

Slash and burn

When it comes to budgets winners and losers are usually in the eye of the beholder. Case in point, the latest provincial budget.

Take the cuts to education for instance. The Ford government wants to increase high school class sizes from 22 to 28 students which will allow them to cut 3,475 teaching positions over the next four years, thereby saving \$851 million.

Beside saving money, their argument for increasing class sizes is that it will help make students more resilient. According to Education Minister Lisa Thompson, by increasing high school class sizes we are preparing students for the reality of post-secondary education as well as the world of work. Poppycock.

So let's get this straight. Increasing class sizes by 25 per cent which will decrease the amount of time the teachers can spend with their students, thus making them less effective, will better prepare the students for college and university.

Students are already stressed out enough, as evident by the increasing number of students who are dealing with mental health issues such as depression and severe anxiety.

The drop-out rate in math and sciences between Grade 11 and Grade 12 is already high enough. Increasing class sizes will only exacerbate the problem.

If you want to help students succeed in university and in life you would bring back Grade 13, but that's another topic for another day. The biggest impact the massive cuts in teaching positions will have will be on those aspiring teachers who are still in teachers college or were hoping to become teachers.

I'm guessing this year's convocation ceremony will be bitter-sweet. It reminds of the massive cuts the Harris government made to health care in the early 90s when hundreds of doctors and nurses had to go elsewhere to find work. Most went south of the border and Texas in particular, if my memory serves me correct. A lot of them came back when things improved under the Liberal government, but it led to years of upheaval.

Slashing 3,745 teaching positions will provide a short-term gain in exchange for years of pain and its the students who will suffer most. And when the students suffer we all suffer.

The situation could still end up being worse than many critics of the Ford government are predicting. Changes in the funding formula for kids with autism combined with the government's desire to integrate autism spectrum students in regular classrooms could prove disastrous for everyone involved unless the necessary financial support and resources put in place. Whether that's no more than wishful thinking only time will tell.

- Fred Sherwin, editor



Federal government introduces Climate Change Action Incentive

Climate change is real and recent floods, droughts, forest fires and extreme heat are imposing huge economic and human costs across our country.

Canada is one of the top polluters in the world per capita and we have the expertise and support of Canadians to change that and become a cleaner country and a leader on fighting climate change. We also have the chance to take advantage of the clean economy that could create 65 million jobs around the world.

Our climate plan is ambitious, effective and makes life affordable while creating good jobs by putting a price on pollution. Over the next decade we will invest more than \$20 billion to support public transit; over \$9 billion to support green infrastructure – like clean power – in provinces and territories; more than \$5 billion for green projects at Canada's Infrastructure Bank; and over \$2 billion for the Low Carbon Economy Fund which will be used to help Canadians save money through energy efficiency along with hospitals, schools and businesses of all sizes.

One of the most practical and affordable ways to cut greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change is putting a price on carbon pollution. A price on pollution is part of any credible climate plan: it is supported by small, medium and big business leaders across Canada, Nobel Prize winners, economists and world health organizations.

Our government is implementing a price on

carbon pollution in jurisdictions that do not have systems that meet the standard agreed to in the Pan-Canadian Framework: Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick.



We are giving the money from the price on pollution directly back to Ontarians through the Climate Action Incentive. An average family of four will receive a \$307 rebate when they file their taxes and the Climate Action Incentive rebate which will leave eight of 10 Ontario

families better off. Amounts are based on province of residence on Dec. 31, 2018, and family composition.

Ontarians can save even more money if they choose clean solutions (public transit, a more efficient vehicle, LED light bulbs or smart thermostats).

We are also providing a portion of the revenues from a price on pollution to support small and medium-sized businesses to help them take climate action, and be more energy efficient – this will lower their energy costs while ensuring they remain competitive. Further, gasoline and diesel used for farming or fishing will be exempt from the price on pollution under our approach.

We are focused on making life affordable and growing the economy – from the Climate Action Incentive and our middle class tax cut, to the new Canada Child Benefit and the enhanced CPP, to helping Canadians create 800,000 new jobs.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact my office at 613-834-1800.

THE Orléans Star



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Rutting season

Let's face it, we here in the nation's capital have a propensity for complaining, especially when it comes to the weather. It's either too hot, too cold, too wet or too dry.

We also love to complain about the city, or to be more specific, city services, like the abundance of potholes in the spring, or OC Transpo buses being too early or too late. But when the extreme weather leads to a breakdown in city services, say after a snowstorm, then that's really worth complaining about.

In particular, I'm referring to the mess that was recently created by a massive snowstorm followed by day of rain and then a sudden drop in temperature which left Grand Canyon size ruts on some streets and outdoor skating rinks at the end of others. No big deal if you drive a monster truck or an SUV, but a disaster waiting to happen if you drive something a little closer to the ground like a Chevy Cruze or Hyundai Elantra.

Community Facebook pages have been inundated with photographic evidence of said ruts with each post trying outdo the last.

And God help our local councillors who are getting inundated with the same photos and complaints that they need to do their jobs and clear the streets with seeming expectation that they should grab a shovel and a pickaxe and do the job themselves.

I'm pretty sure getting 100 complaints a day from irate residents ready to take to the streets waving pitchforks and ice chippers was not what they had in mind when they ran for office four short months ago. But that's Ottawa.

Mother Nature doesn't have a complaint department or an email address, but you local councillor does.

The fact of the matter is that we live in a city that can have some wonky weather in January and February that includes freezing rain, rain and sudden changes in temperature. Streets are going to get iced over, ruts are going to form and puddles the size of Dow's Lake are going to form at intersections where the stormwater drains are blocked by snow.

City workers are going to do the best job they can to clear up the mess, but there is only so much they can do. They can't be on every street in Ottawa at the same time. Yes it's a hassle. Yes it's a pain in the rear end and yes it can often be infuriating, but we live in Ottawa not Myrtle Beach.

I read somewhere once that for some people complaining can be cathartic and even therapeutic. It can also be annoying if you are the target of the complaints.

Hopefully, we have seen that last of Old Man Winter. According to the long range forecast, the first two weeks of March will be abnormally cold, but the last two weeks will see above average temperatures along with above average precipitation and potential flooding when the complaints will likely begin anew.

- Fred Sherwin, editor



Orléans residents invited to take part in free tax clinics

February was a very eventful month for our riding. February is host to two important occasions that are observed in our riding and beyond; they include Black History Month and Pink Shirt Day, a day to stand against bullying. It is important that we recognize the many contributions made by the black community.

Additionally, thank you to the over 400 attendees that were able to join our Family Day Bowling event, which was co-hosted with MP Andrew Leslie. The event was a great opportunity to see many generations come together from all across the riding to enjoy time with their loved ones. Always a pleasure to see you all.

As Member of Provincial Parliament, it brings me great joy to host my annual International Women's Day Breakfast on March 8th. During the breakfast, I am always pleased to see how the event pulls together leaders to celebrate and acknowledge the great work women do in our community. The event hosts women from diverse backgrounds and generations, which always results in listening to inspiring conversations.

Shortly after the breakfast, I am recognizing over 20 recipients for my new award the Orléans Leading Women and Girls Recognition! I am a firm believer in providing opportunities and highlighting strong female community members. Thank you for putting forward nominations.

Through my office in collaboration with MP Andrew Leslie, I will be hosting FREE tax clinics throughout the month of March and April.

The tax clinic will be provided for individuals and families who otherwise have limited access to tax filing institutions due to financial strain.

At 206-250 Centrum Blvd, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m on March 9 and 16 and April 6 and 27.

At the RAFO, 3349 Navan Rd, from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. on April 11 and April 25.

Registration is mandatory; please call my office at 613-834-8679 to book an appointment.

With such cold weather it might be easy to forget that spring is around the corner. This spring we will welcome the first trains into Blair Station. The LRT will serve as a strong economic force for our community connecting commuters to their jobs and the city. I am working hard to ensure construction on LRT Phase II – through Place d'Orléans and on to Trim Station – starts as planned this year.

As I speak to residents throughout our riding, I am proud to announce that the Orléans Health Hub is now very close to having shovels into the ground.

Recently, the Montfort Hospital shared progress regarding the project to the Champlain LHIN Board. We now understand fully the model of care that will be delivered, building operations and set to welcome a developer this year.



Queen's Park Corner

Marie-France Lalonde

THE Orléans Star



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Candid camera

Last week, Cumberland Ward councillor Stephen Blais announced that the City of Ottawa would be putting surveillance cameras on the outside of six school buses. The purpose of the cameras is to catch motorists who pass the buses when the stop-arms are extended.

As hard as it is to believe that people still drive past school buses which have their stop-arms extended and their lights flashing, it is all too common. In fact, it happens on a regular basis.

In one incident that occurred to an M.L. Bradley driver, some idiot drove up the inside of the bus along the shoulder of the road after the bus had stopped with its lights flashing. The driver just opened the door when the car sped by, nearly crashing into the open door. The poor bus driver was so shaken they had to take a week off work.

I spent close to a year driving a school bus for M'L Bradley in 2014-2015 and let me tell you that a driver's worst nightmare is having a motorist ignore the stop-arm and hit a child as they cross the street.

School bus drivers are already trained to make sure they keep an eye on their kids as they leave the bus and continue on their way. They make doubly sure that the area around the bus is clear before they deactivate the stop-arm and continue on their route. Part of the training also includes waiting a minute or two after the stop-arm is activated before opening the door and allowing the kids to disembark the bus. It's an extra precaution to make sure it's all clear, but still you will have the odd moron run the stop-arm, usually going in the opposite direction.

The fine for passing a school bus with its stop-arm extended and its lights flashing is \$490. Personally, I would add a public flogging, but I am told that it is uncivilized in today's society.

There is a special place in Hell for someone who would place a child's life at risk for the sake of saving 30 seconds to whatever it is they are going.

The only exception to the rule is on a roadway with a median and you are going in the opposite direction.

The stop-arm camera program should help deter a lot of drivers from driving past school buses with their stop-arms extended and their lights flashing in the future. But not everyone will get the message, which is where you come in. If you see someone drive past a school bus in that situation try to get their license plate number and report it to the police. Not every bus will be equipped with the cameras. In fact, the majority won't and there are still people out there who will be willing to take the chance with our children's lives despite the threat of a \$490 fine.

It's up to all of us to make sure the transgressors don't get away with it.

Fred Sherwin, editor

OTTAWA TO INSTALL CAMERAS ON SCHOOL BUSES



Orléans MPP to share autism concerns with Ford government

I hope you enjoyed the Orléans Poutine Fest as I did, despite the rain! I look forward to joining you at the Craft Beer Fest taking place from June 6-8 in the heart of Orléans on Centrum Blvd. See you there!

During the month of May I was able to host three round table discussions. Two of these discussions were regarding the changes to the Ontario Autism Program. I was able to hear from those touched by autism, parents, community leaders, and agencies as they pulled together to propose community centric solutions.

Additionally, this past week I also held a Disability Round Table to address the needs of anyone touched by a disability. I am a found believer of providing a platform where constituents are free to share ideas, experiences and collaboratively find solutions to their needs. We still have a lot of work to do to support those living with a disability; I am ready to roll up my sleeves and continue to serve our residents. I look forward to bringing my findings to the government.

As a member of the Rotary Club of Orléans, I had the pleasure of joining my fellow Rotarians for the second annual Orléans Victorian Mother's Day Tea Party. It was a great event as we celebrated diversity, strength and all the work that mothers and motherly figures do. Often mothers wear many hats, as they have many obligations, I continue to be inspired by the mothers in Orléans!

Tourism brings people from around the world to our region and drives our local economy, unfortunately the current government does not see such a value. The province has cut millions in funding from Ottawa Tourism. This money has been used to support many local businesses who depend on tourism in the past and it will be greatly missed.

Ontario Public Health has also been struck by many cuts. I was able to visit three public health facilities across Ottawa and learn about the essential services they provide. We need to protect the funding on a long-term basis, understanding that prevention is the solution. These cuts will cost our taxpayers more in the long-run.

Upcoming events

I hope you will be able to join us for our annual Strawberry Social, which is around the corner! I welcome seniors and their loved ones to join me for an afternoon full of music, food and good company. June 29 at 1 p.m. This is a free event!

This year's Community Corn Roast & BBQ will once again be held on Petrie Island on Thursday, August 15 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Once again, this is a free event with free parking after 6 p.m. This is by far our most popular community initiative and I look forward to seeing you all there.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact my office at 613-834-8679 or e-mail mflalonde.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org.



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