your lid on." We have a lot of kids whose lids flip really easily because of how they're growing up in our society, and so they need caring adults who can help them build those tools when they enter school. But what they're faced with is crowded classrooms. What they're faced with is staff shortages. And what they're faced with is a lack of EA support that they need to get through the day.

I also think, for children's aid societies—if you talk to poor people and you tell them that "the help we're going to give you is help budgeting," it's insulting. Somebody on Ontario Works, for example, gets \$390 to pay rent. It's not a budgeting issue; it's a math issue. When we talk to school boards, when we talk to children's aid societies, and we talk about waste, it's like an insult to them. Because it's not about the budget, always. It's not about some milkshake. There are some major gaps in the funding formula that really need to be addressed.

The same goes for colleges and universities. I worry that this government, by addressing these incidental fees and student union charges that are democratic—these people are elected; they're deciding how to spend the money—we're going to just spend more money on court challenges. This government has spent a lot of money on court challenges.

And universities and colleges are experts on processing applications. To act like people aren't merited to be entered into colleges and universities is, I think, misleading. I think we're looking too much at what is trending really well on X instead of what the evidence is saying and what the workers of this province who work in colleges and universities, work in children's aid societies, work in our elementary schools and secondary schools are saying.

What I think is happening is, unfortunately, I worry that we're turning Ontario and our assets into a yard sale. I look at what's happening with our water and the uploading of assets to a centralized service. What's going to happen with those assets? We're asking municipalities to upload billions of dollars of assets. Now we're asking for school boards to lose control over their assets. I live in a neighbourhood, for example, where there is an empty school, but guess what? Right now, it's surrounded by skyscrapers. And there is an uptick and an overpopulation of the school across the street. If we don't plan well, we risk selling off this school that is underutilized, yes, but without predicting what the future holds. Our school infrastructure can't run on a four-year cycle like we run government.

I mean, our government shouldn't run on a four-year cycle. We should look long term, and that's what school boards try to do with bricks and mortar. It's really hard to plan bricks and mortar when we have an ebbing and flowing of our school population. So let's not turn our education system into a yard sale. I know we're open for business, but we shouldn't be for sale.

I worry that we're punching down and we're attacking democratically elected trustees. I know some have made mistakes and there have been errors, but I think there is a process in place for code of conduct stuff that we could be using right now to root out any bad actors and bad behaviour and address the legal cost that we are seeing.

But my biggest worry of all, I think, is the threat to democracy. Trump would salivate at the opportunity that this government is taking—Bill 5, getting rid of all legislation if we just call something an economic zone. There's a lot of vagueness in this policy of how supervisors can come in. They could come in because I coughed twice. They could say, "Aislinn coughed a lot. That's public interest, so we're going to come in and supervise your school board."

How many of these people are from the communities they're supervising? How many of them have a background in education? I worry that there's less merit in the people that we appoint to tribunals, to supervise school boards than we're talking about here. I think we've got to look in the mirror a little bit when we start talking about merit.

Another thing about democracy: I worry about us selling off public assets. I think we undermine the public system like we're doing in health care, colleges and universities and the education system to support the private sector, and we know that that is not a better use of money. We look at what's happening to the States. We have widespread drops in people's critical thinking. And what does that mean? That people are being misled and they're voting for somebody who's selling them lies. So I worry that if the educational quality goes down and we stop investing in these systems and we start to privatize more and more, we will see a major shift in the capacity and ability of our young people.

We should not be telling misinformation. I worry about the math. Sometimes we say we are making it better, but we're spending more money trying to save and create these efficiencies, like an overpriced milkshake.

Overall, I hope this government doesn't end up like Mike Harris Sr. selling off the 407 at a loss, because I want us to remember and look back at how we functioned in this place and not have any regrets. I'm sure we'll all have some regrets. Nothing is perfect, and we make the best decision we can at the time. But I think the best way to make the best decisions going forward is to have all the information.

I want to know from this education minister: When was the last time you talked to teachers? When was the last time you talked to an EA? When was the last time you talked to a principal and a director of education and asked what they need? Because the list of things that I hear from them that they need does not match this bill.

I do think that with great power comes great responsibility, and I worry that by centralizing power, we risk making some major mistakes by not having all the information, not being open-minded, not having qualified people at the table like the supervisors. That would ultimately harm our kids.

I'm a mom, and I know some of you are becoming grandparents or parents. What we need to make sure of is that we have a public education system that is loving and has adequate access to caring adults. Whether that means small class sizes, whether that means educational assistants or social workers in the schools, we need to make sure that we have more and more caring adults in our school system and that we listen to those caring adults. They know our kids better than anybody else.

If you want to come and talk to me about mental health issues in our school system and what families need, I had a caseload of 120 students with mental health challenges. You can imagine what it's like to carry a caseload of 120 students with mental health challenges. I was run ragged, and I was putting out fires. When we have good ratios—when we have enough caring adults in the room—we can move forward in a beautiful and meaningful way.

And so I urge you to invest in those caring adults and to listen to them, because that is the prevention of all sorts for all the negative outcomes that can happen in people's lives, whether it's crime, health outcomes or poverty.

When we have caring adults building their capacity and good trades like auto tech—those buildings are falling apart, the kitchens are falling apart; we need infrastructure. We need adults to make our education systems work properly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I rise today to speak in strong support of Bill 33, the Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025. Introduced by the Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister of Education, this legislation proposes comprehensive reforms across several key statutes, including the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017; the Education Act; the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act; and the Ombudsman Act. Bill 33 is primarily about strengthening accountability and transparency so our schools, children's aid societies and post-secondary institutions put children, youth and families first.

As the member for Oakville North–Burlington, I believe this bill offers meaningful benefits for my community and for Ontario more broadly.

In our government's announcement on May 29, 2025, Minister Calandra stated that parents deserve confidence that school boards are making decisions in the best interests of their children's education. We are strengthening accountability and transparency across Ontario's education system to ensure that every dollar invested is preparing students with practical skills for good-paying, stable careers.

Bill 33's stated objectives include:

—empowering the Minister of Education to investigate school boards in matters of public interest, issue binding directions, approve major school board expense policies and work with local police services regarding school-based programs;

—requiring publicly assisted colleges and universities to adopt merit-based admissions criteria and publish them, to develop and implement research security plans, and to regulate student fees;

—strengthening oversight of children's aid societies by requiring reviews of bylaws, public access to those bylaws and in language that children and youth can understand;

—expanding the mandate of the Ombudsman to include individuals aged 18 to 22 who have aged out of care, thereby enhancing oversight for this vulnerable cohort.

These changes, taken together, represent a significant reform package—one that builds on past efforts to improve governance and compliance in education.

Let us turn our attention specifically to how Bill 33 would benefit people in my community: students, parents, educators, and the broader community.

In Oakville North–Burlington, the Halton District School Board and the Halton Catholic District School Board are responsible for delivering high-quality education in a rapidly growing community. Bill 33's provisions give the ministry greater capacity to intervene when boards may be underperforming, running chronic deficits or are mismanaged. For parents, this means they have greater confidence that funds are used effectively and that board governance meets high standards. For example, when concerns emerge about expense policies, financial audits, or delay or cost overruns in the construction of new school facilities, Bill 33 allows enhanced oversight and more rapid response.

Even in my own community, some concerns were raised with the decision of the Halton Catholic District School Board to spend more than \$41,000 on international staff travel, including trips to Brazil, Haiti, Germany and the United Arab Emirates. The Halton District School Board, based on only one complaint, decided to rename a school, at a projected cost of \$250,000 without consulting the school community. This raises serious concerns about priorities and accountability. Taxpayers deserve assurance that every dollar is focused on student learning, not questionable travel expenses. This serves to highlight why stronger provincial oversight of school boards is essential.

Speaker, another reason why this matters: Halton is one of Ontario's fastest-growing regions. We are experiencing explosive growth. In the five years between 2016 and 2021, the population grew by nearly 9%, and much of this growth comes from young families moving into the region, attracted by strong job opportunities, vibrant communities and a high quality of life, all of which place increased pressure on local schools. This rapid growth shows no signs of slowing. Halton is projected to reach more than 1.1 million by 2051. That's nearly double our current population. As these new families put down roots, the need for higher-quality schools, and more of them, becomes even more essential.

Bill 33 also introduces a requirement for school boards to collaborate with local police services to provide access to school premises, allow participation in school programs and implement school resource officer programs where available.

In our community, all the school boards, including MonAvenir, a French Catholic school board, enjoy a positive relationship with the Halton police service, and parents rightly expect safe and nurturing learning environments. This initiative builds real connections and acts as a bridge between students, families, the school system and the police. As Mark Baxter, the president of the Police Association of Ontario said, "The School Resource Officer Program plays a crucial role in fostering trust, safety, and mentorship within our schools." And he continued: "There is a list of reasons why it's a good idea to have a resource officer in school: mentoring students, being there to assist with intimate partner violence incidents when they come up and the complexities of cybercrime."

Many young people from my community will pursue post-secondary education in the GTHA or enter the local innovation economy. Bill 33's merit-based admissions requirements and the fee transparency regime, as set out in schedule 3 of this bill, help ensure fairness and clarity in the pathway from high school to college or university. For the Halton region, which focuses on innovation, talent development and economic growth through the mega-region framework, this is meaningful. If colleges and universities publish clear criteria and ensure admission is based on merit, our local students and their families know what is expected and can plan accordingly.

This aligns closely with our regional strategy of building talent pipelines for high-value jobs in advanced manufacturing, tech and services.

As well, through schedule 1 and schedule 4 of Bill 33, there will be enhanced protections for children's aid societies and youth who have aged out of care. For youth transitioning out of children services agencies, the new measures mean that youth will receive better information about their rights, in language they understand, and recourse through the Ombudsman.

It's vital that all youth, including those from vulnerable backgrounds, are well positioned for student achievement and real-world success.

As our region continues to grow, we need schools and post-secondary institutions that produce skilled graduates who are ready to contribute and thrive in their personal and professional lives. Bill 33's accountability and transparency reforms support this objective.

This means that when a new school is built in Burlington or Oakville, parents can trust that the school board is following rigorous expense policies and audit regimes; that when a student from Burlington applies to a regional college, the criteria and fee expectations are clear; that when a youth aging out of care in Halton seeks support, the Ombudsman oversight ensures their rights are respected.

Speaker, it is vital that we strike the right balance: ensuring accountability without stifling local innovation, ensuring cost-effective governance without reducing supports that matter most to students and their families. And this bill accomplishes that.

Let me illustrate two examples in my community. Let's say that a graduate from Dr. Frank J. Hayden Secondary School in Burlington applies to a college in Ontario. Under Bill 33's schedule 3, the college must publish admission criteria and ensure entrance is merit-based. This clarity helps students plan, reduces barriers and supports regional mobility of talent. Or let's take a young adult in Burlington who has aged out of care—under this bill, they will now be able to enter into a "continued care support" agreement and will now receive clear information, in language they understand, about their rights and about the Ombudsman's services under schedule 4. This ensures that vulnerable youth in our community are better protected and supported.

Speaker, even the Toronto Star columnist Martin Regg Cohn has acknowledged that the current system is broken. Last August, he wrote: The current model "clearly isn't working in the big cities and large regions where school trustees are increasingly out of touch and school boards out of control."

In conclusion, Bill 33 is a bold and far-reaching piece of legislation. It recognizes that the challenges in education, child welfare and post-secondary in Ontario are complex, interlinked, and demand modern accountability frameworks. But more than that, it recognizes that students,

children, youth and families in communities like mine, in Oakville North–Burlington, deserve transparency. They deserve fairness. They deserve to know that their schools, colleges and welfare supports are managed in their interest.

As the MPP for Oakville North–Burlington, I see clearly that the future prosperity of my community and region depends on talent, inclusion and strong institutions.

I urge all of my colleagues to support Bill 33 so that we move forward with the objective of delivering better results for every student and every family. Together, let's ensure that Oakville North–Burlington and all of Ontario benefit from an education and child welfare system that is fit for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Bill 33 is not about strengthening education. It's about ignoring parents and the local communities who know our schools best.

Bill 33 gives Queen's Park sweeping powers to override school boards and seize control under vague public-interest claims.

It strips locally elected trustees of their role, replacing community decision-making with centralized, one-size-fits-all control—it's what I call the mystery telephone that sits on a desk somewhere in Toronto and, somehow, everything that parents need and kids need, they're going to pick up that phone, and maybe God will speak and tell them what they need. There we go.

Bill 33 silences parents and blocks access to their representatives, making it harder to openly voice their opinions and ask for help for their children.

It ignores the voices of parents and students from Indigenous, Black and other equity-deserving communities who have very serious concerns about mandating police in schools. What I see with that is that you've already set the stage for criminalizing students, which is appalling.

We also know that Bill 33 cuts out special-needs kids—that they have no voice. Without their trustees, they have nowhere to go to try to get what they need.

But most of all, all of this distracts from the real issue, which is the \$6.3 billion that has been scooped out of education funding for our public schools over the last eight years. And that is the crux of the problem.

It's interesting, because we've got the denial of democratic rights—the school trustees were actually the first form of democracy. It was very important to parents to have access to that in education. So we are denying parents access to those democratically elected people. We're also denying parents and communities the right to actually contribute to what is going on in this bill, because they're being denied public hearings. So it's kind of a double whammy of anti-democracy that's built into this bill and built into the way that this government operates.

I would like to speak briefly about what's going on for universities.

I have copies of 150 letters from students at Confederation College in Thunder Bay opposing Bill 33.

I also had a very lengthy meeting with the student union at Lakehead University, who are dead set opposed to this bill. They see unnecessary government oversight. They want us to defend and legislate students' right to organize and safeguard the autonomy of campuses.

I really question why the government is so afraid of students organizing. Do they not want them to be able to think for themselves, to gain skills as student leaders? Apparently not. Apparently, that's dangerous. And if we listen to Premier Ford—he's definitely afraid of what students might talk about. God forbid they have ideas different from the current ideology of this government.

Of course, they want to see immediate and dedicated public funding into the post-secondary sector.

We know that post-secondary schooling in Ontario is the lowest-funded in the entire country—roughly \$6,000 less per student at universities and over \$13,000 less per student for colleges.

This government has deliberately misled the public—oh; withdrawn.

This government has deliberately underfunded public education for years. They don't even call it "publicly funded post-secondary." What do they call it?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Publicly assisted.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: "Publicly assisted." Bill Davis would be rolling in his grave if he heard that. What a betrayal of public education and young people in our province.

We know that student organizations provide incredible services. They're very important.

I will just say one last thing here: This merit-based admissions thing completely overlooks how those decisions are actually made. Where it comes from is straight out of the Trump playbook. "Let's just get rid of DEI, because oh, my God, it's a threat." Nonsense. We know where it's coming from, and shame on this government for putting it in this bill. University students and college students are not worried about whether they get in or not, because the rules are already very clear and, frankly, they're fair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: Have faith. Here we go. My House leader reminded me to stand up, but I had already reminded you that I was going to stand up, so—oh, I've got 14 minutes. I feel sorry for all of you guys. You have to listen to me for 14 minutes. Are we all awake? All right. Good.

I want to start off by saying, I think, something we all already know: Schools belong to the families and the communities they serve. It has been that way for hundreds of years in Ontario for a reason. Schools are different in Timiskaming than they are in Toronto—and then Ottawa is different from Windsor; it's different from Sudbury; it's different from Thunder Bay. They're different. They need to respond to local needs. If you look at Bill 33, it goes in the other direction.

The Minister of Education and the Premier think that they can run education in Ontario from downtown Toronto. It's not going to work. Running it from an office in Queen's Park is not going to work.

There's a lot in here about governance, and I think governance is really important, but the government is missing the boat. If the minister wants to make an omelette and he wants to

crack some eggs, as long as the omelette is local, democratic, transparent and effective, have at her. I don't care whether you have five trustees or 20 trustees; that's not the problem that exists in our schools.

The problem that exists in our schools right now is that they are not safe places to learn or to work. I know that because I've spent some time travelling around, talking to the people about what's happening in our schools. There are three reasons for that. Class sizes are too big, we know that. We know that special education is being underfunded by \$850 million a year, that the government is not sending to the boards, that they have to find somewhere else, and we're not even meeting the needs of children with exceptionalities. The third thing is, we have a mental health crisis in our schools, marked by things like incivility—it's the same thing that we see in our society all around us. We know there's a mental health problem—but these are kids; these are young people. So many of them have been affected by the pandemic and are affected by these things here—the screens, the phones. It's a problem. But the government is saying, "Look over here."

One of the latest look-over-heres—and it's not in this bill—is, the Premier is going to give every teacher on the elementary panel, maybe more, maybe 200,000 of them, or 120,000, a P-card, a purchasing card. Unfortunately, he didn't tell the Minister of Education, who I think rightly said, "That's the Premier's idea, and I don't know how it's going to work." It's not going to work because there's so many. It's not going to work—because the problem is not going to be fixed by a P-card. You're not going to make a class size smaller with a purchasing card. It's not going to work. You're not going to get a child with exceptional needs the help they need with a P-card. It's not going to happen. And we're not going to fix the mental health crisis in our school because somebody has a P-card. But it's a great little bauble; it's like pointing in another direction. It will be popular because it sounds good. It's totally impractical. It's not even a fully thought-out idea. Somebody told the Premier that, and he remembered it, and it just came flowing out when somebody asked him a question.

I think children and families in our province deserve a little bit more thought than that—a little bit more thought about things like class sizes. They're too big. They're too big in the elementary panel. They're too big in the secondary panel. That makes it harder for the kids to get what they need. Not having enough support for students with exceptional needs, when we have a policy of inclusion and an Ontario Autism Program that is literally not functional, makes it harder and less safe for children, teachers and SSLs.

The mental health needs of our kids—it's not a surprise. I've said this again and again. We go into a bank, and there's a sign that says, "Harassment will not be tolerated. Foul language will not be tolerated." You phone your insurance company, and they tell you the same thing. Everywhere we go, we're being told, "You need to behave. You can't act out." Do we think that's not happening in our schools?

I have a neighbour; he's a great principal, a fantastic principal at—I can't remember if it's Roberta Bondar or what. It's a school in my riding. It's a big elementary school. He's a nice guy, a really good principal. He works really hard, and he knows all the kids in his school. I was talking to him about these safe schools, and he said, "I had a chair thrown at me by a 12-year-old girl the other day." I said, "What?" Then he said calmly, "It's just another day."

I have a friend whose wife is 70, and she went back for one year. She wanted to go back because she loves the kids, and she wanted to have that experience. She had one child in her

class who has really exceptional needs and behaviour challenges and sometimes requires a few people to restrain the child—because that's what's there. The first time it happened, she ended up with a bunch of scratches on her arm, so she went to see the vice-principal. The vice principal's response was, "I guess she'll have to wear long sleeves"—not "How are you? What happened? Oh, my God." Instead, it was, "Yes, that happens. Just wear long sleeves."

How do we get there—where that happens and the government is not saying we've got a big problem?

Actually, our kids have a big problem, and the government is not seeing it.

Yes, there are some bad trustees, and they make bad decisions, and governance has to be looked at. But you can't walk by the thing that is so obvious and important and try to point at P-cards and trustees and whatever else. Trips to Italy—we all agree that's bad. There's a way of fixing that. You don't have to do a piece of government legislation to fix that—we've had problems with boards before, and we've done the things that needed to be done—but now what the government has done is use it as a tool to silence people.

Special education is \$850 million short. The government is not spending enough, and boards have to find it somewhere else.

You get the supervisors in—by the way, who are making \$350,000 a year, not including expenses. That's probably more than the average Ontarian earns in four or five years—I'm just saying that. And they're all accountants. I have nothing against accountants, but none of them have any educational experience. One of the things they do is a special education committee, something that should be open to the public, talking about how children with exceptional needs—how their needs are being met, what needs to be done, and what the problems are. The supervisors pull the plug. You can't see it.

What would we say if the Speaker decided to pull the plug on these cameras here? We'd all be screaming. It's not democracy, is it?

It's not even actually about that; it's about the people we're serving knowing what we're doing and knowing what's being done for their kids. That's not fixing anything.

Then, to say the government is going to set up these offices or call centres where you can call up if you have a challenge with your child in school that's not being satisfied by the school—you've got a cross-boundary transfer; your child has exceptional needs; there are mental health needs; there's bullying or something going on that's not getting resolved. There are problems in schools. That's not a solution. You have people there who can do that. If you want to make it better, then work at making it better. Ensure that people have someone that they can go to, that they can see, that they can feel and touch, and they don't have to drive halfway across town to get to. Come on. What would you expect for your own family?

I came here, like most of you came here, for the things that are important. I think the three things that are important are to take care of people's health care—make sure their hospitals are good, and make sure it's there for them when they need it. That's what we want. We all want that for all of us, no matter what our ideological bent is. I think that's kind of a standard in Ontario. I would like to believe that. That's what we're all here trying to do, maybe in different ways.

Make sure the economy is good so our young people have jobs. That's a good thing. It's an important thing.

Make sure our schools are great so our kids have opportunity, but not just because it's the nice thing or the right thing to do; because it's the smart thing to do, because the most valuable commodity in the global economy is what? Highly skilled, highly trained, highly educated people—and healthy people too. We do those things not just to be nice and good and moral, but to do it because it's enlightened self-interest.

But when I look at the fall economic statement, I don't see anything there for either of those three things—nothing, zero, zilch, nada, on the things that are most important to our families, so you've got to ask yourself why. Why are we not focusing on the things that are important?

Pointing the finger and saying, "Look over here at these P-cards," or, "Look over here at these trustees. They were really bad"—yes, they were. But I could do the same thing and say, "Look over here at the Skills Development Fund." Should we just actually eliminate the Legislature because the government is shovelling money out the door to insiders and friends and donors? Should we do that? No.

I don't understand why the government can't just simply focus on making sure we take care of our schools.

I've said this before: You got your licence plates for free, whether you have one or two or three, but Johnny is not getting what he needs in school. You got your licence plate for free, but by the way, the class size for your children is way bigger than it should be. You got your licence plate for free, but—heck, I'm sorry—the mental health needs in our schools are just not being met. But you don't have to worry about that licence plate fee. It's a billion dollars.

The problem that the government needs to address in education is really simple. It's not that complicated. We don't have enough adults in our schools. We don't have enough EAs, SSLs—whatever you want to call them. We don't have enough ECEs. We don't have enough teachers. We don't have enough mental health workers. And we don't have enough youth workers. We're not meeting the need. We don't have enough people. It's not complicated. We need more people. I don't see any investment in this.

And do you know what? Great schools are not just a thing that's over here on this side; on that side, in that party—I remember Bill Davis. This is not the party of Bill Davis. I'm sorry; to those of you who think you're there—you're not. You're not there to build up schools—because it's not happening—

Hon. Nina Tangri: How many schools did you close?

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: You're not there to build up schools. You're not there to get graduation rates up.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: I know it hurts. I know it really hurts, but you've got to hear this. You've got to hear this because you're letting our kids down.

Our schools aren't safe places to learn and to work because class sizes are too big, and you know it.

You know you're underfunding special education by \$850 million a year, so it's coming up short for the kids who need it.

And the third thing is—yes you can wave at me all you want there, the member from Whitby, but it's the truth—you're not taking care of kids' mental health, and you had better get to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I am honoured to rise in the House today, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, and stand alongside my government colleagues and speak in strong support of Bill 33, the Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025.

Bill 33 represents another meaningful step forward in our government's ongoing work to strengthen the safety, accountability and integrity of Ontario's child welfare system.

Bill 33 reflects our continued commitment to ensuring that services designed to protect young people truly meet the standard they deserve, to ensure that every child in this province has the opportunity to succeed and to thrive.

If passed, Bill 33 would amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017—CYFSA for short—as well as several related statutes.

The amendments aim to achieve two important, overarching objectives: first, improving accountability and transparency within children's aid societies; and second, expanding and clarifying the role of the Ombudsman to enhance oversight and ensure that young people receiving services under the CYFSA are better supported, better protected and heard.

These reforms continue the work we began in our first term—work that remains grounded in the principle that the safety and well-being of young people must always be at the centre of our decisions.

Since taking office in 2018, our government has taken significant action to modernize and support the child welfare system in the province of Ontario.

Bill 33 builds on that foundation by reinforcing the expectation that services must place the highest priority on safety and protection; must meet consistently high standards of quality; and must respond to the cultural, emotional and social needs of children, young people and families across the province of Ontario.

Throughout this process, we have engaged extensively with partners across the province. We sought perspectives from children's aid societies, from caregivers, from advocates, from community agencies, and from young people with lived experience in care. Their insights and experiences have played a crucial role in shaping this legislation.

I want to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed to this work; particularly those who shared their personal stories and personal experiences. Their voices are reflected through this bill.

The measures included in Bill 33 reflect not only community feedback but also recommendations from Ontario's Ombudsman—an office that has been serving the people of this province for half a century. Their work has consistently highlighted the need for clearer oversight and improved transparency in the systems that serve children and young people.

This legislation was also strongly informed by the public consultations held for Bill 188, the Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024, as well as the extensive engagement conducted as part of the CYFSA legislative review. These conversations produced invaluable feedback about what is working, where improvements are needed, and how we can better support young people receiving services.

Speaker, improving the child welfare system requires ongoing dialogue with the people and organizations who support young people every day.

That's why the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services is building on the work of Bill 33 by consulting the children's aid societies and out-of-home care licensees on proposed regulatory amendments that complement this legislation. These proposed changes would require children's aid societies and licensed care providers to display clear, age-appropriate information about the rights of children and young people and the process for making a complaint or for raising a concern. This information must be presented in accessible, child-friendly language and posted in locations where young people can easily see it and where it can easily be understood. Through the CYFSA legislative review and our many engagements across the sector, we heard repeatedly that many young people in care do not always remember, understand, or feel confident about their rights. That is not acceptable. Every young person who receives services from a children's aid society deserves to know what their rights are, what quality care should look like, and what steps they can take if something isn't right. By making this information more visible and easier to understand, we will help ensure that young people are informed, that they are supported, and that they are empowered.

These proposed requirements will also align with existing obligations to post information about the Ombudsman and are consistent with posting requirements in other care settings.

These proposed regulatory measures build on Ontario's Quality Standards Framework. That's why our government strengthened accountability and raised the bar for children's aid societies through the quality standards framework, making sure every child in care receives safe, high-quality and consistent support by:

- strengthening oversight of foster care and group homes;
- enhancing privacy protection;
- increased frequency of visits;
- requiring new police record checks; and
- requiring that information about the Ombudsman on how to contact their office is posted in care facilities.

The quality standards framework sets out what high-quality care should look like across all licensed out-of-home care settings, including child welfare, youth justice, child and youth mental health services, and special-needs programs.

This framework is not just a guideline; it's an educational tool that outlines the essential elements of safe, supportive and effective care. It provides practical guidance to ensure that vulnerable young people in care have what they need, not only to be safe, but to thrive and achieve better outcomes.

Under the previous system, too many children fell through the cracks, facing instability and uncertainty instead of safety and opportunity. Our government took action.

To support this implementation, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services released free sector-wide training to help service providers understand and apply these standards consistently. We also released child-friendly resources—including “The Care You Deserve” website and poster—to help young people understand the standards of care in language that is clear, accessible and meaningful to them.

Similarly, our government introduced the children and young persons' rights resource in 2020. The resource was created because we heard directly from young people that the rights-based provisions in the CYFSA were often difficult for them to interpret or to understand. This resource addresses that barrier by explaining rights using simple, plain language. It helps young people understand what their rights are, why those rights matter, and how to seek help if they believe those rights are not being respected. It also acts as a resource for families, caregivers, service providers, and communities—helping adults better support young people in understanding and exercising their rights.

With the quality standards framework in place and the children and young persons' rights resource available province-wide, Bill 33 and the accompanying regulatory proposals will expand this progress even further.

Our goal is simple: to increase the number of young people who understand their rights and to empower them to exercise those rights if and when needed. Through stronger oversight, clearer expectations and better access to information, we can give young people the confidence they need to speak up, seek help, and advocate for themselves.

Speaker, this is why our government remains committed to continuously strengthening the quality of care offered to children and young people across Ontario. We will continue engaging with front-line workers, with community experts, with partners, with advocates to identify new ways to improve services.

This also includes ongoing, dedicated engagement with First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and urban Indigenous communities. Their leadership, knowledge and lived experience are essential to building a system that meets the unique needs of Indigenous youth and their families. Ensuring culturally appropriate, community-led supports is fundamental to achieving better outcomes and advancing reconciliation. We must and we will continue this work collaboratively, respectfully and meaningfully. Their contributions—along with the input of countless service providers, caregivers, and young people—remain at the heart of our government's vision to leave no child or young person behind.

Bill 33 moves us closer to that vision. It strengthens oversight, improves transparency, enhances awareness of rights, and reinforces our commitment to ensuring that every young person in Ontario receives the high-quality care, protection and support they deserve. These are

not symbolic changes; they are practical, impactful, and informed by the people who rely most on these services.

Speaker, we know that young people succeed when the systems designed to support them are strong, accountable and responsive. We know that when those systems don't match the reality on the ground, the consequences can be severe and long-lasting.

That is why this work matters. That is why Bill 33 is necessary. And that is why our government will continue working tirelessly to strengthen Ontario's child welfare system. We will keep listening. We will keep learning. And we will keep acting to ensure that young people across Ontario have access to the supports, stability and opportunities they need to thrive.

Bill 33, if passed, is about accountability and transparency. For the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, it means that children's aid societies and licensed residential providers must provide information about the Ombudsman to children and youth in care. Children's aid societies will be required to review their bylaws, update them, and make them publicly available.

Bill 33, if passed, will increase accountability, improve transparency and strengthen youth rights.

Speaker, every child deserves a safe, loving and stable home, along with the resources and supports to achieve lifelong success. That's why our government is continuously improving the child welfare system to focus on services that prioritize safety, protection and the needs of children, youth and families.

The Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025, is our government's next step to ensure that every child and youth in Ontario is supported and protected.

Together, we will continue building a stronger, more responsive and more compassionate child welfare system—one that puts the well-being of young people across Ontario at the centre of everything we do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Tom Rakocovic: I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this.

If there's one thing that this government has more in abundance than any government ever before, perhaps even on planet earth—do you know what that is? It's nerve.

We are debating a bill whereby they have taken over school boards—five of them—because they say that they're not managing their affairs and their money well. And do you know what their plan of takeover has been? It has been to get rid of all of the democratically elected trustees, elected by the communities that they represent—people who can receive a phone call and do their best to help—and replace them with friends of theirs who they are paying \$2,000 a day, \$350,000 a year. And since they've done that, do you know what you're seeing? If you've got a kid in school right now, they're probably in a split class. So now what's their solution in education? Put all the kids—two grades into one. In some schools in the province of Ontario, there are three grades in one classroom, a first-ever under this government. That is the solution from their administrator friends who are getting paid top dollar. And all of the meetings have been moved—because they hate consultation and they hate transparency—indoors, closed, curtains shuttered, doors shut, windows shut. "We're not going to let you know what the decisions are that are being made."

All that they're leaving is carnage in education, and parents are angry. But do you know what? They just do this—because getting sued is like Tuesday for them, right? It's just how it works.

Why do I say that there's nerve? Well, Speaker, this is a government that has taken the debt of the province of Ontario to half a trillion dollars, making it the most indebted sub-sovereign state on planet Earth. I have reached out to NASA and NASA has actually directed the James Webb telescope in a wide arc across the universe, and in fact, nowhere in the universe has the debt of any sub-sovereign state ballooned to the level it has here. It's unbelievable, right?

And what has this board presided over? Almost historic job losses—tens of thousands in every industry. I mean, you've got a minister now dubbed the minister of favours on his own Amazing Race, okay? We've all seen the show. And he's travelling the world. He's in internationally regarded cities. I mean, you go to any sports event—doesn't matter—and he's there. He's in the prime seats, right? That's what's happening and that's this board. And so they're bristling at what's happening.

It's a government; it's a board. I mean, you can essentially equate it to be essentially the same thing.

What we are seeing is losses in jobs and money going out the door to their friends in record numbers. I mean, it's like Halloween and they're shovelling it into bags that their friends are walking away with.

There is mismanagement on every level. When you look at anything—it doesn't matter what it is: car insurance, highest it's ever been; electricity bills, highest it's ever been; gas bills, highest it's ever been. Everything is record in costs and the debt is in record, so taxpayers are spending all this money and getting literally nothing.

You know what their emergency management plan is? It's a three-pronged one. First thing is they wait for some sort of crisis to bail them out—international, external, doesn't matter. They're hoping for it. And then there's probably an internal countdown. When that doesn't happen, the second thing that they do is they try to wage some kind of culture war, okay? That's the second thing they will do. If it's not working, "Let's wage a culture war, let's do this." And if that doesn't work, shut down the House and run commercials.

During the Jays, during the World Series, all we saw was what was the cause of them rising the Legislature early for the summer: It was the Ring of Fire. And I have to tell you, they are now going to open the Ring of Fire just to pay for the commercials to open the Ring of Fire.

If there's any board that should go into receivership, it's this government. So, why don't you follow your own advice and just do it? Because you're really making a mess of the province, worse than any board you could ever accuse of doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais dire quelques mots par rapport à l'impact du projet de loi 33 pour les francophones de l'Ontario.

Les francophones de l'Ontario parlent d'une seule voix. On est tous sur le même horizon. On n'en veut pas du projet de loi 33.

Le système d'éducation francophone en Ontario, ça assure la survie des francophones en Ontario. C'est dans nos écoles que nos enfants apprennent les règles de la langue. Ils apprennent notre culture. Ils apprennent notre histoire. Ils apprennent à développer les compétences nécessaires pour continuer à parler français pour le reste de leur vie.

Quand on vit en milieu minoritaire, tu te lèves à tous les matins en disant : « Ne descends pas ton arc », parce qu'on ne sait pas quand le prochain coup va venir. On ne sait pas ce qui s'en vient, mais on sait qu'on doit prendre une décision à tous les matins de continuer à parler français, parce que de se faire assimiler, c'est tellement facile.

Je vais vous faire une petite leçon d'histoire, monsieur le Président. On avait, en Ontario, le règlement 17. Le règlement 17 empêchait l'enseignement du français. C'était une loi qui a été passée par le gouvernement de l'Ontario qui disait : « Vous n'avez pas le droit d'enseigner en français en Ontario. » Ça a pris plus d'une décennie de se débarrasser de ce projet de loi-là.

On se souvient de la bataille des épingles à chapeaux. Mon collègue de la Baie James a amené de l'avant—c'étaient les mères francophones qui avaient sorti les épingles de leurs chapeaux pour défendre les institutrices qui enseignaient le français parce que c'était défendu de le faire.

C'est seulement dans les années 1960 et 1970 que le gouvernement a commencé à subventionner les écoles secondaires francophones. On peut parler aux gens de Sturgeon Falls; ils s'en souviennent de la mobilisation communautaire qu'ils ont dû faire pour venir à bout d'avoir une école à Sturgeon Falls—la même chose à Penetang. Ça a demandé beaucoup, beaucoup d'efforts, de temps et d'énergie pour venir à bout d'avoir nos écoles francophones. On ne veut pas les perdre.

En 1982, l'article 23 nous donne, finalement, le contrôle et la gestion de nos écoles. On a dû attendre en 1998 pour avoir nos conseils scolaires francophones. On est ici, les francophones, pour vous dire qu'on veut nos conseils scolaires francophones. On s'est battu longtemps, on a travaillé fort, on les veut.

La dernière chose qu'on veut, c'est quelqu'un à Toronto qui prend un téléphone pour un problème à l'école de Foleyet. Ils ne savent même pas c'est où sur une carte de l'Ontario, Foleyet, encore moins quelles sont les ressources qui sont disponibles. Même chose si je dis l'école Notre-Dame du Rosaire à Gogama à quelqu'un de Toronto. Il va aller sur Google Maps pour venir à bout de savoir où c'est, cette affaire-là. C'est eux autres qui sont supposés d'aider mes constituants, d'aider les francophones de Gogama, de Ivanhoe, de Foleyet, de partout dans mon comté? Bien, voyons donc. Ça n'a aucun bon sens.

Vous ne pouvez pas aller de l'avant avec ce projet de loi-là sans commencer des repoussées par la communauté francophone. On n'acceptera pas ce que vous êtes en train de faire. On a travaillé bien trop longtemps pour avoir droit à nos écoles françaises, pour avoir droit à nos conseils scolaires francophones. Je vous garantis qu'on ne laissera pas le projet de loi 33 nous enlever tout ça, parce qu'une menace à notre système scolaire francophone, c'est une menace à la survie des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I don't often get a chance to speak in these debates, but I really needed to be here because what is transpiring here in the Legislature today with this government ramming through this legislation without proper debate—real debate—without

hearing from community members, is just so shameful. I think it's really important to be here to call out what's happening and to talk about what really matters.

Because in the last 19 hours, 55,000 emails—more than that, actually—have been sent to this government. Parents, students, teachers, education workers, community members, all saying the same thing: Do the right thing.

But this government has the wrong priorities, and they always have. Time and time again we see it, right? The Minister of Education talks about pretending that this is going to somehow fix the issues in our schools, but the issues in our schools are of the government's own making.

The fact is that since 2018, the government has cut \$6.3 billion from public education. This year alone—just this year alone—they have cut another \$300 million. And you see it. We see it across the province, as parents, as education workers. The kids see it. Class sizes are ballooning. Essential programs are being cut. Teachers and education workers are truly stretched to the limit. They are at the breaking point.

And our schools are literally falling apart. Speaker, I had to go back and check this again today. Back when I was the shadow minister for education, and when I ran to be elected in 2018, with the previous mess that the previous Liberal government had actually left, we had a capital repair backlog at that time—an infrastructure backlog, really—of about \$15.3 billion. I remember that figure well. Today, it's at \$16.8 billion. So more than 10—that is a significant increase, right? Another billion.

Students are learning in classrooms that have leaky roofs. We have broken heating systems. We have asbestos in the wall. Children cannot drink from the taps because there is lead in the drinking water. One in 12 schools in Ontario has the same roof panels that this government alleges were the reason that they closed the Ontario Science Centre. Just let that sink in: the same panels that the Premier said were too dangerous for people to be under—apparently, that's safe enough for our kids.

The government's current capital plan for education falls \$12.7 billion short of what is actually needed right now, and it's not only our public school system; it is also our post-secondary institutions that are impacted by this terrible legislation. It is cut after cut to services, to programs. We have seen mass layoffs in our college sector—10,000 college workers laid off.

That is the real crisis in Ontario education, Speaker—overcrowded classrooms, not enough workers, not enough supports—and our children are the ones who are paying the price, because they are falling behind. At a time when we should be investing in our future, we are leaving them behind.

What is this government's solution? It is Bill 33, the bill we are debating right now. What does that legislation do? It fires elected school trustees. It replaces them with \$350,000-a-year government appointees who are based in Toronto. It cuts student services—food banks, mental health supports, sexual assault centres—in our post-secondary institutions.

While children—and, well, everyone—need smaller class sizes to succeed, while they're desperate for enhanced special education or mental health supports, this government is busy paying Conservative insiders \$350,000 a pop to make decisions from downtown Toronto. Students do not need political interference. They don't need government control. They need investment right now.

It's all about priorities. We always say that: It is about priorities. The Premier—I remember; we all remember this—he told the 800,000 unemployed Ontarians that they needed to look harder. While Doug Ford was out there playing Captain Canada and Batman or whatever for the cameras, this government turned the Skills Development Fund, that is meant to help working people, into a pay-to-play scheme for lobbyists and donors. The Auditor General called it “not fair, transparent or accountable.” We remember. This is a government that has chosen, as a priority, to spend \$2.2 billion on a luxury spa at Ontario Place. It is a government that is choosing to spend that money—\$400 per household in the province of Ontario—while schools have a \$16.8-billion school repair backlog.

Let me tell you what we have heard from Ontarians. That's what I really wanted to make sure I did here today. Some 55,000 emails in 19 hours—from every single corner of this province, people are expressing their outrage. Parents are saying, “Don't silence us.” Students are saying, “Don't cut our supports.” Communities are saying, “Don't take away our voices—our locally, democratically elected voices.”

What did this government do when people expressed those opinions? They chose to shut down debate. They rammed this legislation through anyway. It's really quite shameful, Speaker, because this is what we have seen this government do time and time again, whether it's privatizing health care while hospitals close and nurses leave the profession—and now Bill 33, silencing parents while they pay insiders \$350,000 a pop, cutting student services while our students go hungry, taking power away from communities while schools are actually falling apart.

Speaker, if this government doesn't know what the solution is, I am very happy to provide it to them. It's pretty straightforward: Just properly fund education in the province of Ontario. What students need is investment, not political control. Parents need a voice, not Toronto insiders making decisions about their communities and their schools and their children. Schools need repairs, not power grabs.

I'm going to ask the government again to do the right thing. Vote no on Bill 33, or better yet, just shelve it. Let's have a conversation about what communities really need right now: Fund our schools, listen to parents and support our students and our education workers.

And with that, I have to say I really want to give the government one last opportunity to do the right thing, to take the time that's needed to reconsider what you're doing here, reconsider the direction that you're taking with this legislation.

I am going to hope that they will take the evening to consider this decision more carefully, and I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Ms. Stiles has moved adjournment of the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This is a 30-minute bell.

Hansard Tuesday, November 18, 2025
(Bill 33 Third Reading Debate)

The division bells rang from 1721 to 1751.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Will the members please take their seats?

Ms. Stiles has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerks.

All those opposed to the motion, please rise and remain standing to be counted by the Clerks.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 24; the nays are 61.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I declare the motion lost.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 6, I am now required to put the question. Mr. Cho, Willowdale, has moved third reading of Bill 33, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to child, youth and family services, education, and colleges and universities.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Orders of the day?

Hon. Steve Clark: If you seek it, you will find consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The House leader is seeking unanimous consent to see the clock at 6 o'clock. Agreed? Agreed.