

Hansard Thursday, May 14, 2026
(Education Funding, KidsAbility)

Education funding

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Bonjour, Speaker. I rise today to recognize a historic milestone for Brampton West, the groundbreaking of Brampton's first-ever French-language Catholic secondary school. Our government is investing \$43.8 million, including \$27.5 million in additional funding, to create 410 new student spaces for local families and support the growing French-speaking Catholic community in our city.

Speaker, this investment builds on our government's strong record of delivering education infrastructure in Brampton West. Construction is under way on the new Mount Pleasant secondary school, supported through an \$84.2-million provincial investment that will create 1,660 student spaces and 73 child care spaces.

Not only that, Madam Speaker: Last year, Red Cedar Public School and Malala Yousafzai Public School opened their doors, creating 1,700 new student spaces and 146 child care spaces combined for local families.

Through our nearly \$180-million investment in the Toronto Metropolitan University School of Medicine in Brampton, we're also helping train the next generation of health care professionals right in our community.

Speaker, our government is making the investments needed to ensure students and families in Brampton West have access to modern schools and opportunities for success for generations to come.

KidsAbility

Ms. Catherine Fife: Parents, staff and community members have been sharing their concerns with me about the recent workforce reductions and lack of financial transparency at KidsAbility. KidsAbility is a treasured institution for child development and inclusion. In the past, they reinvented the way care is provided to better meet the needs of local kids and their families earlier in their journey.

But according to public records, there's been a consistent increase in funding since 2020, yet to date, 63 people have been laid off, 45 of which were front-line staff. Service levels are being impacted.

It's difficult to justify these staffing cuts when last year, KidsAbility's CEO saw a 22.1% increase in her salary. The IT and marketing departments are steadily growing while front-line clinical services have been slashed. Resource allocation should prioritize children, especially given the wait-list.

As one parent says, "Since there have been no cuts to funding, KidsAbility leadership owes the public a clear explanation as to why these layoffs were necessary. The loss of experienced staff and the disruption of services caused by these layoffs cannot be easily recovered. Institutional knowledge, trust and continuity are not easily recovered. Leadership must be accountable...." We agree. Families and children in Waterloo region demand better. We demand transparency as well, and we will not stop fighting for those kids.

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Ms. Chandra Pasma: When it comes to private luxury planes and Austrian spa companies, the Premier always has money, but when it comes to our kids, somehow the cupboard is always bare. After eight years of funding cuts, our kids are in large classes in unsafe schools. The teachers and education workers who support them are being fired. There's no mental health supports and special education is failing. And yet, the Premier has nothing to offer them except another cut in funding.

What will it take for the Premier to put our kids ahead of his own personal vanity projects?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: It was actually interesting—I did read the NDP press release yesterday when it came to education funding and they said it was a cut hidden in an increase. And it meant so much to me because it really explains to me everything about the NDP. When their caucus was cut in half, they actually assumed it meant that they were increased, right? But what happened in education yesterday was an increase in funding yet again—the highest level of funding in the province's history. We are well on our way to doing exactly what we said we were going to do: take the division out of education; focus on students, parents and teachers, not ideology that divides people; focus on student achievement across the board; a more consistent level of education so that no matter where in this province you are, you have an education system that you can rely on and where teachers and students have the opportunity for the highest level of academic achievement. That's what we're going to do and we will not be put off on that mission.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Ottawa West–Nepean.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It sounds like someone would get an F on the grade 10 financial literacy test, Speaker.

Our kids are in the midst of a mental health crisis without the trained, caring professionals needed to support them. One high school in eastern Ontario with 1,000 students has one student support counsellor, so students have to take a number when they need help. But at least that school has someone; half of our schools have no mental health professional at all. For the Premier, this is apparently good enough. Funding for student mental health is not going up a single cent this year. Why does the Premier think it's okay to abandon kids when they need help?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Colleagues, this is a member who yesterday was upset that we fired some people at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board—some of the higher administrators—because we want to save \$1 million and put it back into the classroom. This is a member, yesterday, who fought against that. This is a member who fights against us eliminating trustees because they are spending more money fighting each other than they are putting into special education across the province, because that's what the opposition likes. See, for the opposition, if you have a system that is built on division, a system that is built on dividing people as opposed to bringing people together, that's what they thrive on.

So what we're going to do is continue to do what we do. We're going to work together—the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, the Minister of Health. That is what the Premier has asked us to do: Work together across government—shocking—to ensure that we have the best levels of support for our children in school and in community, because that's exactly what has to happen if you're going to build a bigger, better, stronger province of Ontario.