

### **Food banks**

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's close to Christmas, and the great thing about Christmas is that there's always an ability to redeem oneself.

Speaker, we all agreed, when we pulled American liquor off the shelves, it was the right thing to do. We sent a message. It felt good. And do you know what would be even better? To do some good at home with that action and not just let this liquor collect dust in a warehouse.

What I'm calling on the Premier to do today—asking the Premier, all of us—can we sell that American liquor, use the profits, and give it to Ontario's food banks and have it do some good? There are more people than ever going to visit food banks in Ontario this year. It's going to be really tough. It would help a lot of people.

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So will the Premier instruct the LCBO to sell that surplus liquor we have collecting dust and use that money, the profits, to give to Ontario food banks?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I thank the member opposite for the question.

What we have seen since we took the American liquor off the shelves is a massive increase in sales in Canadian products. Ontario, in particular—a 79% increase in Ontario VQA wine alone.

The member opposite may want to support American companies, but this government, our Premier, has said we need to get behind the people of Ontario. We need to support all of those workers in Ontario. And what are we seeing? Record numbers of people who are employed in this industry as a result of that.

We will continue making sure that we're doing the things that we need to do to protect the people of Ontario, to increase the opportunities for jobs, and to make sure that Ontario is the best place in the G7 to invest in.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the member for Don Valley West.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** According to Daily Bread and North York Harvest Food Bank, visits to food banks reached another all-time high this year: 4.1 million visits in Toronto alone. And they're up in my riding of Don Valley West too, at the TNO food bank. What do we hear from this government on that? Silence.

Speaker, other provinces are stepping up to help their local food banks by selling off the US alcohol on the shelves. We know the PC government is holding \$80 million of US alcohol in storage—the finance minister said that about \$2 million of that will expire over the next six or seven months. Basically, it will all be poured down the drain.

My question to the Premier: Will he pour all that US booze down the drain or let the LCBO sell it to help food banks feed families?

**Mr. Dave Smith:** This is a government that has done everything possible to protect the people of Ontario, to protect the industries in Ontario.

When we take a look at the measures of removing the American product off of the shelves, what has this meant? Not just an increase in VQA wine sales—it has also seen an increase in craft beer. We have seen an increase in craft cider—in fact, craft cider is now the fastest-growing industry in the alcohol file in Ontario. And all of this translates to jobs. This is about protecting the people of Ontario. This is about doing things that increase opportunities for employment—and it is the right measure to do this.

To put American alcohol back on the shelves would mean we're saying to all of those Ontario employees, "You're not valued. We want the Americans more than we want people in Ontario to work"—and we disagree with that philosophy from the Liberal Party.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Actually, there are four provinces that are putting that surplus United States liquor to good use. They're selling it, and they're donating the profits to support people in need. And the need in Ontario has never been greater.

Here in Toronto, the Daily Bread Food Bank, in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, reports more than 4.1 million food bank visits in the past year. That's a record 340% increase since 2019.

To the Premier: Will he make this commitment to support struggling Ontarians this Christmas season and donate liquor profits to food banks?

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Madam Speaker, I am appalled that the member opposite has stood up here and said Canadian people, Ontario jobs should not be protected. I'm appalled that the member opposite is supporting American companies by that kind of a statement. This government will not do that.

We are here protecting the people of Ontario. We're ensuring that people in Ontario have jobs, that they have the ability to go out and buy the things that they need to buy. We want to make sure that we're protecting the workers in this province, and we'll continue to do that.

We'll take no lessons—from these things coming from that Liberal member.

### **Subventions destinées à l'éducation / Education funding**

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Depuis plus de 25 ans, l'éducation publique de langue française est celle qui connaît la plus forte croissance en Ontario. Les inscriptions ont plus que doublé.

Aujourd'hui, ils font face à une crise causée par une pénurie chronique d'enseignants, un manque d'infrastructure pour desservir 110 000 élèves qui n'ont pas accès à une école francophone, en plus de devoir mettre en oeuvre des nouvelles obligations provinciales sans financement additionnel.

J'ai une question pour le ministre de l'Éducation. Comment le gouvernement peut-il prétendre respecter les obligations constitutionnelles de l'article 23 de la Charte alors qu'il n'investit pas les ressources nécessaires pour offrir aux élèves ayant droit à une éducation en français un accès réel, équitable et local à une école de langue française?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The member will know—in fact, I was just in Ottawa last Friday to announce significant funding for an expansion of a French school in her riding, actually, I think it was.

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There has been a significant increase in funding toward our French education partners—over \$2.2 billion in funding. It's an average of over \$19,000 per pupil in that sector.

Part of the reason we're making such dramatic investments on the French-language side is partly because the popularity of French-language education has exploded across the province of Ontario, not just in our French-language school boards, but also in our English-language school boards, where we're seeing more and more movement toward—sorry, I always forget; excuse me—French immersion in our English boards as well.

We know that the Minister of Colleges and Universities put more funding in to have more French teachers.

All in all, it's a significant amount of investments, because the system is a good system. It is a system that is giving our students the best opportunity to succeed and—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member for Ottawa—Vanier.

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** On reconnaît en effet que le système francophone est un bon système. Et les enjeux auxquels font face les conseils scolaires ne sont pas liés au travail des conseillers scolaires. Il est lié au sous-financement.

Le ministre de l'Éducation répète depuis des mois qu'il ne touchera pas aux conseillers scolaires francophones. Pourtant, il met en place des structures comme les bureaux d'assistance aux élèves et aux familles qui ont, en fait, pour effet de retirer des pouvoirs essentiels aux conseillers scolaires, comme on l'a vu—c'est ce qui est arrivé au Québec et en Nouvelle-Écosse.

Est-ce que le ministre peut garantir clairement aujourd'hui que toute initiative de son gouvernement respectera non seulement l'existence des conseillers scolaires francophones, mais aussi leur pouvoir réel de gestion et de contrôle tels qu'ils sont protégés par la Constitution?

**L'hon. Paul Calandra:** J'ai déjà dit, ce gouvernement va toujours respecter la Charte et la Constitution. C'est pourquoi nous avons fait beaucoup d'investissements dans l'éducation francophone aussi. Au même temps, c'est vrai que nous voulons faire des changements dans le système d'éducation pour assurer que nos étudiants ont les ressources pour avoir le meilleur succès.

That means that all boards will be challenged—and every trustee—across the province.

I've said this on a number of occasions, and I'm not going to back down on it just because the Liberals, an arrogant, outdated party, do not agree—

Interjection.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** You're right; it is. You're right. It's Christmas for students, parents and teachers in the province of Ontario because they finally have a government that actually cares about them. That's why it's Christmas.

The party opposite is—you see how angry they get when you call them arrogant and outdated—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Question?\