

## **OSSTF/FEESO MEMBERS DESCEND ON QUEEN'S PARK AS OPPOSITION PARTIES CONTINUE QUESTIONING LIBERALS**

With about 4,000 OSSTF/FEESO members and their allies congregating on the grounds of Queen's Park on May 14, the heat in the Legislature increased with both opposition parties continuing to attack the government on the teachers' strikes. During the day's Question Period NDP Leader Andrea Horwath [asked](#), "Instead of lighting a fire under negotiations, the Premier and her government are playing the blame game—blame the teachers, blame the school boards—but never admitting their government is failing families across this province. The Minister of Education, this minister, is sitting on the sidelines and doing nothing while the process is being circumvented. Will the Deputy Premier and her government stop sitting on the sidelines and get up and start making sure that students get back into the classroom, where they belong?"

Meanwhile, PC caucus leader Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey) and PC Education critic Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North) led their party's questioning demanding that the Liberals get the parties back to the negotiating table. Wilson said, "The Premier and this education minister have made no progress on any of the three boards where the teachers are currently on strike. OSSTF/FEESO is in a position to call strikes in four more boards: Halton, Lakehead, Waterloo and Ottawa–Carleton. Thousands more students could be out of the classroom before the end of the school year. Thousands more students could lose their school year entirely, and their graduation. Deputy Premier, get the Premier to use those mediation skills she so often talks about, get the parties back to the table and get the job done and the students back in the classroom." Dunlop continued blaming Bill 122, the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act*, for the problems by [saying](#), "The two-tiered bargaining system simply is not working. We all know that; all sides know that. It is a failure, and the victims now are the 72,000 students. It is your Bill 122, it is your two-tiered system that is putting the education system in chaos." Education Minister Liz Sandals replied, "I think we need to go back and think about how we arrived at Bill 122. We negotiated. We consulted. We talked to all four trustee associations. We talked to the directors. We talked to all the unions. We went through this process of drafting and consulting and redrafting and consulting. Through all that process of working with all the partners who are concerned with collective bargaining in the education sector, this party remained obstinately opposed to having any part in that negotiation, in that discussion, in that consultation. They just kept saying "No, no, no." Well, I'm really not surprised that the member doesn't like the legislation; they all voted against it in the first place."

## **PEEL, RAINBOW AND DURHAM BOARDS PURSUE OLRB ACTION TO DECLARE LOCAL TEACHERS' STRIKES ILLEGAL**

The [Peel](#), [Rainbow](#) and [Durham](#) District School Boards have jointly [filed an action](#) with the Ontario Labour Relations Board seeking to declare their local teachers' strikes illegal. The three boards maintain that the issues publicized by the three local OSSTF/FEESO teacher Bargaining Units are

properly in the domain of central negotiations and not local negotiations. The three boards claim that striking teachers have been discussing central table items such as class size and teachers' professionalism. Peel Board Chair Janet MacDougall [said](#), "We've seen secondary teachers in each of the three boards protest issues being negotiated at the central table, particularly the central matter of class size. Our teachers need to know, and our parents and students need to know, that there is nothing we can do at our local table to impact class size decisions—nothing." The Boards' also allege that OSSTF/FEESO is using locals strikes to influence the central table. MacDougall added, "We've said, from the beginning, what we know is true: that provincial OSSTF/FEESO is setting the agenda for local bargaining and that this local strike is part of their overall provincial strategy." While making these allegations, the boards neglected to mention that OSSTF/FEESO had gone through the proper OLRB statutory procedures to secure a legal mandate for local strikes. As well, it is peculiar that the boards waited until the 17th day of the Durham local strike to deem the strikes illegal. Finally, the Minister of Education has referred to the strikes as local on numerous occasions in her responses to questions in the Legislature. The OLRB's decision is expected shortly.

### **EDUCATION MINISTER SEEKS ADVICE FROM EDUCATION RELATIONS COMMISSION**

After hinting the week before that she might seek the advice of the [Education Relations Commission](#) on when the school year might be in jeopardy, Education Minister Liz Sandals (Guelph) made a formal request to the Commission at the very end of the week. In justifying her request, Sandals [said](#), "In light of this, we are increasingly concerned the ongoing local strikes in Durham, Rainbow and Peel district school boards may be putting the school year at risk. Therefore, we are seeking advice from the Education Relations Commission of Ontario as to whether the continuation of the strikes is placing the successful completion of courses of study by affected students in jeopardy." At this point, it is unclear when the Commission will hold its hearing. If the ERC case is heard expeditiously and the Commission decides to declare the school year in jeopardy, the matter will be referred to Cabinet for a decision. The Cabinet may then decide to pursue back-to-work legislation for striking teachers. Even with the Liberals already declaring that the final two weeks of the Legislative session beginning on May 25 will have night sittings, it is unlikely that striking teachers would be forced to return to work before early June.

### **BUDGET BILL PASSES 2ND READING BUT IS ASSAILED BY WATCHDOG CRITICS**

As the Liberal majority pushed through their [budget bill](#) passed 2nd Reading, eight independent officers of the Legislative Assembly forwarded their [concerns](#) to the Legislature regarding the pending sale of Hydro. The eight officers include the Privacy Commissioner, the French Language Services Commissioner, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, the Financial Accountability Officer, the Auditor General, the Environmental Commissioner, the Ombudsman and the Integrity Commissioner. Their concerns include:

- The Auditor General would not be able to conduct performance audits of Hydro One and its subsidiaries.
- The Ombudsman would have no ability to investigate public complaints about Hydro One and its subsidiaries.
- The Information and Privacy Commissioner would no longer be able to oversee the right of access to records held by Hydro One.
- The Financial Accountability Officer would not be able to examine the impact of planned Hydro One operations on consumers or the economy.

- Lobbyists would no longer be required to report whether they are lobbying Hydro One and its subsidiaries.
- The Integrity Commissioner would no longer review Hydro One expense claims to ensure prudent spending of taxpayer dollars.
- The French Language Services Commissioner remains concerned that Hydro One and its subsidiaries would never be subject to the *French Language Services Act*.

Despite this warning, the Liberals have given no indication that they intend to alter any of their provisions for the sale of Hydro.

### **AUDITOR GENERAL WARNS OF PARTISAN GOVERNMENT ADS IN BUDGET BILL**

Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk [reviewed](#) the Liberals' [Budget bill](#) and found that significant changes to government advertising are proposed. Lysyk [notes](#) that as the current law stands, the Auditor General has the discretionary authority to determine what is partisan, taking into account whatever factors he or she sees as relevant. Under the new proposed law, she could only disqualify ads that contain the name or voice of an elected MPP, a party logo, or a colour associated with a party "to a significant degree." Lysyk says that this makes it possible for a government to run "self-congratulatory" ads praising its performance and making inflated—and unsubstantiated—claims about the benefits of its actions. She [adds](#), "This would damage the credibility of my office, with citizens rightly asking how the Auditor General could have approved controversial advertisements as being non-partisan."

### **MINISTRY OF LABOUR'S CHANGING WORKPLACES REVIEW SET TO BEGIN**

The Minister of Labour, Kevin Flynn (Oakville) [announced](#) that public consultations on the issues and trends that affect workers and employers across the province in the modern workplace will begin in Toronto on June 16. Further consultations will happen throughout the summer. The consultations will look into how the [Labour Relations Act, 1995](#) and [Employment Standards Act, 2000](#) could be amended to keep pace with the changing needs of workers and employers. A number of items will not be reviewed by the consultation including the broader public sector bargaining structures of which OSSTF/FEESO is part of. The deadline for submissions to the consultations is September 18, 2015.

### **FORMER PC LEADER TIM HUDAK TO RUN AGAIN IN 2018**

In a recent interview, former Progressive Conservative Leader Tim Hudak (Niagara West–Glanbrook) said that he will be a candidate again in the next provincial election in 2018. Hudak [said](#), "I love what I do, I've been sent back to Queen's Park six times...and I look forward to continue serving." While many expected Hudak to move to the corporate world with a high-powered directorship or the like, the present-day realities for many politicians is very different. One need only look at the lack of opportunities that former Dalton McGuinty has had to see the challenges faced by former leaders.