

## NEW BILLS INTRODUCED

### **BILL 137, FRANCO-ONTARIAN COMMUNITY ACT, 2019**

A week after Interim Liberal Leader John Fraser's (Ottawa South) private member's bill, [Bill 135, La Francophonie Act, 2019](#), that would codify and expand the use of French-language services in Ontario, NDP MPP Guy Bourgouin (Mushkegowuk—James Bay) introduced his version. Among some of the highlights of Bourgouin's bill:

- Proceedings in the Legislative Assembly may be in English or in French and legislation shall be introduced and enacted in both languages. Regulations shall be made in both languages
- Courts and tribunals shall all be able to carry out proceedings in French and important decisions shall be published in both French and English
- Government agencies and public institutions, as defined in the Act, shall actively offer services in both French and English, and shall only use bilingual signage
- Municipalities may pass a by-law electing to provide services in French. Ottawa's bilingual character is recognized
- Universities may be designated as government agencies that are required to operate bilingually, and a procedure is set out to ensure that the enabling statutes of such universities are translated into French
- French-language services plans must be made by government agencies and public institutions

- The Act establishes or continues, as the case may be, an Office of the Franco-Ontarian Community, an Advisory Council on the Franco-Ontarian Community, a French Language Services Commissioner as an officer of the Assembly, a system of French Language Services Coordinators throughout government agencies and public institutions, a language rights support program and a Fund for the Promotion of the Franco-Ontarian Community, all to be funded out of money appropriated for these purposes by the Legislature.

### **BILL 138, PLAN TO BUILD ONTARIO TOGETHER ACT, 2019**

This bill is the accompanying legislation for the new Finance Minister's, Rod Phillips (Ajax), fall economic update. With this bill, the Doug Ford government has retreated slightly on some funding cuts. In his address, Phillips said that the projected deficit of \$10.3 billion is now \$9 billion. At the same time, the Minister said that he would raise spending by \$1.3 billion, the same amount of the cut in the projected deficit. According to Phillips, increased tax revenues have brought in an extra \$1.6 billion. As well, Phillips said deficits would continue until 2023, one year after the next election. The Tories project the deficit to be \$6.7 billion next year, then \$5.4 billion in 2021–22.

The PCs pledge to increase funding in education by \$186 million and an additional \$278.5 million for needs-based autism

supports in place while a broader redesign is considered.

In regard to the increases in education funding, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' (CCPA) [Ricardo Tranjan says](#), "Of this total funding change, \$122 million is earmarked "to help municipal partners provide child care programs." He adds, "The remaining \$64 million is to "support elementary and secondary education programs." No further details are provided, but this expense is likely related to the roll-out of three recently announced initiatives: the math strategy, funding for mental health supports, and the expansion of the Specialist High Skills Major program."

### **[BILL 139, CARIBBEAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2019](#)**

A week after Liberal MPP Michael Coteau (Don Valley East) introduced his [Bill 134, Caribbean Heritage Month Act, 2019](#) NDP Co-Deputy Leader, Sara Singh (Brampton Centre), put forth her bill that would also proclaim the month of August in each year as Caribbean Heritage Month.

## **BILLS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE**

### **[BILL 112, LUPUS AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2019](#)**

PC MPP Billy Pang's (Markham—Unionville) would recognize May 10 in each year as Lupus Awareness Day. The bill will go to the Standing Committee on General Government for review.

### **[BILL 132, BETTER FOR PEOPLE, SMARTER FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2019](#)**

The Associate Minister Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, PC MPP Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria (Brampton South) passed 2nd Reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on General Government. The committee plans to hold public hearings from November 19 to 29 in London, Peterborough, Sault Ste. Marie, Kenora and Toronto. Under a motion passed in the Legislature, the bill will return for 3rd Reading debate by December 4.

Sarkaria's bill is another of one of what seems like endless bills by governments to reduce bureaucratic red tape for businesses. Sarkaria's version includes permitting 24-hour alcohol service in airports, allowing dogs onto bar and restaurant patios and into some breweries, and easing rules for food banks and food donation programs. In an interesting addition, Sarkaria will make it easier for the Highway 407 conglomerate by not requiring them to send reminder invoices to delinquent payers. Instead, only one "notice of failure to pay" will be issued. If bills are not paid within 90 days, a penalty will be charged and their vehicle permit will be non-validated.

## **BILLS PASSED**

### **[BILL 124, PROTECTING A SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC SECTOR FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT, 2019](#)**

The President of the Treasury Board, PC MPP Peter Bethlenfalvy's bill passed the Legislature with all three opposition parties—NDP, Liberals, Greens—united against it. Bethlenfalvy's bill would limit salary increases to one per cent for each 12-month period of a three-year moderation period. Prior to the bill's passage, OSSTF/FEESO President, Harvey Bischof, [addressed](#) the Standing

Committee on General Government calling for the withdrawal of the bill because of its intrusion into the collective bargaining rights of workers. After the bill's passage, Bischoff, along with the Presidents of AEFO, ETFO and OECTA issued a [joint press release stating](#), "The four unions are promising to explore all available avenues and mechanisms, including the courts, to fight the legislation and restore the right to bargain freely."

## IN OTHER NEWS

### QUESTION PERIOD

#### **NDP COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES CRITIC RAISES ISSUE OF FUNDING CUTS**

NDP Colleges and Universities Critic, Chris Glover (Spadina—Fort York) questioned the PC government on the cuts to the Ontario Student Assistance Plan and related cuts to post-secondary services. [Glover asked:](#)

"Today, thousands of students at universities across the province are walking out of their classrooms to protest this government's cuts to OSAP. I've had students call my office in tears who, thanks to this government's cuts, could not afford to return to school this year. I've talked to others who are working full-time jobs while studying full-time because their OSAP grants and loans were cut in half.

Premier, students should be spending their time studying, not worrying about making ends meet. Will you do the right thing, stop this attack on students and reverse these reckless cuts?"

Colleges and Universities Minister Ross Romano (Sault Ste. Marie) responded:

"Thank you very much to the member for the question. We're all aware that changes were made by the previous government to the OSAP system before the last election—in fact, on the eve of the last election. Those changes that were made were principally made in a fashion which allowed students to access OSAP who came from higher-income families, and they were receiving grants.

Now, the Auditor General has reviewed the changes that were made, and she noted that OSAP had increased by over \$2 billion within the first year. It got so expensive that it wasn't sustainable any longer.

We needed to protect the future of OSAP for future generations. That is what we have done. Not only have we protected it for future generations, but we've also reduced tuition by 10%, saving students more money, keeping money in their pockets, so that they can get the education they need."

Glover continued to press the Minister:

"The students who were not able to return to school this year because of your OSAP cuts do not feel protected by this government. The Liberal government did double tuition fees in this province and then, as an act of penitence, tried to increase OSAP. But now your government has actually cut it by \$670 million, and not only that, but they have jeopardized funding for student food banks, for women's centres, for LGBTQ centres on campus.

Given that the minister received over 3,000 letters from students begging this government to reverse this heartless decision, it is clear that these cuts are making life worse for students and families across the province. Why does the Premier think that students don't deserve the financial support they need to access college and university, while this government squanders money on lucrative appointments for friends and family?"

Romano continued defending the cuts by stating:

“Again, if you don’t want to take it from us, listen to the Auditor General: \$2 billion in the first year and \$2.7 billion within the next three years. That’s double the cost of the OSAP system, double over budget. It was not sustainable. We needed to protect it for future generations, Mr. Speaker. These changes had to be done to ensure that we would still have OSAP for our students.

What we’ve done now is reduce tuition by 10%, saving students \$450 million across the province. That’s not for a single student. Every single student across this province will see those savings. That is a significant savings for students. We’re keeping money in their pockets and making sure that they have access to high-quality education, the education they need, Mr. Speaker, and the education that they deserve. We’re making sure that OSAP is there for the students who need it most.”

## **NDP LEADER ANDREA HORWATH CHALLENGES PCS ON EDUCATION CUTS**

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath (Hamilton Centre) challenged the Doug Ford government to reverse its cuts in education. [Horwath said](#):

“For months, the Premier insisted, against overwhelming evidence, that his decision to cut classroom funding, to dramatically expand high school class sizes and to cut support for after-school programs wouldn’t hurt kids in the classroom or lead to job loss. Is this government ready to admit that they were wrong?”

Education Minister Stephen Lecce (King—Vaughan) responded:

“What the government is committed to doing is investing in front-line services to improve student outcomes for the young people of this province. It is why our government undertook an initiative to invest over \$700 million, the largest investment ever expended in provincial history in public education in the province of Ontario. It is why, today, we’re moving forth with new initiatives.

The fact that today CUPE ratified a deal with this government shows that we can get deals that keep kids in class. It is that proposal alone that helped ensure parents have the predictability they deserve while knowing that our government will continue to invest in a modernized curriculum, updating our schools and giving every student the ability to reach their full potential.”

Horwath continued her questioning asking:

“The fact is, the Ford government is scrambling to run away from damage they caused by their own cuts.

A new independent report confirms what the Financial Accountability Office has already told us: Ontario will be losing 10,000 teaching positions due to the Ford government’s cuts. In Toronto, over 1,000 positions will disappear. In Ottawa, nearly 400 will vanish. But worse, the courses these teachers offered will also vanish, and the quality of our kids’ education will suffer.

If the Ford government is now admitting that their education cuts are hurting students and leading to layoffs, why won’t they simply admit that they got it wrong and reverse tracks?

Education Minister responded by saying:

“Our focus, under the leadership of the Premier, is to invest in and defend public education. That’s why we’re investing more than any other government in our history.

But in addition to that public expenditure, it’s also about what we’re doing to modernize our curriculum to ensure it is aligned with our labour market needs. It’s also about ensuring we have positive mental health supports. It is this government—it will be in the report that came out today—that more than doubled our funding allocation to ensure young people have the strength, the resilience and

the capacity to go through school knowing that the system will be responsive and proactive to their needs.

It is why our government is investing more than \$3.1 billion in special education funding, given the report last week from our autism task force, to ensure that every child knows that they have the dignity and the support to get through school and, ultimately, one day maybe even get the dignity of work.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to invest in education. We've proposed reasonable options to our unions that will help incent them to stay at the table and get them to deal with our government."

## **UPPER CANADA DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD CUTS**

NDP Education Critic, Marit Stiles (Davenport) raised the issue of mental health cuts in the Upper Canada District School Board. Stiles asked:

"The minister can talk the talk about mental health, but his cuts are making things worse for the most vulnerable children in our schools.

Let's talk for a moment about facts and not fiction: In the Upper Canada District School Board, cuts have meant they've lost their psychological associate and all 24 mental health and behavioural support workers—that is shameful.

Simply put, investing in mental health in our schools saves lives. Cramming more kids into overcrowded classrooms makes it harder for students to get the vital attention and mental health support they deserve.

Again to the Premier: Will he listen to principals, teachers and the experts, and scrap the cuts and stop jeopardizing the well-being of Ontario's students?

Education Minister Stephen Lecce replied:

"The Premier and all members of this caucus are absolutely committed to supporting the most vulnerable in the class. It is why our government announced more than double the mental health funding for the most vulnerable children in schools, from \$14 million to \$40 million.

It's why, for children with autism, who are on the spectrum, we more than doubled the funding envelope for kids with ASD. It's why for kids with special education needs we're investing more than any government in the history of this province: a \$3.1-billion investment to help those children.

These are the facts: 180 new psychologists, psychotherapists and social workers supporting high schools across our province. I know there's more we can do, but this government is leading by example, investing in the front lines and supporting the most vulnerable kids in our classes."

## **LEAD IN SCHOOL DRINKING WATER**

NDP Education Critic Marit Stiles asked the Minister of Education about reports of high-levels of lead in the drinking water of many schools. Stiles asked:

"Mr. Speaker, you can put a new spin on these things, but it's the same old story. Seven schools in my community alone have been found to have unsafe levels of lead in the water, and there are thousands more across the province.

Let's do the math, shall we? Fifteen years of Liberal inaction resulted in a \$15.9-billion school repair backlog. Now, in just over a year, the government has grown that backlog to over \$16.3 billion. That's about a half a billion dollars.

And that doesn't even include the cost to remove the lead from our schools.

Given that the fiscal update yesterday did nothing to fix the damage that this government has done in the year

they've been in power, when is the government going to do the right thing, reverse the cuts, and stop hurting our families?"

Education Minister Stephen Lecce replied:

"It is under the Minister of Finance's leadership—yesterday, he confirmed that we are, in fact, on track to spend \$1.2 billion more than we did last year.

Mr. Speaker, we announced in our last budget a \$550-million investment to improve schools and \$80 million to improve child care facilities, because we accept that after 15 years of the former Liberal government there is so much more to do to support our kids in schools with better facilities.

But, Mr. Speaker, what I said earlier—\$1 billion a month on interest—spending money that we do not have is not in the interests of the next generation. They want government to live within their means. They want government to set them up for economic success. That's why we're growing the economy so that we're able to invest more.

As the Minister of Finance confirmed just yesterday, more money than ever before in the history of this province—for health care and education and the social services that every family deserves."

## **NEW STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS APPOINTED**

The following PC MPPs have become chairs of some of the Legislature's Standing Committees:

- MPP Amarjot Sandhu (Brampton West)—[Finance and Economic Affairs](#)
- MPP Roman Baber (York Centre)—[Justice Policy](#)
- MPP Deepak Anand (Mississauga—Malton)—[Regulation and Private Bills](#)
- MPP Goldie Ghamari (Carleton)—[General Government](#)
- MPP Natalia Kusendova (Mississauga Centre)—[Social Policy](#)
- MPP Kaleed Rasheed (Mississauga East—Cooksville)—[Legislative Assembly](#)

## **HERITAGE PARLIAMENTARY ASSISTANT APPOINTED**

With the recent addition of the Heritage portfolio included in her ministerial duties, MPP Lisa MacLeod (Nepean) also added a new parliamentary assistant—MPP Sheref Sabawy (Mississauga—Erin Mills).

## **CRIMINAL CHARGES DROPPED AGAINST MPP**

Local police have decided to [drop criminal charges](#) against PC MPP Amy Fee (Kitchener South—Hespeler) related to a domestic violence incident involving her partner.

## **MOTIONS PASSED**

### **STUDENT CPR AND DEFIBRILLATOR TRAINING**

PC MPP Nina Tangri (Mississauga—Streetsville) submitted a motion to educate high school students on CPR and defibrillator techniques. [Tangri's motion read:](#)

"That, in the opinion of this House, it is crucial to educate Ontario secondary school students in the areas of life-saving CPR techniques and the use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs), in an effort to increase public awareness and improve the rates of bystander intervention in medical emergencies."

Tangri's motion passed unanimously.

## **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

Liberal MPP Michael Coteau (Don Valley East) put forth a motion that seeks to ensure that Ontario does not emulate Quebec's Bill 21 that curtails religious freedoms, although Coteau's motion does not explicitly mention the Quebec legislation. [Coteau's motion states:](#)

"I move that, in the opinion of this House, Ontario and its government shall oppose any law that would seek to restrict or limit the religious freedoms of our citizens; and, that Ontario's Legislature should affirm that we value our

diversity and assert that we shall promote and protect free expression and the rights of religious minorities, consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”

The non-binding motion passed by a voice vote.

## **MINISTRY OF EDUCATION TO REVIEW PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

Education Minister Stephen Lecce [announced](#) a review of the Peel District School Board over concerns of anti-Black racism. The Minister wants the review to:

“Therefore, I intend to appoint reviewers to conduct an immediate review of the PDSB - and, upon completion, provide a final report to me with recommendations on how the board could ensure effective board governance that promotes equity, increases accountability and transparency, and safeguards the success and well-being of students - irrespective of heritage, faith, colour of skin, orientation, or socio-economic status.”

The Legislature will be recessed the week of November 11, 2019.  
It will resume on November 18, 2019.