

EDUCATION NEWS

BILL 48, SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOMS ACT

Education Minister Lisa Thompson's (Huron—Bruce) government bill passed second reading debate and was referred to the Legislative Committee on Social Policy. The bill will now have two days of public hearings scheduled for Monday February 25 and Tuesday February 26. OSSTF/FEESO President Harvey Bischof will make an oral brief to the committee on Monday. Any interested individuals or groups have until 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday February 26 to submit their written briefs. At this point, the bill is scheduled to return to the Legislature for third reading on Wednesday, March 6.

Thompson's bill would require all teacher candidates to pass a math test before being licensed. Thompson's bill would also revoke the certification of teachers and licensed early childhood educators disciplined by their respective professional regulatory body for committing sexual abuse against a student or child. As well, the bill would create guidelines for school boards to implement policies for the inclusion of service animals. Currently, 39 of the 72 school boards have policies in place. Thompson's bill also would allow future changes to the composition of the Ontario College of Teachers and its various committees to be made by regulation rather than having to pass a bill in the Legislature.

FULL-TIME EQAO CHAIR OF THE BOARD APPOINTED

Education Minister Lisa Thompson appointed Cameron Montgomery as the new Chair of the Board for the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). Montgomery becomes the first full-time chair of EQAO with a yearly salary of \$140,000 for a three-year term. Prior to this appointment, Montgomery was a professor of education at the University of Ottawa for 14 years. He resigned that position to become the Ontario Progressive Conservative candidate in the 2018 provincial election in the riding of Orléans. He lost the election to Liberal incumbent Marie-France Lalonde. A number of individuals, including the outgoing chair, David Cooke, questioned the need for a full-time chair and the salary. According to Cooke, he earned approximately \$3,600 in the final year of his appointment.

NEW BILLS INTRODUCED

BILL 68, COMPREHENSIVE ONTARIO POLICE SERVICES ACT

Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Sylvia Jones (Dufferin—Caledon) introduced this government bill that would limit the scope of the Special Investigations Unit (SIU). The SIU would only investigate in cases where police are involved in serious injury or death, and face allegations of sexual assault. As well, the SIU is to complete their investigations within 120 days. If they don't, they must provide reasons for the delay. The bill will also create a new agency, the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency, to deal with complaints against police. The agency will have the power to direct complaints to a police force or to an independent investigator. This

is a change from the current complaints process, which is handled by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director.

BILL 71, PARIS GALT MORAINÉ CONSERVATION ACT

MPP Mike Schreiner (Guelph), the Green Party Leader, introduced his first piece of legislation which would protect the drinking water supply in his riding of Guelph. Schreiner's bill is a response to a part of government's Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, which Schreiner said would threaten the clean drinking water supply provided by the Paris Galt Moraine to Guelph and the surrounding community.

BILLS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

BILL 63, RIGHT TO TIMELY MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION CARE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACT

NDP MPP Bhutila Karpoche's (Parkdale—High Park) private member's bill passed second reading and has been referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

Karpoche's bill would require the Minister of Health and Long-term Care to ensure that a person who is less than 26 years old, residing in Ontario and has been deemed to require a mental health or addiction service receive access to the required mental health or addiction service within 30 days of being deemed to require the service.

BILL 64, NOAH AND GREGORY'S LAW (TRANSITION TO ADULT DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES AND SUPPORTS)

NDP MPP Lisa Gretzky's (Windsor West) private member's bill passed second reading and has been referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

Gretzky's bill aims to end the gap in funding support for individuals with developmental challenges when they turn 18 years of age. In addressing the need for this legislation, [Gretzky said](#), "So the Noah and Gregory's Law would bridge that gap. What it could do is, as someone ages out of their support—children and youth, once they turn 18—the funding that they were already receiving, the funding and the supports that they were getting through the ministry of children and youth, through SSAH, would follow them. They would continue to get it while they go through the application process for Passport, while they sit and wait for Passport funding to actually begin. There would no longer be a four- or five-year gap where they're not receiving any supports or services at all."

IN OTHER NEWS

AUTISM DEBATES DOMINATES QUESTION PERIOD

The first week of the spring session's Question Period was dominated by the recent changes implemented by MPP Lisa MacLeod, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to autism services for children. The day after parents of autistic children filled the public and members' galleries of the Legislative Chamber, NDP Leader Andrea Horwath (Hamilton Centre) demanded action on behalf of the parents. [Horwath asked](#) MacLeod, "After the Premier promised families so much, this Premier has done nothing to offer anything to parents. The promises were big, but the result was nil. All they've done is given the families of this province who have children with autism the expectation to have no hope. That's what they said yesterday: Give up hope. There's no hope left for you. In fact, that's literally what the minister said: "No parent should have any hope." Meanwhile, parents who joined us yesterday are planning to sell their homes, cash in life savings, just to provide the supports that the Ford government has yanked from them. When her party needed those parents' votes, the minister was happy to offer hope, Speaker. But now that she has the minister's office, she has nothing to offer at all. How can she justify that?"

In response, [MacLeod said](#), "I appreciate that the leader of the official opposition wants to play politics and score political points off the backs of vulnerable families. There are 23,000 children in this province who have gone without support. We have increased funding in this ministry. The budget used to be \$256 million; I have increased it—during a time when the previous

Liberal government left us with a \$15-billion deficit—to \$321 million. During that period of time, Speaker, I made a commitment to the parents who were currently receiving service that we would continue their funding throughout Christmas and had to go to Treasury Board for an emergency \$102 million so that the 25% of the children who were receiving support could continue to receive support.

But if the member opposite is suggesting that I should do what the previous Liberal government did and ignore 75%—three out of four—of the children in the province of Ontario with autism, think again.”

As the debate engulfed the chamber, the week’s tense exchanges resulted in the suspension of veteran PC MPP Randy Hillier (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston) for being insensitive to the parents. Hillier was accused of saying “yada, yada, yada” when responding to comments by NDP MPP Monique Taylor (Hamilton Mountain) that many felt were actually directed to the parents. Premier Ford suspended Hillier from the caucus and said that Hillier’s status in the PC caucus would be determined soon. At Thursday’s session, Hillier’s seat was assigned to the opposition benches.

POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS PROTEST CHANGES TO FUNDING

As the Legislature resumed on Tuesday, post-secondary students gathered on the lawn of Queen’s Park to protest the recent changes to post-secondary funding. At the rally, OSSTF/FEESO President Harvey Bischof spoke and expressed OSSTF/FEESO’s solidarity with the students’ goal of lowering tuition costs. Meanwhile, inside the Legislature, [NDP Leader Andrea Horwath \(Hamilton Centre\) asked](#) Premier Doug Ford, “The Premier has announced an attack on post-secondary students that includes higher student debt, scrapping grants, and attacks on student organizations. It’s a change that only helps students from Ontario’s wealthiest families. To quote an expert, “Any policy which leaves students from the top 5% of families better off and everyone else worse off is—if you ask me—difficult to describe as fair. Will the Premier put a halt to this, reverse the decision, and support, rather than attack, students?”

As Horwath continued her questioning, a number of students rose in the public galleries to demand the repeal of the government’s actions. As the protesters were escorted outside by security, a visibly upset Premier Ford responded, “Through you, Mr. Speaker: Here’s an example of indoctrination, what we just saw up there. This is part of the opposition benches—that’s how they train our kids, with a filthy mouth. They should have their mouths washed out with soap. That’s what they should have, because that’s embarrassing.”

MPP JIM WILSON RETURNS TO LEGISLATURE

After his dismissal from the Progressive Conservative caucus because of allegations of sexually inappropriate conduct, long-time PC MPP Jim Wilson (Simcoe—Grey) returned to the Legislature for the first time to sit as an independent MPP. Wilson was greeted by Premier Doug Ford prior to the beginning of Question Period on Tuesday. At this point, the PC party is conducting an investigation. No timeline has been given for the investigation and when, or if, its findings will be made public.