

Hansard Thursday, May 1, 2025
(Mental Health Services, School Boards, Municipal Accountability Act)

Mental health and addiction services

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I'm honoured to rise today to make my first member's statement as the MPP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

From May 5 to May 11, agencies, advocates, families and patients are marking mental health awareness week across Canada.

In Canada, one in four people will experience mental illness. We know that addressing mental health early is critical to prevent illness.

Tomorrow, I will be visiting the Jean Tweed Centre, a treatment centre in my riding for women looking to overcome challenges with substance use, gambling and mental health.

Next week, I'll be attending mental health night at my son's school, Silverthorn Collegiate, where he's a student in the high-performance athlete program. The invited speaker is a prominent advocate for mental health in the sports community. It's open to anyone to attend.

Young people aged 15 to 24 are more likely to experience mental illness and substance use disorders than any other age group. Some 39% of Ontario high school students indicate a moderate to serious level of psychological distress, including anxiety and depression.

We have come a long way in addressing stigma, but we have a ways to go in funding mental health like other health care challenges. Mental health is health.

I encourage all MPPs to seek out mental health providers in your communities and learn more about the essential role they play in supporting healthy families and vibrant and prosperous communities.

School boards

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education.

Minister, your government recently began investigating the TDSB, citing financial concerns. While I agree that fiscal responsibility matters, we also can't ignore the real challenges facing the students across the TDSB and in my riding of Don Valley North due to chronic underfunding. In fact, since 2019, per-student funding has dropped by nearly \$1,500, leading to larger class sizes and less support for students.

My question to the minister: Will this ministry's investigation include a full review of these urgent needs, and will your government commit to properly funding the solutions?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

Let's put this into perspective. The Toronto District School Board has been running multi-year deficits. What they're being asked to do is find savings of less than 2% in an over \$3-billion budget.

They did exactly what I expected them to do. Last night, they attacked students, parents and teachers, as opposed to finding savings by reducing, let's say, the number of superintendents they have or by going after the \$35 million of paid leave that they have. What did they do? They attacked students. They attacked teachers. That is what that school board does—and that is why I'm sending an investigator into that school to put it back on the right track.

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Let me be very clear to the member opposite and to the members of the Toronto District School Board, the trustees: Do the right things for students. Do the right things for teachers. If you don't, I'll take you over and I'll put the board back on track.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Don Valley North.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Minister, the fact is that when funding goes down, students feel it—and so does the quality of their education.

Parents and teachers in my riding are deeply—deeply—concerned about the impact of the inaction of this government over the past seven years, especially on special education, IT programs, and opportunities in music, drama, sports and the arts. On top of that, aging infrastructure only adds to these pressures.

If your government will not fill the \$1,500 per-student shortfall, will your ministry's investigation, at the very least, show how the TDSB is expected to pay for these essential programs and maintenance?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes, absolutely. That's exactly what we're going to do—because, as I said, colleagues, the Toronto District School Board did exactly what I expected last night. What did they say? “Oh, we're going to close all our pools. We're going to fire our music teachers.”

What they didn't say is, “We're going to look at the record number of superintendents who are littered all over the sunshine list”—they went from 3,000 to 8,000 people on the sunshine list. “We're not looking at that at the TDSB.” Why? Because the TDSB and the trustees are all about protecting themselves at the expense of students, at the expense of teachers. And that is what the Liberal record is, Madam Speaker—every one of those trustees is either a former Liberal or NDP caucus member or candidate.

Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to put the board back on track. The investigator will find a way to put it back on track. And if they don't do it, I'll take it over and I'll do it for them.

Municipal Accountability Act, 2025

Mr. Flack moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 in relation to codes of conduct

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Would the member briefly explain the bill?

Hon. Rob Flack: The proposed legislation, the Municipal Accountability Act, if passed, will strengthen accountability at the municipal level by improving how codes of conduct are applied across Ontario. The legislation allows the province to set consistent codes of conduct for all municipalities. We are proposing to give the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario new tools to support and oversee local integrity commissioners. These changes will help ensure local governments operate with greater transparency, fairness and public trust.