

Immigration And Clean Power Top Agenda For Federal, Atlantic Officials

New GO Station At Woodbine

HALIFAX: A federal program aimed at attracting foreign workers to Atlantic Canada will be extended for another two years to address a shortage of skilled workers. The Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program was supposed to end this year, but federal officials say it will be extended to the end of 2021.

Federal Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen made the announcement in Halifax during a meeting of premiers and ministers concerning the Atlantic Growth Strategy.

"We are on the right track," Hussen said, noting that more than 1,800 Atlantic employers are now participating in the pilot program. "We have approved applications for 2,500 permanent residents and their family members destined for the Atlantic region."

Hussen said the program has created good middle-class jobs.

"This will give the government of Canada and the Atlantic provinces more time to experiment with different approaches and to assess the program's medium and long-term impacts in this region," he said.

Greg Thompson, New Brunswick's intergovernmental affairs



Nova Scotia Premier Stephen McNeill (left to right), P.E.I. Premier Wade MacLauchlan, New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs and Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Dwight Ball gather at a meeting of the Atlantic premiers in Charlottetown. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Brian McInnis

minister, welcomed the news, saying his province needs to fill a shortage of skilled workers.

"We could grow the economy in just about every village and town in New Brunswick if we had qualified workers," Thompson said.

Navdeep Bains, the minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, said the region continues to experience record levels of immigration, welcoming over 21,000 newcomers since July of 2016.

The Halifax meeting included the premiers of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador. New Brunswick was represented by Thompson. The group also announced plans to develop what they're calling a "clean power road map" for Atlantic Canada.

An engineering study will look into improving power transmission connections throughout the region and with Quebec to allow

for another 2,000 megawatts of electricity.

"I can't stress to you enough how critical this will be for the future economic success and stability of Atlantic Canada," said Nova Scotia Premier Stephen McNeill. "It is a leadership role for the Atlantic premiers and our federal colleagues to put together a plan that will not only benefit Atlantic Canadians but I think will set a tone for the country," he said.

TORONTO: The Ontario government plans to build a new GO station at Woodbine at no cost to taxpayers.

Jeff Yurek, Minister of Transportation, along with Kinga Surma, MPP for Etobicoke Centre and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Transportation, and Phil Verster, President and CEO of Metrolinx, announced that Metrolinx and the Government would partner with Woodbine Entertainment to build the station along Highway 27, on the Kitchener GO rail line.

As part of Ontario's broader strategy to deliver more transit solutions in the GTHA, the province is pursuing a transit-oriented development approach to the delivery of transit infrastructure to reduce the cost to taxpayers.

Woodbine Entertainment has development plans that will bring new jobs, housing and entertainment opportunities to the area around the station.

"The station is terrific news for everyone in Etobicoke and the surrounding area," said PA Surma. "This will better connect Etobicoke residents to the GO line." The new station will also feature fully accessible and barrier-free facilities, and direct road, bicycle, and sidewalk access.

Ontario Recommending School Boards To Freeze Hiring

Consultations Being Held On Class Sizes In Kindergarten & Primary Grades; NDP Attacks Plan

TORONTO: Ontario's education ministry is recommending school boards freeze hiring ahead of the provincial budget and as the government consults on class sizes and hiring practices.

Deputy minister Nancy Naylor sent boards a memo Thursday noting that the government implemented a hiring freeze in June and that school boards may wish to institute similar measures.

When that public service hiring freeze was instituted, the government said it didn't apply to front-line staff such as police and fire services, and Premier Doug Ford said it also didn't apply to nurses or teachers.

Naylor advised the boards this week to defer filling vacancies for retirements and other leaves for teachers and other staff until the minister gives them an update by March 15.

"I am writing to you today to recommend that school boards exercise prudence in making hiring decisions in light of the upcoming Ontario budget and the



Deputy minister Nancy Naylor

recent consultation on class size and hiring practices," she wrote in the memo.

The consultations launched in January contemplate the possibility of removing class size caps for kindergarten and primary grades.

NDP education critic Marit Stiles suggested the promise of an "update" by March 15 is omi-

nous. "The Conservatives, I believe, have just put families on notice that deep cuts are coming to their children's education."

Education Minister Lisa Thompson said in a statement that her priority is ensuring all students have access to a meaningful education.

"To achieve this, we need to

take a hard look at how school boards spend their money and make sure every single dollar invested in our education system is a dollar invested in a student's future," Thompson wrote.

Harvey Bischof, president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, called the news "deeply concerning," saying schools are already "worse than stretched thin."

"There are gaps in the fabric of what we can provide in terms of a lot of the services that kids require," he said.

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association said the memo was alarming. "The message is clear: the government is asking schools to do more with less," president Liz Stuart said in a statement. "This will have a negative impact on student achievement and the learning environment."

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association would not comment on the memo, but it has recently expressed concern

that changes to the province's autism program set for April 1 will mean more students with special needs in schools and so far there has been no additional funding to help them.

Laura Walton with the Canadian Union of Public Employees, which represents 55,000 education workers, said the timing of the memo is "really weird," given that need for more supports _ not less. "I don't think a hiring freeze is going to be the answer to any of those needs," she said.

School boards typically hear from the government in March about what to expect in the spring budget, Walton said, so the sector will be closely watching the mid-March update from the minister.

"It should give us some indicator of what the world is going to look like as we head into bargaining," she said.

Contracts for teachers and education workers are up in August, at a time when the government is trying to slash a multi-billion-dollar deficit.

Dentistry

Dr. Dogra & Associates

Dr. SUNDEEP DOGRA
Dental Surgeon

Dr. ARPITA DOGRA
Dental Surgeon

- Extractions
- Root Canals
- Crowns & Bridges
- Complete and Partial Dentures

- Cleanings
- Fillings
- Teeth Whitening

New Patients Welcome :)
Evenings • Weekends • Saturday

Brampton Business Centre
7910 Hurontario Street, Unit 17
Brampton, ON L6Y 0P6

905-497-3300

Court Dismisses Challenge Against Sex Ed Curriculum

TORONTO: An Ontario court has dismissed a challenge from elementary teachers and a civil liberties group over the Progressive Conservative government's repeal of a modernized sex-ed curriculum.

The challenge from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association argued that changes made by the government infringed teachers' freedom of expression and put students at risk by failing to be inclusive.

The Tories repealed a 2015 curriculum from the previous Liberal government that included lessons warning about online bullying and sexting, as well as parts addressing same-sex relationships and gender identity. A Divisional Court ruling released said that it is the role of elected officials, not the courts, to make legislation and policy decisions.

Government lawyers said teachers were allowed to go beyond what is in the new curriculum, the court noted, and there was no evidence of a teacher being disciplined for doing that. Schools are currently using an interim curriculum based on a version from 1998.

"Nothing in the (interim) curriculum prohibits a teacher from teaching any of the topics in question, which include: consent, use of proper names to describe body parts, gender identity and sexual orientation, online behaviour and cyberbullying,

sexually transmitted diseases and infections," the three-judge panel wrote.

ETFO's lawyer had said there might not have been a legal challenge if Premier Doug Ford hadn't also issued a warning to teachers who said they would continue to use the now-scrapped version of the curriculum.

Some of the public statements made were "ill-considered," the court said, but did not constitute an infringement of the charter. There was no evidence of a teacher being disciplined for referring to the repealed curriculum, the court wrote.

ETFO framed the ruling as a win for teachers because it affirmed their professional judgment rights. "The government's explicit concession on this point in court makes this case a victory for ETFO and others," president Sam Hammond said.

Education Minister Lisa Thompson said after getting feedback from public consultations on the health and physical education curriculum, a new one will be ready for the fall.

"I think it's going to be safe to say that there were opportunities to introduce even more realities in terms of what students face today," Thompson said. "Cyberbullying, consent, human trafficking _ those are all issues that we have heard through our consultation that parents want to be addressed." The Liberal curriculum included lessons on cyberbullying and consent.