

Freedom of information

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Families are saving up, but they still can't afford their first home; young people are working hard at school, but they still can't find a job; and everybody is playing by the rules, but this Premier is making it impossible to get ahead.

Recently, when the courts told the Premier that he had to start playing by the rules, with the stroke of a pen, he changed the law so that he could hide his phone records. So to the Premier: Does the Premier think the rule of law does not apply to him?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

I find it ironic when you talk about the affordability of housing—I just heard, for an hour, the members opposite suggesting that they're not going to support our HST reduction on new homes. That's unbelievable to me.

You talk about affordability. You voted against the budget. You voted against capping the tickets for resales in the province of Ontario. You voted against small business taxes—small business owners are thrilled with a 30% tax reduction, Speaker. That's a lot of money for small businesses here in the province of Ontario. You voted against that, not to mention so many other things that you voted against, whether it's affordability measures like One Fare, which saves transit riders every single day; the LIFT Tax Credit, the largest tax credit in the history of Ontario—you voted against it.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll tell you that, obviously, that member did not listen to the question.

If there is nothing to hide, why change the law to keep things hidden, right? We know that more than 200 records of meetings with developers have been buried and hidden from the public with the changes that the Premier has made to the laws. There is no question that this government rushed through the budget bill just so that they could stop those records from coming out.

Back to the Premier: What meetings is the Premier trying to hide from the public and why?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Again, as I've said many times in the House, we're modernizing an outdated FOI system which is almost 40 years old. Written in 1988, this legislation didn't contemplate the technologies and the modern world that we're in today, Speaker. It's also, quite frankly, bringing into motion what courts in this country have stood for, which is cabinet confidentiality, the importance of government decisions being candid, but government decisions being open and transparent. That's exactly what this legislation does.

In fact, speaking of cabinet confidentiality, perhaps it's something that the members opposite don't understand because I don't think there has been a member on that side who has actually been in cabinet.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Ouch, Speaker.

Anyway, Speaker, I've got to tell you, it is a shame, really, such a shame that this Premier built his whole career—well, at least the more recent part of his career—pretending that he is just like everybody else, he is for the little guy, he's going to fight back against corruption and government waste, and then he turns around and he takes \$30 million out of the public purse, out of the taxpayers' pockets, to buy a luxury private jet. Shame. Shame on that government. Now what is happening is that the walls are closing in around him, and right when we get close to the truth, he directs his government to change the law so he can hide his backroom deals. That's what's happening.

Does the Premier believe he is truly above the law?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: The Premier of Ontario has been the most open and transparent Premier, not only in the province's history but across Canada. He has put his phone number out. He receives hundreds if not thousands of texts from everyday Ontarians discussing issues of importance to them, whether it's affordability, jobs, the economy. His number is out there in the public record. I encourage the Leader of the Opposition—I encourage you right now—pass your phone number around. Tell the people of Ontario so they can connect with you and talk about their concerns. This Premier has been very, very open, speaking to the people of Ontario.

What this legislation is doing, for the umpteenth time I'm here in the Legislature speaking about it, is modernizing a privacy framework that is almost 40 years outdated. I encourage the member to also bring up the NDP legislation out in BC if she's got concerns about this legislation.

Child protection

MPP Alexa Gilmour: This week, two foster parents were found guilty of murdering L.L. and torturing J.L., two Indigenous brothers zip-tied into wetsuits, confined in a dungeon-like basement as they wasted away. Teachers, doctors and social workers sounded the alarm for five years—five years—and this government heard them and did nothing.

This government knows that one child connected to government care is dying every three days, and their response is to stop tracking the numbers. Our children need protection, not secrecy.

To the Premier: Why did the government stop tracking the number of children dying under your care?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank the honourable member for the very important question.

Madam Speaker, the loss of any young person in care is profoundly tragic and heartbreaking. No caregiver or parent should ever have to deal with such heartbreak.

It's why our government took action from the day we formed government. We said the status quo was not acceptable. We've taken action. We've said from the beginning that the time for talk is over. We have introduced measures that never existed before. We have increased the frequency of visits, from 90 days to every 30 days. We hired more inspectors on the ground. We increased the number of unannounced inspections. We introduced monetary penalties to hold bad actors accountable.

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This is a subject that I would appreciate no one play politics with on this side of the House. And certainly, I expect all my colleagues in the opposition to support us on making sure no child or youth in this—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Parkdale–High Park.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Speaker, this government says that they had a visit every 30 days for five years, and children who wasted away in a basement were never removed from the home. It is shameful.

On Saturday, the Rosedale community gathered to mark two years since another CAS child, four-year-old Neveah, was found dead in a dumpster—two years ago this Saturday, and still no systemic accountability; only a government that hides data.

These were children. These were children with names and people who loved them and a government that was supposed to protect them.

If this government won't protect them, will they reinstate the provincial advocate for youth and children who will?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Madam Speaker, let me make it very clear to every member in this House, including the members in the opposition: No more time for talk. The office that the member is referring to wrote over 700 pages—report, report, report. That time is done.

We're now taking added action. We will hold every single person accountable—including monetary fines.

Madam Speaker, the opposition did nothing when the previous government was in power.

I and the members of this caucus will not have kids left behind. It's why we introduced measures. I would encourage the member to stand up and support us on these initiatives, not to come here and politicize the issue. The measures that we've introduced never existed before.

No, we're not going to have an office that sits down and writes reports.

We will be happy to take action to make sure every child and youth in this province is supported—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member from Parkdale–High Park will come to order.

Hon. Michael Parsa: —and if they don't, every single person in this space is put on notice: We will hold—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Mental health and addiction services

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Speaker, my question is for the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. This week is Mental Health Week, an important time to raise awareness about the importance of prioritizing mental health and checking in on our loved ones. I've spoken to many

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families in my community who have experience with depression and anxiety, whether they are struggling themselves or supporting their loved ones going through a tough time. They deserve access to programs that will help them get the care they need.

Speaker, our government has made historic investments in expanding mental health services through our \$3.8-billion Roadmap to Wellness. We are continuing to work on building a comprehensive system of care and filling gaps in communities across our province.

Speaker, can the associate minister share with this House what progress we have made in expanding care through the Roadmap to Wellness for those who need it most?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for this important question and his passionate advocacy on this issue.

There is no question that too many in our communities have and will face mental health challenges in their lifetime. That is why this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, has made transformational investments through the Roadmap to Wellness.

We are investing in programs that treat depression and anxiety-related disorders such as the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Program that offers free therapy services to adults experiencing stress, depression, OCD, PTSD and other anxiety-related concerns. As of last month, there are over 25,000 people enrolled in this program.

We are also investing in intensive services such as rTMS—magnetic stimulation to better treat severe cases of depression.

We take mental health as health and treat everyone, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the associate minister for his continued work on expanding mental health care in communities like mine.

Speaker, the pain of addiction has touched too many lives in our province. People in Ontario want to see services that will help their loved ones on their path to recovery. HART hubs are doing exactly that. They work to provide wraparound supports for those struggling with homelessness and addiction. From withdrawal management and addiction counselling, primary care, all the way to supportive housing, HART hubs are saving lives in communities across our province.

Speaker, can the associate minister update the House on the important work our government is doing to help individuals struggling with addiction on the path to recovery?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: The member is exactly right. HART hubs are having an enormous impact in communities across the province. Over the past year I've had the opportunity to visit HART hubs across the province from Windsor to Ottawa to Sault Ste. Marie and countless more in between, seeing the incredible work that is being done on the ground to offer meaningful mental health and addiction support for the most vulnerable among us. HART hubs are supporting over 45,000 people annually, helping break the cycle of addiction, Madam Speaker.

We also established 500 addiction recovery beds, serving over 7,000 people across the province.

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All these important investments are to help those who are struggling with addiction, to make sure we provide the recovery and treatment towards a path towards recovery.

Royal assent

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I beg to inform the House that in the name of His Majesty the King, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996

An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care /