

Children and Youth in Care Day

Mr. Deepak Anand: Speaker, it is our shared responsibility to ensure that every child grows up in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment. When we invest in the well-being of our children, including those in care, we build the foundation for a more just and compassionate society.

May 14 is Children and Youth in Care Day, a time to recognize their courage, celebrate their voices and reaffirm our collective duty to support their well-being and success. Children and youth in care show remarkable strength and resilience. They deserve our admiration and our action.

This year, Peel Children's Aid Society marked the day with a vibrant celebration and ongoing wellness-focused activities through its Trailblazers Youth Centre, a youth-led, empowering space in Mississauga–Malton designed to foster belongingness, build leadership and support youth in shaping their futures. To the youth, staff and partners, and the leaders, Mary Beth and Prasad Nair: Thank you for your vision and leadership.

Peel CAS also proudly co-leads Ontario's first youth wellness hub, led by our CAS, offering integrated mental health support for our youth.

Let's stand together every day to uplift, invest and empower youth in care. Their future is our future. Let's build a stronger, prosperous Ontario together.

Government spending

Mr. John Fraser: Imagine an Ontario that's half a trillion dollars in debt. I don't actually have to imagine, because we're there. And while the Premier has been busy setting that record, he's been even busier on another record, and that's the amount of money his government has spent since 2018 on self-serving, taxpayer-funded, partisan ads. That's hundreds of millions of dollars. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her help.

Speaker, through you: Will the government pay back the money they've wasted on taxpayer-funded, partisan ads?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Through you, Madam Speaker, thank you for the question from the independent party, the Liberal Party, the party opposite.

Let's think about this in context: We inherited deficits—year after year after year of deficits—from the Liberal Party, supported by the NDP. What have we done since then? We've actually lowered the debt-to-GDP because our debt is much smaller relative to our economy. What a concept.

Our economy is growing. That's the way you dig yourself out of a hole that we inherited from those parties over there. As I mentioned, interest costs are the lowest since the 1980s, spending fewer dollars on interest so that we can fund world-class health care, world-class education, world-class social services. That's what a responsible Conservative government does.

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

Hansard Monday, May 26, 2025
(Ontario Budget – Education Funding)

Mr. John Fraser: Never has the government spent so much, borrowed so much, incurred so much debt to do so little in the history of Ontario.

The Premier's "It's All Happening Here" ads cost \$40 million. Well, for the government, for the Premier, here's what's happening here: It's the highest unemployment rate in a decade—in a decade. We have the highest youth unemployment rate in Canada. And 2.5 million Ontarians don't have a family doctor.

So, given all these things and more—because I only have a minute—do you think that the right thing to do is for the Premier and his party to refund this money that they've spent on this self-serving ad?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I don't think math is perhaps their strong suit because I just highlighted that what the credit rating agencies look at, as everybody knows, is debt-to-GDP. In fact, the party opposite, they increased taxes and they got their credit ratings downgraded. We reduced taxes and fees, grew the economy, and got credit rating upgrades—what a concept.

But you know what else we inherited from that party over there is an infrastructure deficit. The majority of the debt that this party has incurred is to build the infrastructure that they didn't build because our population is growing and because the people of Ontario, the families of Ontario deserve world-class health care, world-class education and an economy that works for everybody.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Well, the finance minister and I agree on one thing: They deserve the best schools in the world and they deserve the best health care in the world, and they're not getting it. That's the point.

So does the Premier think we were all born yesterday? You know, here's what Kory Teneycke, the Premier's campaign manager, had to say: "The fire hose is what governments can do.... I don't think you'd see the Ontario PC Party where it is in the polls if it wasn't out telling its own story in a positive way using government advertising." But the Ontario taxpayer is not the personal piggy bank for the Premier's party.

So once again, back to the minister: Will the PC Party, the Premier's party, pay back the money they've spent on this self-serving taxpayer-funded ad?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I think one thing that differentiates is very clear. On this side of the House and there, we are very proud of Ontario, and on that side, from the member opposite, he's not very proud of Ontario.

Ontario is leading the way, whether it's attaching individuals to family care, to a family doctor. We've got Dr. Jane Philpott, under the great leadership of the Minister of Health—a plan and a vision to make sure every person in this province has a family doctor.

And under the leadership of the Minister of Education, we're making sure we hold every school board accountable to make sure the billions that we've invested in students and teachers—make sure that that money gets funded directly to the people who matter in this province.

This side of the House will never tire of promoting Ontario. Why don't you join us?

Government spending

Mr. John Fraser: On what planet does a minister of the government stand up and crow eloquent about 2.5 million Ontarians not having a family doctor? It is totally unbelievable.

So \$40 million for a single ad campaign is more than most Ontario governments have spent in a single year. All this, while our schools are crumbling and our kids aren't getting what they need in schools.

Does the Premier not think that all this wasted taxpayer money could have been better spent supporting our children?

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the minister. Will the House please come to order?

Minister.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: As my budget really outlined, we're protecting Ontario, we're battling the tariffs, we're meeting the moment, and we have a vision for the future.

But let me quickly address, Madam Speaker, what the member opposite just said about health care. Do you know under their watch they cut 1,600 nurses? They didn't build any hospitals—very few hospitals. As the Minister of Health just mentioned, they cut medical seats. If you're not thinking about building for the future, how can you take care of the people today?

That's why this government is putting a record amount of investments into our economy to grow our economy, support our workers, boost the prosperity for everybody so that we can afford world-class health care and education in this province.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, this ad could have bought 495 teachers, 820 educational assistants to help students with special needs. It could have gone towards badly needed repairs for our crumbling schools. Does the Premier really think that all this wasted money could not have been better spent on our children?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Well, I'm going to walk over a copy of the budget to the member opposite because obviously he hasn't read it. We've got 2,600 new teaching positions funded in this budget that support our teachers and our students. We've got \$30 billion of immediate tariff supports to support businesses and workers in this province. And, Madam Speaker, we put in \$750 million to increase the number of science, technology, engineering and math students at universities through this minister of education, colleges, universities and a few other things.

This budget is meeting the moment, and I call upon the member opposite to show some leadership and vote for this budget to support Ontarian workers, families and businesses.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It looks like the minister is tripping back to that alternate universe.

Hansard Monday, May 26, 2025
(Ontario Budget – Education Funding)

Speaker, it's clear that the government is spending \$1,500 less per student in our public school system since 2018 and that our college system, our once proud college system, is on its knees.

At Algonquin College, they cut 37 courses over the last year, and they're not finished. They're not finished. These are our kids. Our kids depend on the college system—37 courses. I don't know how the minister can crow about education when that's happening here in Ontario, and it's not just happening at Algonquin College.

So I just think—and I hope everybody around here does, including people on the other side—that we would have been better off spending that money on our children, our colleges and our schools than we would on ads that promote the Premier because he wants to win a damn election.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw the last word.

Mr. John Fraser: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: A lot of withdrawing going on on that side of the House, Madam Speaker.

Again, I refer—maybe we need to help the member opposite. I'm willing to give you a briefing on the budget. The budget increased the core funding for education by 3.3%—greater than inflation. The budget increased the funding per pupil by 2.6%—greater than inflation again.

It's under the leadership of this Minister of Education, who's going to make sure the billions of extra dollars that are going into our world-class education system get to the students and get to the teachers so that they continue to have the best education in the world right here in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, we have a plan to protect Ontario. We're investing to protect workers, to protect families and to protect businesses. Again, I call on the opposition to vote for this budget and support families, to support the workers and to support moving Ontario forward.

Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2025

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 26, 2025, on the motion for second reading of the following bill: Bill 24, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm honoured to rise today to speak on behalf of the residents of Ottawa West–Nepean on this government's budget. I have to say, Speaker, this was a moment that called for urgency, but the government really didn't deliver. We have people who are challenged to afford life in Ontario right now, people who cannot afford a home, who do not have a family doctor, who are waiting far too long at the hospital, who are worried about their jobs moving to the US, and this government just did not meet the moment with this budget.

Health care is actually a great example of this. Not having a family doctor is the number one issue that I hear about from constituents. The Queensway Carleton Hospital is not the right size to serve our population.

We moved a motion and had debate in this House two weeks ago calling on the government to invest in health care infrastructure so that people would get the health care they deserved. The

Hansard Monday, May 26, 2025
(Ontario Budget – Education Funding)

government voted against that, and in this new budget, the only new health care funding in it was for private clinics, which means we're going to see more of our money diverted to private profit rather than care.

The government did not invest in the expansion of the Queensway Carleton Hospital, so I guess they don't care about the wait times for access to health care in Ottawa, but I'm going to keep fighting until that money is there.

But I want to spend most of my time today talking about education because this budget is terrible for education. Our education system, both K to 12 and post-secondary in this province, are very shaky thanks to years of cuts from this government.

We know that it's incredibly important. It's important anyway to invest in our young people, to invest in their future, but it's even more important now, when we are facing this trade war. We need to have workers who are skilled enough to be competitive in a global environment, and unfortunately, this government is choosing to lean into cuts instead of actually investing in the education that would provide our students with those world-class skills.

That is certainly the case in post-secondary education, where the government had a \$1.2-billion funding cut to post-secondary education, and that's at a moment when colleges and universities are cutting programs. They're not sure they're going to be able to keep the lights on. And instead of maintaining funding, at least, so that we could stay in this precarious position, they're cutting funding.

Algonquin College, in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean, is already trying to eliminate a \$60-million deficit for this coming year. They're cutting 41 programs.

Remember, colleges provide students with direct-to-job-market kinds of skills. They work closely with local industry. And yet, this government is allowing these programs to be lost.

Algonquin College is closing the Perth campus because of the deficit that they're facing. When the Ontario home builders were here a couple of weeks ago, they were saying to me that that's a big loss because students in that part of eastern Ontario—they need graduates. They need people who have skills to work in the home construction industry. This government claims to support that industry, and yet they're allowing that campus to close without providing any additional funding for post-secondary education.

Algonquin is having to close the academic upgrading program, which helps students to get credits so that they can enter post-secondary. You would think we would want more students, now more than ever, in post-secondary, and yet they have to close this program which actually helps bridge students into post-secondary and helps them succeed once they're there. Students who take this program are 10% more likely to finish their post-secondary studies. This is exactly the sort of thing you would think we would want to be investing in.

Algonquin is having to close the Academic Assistance for Adults with Developmental Disabilities program, which supports students who have developmental disabilities and is often the direct track into the labour force for these young people who might not otherwise have a way of getting into the labour force. I've heard from many families that this was incredibly important for their child. Now no new student in Ottawa is going to have that opportunity. Once again, we're seeing this government's cuts to education funding harm the most vulnerable people in our province the most.

And because of these cuts, Algonquin is also losing approximately 100 jobs.

You would think a government that is interested in protecting jobs right now would also be interested in protecting public sector jobs that are going towards developing our workforce in Ontario. Yet they're allowing these cuts to happen. And that is based on the existing funding. That's not even taking into account the \$1.2 billion in funding cuts for next year.

So we'll see how much more Algonquin and other post-secondary institutions have to cut next year, thanks to this government.

We're seeing very significant challenges in our K-12 system as well. Over the course that they have been in power, this government has cut funding to our elementary and secondary students by \$1,500 per student. The Minister of Finance was congratulating himself this morning that, for once in their term, funding is keeping pace with inflation. That's just not good enough. One year out of eight years doesn't make a difference when you have taken \$6.35 billion out of our school system since 2018. This year alone, there is \$561.7 million less than there was in 2018, once you account for inflation and enrolment. Just imagine how many teachers and education workers, paper, textbooks, pencils, and special education classes we could pay for if that \$561.7 million was just there. Make no mistake, our schools are in dire straits under this government. Our kids do not have the resources that they need. They're in larger class sizes. They do not have qualified teachers and education workers because we have a shortage. They are not in safe and healthy schools. The schools are crumbling. Yet this government couldn't even find it in themselves to close that funding gap.

Instead, what we've seen is the new education minister—the fourth in the space of a year—attacking school boards. We have 40% of school boards in the province that are running deficits. The minister has been attacking three of them, in particular: the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, and the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. In fact, he has ordered an investigation into them. Even though one of them has just had a report by Deloitte that the ministry has refused to release to the school board, they have still hired Deloitte to do another investigation into the board. I'm sure that there is nothing in the first report that says funding doesn't match expenses—and that's why they won't release it. But we'll see what the new investigations report. When you look at what kind of funding these boards have lost since this government came to power—it is massive.

The Toronto District School Board has lost \$918.7 million since 2018, and next year alone, they will be short \$127.1 million compared to 2018. They're looking at cuts of up to \$80 million, to balance their budget next year. If they had that difference in funding, if they still had that 2018 funding, they wouldn't be looking at cuts. There would be \$40 million more that could be invested into new programs and services.

The Toronto Catholic District School Board has lost \$273.2 million under this government, and next year they'll be \$22.3 million short compared to 2018. They're looking at cuts of \$65 million. They wouldn't be in that position if the government had just maintained funding since 2018—even increased it, just maintained it.

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has lost \$337.4 million since 2018, and they're short \$41.8 million next year compared to 2018. Last year, the OCDSB had to move \$9 million from their reserves to balance the budget, which shouldn't be happening, because reserves are meant for rainy days. You shouldn't need to rely on your reserves to balance the budget. But the

Hansard Monday, May 26, 2025
(Ontario Budget – Education Funding)

OCDSB made that decision to save programs by moving that money from reserves to balance the budget. They still ended up in deficit because this government, which passed an unconstitutional Bill 124, owed remedies to the workers who had lost out on pay because of that. You would think, then, that the government would put forward the funding to actually provide those remedies, but what they did was provide that funding based on a formula, not based on the number of actual staff who had been working in the schools these school boards owed the remedies to. So the OCDSB ended up in deficit, after all, because of this government's failure to respect constitutional rights and then failure to make it right to the workers themselves. The OCDSB has already made significant cuts for next year, including closing the alternative program in the future entirely. But they have to cut an additional \$4 million from their budget, and that would be more than looked after—in fact, we would be able to reopen programs—with that \$41.8 million that they would have if funding had just kept pace this year with 2018. They would be able to invest over \$37 million in new programs.

So when the minister makes threats that these school boards have to eliminate the deficit, but they cannot touch a single resource going into classrooms—that's a joke, when you're not restoring the funding. It is the government that has forced the deficits on these school boards, and there is no way for the school boards to eliminate the deficits until that gap is fixed.

But this government's blame game is—I mean, they bring game. It's like a giant game of Twister. The former, former, former minister blamed the teachers and education workers for everything he didn't like in education. Then we had a minister who wasn't around long enough to actually blame anybody. Then we had another minister who blamed teachers and school boards. Now the new, new, new minister is blaming school boards. It's like there's just a giant pile of arms and legs, as they're all trying to point in different directions.

Let's talk about what this actually means for our kids, in terms of what supports and resources they have. First of all, it means that our children are in much larger class sizes. We've lost 5,000 educators under this government, and this budget, by not closing the gap, is not going to restore those positions. So our kids are in larger and larger class sizes, which means they're not getting the attention they need, even as they've lost learning over the course of the pandemic.

We also have a teacher shortage, so we do not have enough qualified teachers to fill the positions in our schools that we need. The budget did put money towards 2,600 new teachers who will not be in our system for another two years, because they did nothing to shorten teachers' college. But 2,600 is a drop in the bucket, when we have 46,000 teachers in the province who are certified with the Ontario teachers' college but not working in our system because of the conditions that this government has created. So they would be much better off addressing the conditions that are driving teachers out of our system than to wait two years to add a tiny proportion of teachers back into the system.

There's nothing at all to address the shortage of education workers; we also have a big shortage of qualified education workers. And there's nothing to address the shortage of mental health professionals in our schools either. Our children are really struggling, Speaker: 90% of principals in the province say they need more help in providing mental health supports to our students, and yet there is only 22.9 cents per student per day in this budget for mental health. That is not going to add any mental health professionals to our schools, even though only one in 10 schools has regularly scheduled access to a mental health professional. That's just not going

Hansard Monday, May 26, 2025
(Ontario Budget – Education Funding)

to cut it, Speaker. When a child is brave enough to ask for help, that help should be there. That's not going to happen under this budget.

We also urgently need action on violence. The Auditor General reported in December that reports of violent incidents are up 114% across the province since 2017, and that doesn't even include all violent incidents because we know that many of them do not get reported. When we listen to our teachers and education workers, 77% of ETFO members have said they have personally experienced or witnessed violence in our schools, and yet funding is a mere 15.4 cents per student per day in the midst of an emergency. That's just not going to cut it. The government needs to actually act with the urgency that this situation really requires.

On special education, our school boards are running a massive deficit. They are spending so much more money than what they are taking in from the government. In this current school year, they have spent \$582 million more than what they've gotten from the Conservative government, and that's for a system in which families are reporting that their child is not safe, that their child is not allowed to be at school. One third of children with disabilities have been sent home or told to stay at home. Half of families say that they are always or usually worried about their child's safety, and 80% say they're worried about their child's safety at least some of the time.

Thanks to our advocacy efforts and the efforts of parents, we have seen an increase that's greater than inflation here, but the increase in new special education funding falls short of closing the deficit by \$442 million. So we're not even close to eliminating the deficit, let alone making up the gap to ensure that our students with disabilities and special needs are actually receiving the safe, secure education that they deserve in the province of Ontario.

Student transportation is another area where we have successfully pushed this government to take some action. We're seeing more of an increase than inflation in funding this year, and yet, two years ago this government cut funding for student transportation to the OCDSB by \$6 million, and this new funding only provides \$2.8 million in new funding to the OCDSB. So we're not even talking about half of the gap that this government created.

For the French Catholic school boards in the province, this year they ran a deficit of \$11.7 million, but the new funding provided to these same boards next year is only \$8.9 million, so again, it's not eliminating the deficit that this government themselves created. And we know what the outcome of these deficits are, because when Renfrew county did not have school buses running for eight full weeks of the school year this year, the Ministry of Education sat down with the school boards and made them cut resources from the classroom. So the government knows perfectly well that this is taking teachers and resources out of the classroom when they do not properly fund student transportation, and yet they're not taking action.

We have a massive repair backlog for schools. We know it was \$17 billion five years ago; the government has stopped telling us what that number is now, which you know means that it's going up, not down, because they love to brag about marginal victories. And yet, over the past few years, they've only put \$1.4 billion towards repairs, and this year again—surprise—\$1.4 billion. So that number hasn't gone up.

What they have done is put \$575 million towards addressing the reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, but that wasn't included in the \$17-billion backlog, because until last year, the government wouldn't acknowledge it was a problem. But now, they have to justify that they closed the science centre because of this, so suddenly it becomes a problem in our schools so

Hansard Monday, May 26, 2025
(Ontario Budget – Education Funding)

that they can explain why they had to close the science centre. So this is not actually reducing that school repair backlog at all, and they're still not addressing the fact that half of our schools have failed a lead test for drinking water in the past five years. There's no new funding for that.

Et je dois mentionner, Président, qu'il n'y a rien du tout dans ce budget pour l'éducation francophone en Ontario. Le sous-financement, le manque d'attention de la part de ce gouvernement sont pour eux un problème existentiel. Les Franco-Ontariens ont droit à une éducation égale en qualité à celle de la majorité, mais ce droit est en péril sous ce gouvernement.

La pénurie d'enseignants et enseignantes est plus extrême dans le système francophone, mais rien dans le budget ne reconnaît ce problème, et encore moins ne le résout. Le nombre d'enseignants avec permissions intérimaires dans le système francophone a augmenté de 317 % depuis 2014, mais le gouvernement ne promet pas qu'un pourcentage des nouveaux fonds pour la formation des enseignants sera pour les Franco-Ontariens.

Le gouvernement a annoncé un plan, il y a quatre ans maintenant, pour éliminer l'écart dans la formation des enseignants et enseignantes francophones, mais selon leurs propres données, ils n'ont pas atteint la cible par plus de 1 000 enseignants pendant les trois premières années du plan. Et maintenant, on annonce 2 600 enseignants de plus pour toute la province, pour les quatre conseils, mais seulement dans deux ans. Ça ne démontre pas l'urgence d'agir, Président.

Il faut que ce gouvernement commence à prendre au sérieux les droits des Franco-Ontariens et les différences entre le système francophone et le système anglophone, et de combler la pénurie d'enseignants et enseignantes est un bon point de départ.

I'm going to conclude by talking about our provincial schools. As I mentioned, it is so often our students who are the most vulnerable who pay the biggest price for this government's cuts, and our students in provincial schools, which are under the direct authority of the Minister of Education. There is no elected school board; it is the Provincial Schools Authority, which is appointed by the minister, and yet these schools are in dire shape.

The schools are crumbling. We have children who depend on their hands to communicate who are learning in a bathroom because it's the only place in the school that's warm enough for them to be able to use their hands. There's a massive teacher shortage, so many of these students are spending time in the library, being looked after by somebody who is not qualified to provide them with an education.

There are students who have fallen so significantly behind where they should be in learning that their parents are considering filing a lawsuit. We know that the province has already paid out \$23 million for class action suits, and yet there are at least three suits that are currently filed or pending that I'm aware of.

I don't think anybody would argue that this system, under the leadership of this government, is a success story. Yet do you know what the increase in funding for the provincial schools is this year, Speaker? It is zero. There is no increase at all.

This government is taking a system that is broken and failing these children, and they are not providing it with a penny of money more, and that is wrong. They should do better. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Brian Saunderson): Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I appreciated the submissions from the member with regard to the budget. I see that she concentrated exclusively on education issues. This is a very wide-ranging budget and I had questions related to other issues, but since she concentrated exclusively on education issues, I'll ask her an education question.

I know that Ontario schools are saddled with a massive repair backlog left behind by the Liberals, and we knew that was a fact—it's an absolute fact repeated not only by ourselves in the PC Party but also by members of the NDP. We recognize that there was a massive backlog left behind by the Liberals, especially in my riding of Essex. We know that we have built three brand new schools in my riding of Essex, and I think those are good investments and investments that the provincial government should make.

My question to the member is, does she support the rebuilding and opening of new schools such as the new schools in LaSalle, Amherstburg and Kingsville?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Well, a miracle has happened because we finally found something that the member for Essex and I agree on, which is that it is very shameful that the Liberals grew the repair backlog to \$15 billion while they were in power.

But what I would say is equally shameful is the fact that the Conservatives have grown it since then. We know they grew it by at least \$2 billion, but because they've refused to actually tell parents how much it's grown by over the past five years, we don't actually know how much you grew it by. You could tell us and then claim credit for the growth—just a suggestion.

The Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario has said if this government doesn't increase funding from what it's at now, then a decade from now, three quarters of schools in the province of Ontario will not be in a state of good repair. So it's not enough to build new schools if you're not going to maintain them. You wouldn't buy a house and then let it fall into complete disrepair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Brian Saunderson): Questions?

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you to my colleague for outlining what really should concern every single person in this province: how our education has deteriorated over the past eight previous years. I know I counted on her and leaned on her expertise during a recent review in Ottawa that saw cuts made in our school board, especially affecting kids with disabilities, special needs.

I do want to ask though, maybe if you could—and I'm sure you've heard the stories as well—just recount also some of what you're hearing from teachers, how they actually have to use their own money to fill the gaps that are left behind by this government.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to my colleague from Ottawa Centre for that great question. A few teachers have shared a really powerful set of images with me, which is a picture of their classroom before they put in any of the resources that they paid for out of their own pocket and a picture of the classroom after they brought in all their own resources. The reality is that before they bring in their own resources, that classroom is bare. We're talking about tables and chairs, and that's it. Everything else in the classroom—the books, the resources that students are using—is all paid for by the teacher out of pocket.

Hansard Monday, May 26, 2025
(Ontario Budget – Education Funding)

I've spoken with a number of people who say it used to be that parents weren't asked to provide anything for their students; everything was provided at school. Now I know, as a parent, every year we get the list of, "Here are the things that you must send to school with your child." Then the teacher sends out a wish list during the school year saying, "I hope that we can find parents who will provide these things." It's like a wedding registry except it's for your kid's classroom. It really shouldn't be happening. Our children's access to books and to Kleenex in the classroom shouldn't depend on the goodwill of teachers and parents to buy those things for them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Brian Saunderson): Question?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I appreciate the member from Ottawa West–Nepean's remarks on education. In our classrooms, teachers, EAs and ECEs are going through quite a lot. They're going through burnout and they're dealing with issues of violence in the classroom, and primarily that is because of the lack of funding in our public education system. Students with special education needs aren't getting the support that they need. I'm wondering about your perspective on that, and what you would have liked to see in this budget that could help address that.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member from Ajax for that fantastic question. We are really seeing teachers and education workers burning out. I already mentioned the 46,000 who are certified with the college but not teaching in our system, but what we're also seeing is that one in five new teachers is leaving within the first five years of teaching, and it's 30% of new teachers within the French-language system. So we really need to take action to make sure that we are retaining our qualified teachers and education workers and finding ways to bring them back. A big part of that is just properly investing in our system so that teachers and education workers are able to do what they do best, which is provide each child with the targeted support that they need to learn, instead of spending all their time running from crisis to crisis and going home at the end of the day knowing that they failed some of their students because, despite their best efforts, there was absolutely no way to get to every child who needed them that day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Brian Saunderson): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that. You mentioned something—you said that there was a reduction in funding. In 2023-24, the education budget was \$37.1 billion; this year, it's \$41 billion. It's a \$3.9-billion increase in two years. That's 10.5%. Inflation was about 4.5%. How do you describe a 10.5% increase in the budget as a cut?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It's a funny thing because this government brought in financial literacy classes for our students, which I don't disagree with, but they could use some financial literacy courses of their own. I think it should probably be mandatory for them, at least a course on what inflation is. We could probably add in population growth as well because of course that's an important driver of cost. If you do not keep your funding paced with inflation and population growth, then that is a cut. What the government has cut this year alone, compared to 2018, is \$561.7 million—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Brian Saunderson): I call the House to order. If I can't hear the answer, I might have to name some names. My apologies to the member from Nepean.