

DoFo's doling out the cash

By SHERALYN ROMAN

In a move that's right up there with 'Buck a Beer,' Doug Ford has once again come up with a brilliant strategy, this time for resolving the looming crisis in education. What's the plan? Does it involve finally allocating much-needed funds to stop the overcrowding of classrooms or to pay ERW's a living wage that includes danger pay? Is it to adequately fund high schools so that your child (who hopes to attend university) will actually be able to take the courses he/she/they require? Nope - the plan is this: 'DoFo's Day care Dole-out!' Be wary of the fine print however, where it clearly and unequivocally states: 'teacher's need not apply.'

To recap, let's see if we can keep this straight. Mr. Ford, by way of Mr. Lackey (oops, I mean Mr. Lecce - darn computer just seems to auto-correct to Lackey) claims there just isn't any money left in the government coffers to pay for education. Yet, according to various articles and news outlets, a recent announcement by the provincial government suggests it's willing to pay up to \$48 million PER DAY, to refund parents who are out of pocket for day care expenses due to teachers strike action. According to an article in the National Post, that money is coming from the \$60 million per day being saved by the government as a result of not having to pay teachers wages while they walk the picket lines. I'm certainly no mathematician but dare I suggest that whether you take some of that \$48 million, or even just \$12 million (the difference between \$48 million and \$60 million) and apply those funds towards decreasing class size, increasing course options and providing for more ERW's and ECE's in the classroom, it would go a long way to alleviating the need for a teachers strike (and therefore the day care dole out) in the first place.

In making these funds available, Jill Dunlop, the Associate Minister of Children and Women's issues comments 'We will always put families and children first.' I find this claim lacking in credibility. If indeed the government was putting families first, would the focus not be on the longer term goal of supporting an education system that functions well because class size is manageable, a wide-range of high school course choices exists and students with special needs are adequately supported? Whether I receive 'up to' \$60 per day to cover child care expenses is a short term gain potentially causing longer term pain if I am left with a child who flounders in an oversized, underfunded classroom or whom is unable to acquire the necessary mandatory classes to graduate.

I wonder too, who is 'policing' the requests for this funding which, after only day one, numbered over 33,000. What paper work is being completed? What proof do families have to supply? I'd love to say that I researched this information but there must be another 33,000 families currently attempting to apply online because every time I tried to log in to the system it was unresponsive. What is responsive? Well, certainly I marvel at the responsiveness of the government in quickly setting up a website for the day care dole-out, creating an online and paper-based application process and even a toll free line for parents to call with questions. Then again, if they're not busy sitting at the bargaining table, I guess they have all the time in the world for this 'extra' work.

Last April, speaking on the John Oakley show, Doug Ford had this to say about the teachers union: 'the union thugs, as I call them, the teachers' union, (is) one of the most powerful unions in the entire country. There's finally a government with a backbone that wants our kids to start learning math.' I rather think Mr. Ford, that in trying to 'break' this union you dislike so much, you're losing sight of the fact that the only way our children are going to actually learn math is by being IN the classroom. You're the one who needs the lesson. Please use some of your so-called 'savings' to adequately fund the classrooms you want our children to learn math in. Then we won't need your day care dole-out, just like we didn't need your 'buck a beer' either.