

Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 15, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care / Projet de loi 101, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'éducation et à la garde d'enfants.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: From 1998: “The sound and fury of the latest proxy battle between our provincial government and public education in this province has, among other things, provided a useful smokescreen for the Harris government’s attack on the economic foundations of the education system.”

Do folks remember the notorious education minister John Snobelen, who made headlines in 1995 when he was caught saying the government should create a crisis in education to generate support for change? It wasn’t meant to be public—oops—but just like the greenbelt video with Ford’s developer buddies, the Snobelen video revealed what was behind the government’s decisions, and it wasn’t the well-being of students.

In the same era, does anyone remember how the Conservatives ran a campaign designed to incite contempt for teachers, all while cutting financial support for virtually every aspect of education?

They revived the “attack the teachers” mantra in 2018 with their snitch line, but apparently it didn’t work.

This brings us to the game plan we’re seeing today. First, the Conservatives needed to create a really good crisis in education—and I don’t mean the outrage the minister has been stoking to justify appointing failed Conservative candidates as wildly overpaid supervisors or to justify knee-capping democratically elected trustees. No, I mean the actual crisis in education that this government set out to accomplish in 2018 by removing, piece by piece, the funding from education until we were down \$6.3 billion, leaving teachers with more and more struggling students, fewer resources, fewer staff, larger class sizes, an irresponsible transportation formula, and huge gaps in support for special-needs students.

And parents, when you are wondering how these ministers can claim to be giving what they call “historic” funding—it’s called magic with numbers, and it is exactly the same tactic they used in 1995: Don’t include increased enrolment numbers, don’t include inflation, and, bingo, you can say you increased funding. It’s a classic illusionist’s trick.

I’ve been around for a while. I taught in teacher education in the one-year, the two-year programs, and the online COVID year. There are undoubtedly things that can be improved, but this is not the intention of this bill. The intention, as in bill after bill introduced by this government, is to gut our democracy and centralize power in themselves.

So let’s be clear: Nothing in this bill will improve outcomes for students or ensure that they have smaller class sizes, special education, mental health supports—there’s nothing there—or even basic resources like pencils in classrooms. And this credit card for teachers—give your heads a shake. Teachers need cash on hand because the boards have been starved of the money they need to buy supplies. It’s a gimmick.

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Rather than putting student achievement first, the bill vastly expands the minister's powers, creates a new layer of bureaucracy, but limits the advocacy and support that parents currently receive from trustees.

The bill is designed to discourage good people from running for trustee, and the minister has already said he will appoint people where there are no trustees elected. This is not an accident, because the goal, as in everything else this government does, is to put themselves and their buddies in charge; like changing the rules to appoint judges because you don't like their rulings. You put in people in who are beholden to you—not accountable to students, teachers or parents, but beholden only to you.

The priorities in this bill tell you everything: Class sizes are mentioned zero times, while the supervisors imposed on the TDSB are forcing even larger, unsustainable class sizes. Classrooms are mentioned zero times in the bill. Mental health: zero. Special education: zero. Student achievement: three times—grand. But liability, 43 times. Why is the minister so obsessed with giving himself and his supervisors immunity if his goal is student achievement?

I want to take a moment to talk about all the wonderful trustees in the four boards—French public and Catholic, English public and Catholic—in my region. The members of those boards, those trustees, are everywhere kids are, observing classrooms, talking with students, meeting with parents. They take the role very seriously. They've done a lot of governance and development. At one school the trustees found a way to create a music room for students that the board would never have been able to pay for themselves. Trustees are called day and night by parents. The pay is only \$16,000 a year; not much for a full-time, 24/7 role.

Are all trustees perfect? Do they all do justice to the responsibilities they have been elected to fulfill? Well, let me ask: Do the elected officials in this government all behave responsibly? We just have to look at the financial abuses right here between the greenbelt, Skills Development Fund, pet vanity projects of the Premier—the largest, most expensive government in the history of Ontario. There is a problem with people in this House making themselves God, continually changing the laws to avoid accountability.

Well, the current Conservatives, with this ideologically driven Minister of Education, are following exactly the same game plan: Eliminate the climate surveys and don't find out how students are feeling, like ditching hallway medicine records, hiding phone records, or having 47 clauses protecting themselves from liability. Information and accountability are strictly forbidden.

A minister who wants to decide what will be read and not read; wants to get subscriptions for pre-packaged lesson plans, produced by whom? Bill Gates? Disney? Apple? The right-wing Fraser Institute? This is a minister and a government that is obsessed with the righteousness of their own ideology.

Remember that statement that we all must be proud of Canadian history? Let's think about that. What is appropriate is neither pride nor shame. What is appropriate is awareness of the full story. I recommend that the minister visit room 228 and look at the river of children's shoes representing the many Indigenous children who never made it home.

Our students right now learn about Canadian history in its breadth; neither pride nor shame, but thoughtful consideration and awareness. This bill is about power. It's about ideology. It's about eliminating critical thinking, eliminating democracy. And it's also about breaking the system so

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badly, parents with money will send their kids to private schools where they will have class sizes of no more than 15 students.

I know this because my nephew was a troubled kid in his youth, and he wasn't doing well in school, and because his parents had the money, he went to a private school with 15 kids in the class, and he blossomed. He continues to do very well. Why? Because the resources were there to support him. Every student deserves to have those kinds of resources.

We know your endgame, and it is diametrically opposed to well-funded, creative and thoughtful public education.

As I said earlier, I have been a professor in teacher education programs. I'm certainly aware of the kinds of challenges that teachers face. I'm aware of the challenges that trustees face. I am aware of the heart and soul that teachers put into everything they do. I'm also aware of the heart and soul of the trustees that put everything they have into looking into the well-being and supporting the well-being of our students.

There may be problems in some boards. I don't see those problems being solved with supervisors making almost \$400,000 that could be going to support students, but it's not. Instead, it's supporting failed Conservative candidates making really bad decisions. We talk about laying off 600 teachers, and yet at the same time, you're talking about, "We need more teachers." There's a big contradiction in there, and I must say it's clear that nobody has thought through what the transition will look like when you have students in the middle of a two-year program and now you're going to switch to a one-year program so the students who are already in education programs are paying a lot more. How is that going to go?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Everything that this government has done could be described as a smash and grab. We've seen this government try and take the greenbelt from the people of the province, \$8 billion worth of value. Ontario Place: They gave a for-profit foreign spa a 100-year lease. Skills Development Fund: hundreds of millions of dollars went to insiders, including \$10 million to a strip club buddy of this government, and the Premier's family dentist also received money from the Skills Development Fund.

So you can understand why when this government gives themselves the power over land acquisitions when it comes to school boards that people think this is business as usual. The real estate holdings of school boards across the province are very vast and very expensive and very attractive to insiders and developers of this government.

Without providing any clear evidence as to why they are doing this, why they need this power, do you think people are right to suspect that this has everything to do with the land and real estate holdings of the—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Response?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I want to thank my colleague from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for the question.

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It's an important question, because we have seen this repeatedly. We know that there were favours that had to be paid back after the greenbelt scandal was cancelled. We see the same thing; we see this happening with school properties in prime real estate. We see this happening with the conservation authorities that are being amalgamated in order to make it easier to sell off prime real estate—again, to their buddies.

So, yes, it's a very serious concern. Frankly, it's appalling. We keep seeing the same story again and again. We see power being heaped onto the government without any accountability whatsoever.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Bill 101, along with many other things it's doing, is modernizing the education system and simplifying the child care registration. What we're trying to do through this is assign the Ontario education number at birth as part of ServiceOntario's newborn bundle rather than when they enrol at the time of school—which, in other words, will replace 140,000 manual OEN assignments each year, helping the parents, reducing the red tape, supporting them so that they don't have to do it again and the child care wait-list can be seamless.

What is your opinion about all these things which we're doing through this bill?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The government wants to register children when they're born. Parents want to register their children when they take them to school. I just don't see how this is adding anything to the quality of education that students are actually receiving. I would much rather see the government stop pretending that it's giving money when it has actually removed an enormous amount of money and actually support students and teachers so that the teachers can do the jobs they are so committed to doing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question? I recognize the member for Sudbury.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to my colleague as well for her debate.

She had mentioned that about 50 times there's legal protections in this bill for the government and that students are mentioned three times. Also in the bill, if you're looking for mental health, which students need, or smaller class sizes, or special education—those three things are not mentioned even one time in this bill. Those should be tenets of trying to create a better education system.

I'm wondering for this—for my colleague: Do you think the reason that legal protections are here so often is because of what's happened with the greenbelt scandal and the Premier trying to shield his phone records by bringing in freedom-of-information laws that prevent people from seeing what they're doing?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I want to thank my colleague from Sudbury for the question.

It's a pattern we've seen again and again. As I recall, there is built into the Ontario Place bill protection from actually being sued for malfeasance. We see it with the changes to the FOI—hiding evidence, hiding the workings of this government from the public.

We see it in this bill with 47 mentions of protecting the government and their supervisors from liability from, essentially, being held responsible for their actions. It is unacceptable. It's actually

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incredibly embarrassing and it's incredible that the government keeps trying to pull the same stunt.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you to the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North for highlighting some of the important “lacunes” in this bill.

I don't know if you're like me, but every time the Minister of Education tables a bill, I get hopeful. I get hopeful that maybe we're going to be addressing the real issues, the real strain on our education system, but yet I remained disappointed.

Can you tell us what you would have liked to see in in this education bill that is important for the people in Thunder Bay—Superior North when it comes to fixing our education system?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I want to thank the member for her question.

First of all, fix the transportation formula so that students in the north can get to school safely. Provide adequate funding so that teachers actually have the supplies that they need, that they can be purchased in bulk from the board. Make sure there are enough teachers that the class sizes are smaller, that there are enough EAs in the classroom. And frankly, make sure that the French-language system is protected as it is supposed to be—constitutionally—but it is at risk in the writing of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question? I recognize the member for Burlington.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning. Thank you to the member opposite for her remarks earlier.

My question is about supporting teachers with consistent, high-quality learning resources. Right now, teachers across the province of Ontario spend hours sourcing their own material online, on sites like Instagram, TikTok, when we already have the Trillium List for textbooks.

You know, we're looking to have teachers keep full flexibility to supplement the curriculum, but giving them a reliable, high-quality base to start with. Having those consistent resources across school boards for all teachers helps to ensure that students are getting consistent learning materials and curriculum all across the province of Ontario.

So my question for the member opposite is, do you support consistent, high-quality learning resources for teachers in the classroom across the province of Ontario?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Of course we need good-quality resources for teachers. At the moment, they're going to get this gift card so that they can get pencils and paper—remarkable. The question is, who is going to design those resources and who is funding it?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

MPP Jamie West: I believe that the cut to the education since 2018 is \$6.4 billion. I do know that there's \$150 million less in this budget. That money isn't being spent on increased class sizes. Instead, it's being spent on supervisors who make \$400,000 a year, who aren't accountable to the public, who don't answer questions and who don't seem to be improving

anything. Can you help me understand how this is working well for our students who are in larger classrooms?

MPP Lise Vaugois: Well, I'll say it is not working for our students. In fact, it is doing the opposite. It has created another massively expensive layer of bureaucracy. Parents get no information from these supervisors. In fact, they have actually banned live broadcasts of the disability meetings that are so important to those parents. It's a lot of money for zero accountability, and it's money that is not going into classrooms. It's not going to support teachers. It's not going to support parents. It's not going to support students with special needs. It's going to reward insiders—people who, I guess, needed new jobs after they failed in running for office. It's been very, very distressing, sitting through this, watching the histrionics. Am I allowed to say that?

Interjection: No.

MPP Lise Vaugois: No? I can withdraw it.

But the drama is created around, frankly, crises of the government's making. They have been working on this strategy for years, and we can see it echoed in the strategy of the Harris government of 1988. It is exactly the same song and dance to justify cutting funding to education.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'm happy to rise and talk about something that affects every family, every community and the future of our province, and that is public education.

Ontario's education Bill 101 is being presented as a solution, a way to improve accountability, fix governance issues and ensure better outcomes for students. Let me be clear: We all want strong schools, we all want students to succeed and we all want accountability, but wanting those things does not mean that this bill delivers them. Because when we look closely—not at the slogans but at the structure—we see something else entirely. We see a shift: a shift in power, a shift in voice and a shift in who gets to participate in deciding the future of education in Ontario.

Let's start with the most fundamental concern, and that is the erosion of local democracy. For generations, school boards in Ontario have been governed by elected trustees, people chosen by their communities to represent local needs, local values and local priorities. Bill 101 doesn't completely eliminate trustees; it doesn't need to. Instead, it reduces their authority, caps their numbers, restricts their budgets and limits their ability to make meaningful decisions. In other words, it keeps the appearance of democracy while quietly removing its power.

We have to ask ourselves: What is the point of electing representatives if they no longer have the authority to represent us? Democracy is not just about voting. It's about influence, it's about accountability and it's about having a voice that actually matters, and this bill weakens that voice.

Secondly, this bill centralizes power in the hands of the provincial government. Under Bill 101, decision-making authority shifts away from locally elected boards and towards the Ministry of Education and appointed officials. New leadership structures, CEOs and chief education officers, will oversee operations and student outcomes. On paper, this could sound efficient,

professional, streamlined, but here's the problem: These individuals are not elected. They are not directly accountable to parents, to communities or to voters. They are accountable upwards to the province, and that changes everything, because when decisions are made far from the communities that they affect, those decisions often fail to reflect the realities on the ground.

A rural school board does not face the same challenges as an urban one might. A northern community does not have the same needs as downtown Toronto. A one-size-fits-all approach may be efficient, but it is rarely effective. Education is not something that can be governed entirely from a central office. It requires local knowledge, local input, local trust, and this bill risks replacing all of that with centralized control.

Third, there are serious concerns about accountability. The government argues that this bill improves accountability, that it ensures boards are better managed and more fiscally responsible. But again, accountability to whom? Under the current system, trustees answer to voters, and if they fail, they can be voted out. Under the proposed system, key decision-makers answer to the province only. And if something goes wrong, if policies fail, if resources are misallocated, who is held responsible? That line of accountability becomes blurred, and when accountability is unclear, trust erodes. Parents begin to feel disconnected, communities feel unheard and confidence in the system declines. Accountability should move closer to the people, not further away.

Fourth, this bill risks over-standardizing education. Bill 101 introduces greater provincial control over curriculum materials, testing and classroom expectations. Standardization can have benefits—it can create consistency; it can ensure minimum standards are met—but too much standardization comes at a cost. It limits flexibility, it reduces innovation and it ignores the diversity of student needs across this province. Teachers know their students, schools understand their communities, boards recognize regional differences and when decisions are imposed from the top down, that expertise, that knowledge is sidelined, and education becomes less responsive, less adaptable, less human. We should be empowering educators, not Restricting them.

Fifth, there's a risk of unintended consequences for student outcomes. The bill is called the Putting Student Achievement First Act, but nowhere is that promise guaranteed. Because improving student achievement is not just about governance structures; it's about class sizes, teacher support, mental health resources, infrastructure, community engagement. If we focus too heavily on control and compliance, we risk neglecting the factors that actually drive success in the classroom. Students don't benefit from power shifts; they benefit from support, stability and investment, and many are asking: Is this bill addressing the real challenges that students face, or is it focusing on administrative control instead?

The government has pointed to cases of financial mismanagement and governance issues with some school boards, and yes, those issues should be taken seriously. But we must ask: Are we solving specific problems or applying sweeping changes to address isolated cases? When broad policies are built on narrow problems, they often go too far. It's like using a sledgehammer when a scalpel would do. Reform is necessary, but reform must be proportional. Otherwise, instead of improving the system, we would end up destroying it. Well, then, maybe that is the ultimate goal.

There are concerns about long-term precedent that we must also think about. Policies like this don't just affect today; they shape tomorrow. If we normalize the idea that local governance can

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be overridden, centralized and reduced whenever problems arise, what comes next—changes to the municipal governance so that this government appoints municipal officers instead of electing them by the people? That's the next step, and we are already there.

This is not just about education; it's about the balance of power in our province. When that balance shifts, once it's gone, it's not easy to restore.

So what should we be asking ourselves instead? How do we strengthen school boards without silencing them? How do we support students by investing in what actually matters? What do we need? We need targeted oversight when it's needed, transparent financial practices, stronger collaboration between boards and the province and real investments in classrooms.

Education is not just another policy area; it is the foundation of our future. Bill 101 may be presented as a step forward, but we must ask whether it moves us forward in the right way, because progress is not just about change; it's about good change, change that strengthens our institutions, not weakens them. Ontario students deserve nothing less.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I have a question for the member for Kanata–Carleton. It has to do with a part of the bill that modernizes teacher education. We're modernizing teacher education programs, saving aspiring teachers up to \$3,000 in tuition costs and reducing the time needed to launch a successful teaching career.

Added to that is the classroom practicum, the hands-on learning that prepares teachers for real classrooms. It's being maintained, and we're quadrupling the associate teacher honorarium, the \$635 to expand and strengthen placement opportunities.

My hope, Speaker, is that these changes, particularly because they deliver on commitments that all major parties have campaigned on—my hope will be that the member from Kanata–Carleton will stand in their place and support Bill 101.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Thank you to my honourable colleague. I believe that that particular thing about teacher education was in the Liberal Party platform in the last election. That was part of our platform.

I think that whatever we do to make the role of teachers—if we can prepare them better, if they can get—I do agree that in-classroom experience is really important. They do need more of that in their curriculum, let's say. So that part of the bill, I have absolutely no trouble with.

Again, it comes back to the centralizing of power, the removal of accountability. Those are the things that worry me in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the member for her comments.

The government plans to limit the number and scope of school board trustees in favour of creating CEO and chief of education roles, and this bill will change school board bargaining for English boards, taking it away from trustee associations and giving it to government-appointed CEOs. What dangers do you see in that change?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I thank my honourable colleague for the question.

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Again, it comes down to accountability. Because trustees were elected, if they start to do things that make the electorate unhappy, they can always be removed in the next election. But with this—being appointed—there is no accountability. They're accountable only to the Minister of Education but not to the community as a whole, and that's a dangerous precedent.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you to my colleague for her remarks pointing out that the government is not focusing on the right priorities when it comes to the education system.

We talk about education a lot in here, because everybody cares and everybody hears from parents in their riding, from schools. I go in schools very often. It looks like right now we might not be able to do as much because there seems to be some restriction around attending graduations, which I think is a shame.

But on the point of what the priorities should be—like I said before, I always get hopeful when I see an education bill. But we talk about priorities. What should the government be focusing on when we're bringing about change to our education system?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Thank you to my honourable colleague for the question.

It comes back to smaller class sizes, because we know, when we're integrating students in an integrated classroom, there will be some students that will need a little bit of extra support. So make those class sizes smaller.

Secondly, make sure that that specialized support is there. And we've also seen the crisis of violence in schools. That requires—more mental health support, I would imagine, is the right way to go there.

We need more people in schools in order to make sure that education is progressing the way we need it to progress.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm pleased to stand and give some comments on Bill 101.

This bill gives the minister increased power over schools and boards, including books, grades and exams, school budgets, board communications, land acquisition and building projects, as well as trustee pay and expenses. It seriously reduces the powers of trustees and school boards in English-language boards—public and Catholic—to represent their communities, instead giving power to a new business-oriented chief executive officer who can overrule democratically elected and accountable trustees.

The government plans to limit the number and scope of school board trustees in favour of creating CEO and chief of education roles. This bill changes school board bargaining for English boards, taking it away from trustee associations and handing it to the Council of Ontario Directors of Education, which will now be made up of the new government-appointed CEOs—a troubling trend that we're seeing all over the municipal sector.

Nothing in this bill will improve outcomes for students or ensure they have smaller class sizes, special education and mental health supports—as we are always hearing in our community are desperately needed—or even basic resources like pencils in classrooms.

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Rather than putting student achievement first, this bill is all about putting the Minister of Education first. It vastly expands his powers and creates a new layer of bureaucracy but limits the advocacy and support that parents receive.

This government is more focused on controlling classrooms than improving them. Bill 101 gives the minister power over grades, textbooks and school operations. That kind of top-down control undermines educators and distracts from the urgent need to reduce class sizes and improve learning conditions.

Also in the bill, there are 57 clauses regarding protection of the minister, cabinet and the minister's appointees against legal cases, but only one clause in the bill on student achievement.

It eliminates the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. OCUFA says this removes any measure of accountability or transparency in the post-secondary sector, giving the government the power to interfere without consulting experts or engaging with fact-based evidence. It also gives the ministry of colleges and universities the power to police free speech on campus.

In addition to giving the minister more power, it seems to be designed to discourage good people from running for trustee, and the minister has already said he will appoint people where there are no trustees elected.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, ETFO, who I have the pleasure of working with in my community, says, "The proposed legislation removes trustees from the central bargaining tables and shifts local bargaining away from trustees to ... CEOs. This upends decades of established labour relations and eliminates a core democratic safeguard. Trustees have been central-table partners since 2014, when the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act created Ontario's two-tier bargaining model, and have held a statutory role in local bargaining since 1975 under Bill 100. That's decades of democratic responsibility and oversight now put at risk by" this "government. ETFO will review the legislation to determine how these changes may impact central and local bargaining further"—so, having workers' rights under attack here, Madam Speaker.

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association said, "Catholic teachers are deeply concerned by" the Minister of Education's "anti-democratic plan to centralize control at Queen's Park, reduce the role of locally elected school board trustees, and disrupt the collective bargaining process. If implemented, the government's proposed legislation would remove critical education experience and local voices from the ... table."

We've heard the minister stand up and say that he is working on behalf of teachers. These are teachers and their unions who are saying their voices are being removed from the system.

"School board trustees are elected and can be held accountable by their ... communities. The minister has made clear that the government's new chief executive officer position will be accountable to Queen's Park alone—and not to local parents.

"This silences our families and local communities"—and I have heard that in my community and I'm sure my colleagues are hearing it in communities all over Ontario—"the very people who keep our schools strong. At the bargaining table, by replacing trustees with CEOs, the government is removing critical education experience and expertise, as well as local voices, limiting the ability of parents to advocate for the resources students deserve."

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The Ontario Public School Boards' Association says, "Over the past several months, we have seen troubling decisions made in supervised boards without public consultation—decisions such as changing school bell times, lifting class size caps, eliminating programs, closing schools, and reducing supports for students in high-needs communities and those with special education needs. These decisions are being made by highly paid individuals—making as much as \$350,000 a year—accountable only to the Minister of Education, not to local communities.

"In early March, groups representing all levels of the education sector called on" this minister "to consult with them on the rumoured governance changes. No consultations occurred. We continue to call on the minister to provide a clear and transparent plan to return the supervised" school "boards to stable, locally accountable governance. There is still no publicly available list of goals or tasks that the supervised boards need to achieve in order for supervision to be concluded. Students, families, and staff deserve to understand how decisions impacting their classrooms are being made and how local voices will be restored."

This government is doing nothing to address the staffing crisis, hurting students every day. Ontario schools are dealing with teacher shortages and fewer one-on-one supports for students. Instead of hiring more caring adults, the Premier is focused on yet another power grab.

Families are already paying more out of pocket because of cuts, and this bill offers no relief. When supports like mental health services, special education and nutrition programs fall short, parents are forced to fill the gap. Centralizing control won't put more supports in classrooms. Too many students are falling behind because they don't have the special education and mental health resources they need and deserve.

Bill 101 ignores the crisis in school infrastructure. Students are learning in schools with leaking roofs, aging buildings and massive repair backlogs. Instead of fixing school, this government is instead focused on consolidating power.

This is a terrible bill that everyone except this government is opposed to. It clearly requires sober second thought, and I move to adjourn this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Burch has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading debate adjourned.

Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 16, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Niagara Centre, where we left off, was debating the bill, so I return to the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you, Speaker—I think.

In Niagara, in my neck of the woods, severe underfunding has led to extreme understaffing in both the District School Board of Niagara and the Niagara Catholic District School Board. As a result, student needs are going unmet and incidents of violence have increased—and that's

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been reported very much in the local newspaper. That's according to a survey of education workers by the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Ontario School Board Council of Unions. The survey included more than 12,000 respondents from across Ontario, with more than 700 from Niagara-area school boards.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Burch: And I now move adjournment of the House, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Based on the guidance of the table that no member may move adjournment of the House during morning debate—

Mr. Jeff Burch: I tried.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I acknowledge the request of the member and will rule that out of order.

I return to the member who still has the floor, the member for Niagara Centre.

Interjection: What's going on in Niagara?

Mr. Jeff Burch: There's lots going on in Niagara, Speaker.

One of the things that's going on in Niagara is that school offices are over-burdened by increasing demands, cleaning is neglected and necessary repairs are often delayed or left incomplete. These are some of the challenges that schools are facing, and instead this government is attacking democratic rights in our region. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): And thank you. That is time.

Questions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We all know that the pandemic was hard on everyone, including on our kids in school. We have seen a rise in the number of kids who face mental health challenges. I'm really happy that stigma has changed. Families do reach out when their kids need mental health care.

Unfortunately, in my neck of the woods, they will be put on 18-month wait-lists before they can see anyone, which means that a lot of kids with sometimes serious mental health issues attend our school every day. This is something that needs to be addressed urgently.

Do you see this in the bill as an emergency that is getting the attention that it needs?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I thank my friend from Nickel Belt for the question. It's a question that hits close to home. My wife, Linda, is the volunteer coordinator at Pathstone, the children's mental health agency in Niagara. Of course, we've seen increased wait-lists. My son was actually in grades 7 and 8 during the pandemic, so it's a very good question. There's nothing in this bill that address that. Those are the things that we believe the government should be focused on rather than taking democratic control out of school boards.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

MPP George Darouze: We're going to move the question from Niagara to York. At York Catholic District School Board, trustees burned through seven different directors of education in

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just nine years, hiring and firing senior leadership at will, holding board operations hostage to political games.

Bill 101 ends that revolving door by requiring ministerial approval before a CEO can be terminated, ensuring qualified professionals—not warring trustees—lead the day-to-day operation of multi-billion-dollar organizations responsible for the education of our children.

The question is, why does the member opposite want to preserve a system where trustees can fire seven leaders in nine years and call it good governance?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the member for the question. Look, there are all kinds of attacks going on against local democracy, and this is one of them. I mean, the member can point to all of the scandals that he wants; this government itself is not without scandals. If we were going to appoint people instead of electing them, there would be no members left in the government side.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Four trustees at the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board went on a \$45,000 trip to Italy under the guise of purchasing artwork for a new high school in Brantford—a trip the trustees themselves authorized after quietly rewriting their own expense policy days earlier to allow business class flights and luxury hotels, colleagues. After legal fees managed the fallout, the total cost to taxpayers ballooned to \$190,000—money that was supposed to go to students in Brantford classrooms.

Bill 101 finally puts an end to this kind of abuse by capping trustee honoraria at \$10,000, eliminating discretionary expense accounts and giving the minister the tools to hold trustees accountable.

How can the member opposite stand in this House and vote against legislation that would prevent another \$190,000 junket to Italy on the backs of Ontario students?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the member for the question. I'm going to repeat the answer from my last question. You know, Vegas—massages in Vegas—I mean, do you want me to list all of the things that your government has done? It doesn't justify taking away democracy just because there's corruption. You address the corruption; you don't take away democracy and start appointing people and engaging in even more corruption.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: There was some discussion yesterday on this bill about constitutionality. I wanted to make the point that there is compliance with constitutional rights in this legislation. In order to underscore that, in schedule 2 of the bill, in paragraph 17.3—it's kind of a legal issue—it specifically says this act “does not apply with respect to an application for judicial review” or “a claim for constitutional remedy...”

I believe that it provides the constitutional safeguards—which, even if it weren't stated, would still be there anyway.

I just invite the member to comment on that in any way he chooses to do so.

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Mr. Jeff Burch: I honestly have no idea what the member just asked. But the bill doesn't address the staffing shortage. It doesn't address what's happening with students in classrooms. It doesn't address, as my friend from Nickel Belt pointed out, the terrible situation with children's mental health in the province. It doesn't address any of the problems, and trying to confuse things with legal mumbo jumbo doesn't make this bill any better.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague on this debate, There has been a lot of conversation today about being fiscally prudent. I want to point out that our debt today in Ontario under the Conservative government is \$485 billion. That's a 50.15% increase from when they took office. The deficit is \$13.8 billion. That is almost 77% higher than last year.

You would think that this has ballooned because we're investing more and more into students, into our children for education. But the reality is, there has been a \$6.35 billion cut to education, increased class sizes and reduced supports for students. There has been an increase of about \$400,000 for these appointed supervisors, who don't seem to be helping the students. And we do know that the Premier's office now has a payroll of \$8 million for the 50 people working for the Premier.

I'm just wondering, do you think that children in the classrooms would be better off if there were 50 people working for them?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend for the question. One of the things we try and teach kids is to lead by example. We have a government that doesn't lead by example. As was pointed out, this is just typical: get rid of some elected people and hire high-priced middle-management bureaucratic people. We see it in our health care system with middle management people, we see it in our education system, and we see it in our municipal system.

They're attacking municipal councillors across the province and appointing people, while they've downloaded—from 2019 to 2026, it's gone from \$3.5 billion to \$5.5 billion in provincial responsibilities onto municipalities. So they can't even do their job anymore as municipalities because they're trying to pay for things that this government is responsible for.

I guess the message is that they should lead by example.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question? I recognize the member for Ottawa–Vanier, quickly.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Again, I think the government's got their priorities wrong. I think that what's in this bill doesn't address the needs in our education system, and there's so much we could do and so many things we should be doing to help our kids succeed in our classrooms and have a better education.

I got into the education system because I couldn't believe how many portables there were in our schools—the schools my kids were going to—and I really wanted that to change. What would you like to see in this bill to help the kids at school?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A very quick response from the member from Niagara Centre.

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Mr. Jeff Burch: I completely agree. Thank you to the member for the question. As I mentioned in my speech, students are learning in schools with leaky roofs, aging buildings, massive repair backlogs. Those are the things that this government should be focused on, not on messing around with internal structures and getting rid of democratically elected people and appointing their cronies at \$300,000 or \$400,000 a year. That's what we want to see on this side of the House. But in all of these areas, whether it's school boards or municipalities, this government just wants to install their own friends and cronies in these jobs, pay them \$200,000 or \$300,000 and ignore the real problems.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, before I start my remarks, I will be sharing my time with the chief government whip, the member from Perth–Wellington.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to talk about Bill 101, the Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026. This bill is jointly proposed by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security.

If you look at the heart of this bill, as you know, the government is making historic investments in education that put students, parents and teachers first. These investments are focused on improving outcomes in the classroom and ensuring the success for our students. Parents and caregivers should be confident that these resources are reaching the classroom and these resources are directed to support student achievement and educators who are preparing students for a stronger and prosperous Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I'll be talking more about what is proposed by the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security. As we all know, colleges and universities play a critical role in Ontario's success. They prepare workers for in-demand jobs and institutions make sure the needs of learners and employers are taken care of.

What we are doing in this bill is, we are proposing changes that condense teacher education programs to 12 months over three consecutive semesters, as opposed to the current model of four semesters over two years. Another thing we'll be trying to do through this bill is establishing a new minimum length of practicum. As we all know, with work-integrated learning, over and over the data shows that when you have the learning as part of the work, you learn more and you learn faster and you stay longer and you contribute more. Across the country, as we know, practicums range from 70 days to 120. Teachers, faculties, students and school boards have been clear that in order to best prepare for a successful teaching career, our teacher candidates need as much time as possible in the classroom.

These changes would apply across the system to all 14 publicly assisted and three private faculties of education, to both English and French, saving students up to \$3,000—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I apologize to the member for interrupting him. I have stopped the clock.

Could side conversations please consider the fact that there is a member speaking that I am unable to hear—

Interjection.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): —who has the floor and I will be happy to hear him continue his speech.

I will return to the member from Mississauga–Malton, with apologies for the interruption.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciated that.

Madam Speaker, I was talking about that these changes would reduce the financial barrier to launching a successful teaching career by saving students up to \$3,000 in tuition.

As we all know, teachers are essential to Ontario's future. What we're doing through the bill is modernizing teacher education, investing in capacity, shortening time to entry and expanding responsible pathways.

Our government is ensuring that more qualified educators can enter classrooms sooner, without sacrificing quality. This approach saves candidates time and reduces cost. It trains them for successful careers and good-paying, in-demand jobs, and it ensures that students across Ontario have access to well-prepared teachers. As a whole, this approach will strengthen our education system, support families and build the workforce Ontario needs to remain competitive in the years ahead.

I urge everyone and I look forward to continuing this work with the Ministry of Education and our partners across the sector. It is time to stand up for our students and educators and support Bill 101.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member said he was sharing his time, and I recognize the member for Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's great to rise this morning on a very foggy Thursday morning to talk about a very important piece of legislation, colleagues: Bill 101, education 101 in the province of Ontario, and this important piece of legislation that the Minister of Education has brought forward to strengthen our great education system across Ontario and bring transparency, accountability and modernization, colleagues, to our education system.

I know that some of you in this place will know that I did have the pleasure of serving as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education—

Interjection.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the member from Whitby for that round of applause—when the member from King–Vaughan was the Minister of Education, and I know that when we were there, I found it perplexing that we still have an education system that was designed for a one-room school. Our education system was set up in the late 19th century, more or less when our country was forming and our province was being created. It was designed for a system where it was obviously classroom learning, a professor or a teacher at the front.

Obviously, education and technology have evolved since the late 19th century. I know the three previous Ministers of Education under this Premier have brought forward a plethora of initiatives, whether it's around curriculum development, whether it's around mental health supports in classrooms. Colleagues, I know it's been talked about a lot by some of the opposition members.

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I remember when I was in the Ministry of Education, serving as a parliamentary assistant, I was pleased to work with the then Minister of Education from King–Vaughan on increasing the mental health supports to our students in the schools. Now it's obviously higher, but at that time, four years ago now, we increased it to \$125 million annually in mental health supports for students in our schools.

I also remind colleagues around the support that we provide our primary care expansion. I meet with a lot of my family health teams. I have, I think, the most family health teams or primary care interdisciplinary teams in the province. They actually look at hiring child psychologists and other medical experts to work with our local school boards in that as well, ensuring they're then in our health care system and getting those additional supports in school, but outside of school as well. So a lot of government investment may not directly be focused on the Ministry of Education, but is supporting our students and children in their communities and across all communities.

Speaker, I know—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Don't worry, Speaker. I can talk over them.

Interjection: She can't hear you.

Mr. Matthew Rae: She can't hear me? This is the closest a member can be to the Speaker. She's probably telling me to quiet down.

Interjection: She has you in her sightline, too.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Speaker, I had the pleasure of hosting the current Minister of Education from Markham–Stouffville last week in my riding. We had the opportunity to tour a local school being built. The Drayton Catholic elementary school will open in September 2027. It is the first new elementary school in my riding in a few years, with over 200 student spaces. But more importantly, there are also 64 child care spaces. That's important because it's in a portion of my riding that doesn't have any licensed child care providers.

We're making this \$20-million investment in the community of Mapleton and Drayton. It was great to have the Minister of Education out there last week, as I mentioned, touring the site. Obviously, with the rain we've been having in Perth–Wellington, it was a muddy site. But seeing that progress—they've already start putting up the walls around the child care, and I know many people in my community have appreciated that.

I bring that up, Speaker, because this bill will allow the minister to ensure that we get more schools built quickly across the province of Ontario. I think of the Near North board, which encompasses North Bay and Parry Sound, where they literally built half a school and then they walked away from that. That's not acceptable, and that's why we're bringing forward this piece of legislation: to ensure accountability and transparency on making big capital decisions.

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As I mentioned, the elementary school in the community of Drayton is a \$20-million build now. Obviously, high schools, which are larger, are even more. So it's vital to ensure that our capital budget, well over \$16 billion in the Ministry of Education, is spent in a transparent and accountable way. This is the taxpayers' money, as the Premier likes to remind us in our caucus, and I know that's a focus of our government members. It's ensuring that we spend that money in an appropriate manner.

Colleagues, I know potentially later today, potentially next week, my colleagues across the way will have an opportunity to vote for this piece of legislation, and they have a decision to make. Will they stand with the trustees that take junkets to Italy and buy Italian art, or will they stand with the hard-working people in Perth–Wellington, Essex and Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, and vote with us to ensure that we continue to support Ontario?

I move this question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There having been nine hours of debate and 27 members having participated, Mr. Rae has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

It is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day.

Hon. Steve Clark: No business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There being no further business, this House stand in recess until 1015.

Education funding

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Minister of Education. Parents are here in the gallery today because they are alarmed by what the Conservative government is doing to our public schools and the one million children who attend them. This is what their kids are experiencing: overcrowded, large class sizes; schools being prepared for closure; hundreds of teacher layoffs; cuts to language programs; cuts to special education.

This is Jessica Roberts, a parent. She says, "Making cuts to classes for kids with disabilities tells us everything we need to know about this government's priorities."

Minister, what do you have to say to the parents here who are demanding this government stop the cuts and start prioritizing our schools?

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Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, the member opposite will know that education funding is at the highest level that it's ever been in provincial history. The member opposite will know that we've substantially increased special education funding in the province of Ontario.

But as I've said on many occasions, Madam Speaker, I don't think parents care that the opposition says I'm not spending enough or that I say I'm spending record levels. This is a story they've heard over and over and over again for the last 50, 60 years. A minister gets up and says, "I'm spending the most," and the opposition gets up—and the unions say, "You're not spending enough."

So here's what we're going to do. We're going to rebalance the system so that it's focused on student achievement. We're going to take the distractions out of the system, and we're going to focus again on giving teachers the resources they need so that our students can succeed.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Minister, these parents came here today because the cuts made by this government are directly impacting their children. That is why they're here: They are alarmed.

The minister can say all he wants about what the budget is telling us according to him, but the facts tell a different story. These are the facts: The government is on track to cut another \$900 million from schools over the next two years. That is the Financial Accountability Officer—\$900 million.

Minister, how bad are you going to let public schools get before you stop the cuts and start investing in our kids instead?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member opposite obviously knows that the funding formula is based on student enrolment, so obviously, when student enrolment goes down, certain areas of education are readjusted. But despite the fact that enrolment has gone down across the system, we are still spending record amounts in public education. We have declining student enrolment across the system, and we are spending more than we ever have on education.

Again, it comes down to the same thing: When you're a \$43-billion ministry, I think the people of the province of Ontario, the parents of the province of Ontario, expect that ministry to show leadership. That's what the bill in front of the House does: It shows leadership from the ministry. It puts more money back into our classrooms. It ensures accountability for our students. It removes the distractions and the fights between boards and parents so that teachers aren't put in the middle of that.

I know that's stressful for the opposition. I know it is, because they thrive on chaos. But what I think our students want is a system that works on their behalf. That's what this bill is about. It builds on the great work that was done by previous Ministers of Education to refocus the system on achievement.

Education issues

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier.

In a letter to the Minister of Education, the chair of Thames Valley District School Board's special education advisory committee raised concerns about "secrecy" at the board and how the appointed supervisor has "significantly reduced ... engagement and transparency," with

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decisions happening behind closed doors. The Conservatives' highly paid insider/supervisor is operating without accountability, and my community is losing trust.

Will the Premier direct his minister to respond to the letter and correct the culture of secrecy at TVDSB?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: So, I guess what the member opposite is suggesting is that a board that used money that was meant for the classroom, that instead went to a luxury hotel in Toronto and partied it up—that we should somehow support that type of an engagement. No. No, Madam Speaker.

I'll let the opposition continue to support a governance system that has failed our students so poorly in the province of Ontario.

Thames Valley is a classic example of why we brought in Bill 33. They are the poster child for why we brought in the reforms that we have in front of us right now, because what we're going to do is remove the diversions and distractions within the system and focus on student achievement.

We're going to stop putting teachers in the middle of disputes between parents and school boards. We're going to have real results expected from our education directors. We're going to refocus budgeting, human resources and capital into an office of a CEO—a person who can undertake those duties while still ensuring that the director of education is focused on one thing: student achievement.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Back to the Premier: Television, movies and video games include content warnings, but every day in Ontario, young people are witnessing vicious assaults, emergency evacuations and young people hurling vile and abusive language—all in their classrooms. But it's not a complicated problem to solve. Teachers are calling for smaller class sizes, targeted mental health and special education supports to help children succeed.

After billions of Conservative cuts and ignoring escalating problems in education, why on earth should students, parents and education workers believe this government gives a damn about public education?

Hon. Paul Calandra: When I speak to teachers, they say they want a system that is focused on allowing them to deliver results on behalf of their students.

I'll agree with the member opposite: There are a lot of additional distractions. I know that Minister Lecce, when he was there, instituted a cellphone ban. I am looking at extending that because a lot of the teachers in the system are telling me that there still remain distractions in the school, that they are very frustrated by the use of social media and the impacts that has, especially in our elementary and in our secondary schools with respect to bullying.

I am looking at other jurisdictions, the steps that they have taken. I've made no secret of that. I've also said very clearly that there have to be consequences for decisions that are made, consequences when you decide to skip school. This bill addresses that, but we also have to look at the discipline policy within our schools. Our teachers are telling me we have to bring

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back consequences for bad decisions if we're going to give them the ability to manage their school.

I appreciate the members opposite's support for—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Education issues

Mr. Ted Hsu: In May 2020, this government put out a news release that it had a great 2A Support for Students Fund “to provide school boards with more flexibility to address special education, mental health initiatives as well as unique learning needs.”

In October 2020, a government news release said, “Revoking regulation 274 is about ... giving school boards more flexibility...”

In October 2021, there's another news release saying they would “give school boards the flexibility to hire...”

After eight long years in power and having supposedly given school boards more flexibility, why are the Conservatives now throwing all school boards under the bus?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I don't know where to begin with that. I guess the member opposite forgets that we were in a global health and economic pandemic during the time frames that he mentions. Of course we were going to extend flexibility. The entire world was operating on flexibility. The member himself will know that the government of Ontario, this Legislature, came back and worked flexibly so that we could address the needs of the province and of the people of the province of Ontario. And we've extended, we've increased, special education funding by over \$3.85 billion above where it was when they left office.

That accountability has to return back to the system, and it starts with the Ministry of Education showing leadership to ensure that there is a consistent delivery and consistent level of results across the province. I'm not going to apologize for that at all. It is a \$43-billion ministry, and the people of the province of Ontario should expect that it delivers results on behalf of students.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ted Hsu: In August 2018, they put out a release entitled, “Ontario's Government for the People Respecting Parents by Holding Unprecedented Consultation into Education Reform.”

In April 2023, the Minister of Education said, “We're now going to be imposing a requirement for school boards to meet with their parent communities and other stakeholders and voices....”

Now Bill 101 says, stop collecting information from students, staff and parents. The minister knows best, and the best thing is to give him more power to control it all from Queen's Park.

After eight long years in power and five Ministers of Education later, why does this minister think he knows best?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, the bill does no such thing. But the member opposite and his party are continuing to support something called the climate survey within the school boards. So I'll let them go into their communities and explain to parents why a grade 7 student should be

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asked if he considers himself a Canadian. I'll let them go and explain how it improves the system when you ask somebody in grade 4 if they're non-binary, transgender or questioning; asking a student as young as grade 4 if they identify themselves as asexual or demisexual; asking students as young as grade 4 if they are worthless or inferior; asking students as young as grade 4 if they feel others will miss them when they went away.

I don't think that's the type of thing that helps build a better student—just the opposite, Madam Speaker—so I'm cancelling this survey, because it has no way of improving student results. He can try and explain to parents—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Education funding

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Speaker, as a former lifeguard, I saw first first-hand the importance of swimming lessons. The Lifesaving Society of Canada says, "Swimming is a life skill that all children need to learn." The Red Cross says, "Learning to swim saves lives."

With hotter summers, more people are jumping into a pool or a lake to cool off, but unfortunately, not everyone survives. Close to 200 people drown every year in Ontario, as well as hundreds of ER visits and hospitalizations for non-fatal drowning incidents.

While debating Bill 101, the Minister of Education mentioned pools in TDSB schools, saying he is very sympathetic to the board needing assistance with that infrastructure.

Speaker, my question to the Premier: How will you invest in school pools and ensure students are learning a vital life skill?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: A very good question; I appreciate the question from the member. I have said, and the Premier has also been very clear to me, that at some of the historical infrastructure in places like Toronto, where pools were built in co-operation with the municipality, and the municipality at some point decided to no longer support that, there would have to be special accommodation for that.

At the same time, life-saving skills like swimming—we saw in Dryden, I think, last year, a number of other instances. The mayor of Dryden was very, very expressive at last year's AMO conference that the province had to assist. We said that we would look at ways of adding into the curriculum additional opportunities for kids, not only in Toronto but across the province, to have access to life-saving swimming classes. So it is something that we're working on right now.

I know some people would suggest that there are other ways to do this, but just given the instances that we saw last summer, I think it is incumbent on us to see what help we can do. If we can provide that through the education system, at least in part, we will.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Beaches—East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Speaker, we have a serious shortage of lifeguards in Ontario. The TDSB now needs two lifeguards on deck to align with Ontario pool regulations. School swim programs need more staff to continue.

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In beautiful Beaches—East York, swimming lessons—part of the elementary curriculum—have gone from once a week to biweekly or monthly.

Fewer lifeguards also means fewer swim teams. I know the members from Eglinton—Lawrence, Willowdale, York South—Weston, Scarborough—Agincourt and York Centre are also very concerned about their school pools.

Speaker, my question to the Premier: Given that swimming is a life skill and that we all want to reduce drownings in Ontario, what is your plan to solve the lifeguard shortage at schools?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, this is not just a problem in Toronto. I know that when my daughters were learning to swim—we don't have pools in our high schools or in any of our schools in Stouffville, so my wife and I had to go to the local community centre. That's where we had swimming lessons with our children, and we used other community resources in order to give our children that opportunity.

So not every school in this province—in fact, very, very few have access to pools right within their schools. Is there something that we can do to handle those challenges in Toronto? Absolutely. But more importantly than that, Madam Speaker, this is something that we have to work on province-wide.

We have seen an alarming increase over the last number of years—again, I reiterate that the mayor of Dryden made a very, very, very passionate appeal on behalf of a number of communities where he had been seeing things that he was unhappy with. We made a commitment then that we would work within our school system to at least help.

But it's not just the school system, right? We have to work within our communities because not everybody, as I said, has access to a pool. We have to find other ways of delivering this program.

Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026

Deferred vote on the motion for closure on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On April 14, 2026, Mr. Calandra moved second reading of Bill 101, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care.

On April 16, 2026, Mr. Rae moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Mr. Rae's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

- Allsopp, Tyler
- Anand, Deepak

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- Babikian, Aris
- Bailey, Robert
- Bethlenfalvy, Peter
- Bouma, Will
- Bresee, Ric
- Calandra, Paul
- Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
- Cho, Stan
- Clark, Steve
- Coe, Lorne
- Cooper, Michelle
- Crawford, Stephen
- Cuzzetto, Rudy
- Darouze, George
- Denault, Billy
- Dixon, Jess
- Dowie, Andrew
- Downey, Doug
- Fedeli, Victor
- Firin, Mohamed
- Flack, Rob
- Ford, Doug
- Gallagher Murphy, Dawn
- Grewal, Hardeep Singh
- Gualtieri, Silvia
- Hamid, Zee
- Hardeman, Ernie
- Harris, Mike
- Holland, Kevin
- Jones, Sylvia

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- Jordan, John
- Kanapathi, Logan
- Kerzner, Michael S.
- Leardi, Anthony
- Lecce, Stephen
- McCarthy, Todd J.
- Mulroney, Caroline
- Oosterhoff, Sam
- Pang, Billy
- Parsa, Michael
- Pierre, Natalie
- Pinsonneault, Steve
- Pirie, George
- Quinn, Nolan
- Racinsky, Joseph
- Rae, Matthew
- Rosenberg, Bill
- Sabawy, Sheref
- Sandhu, Amarjot
- Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
- Sarrazin, Stéphane
- Saunderson, Brian
- Smith, Dave
- Smith, David
- Smith, Graydon
- Smith, Laura
- Tangri, Nina
- Thanigasalam, Vijay
- Thompson, Lisa M.
- Tibollo, Michael A.

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(Bill 101, Education Funding)

- Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
- Vickers, Paul
- Williams, Charmaine A.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): All those opposed to Mr. Rae's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

- Armstrong, Teresa J.
- Bell, Jessica
- Bourgouin, Guy
- Bowman, Stephanie
- Brady, Bobbi Ann
- Burch, Jeff
- Cerjanec, Rob
- Clancy, Aislinn
- Collard, Lucille
- Fife, Catherine
- Fraser, John
- French, Jennifer K.
- Gates, Wayne
- Gélinas, France
- Gilmour, Alexa
- Gretzky, Lisa
- Hazell, Andrea
- Hsu, Ted
- Kernaghan, Terence
- McCrimmon, Karen
- McKenney, Catherine
- McMahan, Mary-Margaret
- Pasma, Chandra
- Rakocevic, Tom

Hansard Thursday, April 16, 2026
(Bill 101, Education Funding)

- Sattler, Peggy
- Schreiner, Mike
- Shamji, Adil
- Shaw, Sandy
- Smyth, Stephanie
- Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
- Stiles, Marit
- Tabuns, Peter
- Tsao, Jonathan
- Vanthof, John
- Vaugeois, Lise
- Watt, Tyler
- West, Jamie
- Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 65; the nays are 38.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Calandra has moved second reading of Bill 101, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On April 14, 2026, Mr. Calandra moved second reading of Bill 101, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

- Allsopp, Tyler
- Anand, Deepak
- Babikian, Aris
- Bailey, Robert

Hansard Thursday, April 16, 2026
(Bill 101, Education Funding)

- Bethlenfalvy, Peter
- Bouma, Will
- Brady, Bobbi Ann
- Bresee, Ric
- Calandra, Paul
- Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
- Cho, Stan
- Clark, Steve
- Coe, Lorne
- Cooper, Michelle
- Crawford, Stephen
- Cuzzetto, Rudy
- Darouze, George
- Denault, Billy
- Dixon, Jess
- Dowie, Andrew
- Downey, Doug
- Fedeli, Victor
- Firin, Mohamed
- Flack, Rob
- Ford, Doug
- Gallagher Murphy, Dawn
- Grewal, Hardeep Singh
- Gualtieri, Silvia
- Hamid, Zee
- Hardeman, Ernie
- Harris, Mike
- Holland, Kevin
- Jones, Sylvia
- Jordan, John

Hansard Thursday, April 16, 2026
(Bill 101, Education Funding)

- Kanapathi, Logan
- Kerzner, Michael S.
- Leardi, Anthony
- Lecce, Stephen
- McCarthy, Todd J.
- Mulroney, Caroline
- Oosterhoff, Sam
- Pang, Billy
- Parsa, Michael
- Pierre, Natalie
- Pinsonneault, Steve
- Pirie, George
- Quinn, Nolan
- Racinsky, Joseph
- Rae, Matthew
- Rosenberg, Bill
- Sabawy, Sheref
- Sandhu, Amarjot
- Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
- Sarrazin, Stéphane
- Saunderson, Brian
- Smith, Dave
- Smith, David
- Smith, Graydon
- Smith, Laura
- Tangri, Nina
- Thanigasalam, Vijay
- Thompson, Lisa M.
- Tibollo, Michael A.
- Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.

Hansard Thursday, April 16, 2026
(Bill 101, Education Funding)

- Vickers, Paul
- Williams, Charmaine A.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

- Armstrong, Teresa J.
- Bell, Jessica
- Bourgouin, Guy
- Bowman, Stephanie
- Burch, Jeff
- Cerjanec, Rob
- Clancy, Aislinn
- Collard, Lucille
- Fife, Catherine
- Fraser, John
- French, Jennifer K.
- Gates, Wayne
- Gélinas, France
- Gilmour, Alexa
- Gretzky, Lisa
- Hazell, Andrea
- Hsu, Ted
- Kernaghan, Terence
- McCrimmon, Karen
- McKenney, Catherine
- McMahon, Mary-Margaret
- Pasma, Chandra
- Rakocevic, Tom
- Sattler, Peggy
- Schreiner, Mike

Hansard Thursday, April 16, 2026
(Bill 101, Education Funding)

- Shamji, Adil
- Shaw, Sandy
- Smyth, Stephanie
- Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
- Stiles, Marit
- Tabuns, Peter
- Tsao, Jonathan
- Vanthof, John
- Vaugeois, Lise
- Watt, Tyler
- West, Jamie
- Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 66; the nays are 37.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard a no.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The bill will be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The bill is therefore referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.