

Hansard Tuesday, May 12, 2026
(Mental Health and Addictions, Special Education)

Mental health and addiction services

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I want to thank two grassroots organizations whose members believe that people who use or have used drugs deserve safe and equitable access to care without stigma. Thunder Bay's DEK Foundation was founded by Carolyn Karle after the tragic loss of her daughter to an unintentional overdose.

Moms Stop the Harm is a Canada-wide network of families impacted by substance use harms and deaths.

The province's Homelessness Prevention Program offers transitional shelter to people made vulnerable by being homeless, and this is important. But when a person has successfully completed addiction treatment, there is nowhere safe to go and there are no long-term recovery supports. Because of this, the risk of relapse is high.

DEK and Moms Stop the Harm fundraise and advocate for housing and wraparound supports for those who have just finished substance use treatment, but they need a willing government partner.

Deaths in Thunder Bay from unintentional overdoses are six times the provincial average. After-treatment housing and wraparound supports are urgently needed to stop this tragic loss of life.

I implore the government to work with DEK and Moms Stop the Harm. The right supports will save lives and ease those in recovery towards healthy relationships with themselves and others.

Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

Special education

MPP Alexa Gilmour: My question is to the Premier. The Ontario Autism Coalition has surveyed families across 64 school boards and found education plans written but not followed, accommodations promised but not delivered, children locked out of classrooms because there are no adults there to support them.

Nearly three quarters of families reported safety concerns at school, and an estimated 22,000 students with disabilities weren't attending at all last year—22,000. How can this government call Ontario's education system inclusive when so many children are literally being pushed out of it?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Let me just at the outset say I don't disagree with many of the things in the member's question, that's why we're taking a very serious look. I announced a number of weeks ago that we're going to take a serious look at special education delivery across the province of Ontario. The members have heard me say it. It doesn't matter—I can get up here and tell you that we've increased funding substantially. Who cares? As long as we're not getting the results that we expect from the system, then something has to change.

We've heard from the autism community—but not just the autism community, others with respect to seclusion, and I'm troubled by it. I'm troubled by some of the things I saw in the Auditor General's report. We'll have a bit more to say on that later on today.

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But as I said, I think some of the actions that we've seen at school boards across the province of Ontario and the inaction from my ministry are unacceptable, and we'll make some changes to it.

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: To the minister: You've had eight years to fix these. There are 22,000 children that weren't pushed out of the classrooms by accident.

The province's own Financial Accountability Office confirms that per-student funding is at the lowest level in a decade—a decade. School boards are already spending more on special education than this government gives them, and the Auditor General report confirms what students and families have known for years: When the funding fails and falls, then educational assistants will disappear, IEPs will go unfollowed and children will get sent home.

This is not a coincidence; this is a policy choice. When will the government make a different one?

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

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank the honourable member for the question. I thank the Minister of Education for the work that he's doing and the investments and the commitment that he has made when it comes to special education in our province.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to supporting families with children and youth with autism in our province, our government stepped up. I want to thank the President of the Treasury Board because she's in this chamber. In this recent budget, we saw an increase to the Ontario Autism Program by an additional funding of \$186 million, bringing our total funding to nearly \$1 billion. Thank you very much, Madam President.

Why is it so important? Because we want to make sure that outcomes for every child, every youth is improved in this province. To do that, we want to provide that support early on. That's why we have a program that was developed by the Ontario autism community for the autism community. That work is upstream. That investment is early on to make sure every child and youth in this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?