

THE WEEKLY VOICE

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Afghan Minority Families Get A New Home



Harjit Sajjan at the Calgary ceremony. On right, Minister Navdeep Bains speaks about the refugee program.



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he lost his life while helping a stranded motorist but his legacy continues to positively affect those in Canada and around the world. His advocacy was instrumental in starting this process to assist vulnerable Sikh and Hindu minorities in Afghanistan.

"We are proud to carry on the legacy of Bhullar in partnership with the foundation that bears his name through this humanitarian resettlement," Sajjan said.

Harjit Sajjan said: "Our gov-

ernment has taken action to ensure the safety of survivors of persecution and violence in Afghanistan. Families from among the Afghan Sikh and Hindu minority population have faced extreme risk based on their ethnicity and religious beliefs.

"We are proud to ... offer them a new life and home, while ensuring they have the support they need to thrive."

Tarjinder Kaur Bhullar of the Manmeet Singh Bhullar Foundation said: "Today marks an impor-

tant step in fulfilling Manmeet's vision for this project. We hope to continue welcoming other families as they complete the private sponsorship journey.

"Minister Sajjan's stalwart leadership, assistance from the Government of Canada, bi-partisan support, and the sheer will of community members throughout Canada to share in this work; brings us to this point. These families can now move from not only surviving, but thriving while living the Canadian dream."

Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, said: "Canada welcomes the first privately-sponsored Afghan Sikh and Hindu families who faced extreme peril for their ethnicity and religious beliefs. Manmeet Bhullar's legacy of inspiring people to make this world a better place thrives in our Government's efforts to welcome and provide support to refugees, in order for them to become successful participants in the Canadian mosaic."

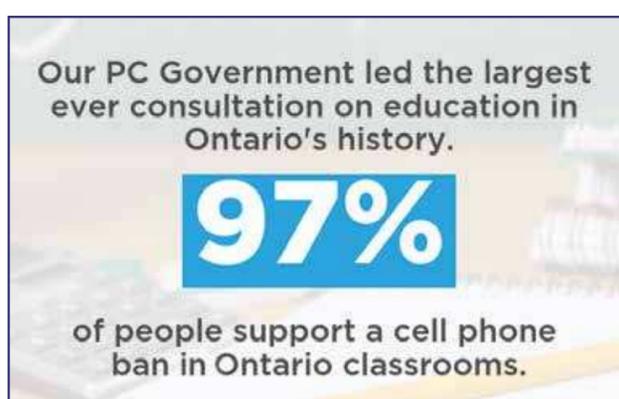
NDP Says Cell Phone Move Is To Distract People

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ter school because they will get less funding for therapy. Changes the government is making to the Ontario Autism Program as of April 1 have come under fierce criticism from parents and advocates, who say kids now won't the levels of therapy they need.

NDP education critic Marit Stiles noted that a recent memo from the education ministry advised school boards to defer filling vacancies for retirements and other leaves for teachers and other staff until a promised update by March 15. That could mean education cuts, larger class sizes or changes to full-day kindergarten, Stiles suggested.

"I think that this (announce-



Official notice on Ontario PC party website.

ment) has everything to do with a government that's trying to distract from the really serious and considerable concerns of families and education workers," she said.

The Green party questioned why a government focused on cutting red tape is introducing "a top-down regulation that complicates things for educators on the

front line." The Tory government conducted education consultations last year, and while input on the sex-education curriculum dominated headlines, feedback was also gathered on a potential classroom cellphone ban. About 97 per cent of respondents favoured some sort of restriction on phones in class.

"It was the closest thing we got in our consultation to unanimity," one source said. The Progressive Conservatives had proposed such a ban in their platform during last year's election campaign.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association did not provide comment, but in its submission to the government consultations it had urged the province to continue allowing school boards to make their own decisions.

"Students need to be discerning digital citizens and opportunities should be provided within the curriculum to allow students to safely explore various uses and risks of technology in an intentionally guided and supportive environment," the association wrote. "Schools and teachers have well-established limits and boundaries with regard to cellphone use in schools."

'Quebec Plan Will Not Help Newcomers'

MONTREAL: A Quebec think tank says the province's plan to cut immigration levels is misguided and will not accomplish its intended goal of better integrating newcomers.

The Institut de recherche et d'informations socio-économiques published a study concluding from publicly available data that immigrants are faring better in Quebec than the government claims. Researcher Julia Posca says the employment rate among immigrants has risen steadily over the past decade, and almost 60 per cent of immigrants in Quebec are fluent in French.

While Posca says the employment rate for immigrants still lags behind that of the general population, part of that is attributable to how the province recognizes experience and education.

The institute says it is in favour of maintaining 50,000 as the number of immigrants accepted annually by the province, citing the province's aging population as one factor. The government plans to reduce immigration to about 40,000 this year.

Quebec Immigration Minister Simon Jolin-Barrette tabled Bill 9 in February, to overhaul the system for selecting newcomers and allow it to be more selective.

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