

## EDITORIAL

### Protecting Students Act long overdue

**M**uch needed, long-delayed legislation is making another appearance at Queen's Park.

Last week, Education Minister Mitzie Hunter announced she is reviving legislation that would automatically fire teachers convicted of sex abuse or child pornography offences.

Now, one would be forgiven for assuming that would be the automatic result of a teacher committing those crimes. It is not.

A few years ago, a Toronto Star investigative series revealed that the Ontario College of Teachers was not only making decisions on discipline in secret, but could elect not to revoke a teaching certificate.

Some teachers guilty of sexual misconduct or abusive behaviour were simply being moved to other schools. Others kept their licence for years while waiting for a hearing, due to a huge backlog in cases. And some were able to confess to less serious offences and escape with a lesser penalty.

The revelations sparked an investigation by retired Justice Patrick LeSage and his report led to legislation introduced in 2013. It was shelved due to the provincial election a year later. Last May it returned, but the legislature was prorogued, prompting another delay.

Hunter is taking another swing at this and let's hope this bill, the Protecting Students Act 2016, has finally jumped all of the hurdles in its path.

"This legislation responds to the rare occurrence that may occur, and is making sure that we have a process that is decisive and moves quickly to take action on anything in a fair and transparent way," Hunter said.

To its credit, the college has acted to increase its transparency during the past few years.

But it's hard to imagine any parents opposing the mandated firing of teachers convicted of serious sex abuse or child porn offences.

This is a long overdue step to help ensure that our students are in as safe a school environment as possible.

## SOCIAL MEDIA



**On residents urged to support Hwy. 400, 404 link by Oct. 31.**

**Kent Elliott** People who travel from the west side of the lake to east end of Toronto know this route should've already been built. The question is why is not already done.

**Shannon Crane-Dickson** So a toll road? Ya that's awesome. Won't really affect the traffic in our area because I'd assume most wouldn't pay to use it. Too much population growth with severely outdated infrastructure everywhere you turn.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Here's why there's school bus driver shortages

I recently retired from school bus driving after a nine-year career and I thought I would add my two cents about the recent school bus driver shortages.

Bus companies start the year off short-handed — some with as few as five to six open routes — and in this year it's up to 60, which is not normal. There are three main reasons companies remain short staffed:

1. Obviously pay, or lack thereof, comes into play. Some districts pay quite a bit less, such as Toronto and Durham, and much better in York or Peel. Some only pay when the wheels are rolling and don't pay deadhead time. Others have a three-hour minimum pay and pay some or most deadhead time.

There are also different pay

schedules for charters and extra route work, which is often less than route pay.

2. The five-year contract. I have seen in the past companies wipe out other companies and yards by low-balling bids and aggressively going after more than they can handle. When this happens and the company you are with loses a lot, or all, of its routes and you want to keep working, you have to go with the new company.

That means you go back to zero for seniority and possibly your safe driving records go back to zero, which happened to us in 2010, and, of course, you'll get lower pay. It took six years to make back the pay we lost by having to switch companies. Also, you may not get your old route back.

3. Lack of support from your yard office and or the school. Every bus has one or two kids that just don't follow the rules, but many have 15 to 20 hard-to-

handle children, like I had. We are taught to use write-up slips and submit to the schools when behavior problems arise, but the school rarely does anything. The child may be told to write a note to the bus driver or miss a recess, but rarely are problem children removed from the bus and you spend too much time pulling over to deal with problems.

School bus fleet magazine in the United States shows this as the No. 1 reason companies have trouble holding on to drivers. This is also the main reason I left after nine years.

Don't get me wrong, bus driving is a great part-time gig, a good way to make extra money and still keep most of your day free to do things, but if you need to threaten to quit every time you need help, something has to give.

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