

NEW BILLS INTRODUCED

BILL 132, BETTER FOR PEOPLE, SMARTER FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2019

The Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, PC MPP Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria (Brampton South) introduced 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 mailed. If bills are not paid within 90 days, a penalty will be charged and their vehicle permit will be non-validated.

BILL 133, BUY IN CANADA FOR MASS TRANSIT VEHICLES ACT, 2019

Liberal MPP Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay—Superior North) private member's bill requires that certain public bodies that purchase mass transit vehicles may only consider eligible bids that meet certain conditions. These conditions include a requirement for at least 60 per cent of the part of the bid price relating to materials, overhead, labour and profit to be on account of materials, overhead, labour and profit originating in Canada. Final assembly of the mass transit vehicles must take place in Canada.

BILL 134, CARIBBEAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2019

Liberal MPP Michael Coteau's (Don Valley East) private member's bill would proclaim the month of October in each year as Caribbean Heritage Month

BILL 135, LA FRANCOPHONIE ACT, 2019

Interim Liberal Leader John Fraser's (Ottawa South) private member's bill would codify and expand the use of French-language services in Ontario. Among some of the highlights of the bill:

- The Legislative Assembly shall operate bilingually. Regulations shall be bilingual.
- Courts and tribunals shall all be able to operate in French and important decisions shall be published bilingually.
- Government entities shall actively offer services bilingually, including bilingual signage.
- Municipalities may opt to operate bilingually. Ottawa's bilingual character is recognized.
- Universities may be designated to operate bilingually, and a procedure is set out to make such universities' establishing legislation bilingual.
- French-language services plans must be made by government agencies and public institutions.
- The Francophonie of Ontario must be maintained and developed.
- There are established or continued an Office de la francophonie, an Advisory Council on La Francophonie, a

Commissioner of La Francophonie as an officer of the Legislative Assembly, a system of French Language Services Coordinators throughout government entities, a language rights support program and a Fund for the Promotion of La Francophonie, all to be funded out of money appropriated for these purposes by the Legislature

BILL 136, PROVINCIAL ANIMAL WELFARE SERVICES ACT, 2019

Solicitor General Sylvia Jones' (Dufferin—Caledon) government bill would repeal the *Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* and see the provincial government assume the enforcement of animal cruelty laws starting on January 1, 2020.

BILLS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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 2nd Reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on General Government. Bethlenfalvy's bill would limit salary increases to one per cent for each 12-month period of a three-year moderation period. Labour unions, including OSSTF/FEESO, will be presenting to the committee.

BILL 130, COMBATting LITTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE ACT

PC MPP Andrea Khanjin's (Barrie—Innisfil) private member's bill passed 2nd Reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on General Government. Khanjin's bill would proclaim the second Tuesday in May in each year as the Provincial Day of Action on Litter.

BILLS PASSED

No bills passed.

IN OTHER NEWS

QUESTION PERIOD NDP ATTACKS PCS OVER EDUCATION CUTS

With over 50 OSSTF/FEESO laid-off and underemployed members in the public gallery on the first day of the Legislature's return after a five-month break, NDP leader Andrea Horwath (Hamilton Centre) led off Question Period with concerns about their work prospects.

Horwath asked: "The Premier spent most of the past five months either hiding or in damage control. Last year, this Premier insisted that not a single person in our province would lose their job, and that our schools, hospitals and public services would improve as he made cuts. Today, we're joined by Natalie and Britney, both teachers who have lost their jobs. Is the Premier ready to admit to these women and the students who have lost the support that these teachers provided that his reckless cuts had consequences?"

[Horwath continued:](#)

“For five long months, the Ford government has tried to rebrand and repackage their agenda of cuts. The Premier threw his former finance and education ministers under the bus. He fired his former chief of staff. He even tried shutting down the Legislature and hiding from reporters.

But none of those changes hide the actual facts, Speaker. Students in our schools are losing teachers and educational workers who are supportive of their learning. Patients in our hospitals are watching nurses lose their jobs as beds continue to close and wait times continue to grow. Those are the things that the Premier needs to change. Those are the changes that the people of Ontario need to see, not the changes that he has made over the last little while. When are those changes going to happen?”

Education Minister Stephen Lecce responded on behalf of Ford and said:

“In fact, if I may, I just want to correct the record. In the areas of education and health care alone—in education, we are spending over \$700 million more this year than at the height of Liberal spending in 2017–18. In health care, it is under the Deputy Premier’s leadership that we are investing more than \$1.3 billion more than the year prior, to help remediate the issue of hallway health care.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing all of this without raising taxes, while growing the economy, so that we are able to sustain the social services that are so consequential to the next generation of workers, innovators and patients in the province of Ontario. We’re going to continue on our plan to grow the economy and invest in the services that families depend on, because that’s what the families of this province have asked us to do.”

Afterwards, NDP Education Critic [MPP Marit Stiles \(Davenport\) asked:](#)

Speaker, it may be Halloween this week, but hocus-pocus and half measures aren’t going to hide the fact that kids went back to school this fall with fewer teachers, overcrowded classrooms and chaos in their schools. Doing away with class size caps is absolutely reckless. It’s a decision that’s going to make matters even worse and it’s going to hit our most vulnerable students. Will you commit to finally doing the right thing, abandon these changes and stop making our kids pay the price for your government’s failures?

Lecce replied:

“Through you to the member, Mr. Speaker: We have, through this process, been a constructive force, a reasonable force, with a singular objective in mind, and that is to ensure we land deals—voluntary agreements—that keep kids in class.

That is why, last week, we proposed to OSSTF, one of the unions, an offer—not the final offer, but an offer—through the ebb and flow of this process, because we made a commitment to parents. I want them to know and to hear us loud and clear that every member of this caucus is committed to ensuring their child’s education is never compromised; to ensure they have access to a world-class education system in a province as diverse and free in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we’ve lowered the number from 28 to the provincial average of 25. We hope that will incent our partners to stay at the table and to land a deal with this government.”

NDP EDUCATION CRITIC CONTINUES PRESSURES ON PCS

The next day in Question Period, NDP MPP Marit Stiles continued advocating on behalf of laid-off and underemployed OSSTF/FEESO members by [asking](#):

“This question is for the Premier. Yesterday, 50 laid-off teachers were here in the public galleries. Among them was Lindsay. Lindsay is a math and science teacher from Chatham who has worked for 12 years in various long-term assignments, but without permanent work. She is also a new mom. This year, Lindsay wasn’t offered an assignment at all because there were no jobs available.

Now that the impact of the Premier’s cuts are too difficult to ignore, does he still stand by his claim that not a single teacher will lose their job?”

Lecce replied:

“Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite: I thank her for her question.

It’s clear that our government is committed to protecting front-line workers and front-line teachers in the classroom. It was the driving force for why this government in our last budget allocated \$1.6 billion to ensure teachers remain at the front of the class. It is why our government has announced a fund that is demonstrably working. In fact, in Windsor–Essex, in the Upper Grand District School Board, all teachers who had redundancy notices have been recalled. These are the stories that have to permeate in the debate. In fact, we’re seeing more of this manifest in boards across the province. We will continue to invest in protecting teachers, invest in a modernized curriculum and invest in modernizing our schools, because that’s what parents expect.”

Stiles continued:

“The Premier and the minister can deny what’s happening, but the fact is that teachers are still being laid off and students are being forced to accept less. With the greatest of respect, sorry, it is not clear at all that you are protecting these jobs.

The independent Financial Accountability Office has reported that by the end of this government’s term, there will be 10,054 fewer teachers in the education system; I have the citation right here. This year alone, the FAO estimates that there will be 967 fewer elementary teachers and 1,859 fewer secondary teachers.

Does the Premier think it’s right that qualified, caring teachers are moonlighting as waitresses to make ends meet while students are seeing supports and courses that they need disappear?”

Lecce concluded by saying:

“Mr. Speaker, our government made a determination to create a teacher protection fund because we want to ensure that teachers remain in the front of class.

The Leader of the Opposition will know that the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, where she proudly hails from—the chair of that board said that this year there are fewer classes with 30 or more students than there were last year. It is proof positive that our plan is working. It is another example that our investments in the front-line are yielding positive results.

We’re doing this while modernizing our curriculum, by investing over half a billion dollars to

renew schools in the province. We have a \$200-million investment to ensure that math scores rise over time. We're doing all of this because we believe in the potential of our young people in the province of Ontario.”

IN OTHER NEWS

ONTARIO LIBERAL LEADERSHIP CANDIDATE CALLS FOR MERGER OF SCHOOL BOARDS

Alvin Tedjo, candidate for the Ontario Liberal Leadership, called for the merger of the public and Catholic school boards in Ontario. In his plan entitled – [Learning Together](#) – Tedjo says any savings in merging the boards would be re-invested in the education system. At this point, other candidates in the race include sitting MPPs [Michael Coteau](#) (Don Valley East) and [Mitzie Hunter](#) (Scarborough—Guildwood). Former MPP Steven Del Duca is also running. The final declared candidate is [Kate Graham](#), who ran unsuccessfully in 2018 in the riding of London North Centre. Ontario Liberals will select a new leader on March 7, 2020.