

NEW BILLS INTRODUCED

BILL 238, WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT

The Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, Monte McNaughton (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex) introduced this government bill that would limit the increase on certain workplace insurance premiums for employers for 2021.

BILL 239, STAY HOME IF YOU ARE SICK ACT

NDP MPP Peggy Sattler's (London West) private member's bill would grant employees 10 days of sick leave, seven of which would be paid leave. In addition, Sattler's bill mandates another 14 days of paid leave in the case of declared emergencies or infectious disease emergencies.

BILL 240, TEDDY'S LAW (ANTI-DECLAWING)

NDP MPP Marit Stiles' (Davenport) private member's bill would outlaw cat declawing unless declared medically necessary by a veterinarian.

BILL 241, COVID-19 MEMORIAL DAY ACT

NDP MPP Teresa Armstrong's (London—Fanshawe) private member's bill would proclaim the third Monday in March in each year as COVID-19 Memorial Day.

BILL 242, CAREGIVER AND HOMEWORKER PROTECTION ACT

PC MPP Roman Baber's (York Centre) private member's bill seeks to protect caregivers, nannies and live-in workers from employer mistreatment, particularly if the employment is tied to the immigration process. The bill would create a registry of employers who have been found to disregard employment laws.

BILL 243, TRESPASS TO PROPERTY AMENDMENT ACT (PROTECTING CONSUMERS FROM PACKAGE PIRACY)

PC MPP Stephen Crawford's (Oakville) private member's bill would provide minimum fines where a person trespasses for the purpose of taking, holding, concealing or destroying mail addressed to another person with the intent to deprive the other person of the mail or to defraud any person. The bill has also been referred to as the "porch piracy" bill.

BILLS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

None.

BILLS PASSED

BILL 213, BETTER FOR PEOPLE, SMARTER FOR BUSINESS ACT

In the face of continued opposition, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria's (Brampton South) government bill that will, amongst other proposals, grant Charles McVety's Canada Christian School the right to confer university-level degrees passed 3rd Reading and was granted Royal Assent. Despite numerous groups, including [OSSTF/FEESO](#), making submissions to the Standing Committee on General Government, the Ford government was determined to pass this bill. These groups cited McVety's long documented history of homophobia, Islamophobia and racism to call for the bill's defeat or, at least, have the pertinent schedule removed. The final vote easily passed, but notably the Minister of Universities and Colleges Ross Romano was absent from the final vote. The reasons for his absence have not yet been explained. Nonetheless, Romano had been a staunch defender of the bill in Question Period. While the PCs have promised to not proclaim the university status of McVety's college until the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) reviews the application, it is still uncertain if the PEQAB will push back on the granting of university status to McVety's college.

BILL 229, PROTECT, SUPPORT AND RECOVER FROM COVID-19 ACT (BUDGET MEASURES)

PC Finance Minister Rod Phillips' (Ajax) 2020 COVID-19 budget bill passed 3rd Reading and was granted Royal Assent. With a number of organizations, including [OSSTF/FEESO](#), appearing before the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to oppose the bill, it was, nonetheless, passed easily by the governing PCs. While the bill primarily deals with Ontario's finances, the most contentious part of the bill became Schedule 6 which environmental activists said would destroy Ontario's Greenbelt. In fact, former Toronto Mayor and Federal Conservative Cabinet Minister David Crombie resigned his position as Chair of Ontario's Greenbelt Council and was joined by numerous other board members to protest the provision.

IN OTHER NEWS

ONTARIO FAO REPORT

The Financial Accountability Office (FAO) [reported](#) that Ontario's remaining balance in its unallocated funds increased by \$2.7 billion from August 26 to September 30 for a total of \$12 billion.

As well, the [FAO calculated that education sector spending](#) has increased by \$1.431 billion as follows:

- \$1,686 million above plan in Elementary and Secondary Education Program—Policy and Program Delivery (Vote-Item 1002-1), which mainly funds school boards. This above plan spending is a temporary increase to offset the 90-day deferral of municipal Education Property Tax payments.
- \$109 million below plan in Child Care and Early Years—Policy Development and Program Delivery (Vote-Item 1004-1), which includes transfer payments to support child care.
- \$135 million below plan in the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan.

Meanwhile, post-secondary education declined by \$477 million including:

- \$77 million below plan in Support for Postsecondary Education (Vote-Item 3002-3), which provides capital funding to colleges and universities.
- \$349 million below plan in Colleges, Universities and Student Support (Vote-Item 3002-1), which provides operating grants for colleges and universities, and financial aid for students.

In response to the FAO's report, OSSTF/FEESO President Harvey Bischof said, "The Ford government continues to sit on more than \$12 billion of unused contingency funds, some specifically earmarked for education, as verified by the December 8, 2020 report of the Financial Accountability Office. These funds could have helped to reduce class sizes to keep students and staff safe. They could have been used to improve ventilation in schools well before they opened in September. Since March, we have offered to provide insights and advice to this government on behalf of the educators in Ontario schools. Instead, we continue to be shut out of the process, and the education system is paying for the disrespect that Stephen Lecce and Doug Ford demonstrate for those who work on the frontlines of education. In short, education workers and teachers feel abandoned and completely unsupported by the Ministry of Education."

AUDITOR GENERAL'S COMMENTS ON MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

Ontario's Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk, released her [annual report](#) and commented on the Ministry of Education's curriculum development, implementation and delivery. Lysyk [wrote](#): "The Report concludes the Ministry of Education does not have formal processes in place to assess when curricula may require updating. Processes used to evaluate curriculum teaching are inconsistent and many teachers find that outdated materials and inadequate training affect their work, and neither the Ministry nor school boards know whether curricula are being taught consistently or to a high standard across the province."

Lysyk [added](#): "Our audit of Curriculum Development, Implementation and Delivery confirmed the need for curricula to be updated on a timelier basis given that we are living in a world of quickly changing technology and cultural diversity; about half of current curricula was last updated 10 to 14 years ago. The Ministry recognizes this and has begun taking steps to address this issue. A key to the successful implementation of any changes and updates will be to provide school boards and teachers with sufficient preparatory time (including resource support) prior to the subject matter having to be taught to students."

In response, OSSTF/FEESO President Harvey Bischof [told the Toronto Star](#), "(Lysyk's report) confirms what teachers have long experienced when it comes to curriculum development, implementation, and delivery. The lack of clear criteria to determine which curricula get reviewed contributes to the sense that some curriculum areas are inappropriately politicized by the government."

Bischof continued, "(Given) the rushed implementation, lack of pilot programs, poor or absent professional development...that Ontario still performs so well by international students (is a testament to their teachers)."

HORWATH CHIDES EARLY CLOSURE OF LEGISLATURE

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath demanded that the Ontario Legislature continue to sit to help Ontario's families through the Covid-19 pandemic. Horwath expressed dismay at the current session [remarking](#), "All Doug Ford managed to accomplish this session was helping his ultra-wealthy developer pals pave over environmentally sensitive lands, and re-paying an IOU that Doug Ford owed infamous bigot Charles McVety." With the shutdown of the Legislature, MPPs will not return until the day after Family Day—Tuesday February 16, 2021.

ONTARIO LIBERAL LEADER MAKES YEAR-END STATEMENT

In an [address to Ontario Liberal Party members](#), Party Leader Steven Del Duca, announced the beginning of a policy development process for the next election. In his statement, Del Duca

proclaimed that only his party can “get it done” and accused both the PCs and NDP of seeking to divide and conquer Ontarians. Del Duca said that only his party seeks to unite Ontarians. In announcing the policy development process, Del Duca outlined the four policy pillars that will guide the party:

- Publicly-funded education
- Universal health care
- Create a clean and sustainable environment
- Economic dignity and justice

**The Ontario Legislature has recessed for the winter break.
It will resume on Tuesday, February 16, 2021.**