

NEW BILLS INTRODUCED

BILL 76, PATHWAYS TO POST-SECONDARY EXCELLENCE ACT (POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL REPORT)

Liberal MPP Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre) would require the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario to collect and publish information about certain educational institutions on an annual basis.

BILLS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

BILL 27, BURDEN REDUCTION ACT

Economic Development Minister Brad Duguid's (Scarborough Centre) red tape reduction legislation, Bill 27, *Burden Reduction Act* passed 2nd Reading with the support of the Progressive Conservatives while the NDP opposed the bill. The bill has now been referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

BILL 59, PUTTING CONSUMERS FIRST ACT (CONSUMER PROTECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT)

Liberal MPP and Government and Consumer Services Minister Marie-France Lalonde (Ottawa—Orléans) introduced Bill 59, *Putting Consumers First Act (Consumer Protection Statute Law Amendment)*, which seeks to increase regulations on door-to-door sales, regulate home inspections and introduce new rules for the payday loan industry. The bill unanimously passed 2nd Reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

BILL 70, BUILDING ONTARIO UP FOR EVERYONE ACT (BUDGET MEASURES)

Finance Minister Charles Sousa's (Mississauga South) legislation to implement the Liberal government's fall economic agenda passed 2nd Reading with only Liberal party support. Among the [features](#) in Sousa's bill is a provision to double the land transfer tax rebate to eligible first-time homebuyers to \$4,000. The bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

BILLS PASSED

BILL 2, ELECTION FINANCES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

The Liberals' election finance bill was passed into law with all-party support. Despite objections from the opposition parties that the bill did not properly involve all-party input, they nonetheless voted for it. The legislation will be effective January 1, 2017. Among the [changes](#) in election financing, MPPs, Cabinet Ministers, candidates, party leaders, nomination contestants, leadership contestants and chiefs-of-staff will be banned from attending political fundraising events. However, MPPs are free to make phone calls to solicit contributions to events. As well, voter subsidies will be introduced and parties will get an annual per-vote allowance of \$2.71 for every vote received in the previous general election. Also, each constituency will divide \$25,000 annually amongst the contending parties based on the previous election's results. Individual political donations will still be permitted but will be capped at \$3,600 per year down significantly from the current \$33,250. Political advertising will also be limited with a \$1 million cap on each political party six months before the election. And, third-party advertising will be severely curtailed and be capped at \$100,000 for the six months prior to an election. Previously, no restrictions existed on third-party advertising. Finally, union and corporate donations will be banned.

BILL 28, ALL FAMILIES ARE EQUAL ACT (PARENTAGE AND RELATED REGISTRATIONS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT)

Attorney General Yasir Naqvi's (Ottawa Centre) government Bill 28, *All Families Are Equal Act (Parentage and Related Registrations Statute Law Amendment)* passed 3rd Reading with all-party support. The bill makes amendments to the *Children's Law Reform Act* to establish new rules of parentage in Ontario that would ensure that same-sex couples did not have to adopt their own children.

MOTIONS DEBATED

BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS

Another Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) [motion](#) regarding the state of Israel was debated in the Legislature. But, unlike previous motions expressing support for the BDS movement, PC Gila Martow's (Thornhill) motion called on the provincial government to reject the BDS movement. With the Liberals and PCs uniting on the motion, the five NDP members present for the vote could not defeat it. The motion [passed 49-5](#).

COLLEGES WEEK

Liberal MPP Vic Dhillion's (Brampton West) [motion](#) to recognize April 3 to April 9 as "Colleges Week" passed with all-party support.

IN OTHER NEWS

NEW MPPS TAKE THEIR SEATS

Newly-elected MPPs Nathalie Des Rosiers (Ottawa—Vanier) and Sam Oosterhoff (Niagara West—Glanbrook) took their seats this week. In addition to being sworn in, Des Rosiers was also appointed as Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Housing and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT AGAIN BLAST GOVERNMENT

In the annual tradition of exposing government waste and mismanagement, the [Auditor General's Report](#) again highlighted the challenges the government continues to face in administering their programs. Ontario Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk found serious problems in a number of ministries but singled out a few for special attention. Lysyk noted that a sample audit of five highway jobs found the transportation ministry paid \$23 million for repairs within three years of a highway being built, even though the highway should have lasted 15 years. Lysyk also found that a contractor installed the truss of a bridge over the 401 at the Pickering GO Station upside down, but was still paid in full and rehired to work on the second phase of the project. Later, the same contractor was hired for another \$39 million project.

In the Ministry of Health, Lysyk said the eHealth program has cost \$8 billion and is still not complete after 14 years. She also found there are still problems with wait times for elective surgeries, especially in large community hospitals, with no improvement over the past five years.

As well, Lysyk called for more oversight of child and youth mental health agencies. She cites a 50 per cent increase in hospitalization for youth suffering from mental illness. She adds that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care does not monitor the performance of its Child and Youth Mental Health Program, so it does not know if it is providing cost-effective services. She says that some mental health agencies are overcharging the province up to 50 per cent.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER DOUBTS LIBERALS WILL MEET DEFICIT TARGETS

In response to the Liberals' Fall Economic Statement, The Financial Accountability Officer (FAO) [expressed](#) doubts that the Liberals will be able to meet their goal to eliminate the deficit by 2017–18. The FAO says that the government's calculations for revenue are \$2.8 billion more than his findings. As well, the FAO predicts that the government will still have a deficit for many years to come.

SKILLED TRADES HOLD LARGE RALLY

Skilled trades workers held a large rally at Queen's Park calling on the government to remove Schedule 17 from [Bill 70, Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act \(Budget Measures\)](#). The workers argue that Schedule 17 would make it legal for employers to assign work that should be performed by a certified tradesperson to someone who is not trained or certified. As well, the workers said that Schedule 17 would also give the Labour Relations Board the power to overturn enforcement action by the Ontario College of Trades. In support of the rally, the NDP and PCs [pressed](#) the Labour Minister, Kevin Flynn (Oakville), to respond to the tradespeople concerns. The Minister denied the accusations vigorously.

PROVINCE MOVES TO SPEED UP JUDICIAL WAIT TIMES

In response to last summer's Supreme Court ruling setting an 18-month limit for the completion of criminal cases in Ontario's justice system, Attorney General Yasir Naqvi [announced](#) the appointment of 13 new judges, 32 new assistant Crown Attorneys, 6 new duty counsel and 26 new court staff. The cost for the new appointments is approximately \$25 million per year.

8,500 CIVIL SERVANTS TO GET WAGE INCREASES

The Liberals [revealed](#) this week that 8,500 civil servants including managers, executives and deputy ministers would get a total of \$125 million in wage increases. The Liberals claim that many managers were making less than the workers they were supervising.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE UNIVERSITY PLANNING BOARD

The Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, Deb Matthews (London North Centre) announced the appointment of a full planning board for a French-language university in central and southwestern Ontario. The committee, to be chaired by Dr. Dayne Adam will include:

- Frédéric Dimanche, director of Ted Rogers School of Hospitality and Tourism
- Management, Ryerson University;
- Yollande Dweme Pitta, PhD Student, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto;
- Léonie-Françoise Guenang Tchatat, founder and oresident of Passerelle
- Intégration et Développement Économique;
- Normand Labrie, professor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto;
- Fété Kimpiobi Ngira-Batware Kimpiobi, general director of Solidarité des femmes et familles immigrantes francophones du Niagara;
- Glenn O'Farrell, CEO, Groupe Média TFO.

The board will complete its report for the government by the summer of 2017.