

EDUCATION NEWS

CHILD CARE WORKER AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR APPRECIATION DAY

On Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day, [NDP MPP Catherine Fife \(Waterloo\)](#) asked the Minister of Education Lisa Thompson: “My question is to the Minister of Education. Today we are joined by early childhood educators from across Ontario. They are hard-working professionals who educate and care for some of the most important people in our province, our children. These professionals play a vital role in the early years of young children across the province. They also contribute to the economy by ensuring that parents can participate in the workforce or finish school. Today is Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day. They get a day. Minister, to say that ECEs across the province are undervalued and underpaid would be an understatement. Is this government still committed to increasing wages for early childhood educators, as you promised to do?”

In acknowledging the hard work of ECEs, [Minister Thompson concluded her response by saying](#), “Speaker, the easy answer to this question is yes. But I think there’s a little bit of concern—I’m feeling a little bit of concern—coming from the focus of the question from the member opposite in the NDP. There’s a lot of rhetoric there. I know a lot of ECEs who work in private daycare facilities who are doing an amazing job—and that’s in addition to the facilities that we have in our public institutions. We need to be celebrating them all, and that’s what we’re doing today.”

PARTNERSHIP TABLES

Former Premier and Liberal MPP Kathleen Wynne (Don Valley West) asked the Minister of Education Lisa Thompson (Huron—Bruce) about the future of the Partnership Table in education. [Wynne stated](#), “My concern is that the partnership table was a place for all of the representatives within the education sector who were tapped into their communities, whether it was trustees or whether it was education workers or whether it was parents, to come together and talk to the government about priorities on budget. The partnership table was part of a broader consultation in the lead-up to, for example, the fall economic statement or the budget.”

Thompson [responded](#), “Our number-one priority is making sure that we clean up the mess we inherited. Need I remind the member that they closed 600 schools across Ontario? Parents received the EQAO results last week, and the math scores of their children in the schools that this previous Liberal government was responsible for have failed dismally with EQAO. We’re going to fix that as well. That’s what we’re talking about and that’s what we want to hear from every single person in this province about through our consultation. I’m really pleased today to share with you, Speaker, that in two short weeks we’re hearing from thousands of people who are taking time to submit written submissions on job skills, on life skills, on testing, on STEM, on health and physical education and on making a better path for students because they know, over the last 15 years, our students went completely off the rails.”

PARENTS REACHING OUT GRANTS

Since 2006, the Ministry of Education has funded school councils and other parent organizations with almost \$35 million to assist in parent involvement through the [Parents Reaching Out Grants](#).

With no word yet on the current status of their applications, [NDP MPP and Education Critic Marit Stiles \(Davenport\)](#) rose in Question Period to ask Education Minister Lisa Thompson, “Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education’s Parents Reaching Out Grants provide modest but very important support to school councils for projects that engage with parents who may experience barriers to participation in their child’s education. Now, with the school term nearing the halfway mark, school councils are in the dark about the status of their planned events, and some have been told the funding is under review. Can the minister tell us why her government is delaying approval of the Parents Reaching Out Grants for 2018–19?”

In response, Minister Thompson said, “Speaker, I want to remind everyone in this House that we are keeping a promise we made during the election, and that is, we’re respecting parents. I think the first step in respecting parents is being responsible with their precious tax dollars. While we’re embarking on this consultation, which has far surpassed the dismal 1,638 responses the former Liberal government generated, we are actually listening to parents. As we embark on a new path forward for the Ontario education curriculum, we’ve hit the pause button in some instances because we want to make sure we’re getting our investments right. To those parents who are listening today, I suggest to them—we want to hear from you, we want to hear your priorities, we want to hear your concerns—go to [fortheparents.ca](#) and participate in this very unique consultation.”

With that, Minister Thompson closed the door on the *Parents Reaching Out Grants*.

IN OTHER NEWS

CANCELLED CAP-AND-TRADE WILL COST ONTARIO TREASURY \$3 BILLION

In his [report](#) on Doug Ford’s government’s cancellation of the cap-and-trade program, Ontario’s Financial Accountability Officer, Peter Weltman, said that Ontario will forego \$3 billion in the budget between the 2018–19 and 2021–2022 fiscal years. In response, PC MPP and [Environment Minister Rod Phillips replied](#) in Question Period, “I wish if the member was going to quote the FAO, he would quote the page numbers. Let me do that. On page 10: The elimination of cap-and-trade will save \$1.3 billion this year alone. On page 3: A typical household will save \$264. He further confirms on page 13—this has been a question in this House—that the money collected for cap-and-trade will be spent on programs to meet the purpose of the act to fight climate change. We’ve been clear. We will wind this program down in a responsible way. We will bring forward a made-in-Ontario plan that balances the economy and the environment. We made this promise and we intend to keep it.”

ROUNDTABLE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DISBANDED

The co-chairs of the Roundtable on Violence Against Women, [Pamela Cross and Farrah Khan](#), [both tendered their resignations](#) to the Doug Ford government because the government had not replied to their inquiries. Subsequently, the panel was advised by Community and Social Services Minister Lisa MacLeod (Nepean) that it would be [disbanded](#). The Roundtable was formed by the [previous Liberal government](#) to advise them on emerging issues of gendered violence.

NEW BILLS INTRODUCED

BILL 42, ENDING DISCRIMINATION IN AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE ACT

With this bill, PC MPP Parm Gill (Milton) heightened the political battle for the voters of Brampton. While a Federal Conservative MP in the Stephen Harper government, Gill represented the riding of Brampton-Springdale. Gill's bill seeks to lower car insurance premiums for drivers in Brampton. Gill's bill would prohibit insurers from using factors primarily related to the postal code or telephone area code for the residence of a person who would be an insured person under a contract. It also requires the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario to make a rule to the same effect. While Gill's bill is not a government bill, Finance Minister Vic Fedeli (Nipissing) has lauded the bill and indicated that the government is supportive of it.

BILL 43, FREEING HIGHWAYS 412 AND 418 ACT (TOLL HIGHWAY AMENDMENTS)

NDP MPP Jennifer French (Oshawa) introduced this bill that would stop the province from tolling the newly built Highway

412 in Durham Region. As well, French's bill would prevent the tolling of any highway that connects to highway 401.

BILL 44, ENDING AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE DISCRIMINATION IN THE GREATER TORONTO AREA ACT

NDP MPP Gurratan Singh's (Brampton East) bill is his party's response to the issue of high auto insurance premiums for Brampton drivers. Unlike MPP Parm's Gill's bill, Singh's bill would specifically prevent residents of the Greater Toronto Area from paying different rates for automobile insurance based solely on the municipality or area in which they reside in the Greater Toronto Area.

BILL 45, CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS AMENDMENT ACT (NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS)

NDP MPP Doly Begum's (Scarborough Southwest) bill would ensure that corporations are not eligible to receive funding for child care and early years programs and services unless they are not-for-profit corporations.

BILLS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

BILL 38, TAX FAIRNESS FOR REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS ACT

PC MPP Bob Bailey's (Sarnia—Lambton) bill passed second reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on General Government. Bailey's bill would allow real estate agents and brokers to register as corporations for tax purposes. A [previous version of this bill](#) was tabled by MPPs from all three major parties in 2017.

BILL 40, HUMAN RIGHTS CODE AMENDMENT ACT (GENETIC CHARACTERISTICS)

PC MPP Christina Mitás' (Scarborough Centre) bill passed second reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Mitás' bill will include genetic characteristics as prohibited grounds for discrimination under the Human Rights Code. Mitás' bill is somewhat similar to Liberal MPP Nathalie Des Rosiers' (Ottawa—Vanier) [Bill 35, Human Rights Code Amendment Act](#). Des Rosiers' bill adds immigration status, social condition and police record, in addition to genetic characteristics, to the code.

BILL 41, HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (HELMET EXEMPTION FOR SIKH MOTORCYCLISTS)

PC MPP Prabmeet Sarkaria's (Brampton South) bill passed second reading was referred to the Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly. Sakaria's bill proposes to exempt Sikh motorcyclists from having to wear a helmet on the road. In contrast to former Premier Kathleen Wynne's opposition to this bill, Premier Doug Ford (Etobicoke North) has indicated that he will support an exemption for the Sikh community.

BILLS PASSED

BILL 36, CANNABIS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT

Attorney-General Caroline Mulroney's (York—Simcoe) legislation allowing privately-run stores for the distribution of cannabis passed third reading and was granted Royal Assent later in the day. Mulroney's cannabis bill will allow privately-run cannabis stores starting in April, 2019, which is in stark contrast to former Premier Kathleen Wynne's plan to have LCBO stores distribute cannabis. In the vote, the NDP and most Liberals (except MPP Michael Coteau, Don Valley East) opposed the bill while Green Party Leader Mike Shreiner (Guelph) supported the government's proposal.