

# ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL

Remember former Ontario Education Minister John Snobelen and his attempts to recreate the province's education system?

After the 1995 provincial election, Snobelen was filmed talking about how to initiate significant reforms in education by creating "a useful crisis."

The video went public, and the minister and the government were vilified but that didn't stop the PCs from introducing Bill 160 in 1997. The bill introduced standardized testing, cut teaching preparation time, allowed the government to determine class sizes and gave the province control of municipal education taxes.

Fast forward to over 20 years and the Doug Ford-led P.C. government won its majority by promising to increase class sizes and repealing the Liberal's 2015 sex education curriculum. In essence, the Ford Conservatives were not only trying to appease its right-wing supporters, but also hearkening back to the P.C. party of old to create a crisis in order to reform it.

So, what's in store for teachers, students and parents this school year?

While Ford railed against former Premier Kathleen Wynne's destructive sex-education curriculum, his government of the people - intent on saving each penny of taxpayers' dollars - spent \$1 million to talk to parents and the public. After all that consultation the result is a sex-education curriculum that looks like the former Liberal government's document, with a few minor changes.

Conversations about gender equity will happen in Grade 8 rather than in Grade 6, sexual orientation will be taught in Grade 5 rather than in Grade 4, consent will be discussed in Grade 1, homophobia in Grade 5, the impacts of pornography in Grade 6 and sexting and contraception in Grade 7.

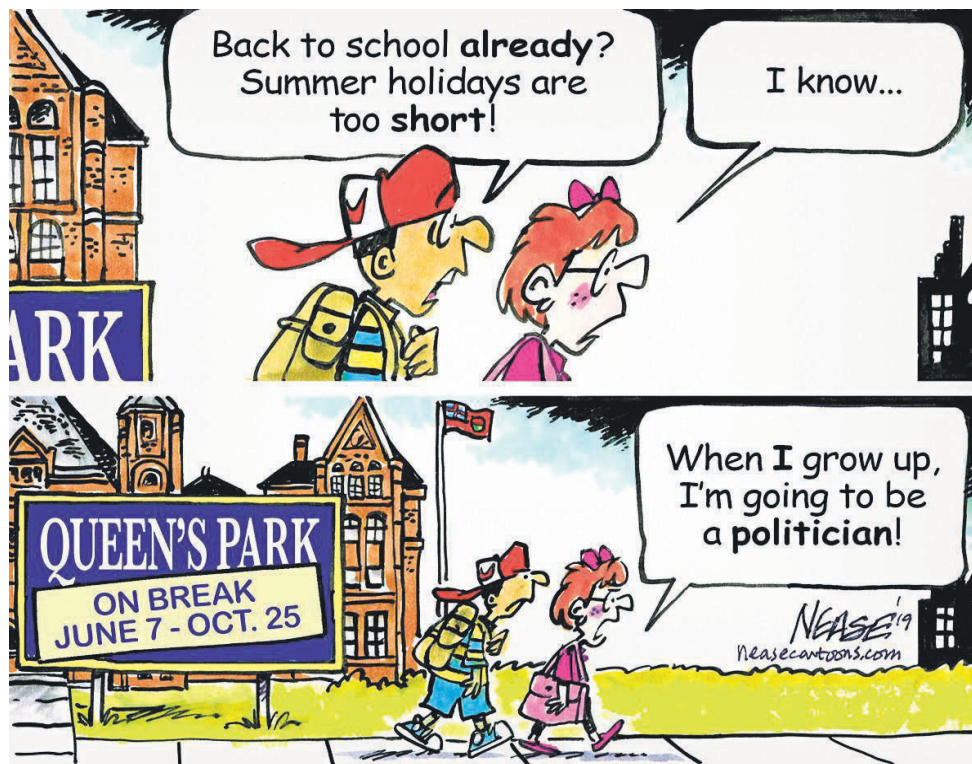
The Progressive Conservatives introduced conversations about vaping, opioids and emphasize mental health.

But the party's education "crisis" strategy extended to increasing class sizes. Former education minister Lisa Thompson announced in March the average class size would increase to 28 students over four years to cut costs.

As the school year got underway, new Education Minister Stephen Lecce put the brakes on that plan, arguing there was misinformation and that it wasn't actually going to happen this year. He said the plan is still to increase average high school class sizes to 28 by 2023, but it will be gradual. He also raised the possibility that class sizes could be tied to union negotiations since teachers' contracts expired Aug. 31. That idea was quickly squashed by teachers.

So, what is the plan for teachers and students? It would seem the party strategists determined their backtracking on the education file played better as a campaign slogan than a real-life plan. But then that has been the party's problem all along. Their cartoon slogans sound better on the campaign trail than they do when they are put into practice.

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## A NEUTRON STAR COLLIDES WITH A BLACK HOLE

### CELESTIAL EVENT OCCURRED 900 MILLION YEARS AGO, WRITES MARIO CARR



MARIO  
CARR  
Column

Somewhere in a galaxy far, far away, about 900 million years ago, a black hole gobbled up a neutron star.

The catastrophic event occurred millions of trillions of miles away, sending out gravitational waves across the universe. It occurred so distant that its waves are just now reaching us - and scientists think it was detected by the European Gravitational Observatory in Cascina, Italy, in mid-August.

Both objects are unimaginable. A neutron star is created after a supernova

explosion and is incredibly small and dense. It's about the size of a small city, only six to 12 miles in diameter. A teaspoonful weighs about 10 million tonnes.

A black hole is a singularity in space where nothing, not even light, can escape its grasp. Here are September stargazing events, which are listed in the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers calendar.

Sept. 13: Hamilton Amateur Astronomers meeting, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., Hamilton Spectator, 44 Frid St. Free admission, door prizes and everybody is welcome. An optional food bank donation of non-perishable goods will be collected and appreciated. The Harvest Moon also rises tonight at sunset.

Sept. 14: The smallest full moon of 2019.

Sept. 20: The moon approaches the Hyades in the predawn sky.

Sept. 21: Last quarter moon.

Sept. 23: Fall officially begins with the Autumn Equinox at 3:50 a.m.

Sept. 27: For the next two weeks, from a dark location in the eastern predawn sky, you could see the Zodiacal Light. It's caused by sunlight reflecting off dust particles in the solar system.

For more information, see the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers website ([amateurastronomy.org](http://amateurastronomy.org)) or call 905-627-4323. The club offers a basic astronomy course for members.

*Mario Carr is the club's director of publicity and can be reached at [mario-carr@cogeco.ca](mailto:mario-carr@cogeco.ca) or on Twitter (@MarioCCarr).*

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**nnc** National NewsMedia Council  
**ocna**  
newsroom@theifp.ca  
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## CONTACT US

**The Independent & Free Press**  
280 Guelph Street, Unit 77  
Georgetown, ON L7G 4B1  
Phone: 905-873-0301  
Classifieds: 1-800-263-6480  
Fax: 905-873-0398

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