

### Education funding

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** The Conservative government has put the Toronto District School Board under undemocratic supervision, and now the drastic cuts to our schools have begun: staff in school cafeterias cut, staff that support school libraries cut, staff who support students in disadvantaged schools cut, two outdoor education centres closed, 150 lunchroom supervisors laid off, 25 clerical staff laid off, 40 vice-principals laid off, 69 child and youth workers cut, 483 teaching positions surplus, 72 ESL teachers cut.

Now the government says that this is all about right-sizing, modernizing, just responding to declining enrolment. Well, I have two responses to that: These cuts are far bigger than declining enrolment, and these cuts are due to a budget shortfall that is entirely of the Conservative government's own making. Not a single parent believes for one second that this is not going to have an impact on our children.

This is also a message from parents to this government: Stop the cuts, invest in public schools and invest in our kids.

### Special-needs students

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, first let me say, yes, you bought him a private luxury jet; we know you support him.

Yesterday, unfortunately, the Auditor General's report told us what parents have been telling us for so many years: The government is failing our children, and especially children with special needs. Sending kids home because there's no support for them, unmanageable teacher-student ratios, ignoring education plans—that is the state of our classrooms under this government's watch. So to the Premier: Does the Premier even care about students with special needs and that they are being left behind?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Obviously we do, and that is why we've increased funding to special education to record levels across the province of Ontario.

But as I've said on a number of occasions and I will continue to say, I don't think parents care and I don't think teachers care that ministers get up here and say it's the highest level of funding or that the opposition says it's not enough. What they care about is, what are the outcomes for their students and for their children? That is what we are going to continue to focus on: outcomes.

As I said yesterday, I'm very concerned by a number of the things that I saw in the report. That is why the ministry needs to step up and show more leadership across the province of Ontario and stop downloading to school boards that are clearly incapable of dealing with some of the situations they have in front of them. For 50 years that leadership has not been shown. Two bills that we brought before this House over the last year have brought back that leadership to the Ministry of Education, and we will make sure that this job gets done for the students and teachers of the province of Ontario.

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

Hansard Wednesday, May 13, 2026  
(Education Funding, Special Education, Skilled Trades)

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I find it a bit rich to hear the minister talk about this as if it's the first he's ever heard of this because, I've got to tell you, we've been raising these issues in the House for years, and so have parents and teachers and so have, frankly, students, because there's horror story and horror story, one after the other, for so many years under this government. Teachers, education workers, are struggling. Our kids are struggling. Parents are struggling. And this minister is sitting in his ivory tower, gathering power and throwing, frankly, very callous comments out there and saying, "You know what? Too bad, no more funding for you. You're on your own." That's what we heard yesterday.

Why has this government so badly neglected special education and the students who need it?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I think what the Leader of the Opposition actually heard me say yesterday, and has been hearing me say for the last year, is that the Ministry of Education has not shown the leadership that is required to provide the best quality education for our students. It has constantly been downloaded for the last 50 years, and we are going to step up and show that leadership.

Now she says that we don't care about special education. She voted against every single increase to special education. It is the highest level of funding that this province has ever had. That started under the previous ministers of education. It has continued under us right now and in this last budget that she voted against.

But it doesn't matter that the minister says it's the highest level of funding; it doesn't matter that the Leader of the Opposition says it's not enough. What matters are the outcomes. Clearly the outcomes are not matching the funding levels, and that is what we're going to make sure of. You know how we're going to do it? By listening to educators who are constantly telling us that perhaps the inclusion model isn't working; perhaps the resources that they need aren't there. We're going to listen to them, we're going to provide the appropriate level of funding, and the ministry is going to step up and show leadership.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Very interesting comment that the minister just made—maybe inclusion isn't working. Does the minister even believe that children with special needs, like every other child in this province, have a right to an education? Because that's not what I'm hearing. They are being excluded. They are being sent home. The government has no data, no tracking, no guidelines.

The minister really needs to go back and read the Auditor General's report, because what the Auditor General said is that special education amendments and plans from the boards are collecting dust on his desk. That's what's going wrong. But he still thinks he should be the emperor of education. He still thinks that his downtown office knows what's best for local schools.

Back to the minister and to the Premier: How can the Premier have any confidence in his minister after the mess he has created in our schools?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, for 50 years governments of all stripes have downloaded responsibility for education to school boards. What we have seen is that they're incapable of

dealing with what we have downloaded to them. What we're saying is that it's time for us to step up.

The report clearly highlights failings of the ministry—it clearly highlights that—failings that have come from the decentralization of education. So what we're going to do—the bills that we have before the House that have been passed are about the ministry stepping up and showing that leadership so that we can centralize and we can have a consistent level of education across the province.

What I care about for kids with special needs is that their special needs are accommodated in our schools. It's not one-size-fits-all. Every child matters, and that is why every child should have access to a special education system that works for them—not for the opposition, not for me, but for the child.

### **Special-needs students**

**Mr. John Fraser:** My question is for the Premier. I think I've asked this question 20 times, about who owns the Premier's luxury private jet, but the good news is I answered my question, Speaker. I answered my own question: The Premier owns the luxury private jet, because he will always own it.

I thought about it in relation to the Auditor General's report. We saw some pretty scary stats. Nine out of 10 teachers feel that they can't give children with exceptional needs the help they need, the help they deserve, the help that's in their plan. So juxtaposition that to "the Premier can buy himself a luxury private jet." If there are no resources, no money for children with exceptional needs in this government, how is it we can afford to buy the Premier a luxury private jet?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** This, coming from a member whose party underfunded special education for 15 years—that is the reality of the previous Liberal government. This, coming from a member who has been afraid to ask about education—the only question they asked about education was, how come we can't go to graduation ceremonies, and can the minister help them get to a graduation ceremony?

Now he's coming and lecturing us about special education when previous ministers before me have increased funding for special education to the highest level that we have ever seen in the province. But you know, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if that level is the highest unless the outcomes match the funding, Madam Speaker. And the outcomes are clearly not matching the funding, and that is why we're going to make sure that we'd better listen to educators, we'd better listen to those who are providing assistance for our students, including our parents, and that every child has the opportunity to succeed in the province of Ontario.

It's not about Liberal ideology or NDP failings. It's about making sure our kids succeed, and you do that by listening to teachers and giving the—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the leader of the third party.

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's about eight years—eight years the Minister of Education and the Minister of Energy have made a mess of kids' special education. We know from the Auditor General's

Hansard Wednesday, May 13, 2026  
(Education Funding, Special Education, Skilled Trades)

report three years ago that they were shorting kids \$350 million. Now we know it's over \$800 million, so our kids are suffering. And we know that the supervisors now are cutting special education, totally opposed to what the minister is saying right now.

So if cabinet can line up and unanimously approve a luxury private jet for the Premier, who already has access to one, why do we have no money, no resources for kids with exceptional needs?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The member clearly did not read any part of the report, because what the member is trying to do is actually defend his record when they were in office, a record of failure when it came to special education across the province.

What did the previous minister do? He guided us through a COVID challenge, a global health and economic pandemic—that kept our kids in school. That's what this government dealt with. And now we're dealing, of course, with a global tariff war.

But despite all of the challenges this government has faced, what are we doing? We've increased funding for education to the highest level in provincial history. We've increased funding for special education to the highest level in provincial history, Madam Speaker. But you know what? The results aren't matching the highest level of funding. We're hearing that from teachers, we're hearing that from parents and we're hearing that also from the Auditor General. So what are we going to do? We're not going to double down and give more money to a system that is failing our kids. We're going to find out why it's not working, and we're going to provide the appropriate level of funding so that the achievement matches the funding better, and the ministry is going to step up and show leadership, something that they have been—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Leader of the third party.

**Mr. John Fraser:** The minister is failing them by just simply not giving the resources that are needed to help our kids. That's what's happening here.

The Auditor General confirmed for us what we already knew, that the wait-list for assessments in the schools are too long, so people are having to pay privately. So they pay through their taxes, and then they pay privately.

I told the story of Marigold, the six-year-old who lives in my riding, and how her parents had to pay for an assessment at four years old because they couldn't get one in schools. Two years later, she's still not getting services. Two years is a long time when you're a little kid. Think about it. When you're six years old, two years is a long time. But you know what? The Premier couldn't wait to get his luxury private jet, right? Couldn't wait, had to get it—it was that important. But Marigold? She can languish.

So maybe the minister can answer why he signed off on the Premier's luxury private jet while Marigold sits stranded without services in her school.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Really, this member has the nerve to get up and talk about failings? This is a member who, in his own riding, refused to give money to the children's hospital—in his own riding—so that they could expand. Our government had to step up.

This is a member who voted against every single long-term-care expansion. He never actually built long-term care in his riding. This is a member who closed down 600 schools across the

Hansard Wednesday, May 13, 2026  
(Education Funding, Special Education, Skilled Trades)

province of Ontario. This is a member who increased taxes for every single person in the province of Ontario. This is a member who spent billions upon billions and has nothing to show for it.

Fifteen long, dark, miserable, agonizing years of failure under the previous Liberal government, and, thankfully, in 2018, a Progressive Conservative government building schools, building hospitals, building long-term care, building roads, bringing jobs and economic prosperity back to the province of Ontario, ending the failures of the previous government and—  
Interjections.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the leader of the third party.

### **Special-needs students**

**Mr. John Fraser:** Speaker, back to the minister: At four years old, Marigold's parents, Kristin and Mason, knew she had exceptional needs. They couldn't wait more than a year to get her assessed, so they paid thousands and thousands of dollars to get her an assessment. Then she gets to school; two years later, no services.

Her parents work full-time, and they can't get time off work, so her aunt Karen supports her by taking her to appointments and helping the family with the cost of those appointments. They're paying for those appointments too. They're paying in their taxes, they're paying for assessments, and they're not getting anything from this minister. No matter how much he blows off steam here in the assembly, she's not getting what she needs.

So they pay taxes, they pay out of pocket, and do you know what? They paid for the Premier's plane too. How is it that this minister can sit there after signing off on the Premier's luxury jet and knowing that Marigold is not getting the services that she needs? And I called the supervisor, and no action.

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** He called the supervisor and no action, he said, in Ottawa—a supervisor who is putting more money back into the classrooms in Ottawa; a supervisor who has the vast, overwhelming support of parents in his community; a supervisor who ended fighting in his community.

These were trustees in his own community who he supported, who were spending more money fighting each other than they were investing new investments in special education.

Where was that member when he had the opportunity to do something? Sitting on his hands, as he always did. Where was that member when the Liberals were spending a billion dollars to save two ridings in the gas plant scandal? Sitting on his hands and doing absolutely nothing, because that's what Liberals do best.

This is a party, colleagues, who think they're ready to govern the province. The only thing he can say is, "Oh you're an emperor." That's the best they've got. "Oh, please, help me get to graduation ceremonies, Minister, because people in the schools like you better than they like the Liberal Party."

Hansard Wednesday, May 13, 2026  
(Education Funding, Special Education, Skilled Trades)

Do you know what, Madam Speaker? We're going to focus on what is important: jobs and economic growth. Do you know why we have to focus on that so bad? Because under 15 long, dark, miserable years of the Liberals, they chased away jobs, they bankrupted the province, and they made us the laughingstock of—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the leader of the third party.

**Mr. John Fraser:** A supervisor, Minister—

Interjections.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Listen up—a supervisor who is cutting speech pathologists. And do you know what Marigold needs? Speech pathology.

All the yelling, all the blowing off steam, all the big talk, all of this bluster that you're giving, Minister, isn't getting Marigold and children like her—thousands of children in this province aren't getting what they need, and they don't need to hear the minister blowing off steam. They need to hear him say, "We're going to invest in special education. We're going to make sure that kids get what they need," and a minister who is going to say, "No, Premier, you can't get that luxury private jet right now, because I've got this other thing that we have to do for Marigold and thousands of kids like her."

And you may all be smiling there, but do you know what? You all approved a luxury private jet while people are in need in this province—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Through the Speaker.

**Mr. John Fraser:** —and kids like Marigold.

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Well, then, by that logic this member holds responsibility for every single investment that we've made in 2018 that has gone against the people. He's voted against his hospital. He's voted against tax cuts. He's voted against the gas tax cut. He's voted against eliminating taxes for the most vulnerable in the province of Ontario. That means he's voted against long-term-care expansions in his riding. He's voted against improvements to transit and transportation in his riding. By that measure, he is responsible for every bad thing that has happened in the province of Ontario because he votes for it.

We are responsible for jobs. We are responsible for growth. We are responsible for prosperity. We are responsible for the billions of dollars of economic investment. I will take that responsibility.

He talks about the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. Yes, the supervisor eliminated some 300 positions there at head office. And do you know what he's doing with the millions of dollars that he has saved by reducing the executive corps? He's putting it right back into the classroom on top of the million dollars this—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Leader of the third party.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Marigold needs a speech-language pathologist. The minister's supervisor is cutting them. It's that simple, Minister.

Hansard Wednesday, May 13, 2026  
(Education Funding, Special Education, Skilled Trades)

If you want to talk about executive offices, in this government, in 2018, they were \$34 million; they're now \$82 million. If you want to talk about the Premier's office, it was \$2 million in 2018; it's now \$8 million.

If you want to talk about something else, the Premier gets a luxury private jet, and all of you line up. All you co-pilots better be careful, because the captain and Teneycke are going to take you down.

You approved a luxury private jet when people need speech-language pathologists, when kids need help in school, and you're not delivering it. So how is it you can approve a luxury private jet when you know this, Minister?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Through the Speaker. I recognize the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, this is a member who just made light of the fact that we cut head office jobs—absolutely—executive positions at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, because we could save a million dollars that we could put back into the system. He disagrees with that.

We've ended trustees at that board fighting each other—over a million and a half dollars. We have stopped that, and we're putting it back into the classroom.

This is a member, of course, who fought tooth and nail to—we all remember the billion-dollar gas plant scandal to save two ridings. That's a billion dollars that didn't go into special education.

This is a member who, every single time he had the opportunity to vote in favour of increases in special education, voted against them. When the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services put record levels of funding for children, he voted against it.

What are we responsible for? Jobs and economic prosperity, the likes of which this province has never seen, and—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

### **Special-needs students**

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** The Auditor General's special education report confirms what parents and educators have experienced for years: This government's announcements are not reaching the classroom.

For example, in March 2023, the minister claimed their spending would ensure that special-needs students "have the supports, the resources and the staff in place to succeed."

The Auditor General found the opposite—educational assistant absences being unfilled, students with special needs being kept away and worse: 18% of EAs are absent on any given day, primarily because of elevated stress and student-related physical injuries.,

The Premier can find \$30 million for a luxury jet, but special-needs kids are being kept home and educators are being injured. Why are they able to spend carelessly on the Premier's priorities but not carefully on vulnerable students?

Hansard Wednesday, May 13, 2026  
(Education Funding, Special Education, Skilled Trades)

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Look, Madam Speaker, this coming from a party that found a billion dollars to take out of education, to take out of health care, to try and save two members during a gas plant scandal. This is a party whose chief of staff went to jail and whose education adviser, I think, followed him soon after.

What we did and what he voted against was—when the previous minister increased funds for special education year after year, they voted against that. What we’re saying now is that we want to ensure that the record level of funding matches achievement for students. They have been fighting that every step of the way. We brought two bills to this House that they voted against which will reassert the Ministry of Education’s leadership to ensure that we have a consistent level of education, including special education, across the province of Ontario. That does not mean that the unique problems that children in the system face will not be addressed; just the opposite, Madam Speaker, just the opposite. Because what we heard is this: that educators and parents want assurances that their child’s needs are being met.

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

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Voters in Kingston and the Islands last election made it pretty clear why it’s important to vote against this government. In October 2024, the minister said, “violence is never acceptable.... That’s why my ministry will continue to invest over \$220 million for student safety and well-being, including for special education.”

Now, the Auditor General says that undocumented cases of special-needs students being kept away from school is common. In those cases, safety concerns were a reason 81% of the time, and lack of support and resources were a reason 64% of the time. Teachers have told me that special education teachers often don’t do special education; they have to fill in for missing EAs. So where has the money gone? How did this government, over eight years, let it get to the point where students, parents and educators have experienced this government’s inadequacies every day for years? And the minister only now—only now—is saying he has to “step up and show ... leadership.”

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I can appreciate that the people of Kingston said that they had to do one thing, but if he was just to look to his left, he will see the seat where his leader was supposed to be sitting, filled by a Conservative member of Parliament. And if he was to look one seat over, he will find another Progressive Conservative. If he was to look behind him, he will find two more Progressive Conservatives. And if he looked over here, he will see a whole lot of Progressive Conservatives. You know why? Because the people of the province of Ontario, for the third straight time, sent a Progressive Conservative majority government to govern the province of Ontario.

You know why? You know why, Madam Speaker? Because for 15 long, dark, agonizing, miserable years of failure where they closed schools, they didn’t build hospitals, where they fired nurses, where they raised taxes, where they put red tape on top of red tape, they devastated energy in this province—

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

### Skilled trades

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. Ontario's skilled trades offer young people and job seekers a viable, rewarding and high-paying career path. While the previous Liberal government left behind a generational labour shortage, our government is taking action to expose more students to the trades earlier and help them see the opportunities available right here in Ontario.

Across our province, we hear from parents who want their children to have real opportunities, from students who are wondering what careers will give them security, from employers who need the next generation of skilled workers to help the economy move. Will the minister please share with the House what our government is doing to support young people and job seekers as they plan for their future?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the member for Mississauga–Erin Mills.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** I want to thank the member for the question. Young people across Ontario want the same thing: a chance to build a future, earn a paycheque and support a family. At a time of global economic uncertainty, our government is not standing still. We recently announced another year of Level Up! career fairs, which provide students with hands-on exposure to rewarding careers and connect them directly with employers, unions, colleges and training partners. Last year alone, more than 50,000 young people attended these fairs, helping them to see that trades are not a backup plan; they are pathways to stable, respected and good-paying careers.