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What Was It All About?

CLASS SIZES

In an attempt to reduce the amount spent on the province’s education system, the biggest change is not to the curriculum itself, but to the environment in which the learning is done, with an increase in class sizes. In Ontario, the average class sizes in secondary schools are reported to be at 22 students, while elementary schools contain about 23 per class, putting Ontario at the top, boasting Canada’s lowest student-to-teacher ratio. With Ford’s changes, the average secondary school class size will increase to 28, while class in Grades 4-8 will rise to 24. With this new minimum number of students per class, many high school courses in the arts and humanities may not be run, due to a lack of general interest and an inability by local schools to run smaller classes.

The motive for these changes, however, is a bit muddled, as when this change was officially announced, Education Minister Lisa Thompson stated that no teacher would lose their job as a result of the increased class size, thus dismissing the government’s perceived motive: to cut costs by laying off teachers. Since then, it has been reported that from Peel region alone, nearly 193 secondary school teachers and 176 elementary school teachers have received layoff notices. The TDSB is expected to face similar changes proportional to the district’s size, with 800 secondary school and 216 elementary school teachers facing layoffs.

Ford states that the changes in class size will result in a reduction of 3,475 teaching positions, a statement contradictory to the original announcement, though this change is projected to save $851 million over four years.

MATH CURRICULUM

Prior to his election as Ontario’s premier, Ford’s campaign attracted a lot of attention with his views on the previous Liberal government’s math curriculum. Discovery Math, a method currently employed, allows students to reach their own conclusions. Mary Reid, assistant professor of math education at the University of Toronto’s Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, explains that it’s “about having students engage in problem-solving, open-ended, authentic, rich problems”. While this unconventional method of teaching may appear innovative and beneficial, math scores on standardized tests across the province have been dismal for several years. Examining the results of the EQAO tests since Discovery Math was employed in the classroom found that in the 2017 results of the test, only 62% of Grade 3 students and a disappointing half of the Grade 6 population met the provincial standard. In Grade 9, 83% of Academic kids and a mere 44% of Applied students meet the standard. While these statistics are disappointing on their own, a six-year study conducted between 2010 and 2016 found that with 27,000 students between students in Ontario and Quebec, Ontario students’ Math marks remained relatively stagnant while Quebec’s saw a significant climb. While Ford’s changes to our math curriculum are in light of these statistics, not much information has been given as to how exactly these changes will be implemented, besides a promise to revert to the fundamentals of math.

These changes primarily target students and teachers, and both parties have chosen to make their voices heard. The degree to which this protest has affected Ford’s decisions is unclear at the moment, though with his insistence in the belief that teachers were behind the walkouts gives us some insight as to where education in Ontario is headed. More info can be found at @bci_saysno on Instagram.

Beyond Bethune
Taking Baby Steps in Genome Editing - What

JESSICA YE

When Chinese scientist He Jiankui was revealed to have made the world’s first genome-edited babies in November 2018, the announcement was met with shock and outrage by scientists around the world.

A researcher studying genome-editing in Southern University of Science and Technology of China, He Jiankui experimented on human embryos using CRISPR-cas9, a genome editing tool, and tried to give them resistance against HIV by impairing the genetic pathway that allows HIV to spread in the body. He impregnated a woman with the embryos, and in a new YouTube video, claims that the twin girls are healthy and with their parents.

In an interview with the Associated Press, He explained, “I feel a strong responsibility that it’s not just to make a first, but also make it an example. Society will decide what to do next”. However, his actions are heavily condemned by scientists and the Chinese government. Dr. Kiran Musunuru, a University of Pennsylvania gene editing expert, describes the editing as “unconscionable [...] an experiment on human beings that is not morally or ethically defensible”. An investigation launched by the Chinese government found He Jiankui guilty of “seriously violating” state laws for “personal fame and fortune.” The university where Jiankui conducted research has fired him from its campus and issued a statement saying that he performed his experiment “outside of the campus and was not reported to the University nor the Department”. Jiankui now reportedly faces the death penalty for corruption and bribery, but denies this, stating that he is safe. However, whether or not he will face capital punishment is still up to speculation.

Due to privacy laws, the identity of the parents and their twin girls remain protected, but Jiankui firmly believes that his actions were justified. The father of the twins is HIV-positive and did not want his children to suffer the same way he has. Additionally, the HIV genetic pathway, also known as CCR5, has already been thoroughly studied, providing him the “real-world medical value” to disable it. Although it may sound like a good plan, genetic modification can easily lead to future health problems. A report published by the Associated Press claims that people who do not carry a normal CCR5 gene have a higher risk of catching the West Nile virus and dying of the flu.

Genetically modifying human embryos is an extremely controversial topic, with one side believing that it is crucial to research and develop the potential to create a perfect and healthy society, while others deem it to be too risky and evil to condemn a human life to mutations, since the results of genome editing are near impossible to predict. He Jiankui is the first confirmed scientist to have genetically edited a baby, but he certainly will not be the last. There are a few countries where genome-editing humans is “technically legal” with loose rules, but it is heavily frowned upon. One thing’s for sure -- there needs to be more caution and control in the field of biomedicine to ensure that no ethics are violated.
The Remarkable Kid Gorgeous

KATHY YANG

“You have the moral backbone of a chocolate éclair,” the iconic comedian said as he earned a big laugh and applause. Although still funny without context, this line is funnier with it, and you can find the context in his 2015 Netflix special The Comeback Kid. This and his other Netflix specials New in Town and Kid Gorgeous at Radio City are all beloved and critically acclaimed, with Kid Gorgeous winning a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing for a Variety Special. He’s a pig in a Spider-Man movie, an awkward teenager on Big Mouth, an old man from Oh, Hello—he is stand-up comedian John Mulaney.

John Mulaney is a household name now, but just a couple of years ago, he was the creator, writer, producer, and the main character of the failed sitcom Mulaney. With negative reviews and comparisons to Seinfeld, the show was cancelled after just one short season. Many assumed this would be the last they heard from the comedian, but they were very much mistaken.

Mulaney hosted Saturday Night Live for the second time on March 2, 2019, and it’s strangely fitting as he was a writer on the show from 2008-2013 albeit having little screen time. He showed off his amazing performance and delivery and it’s truly a testament to what he’s achieved.

His Netflix specials are all popular and well-received, but he also takes part in Netflix’s critically-acclaimed Big Mouth. Written and produced by his longtime friend Nick Kroll, Mulaney voices one of the main characters, Andrew, an awkward teenager struggling through puberty.

Mulaney made his film debut in 2018 with the Oscar-winning Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse. He played Peter Porker, a looney tunes styled pig who is the hero Spider-Ham in his universe. He’s perfectly cast as he takes the character that didn’t necessarily have much screen time and still gave him a unique and hilarious personality.

John Mulaney’s comedy itself is just so funny, yet so inoffensive. He openly admits that he wants to be liked by everyone, and to quote what his wife said to him, “walking around with [John] is like walking around with someone who’s running for mayor of nothing”. Most of his humour is self-deprecating, yet he still displays a charming confidence that differentiates him as an entertainer.

Mulaney is mostly apolitical, yet ironically, one of the funniest bits of Kid Gorgeous is exclusively about politics.

“It’s like there’s a horse loose in a hospital!” is how he explains the current president of the United States. However staying true to himself, the humour is still connected directly to its inoffensiveness; no names are mentioned at all, and it’s entirely done as an analogy using animals.

He’s a combination of amazing writing and performing that’s truly rare to see, and it is no wonder that he sold out seven nights at Radio City Music Hall and countless other tour dates. You can watch his specials and Big Mouth on Netflix, and look forward to his upcoming tour dates. Did I mention that he plays an old man in a Broadway show? You might want to check that out, too.
RISING ARTISTS OF 2019

For anyone living in 2019, music is probably an essential part of life. Music is undeniably important in improving mood, relieving stress, or easing anxiety; it could also simply just be a pastime if someone is bored. There are hundreds of genres of music and an enormous industry of artists that is continuously growing. Currently, there is a lot of rising talent from young artists in various different genres of music. These artists are climbing the charts, records, and quickly rising to fame.

An artist who is currently making her mark in is Billie Eilish. At only 17 years of age, this singer/songwriter has become one of the fastest artists to rise to fame. Billie Eilish Pirate Baird O’Connell was born in Los Angeles, California on December 18, 2001. She started to make music and write songs at age 11, being inspired by her older brother, Finneas O’Connell, who already wrote, performed, and made his own songs with his band. Today, the two siblings are a great artistic duo. At age 14, Billie had signed a record deal with Interscope records and started her career.

Billie’s first song, “Ocean Eyes” was released in 2017, and soon after, her first EP, “Don’t Smile At Me” was released. It consisted of nine songs, featuring her brother and Vince Staples, who is an American rapper. Some of the songs have appeared in movies and TV shows, like 13 Reasons Why and Shadowhunters. Her other singles, such as “Lovely”, featuring Khalid and “You Should See Me In A Crown” secured spots on the Billboard Hot 100 list. Her first album, When We All Fall Asleep Where Do We Go came out on March 29.

Another artist taking the world by storm is H.E.R. Gabriella Wilson was born on June 27, 1997 in Vallejo, California. She is a singer/songwriter who is currently making plenty of noise in the music industry. Her career recently reached a milestone in December when she was nominated for Best New Artist at the 2019 Grammy Awards (along with four other nominations). H.E.R. is an acronym for Having Everything Revealed. She remained faceless on purpose; “The mystery is a metaphor for who I am, or who I was at the time of creating the project,” referring to her first EP, “H.E.R., Vol. 1”.

She has gotten massive support for her first EP, Focus from other public figures like Alicia Keys, Rihanna, and even Barack Obama. H.E.R rose to fame by participating in Radio Disney’s Next Big Thing in 2009. She later signed to RCA Records at the age of 14 and released a single, “Something To Prove”, under her real name in 2014. She re-emerged in 2016 and released her first debut EP, “H.E.R Vol. 1”. She then released subsequent EPs “H.E.R Volume 2”, “The B Sides”, “I Used To Know Her: The Prelude”, and “I Used To Know Her: Part 2”.

Finally, an emerging new rapper is quickly rising to fame with his fast-rap style and perfectly controlled speed. Destin Choice Route, known by stage name JID was born on October 31, 1990 in Atlanta, Georgia. He is part of the musical collective Spillage Village, founded by EarthGang in 2010. He is also signed to J. Cole’s Dreamville Records and Interscope Records, where he began gaining recognition after releasing many individual projects.

JID was a late bloomer career-wise, from being kicked out of his parents house, sleeping in a car at one point, to funding his musical career with jobs delivering pizzas and working at call centers. Nevertheless, JID has been in a BET Awards cypher and the XXL 2018 Freshman Class, alongside others like Lil Pump, Ski Mask the Slump God, and BlocBoy JB. His debut studio album, The Never Story was released on March 10, 2017 and he released his second album DI Caprio 2 on November 26, 2018 to positive reviews and critical acclaim. There is a lot of promise for his future as he continues his outstanding performance.

Music can soothe the brokenhearted, motivate runners and kick off the most epic dance parties, but it also has some serious scientific benefits for our health and overall well-being. Researchers at Stanford University found that listening to music seems to be able to change brain functioning to the same extent as medication. Researchers also tracked 557 participants with chronic sleep disorders and found that sleep quality was improved significantly with music. They concluded that “music can assist in improving sleep quality of patients with acute and chronic sleep disorders.”

In a nutshell, music is not only a pleasurable activity, but it’s also proven to improve health in various ways. With that being said, there are several artists to look out for in 2019 and the upcoming months.
5 High School-Based Movies

JADELYN WANG

High school... A tumultuous, stress-filled, fickle part of life that we all experience for four long years. Teens are spending a good chunk of our lives worrying about tests, assignments, and drama in our social lives, homework, and relationships. Luckily, we have movies in which we can find comfort. High school can be pretty tiring but at times can be equally exciting. So if you’re feeling a little lost or just looking for a good laugh, here’s a list of five high school-based teen movies that you should watch before leaving this institute for good.

Let’s start off with the 70s classic, Grease. This film is probably one of the first “teen-based” films to become popular with every generation. Starring John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John as Danny and Sandy, Grease is an upbeat musical romantic comedy that follows a young high school couple in the 1950s. Its soundtrack is considered the best part of the movie and it even earned them an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Song. The dialogue has just the right amount of adolescent drama, the songs and choreography are super catchy, and the fashion is exquisitely fun to look at. The movie holds some pretty valuable messages for teens to keep in mind after watching as well. Now go put on a leather jacket and get some dancin’ shoes on, Stud (if you didn’t get that, come back after watching Grease).

If musicals aren’t really up your alley, you can try watching Heathers, a dark comedy film about a teen girl named Veronica and her burning hatred for her popular clique’s vicious behaviours. The iconic Winona Ryder shows just what her character is capable of when angst meets violence. Veronica finds herself in deep trouble after realizing her boyfriend Jason, played by Christian Slater, is a murderous individual. This film takes all the negative stereotypes and taboos of high school—salacious gossip, the backstabbing of friends, volatile relationships—and transforms it into a teen cult classic. British film magazine Empire, has named Heathers one of the greatest movies of all time.

Sticking with the 80s genre, we’re now going to look at The Breakfast Club. This movie follows five high school students of different social backgrounds and upbringings as they spend the day together in detention. The film shows just what can happen when five strangers—a rebel, princess, brain, jock, and outcast—have a chance to tell their own stories amongst each other. The Breakfast Club masterfully balances the genres of comedy and drama through the perspectives of teenagers. “Brat Pack” members, Molly Ringwald, Emilio Estevez, Judd Nelson, Anthony Michael Hall, and Ally Sheedy all bring the well-written script to life through performances of sincerity.

Moving on to the 90s, 10 Things I Hate About You is another must-see Rom-Com-Drama. It’s loosely based on The Taming of the Shrew and features Kat Stratford, played by Julia Stiles, as an intelligent and caustic teen who has no plans of dating anyone. Unfortunately, her younger sister Bianca has to abide by house rules of not having a boyfriend until Kat does. There’s some serious plotting that ensues in order to get Kat and her chilly personality to fall for someone, and the charming Patrick Verona, might have a chance at doing so. Even though the movie is from two decades ago, the humorous dialogue and comedic performances brought by a talented cast, proves that 10 Things I Hate About You is as modern as ever. If that doesn’t give you enough incentive to watch the film, just know that the main leads include young Heath Ledger and Joseph Gordon-Levitt... I mean, there’s really nothing to “hate” about this movie at all.

Finishing off this list is—yes, you guessed it, Mean Girls. I’m not really sure how it’s even possible to avoid any forms of this movie for fifteen years straight because it’s practically on every screen you look at. Instagram, Twitter, and even cable television cannot seem to get enough of this teen comedy. Lindsay Lohan plays Cady Heron, a teen from Africa who moves to Illinois with her parents. She finally gets to experience a public high school and all its obstacles, including a popularly cruel clique called “The Plastics.” Audiences get to have a good laugh and indulge in the infamous teen quotes this movie provides. Mean Girls is just a wildly entertaining film that we’ll never get tired of.

To sum it up, we’ve got Grease, Heathers, The Breakfast Club, 10 Things I Hate About You, and Mean Girls (duh!). This blend of ro-
mance, comedy, and drama will definitely take the weight off of stresses and school for a bit. If you’ve seen all five of these movies, congratulations! You can probably appreciate every one of these films and recognize each of their individual grandeurs. If you haven’t seen them, well you now have a great list of high school must-watches.

ANNA YANG

The 91st Academy Awards, also known as the Oscars, took place on February 24, 2019. Many people and films received awards that night, including Black Panther for Best Costume Design, Best Production Design, and Best Original Music Score, Rami Malek for Best Actor in a Leading Role, and Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse for Best Animated Feature Film.

Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse was an immediate hit, many arguing that it was the best Spider-Man movie to date. The movie expanded the idea of what a typical hero should be like, and inspired fans everywhere. When we think of superheroes, we usually think of people like Captain America or Batman, both fully grown adults who seem to always have everything under control at all times. With Miles Morales, our protagonist in Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse, we have the complete opposite of the typical hero persona. Miles is a fourteen-year-old freshman that doesn’t even learn how to control his superhuman abilities until about halfway through the movie. The viewers see Miles stumble and struggle with his new-found powers and responsibilities more than a few times, an atypical feature of superheroes in movies. By the end of the movie, Miles learns that being a superhero isn’t just about having cool powers -- it’s about using those powers to do what’s right. It feels as though the viewers were growing and learning alongside Miles, making him an even more endearing character. The concept of watching Miles go from zero to hero (quite literally) also taught the viewers another lesson: that anyone can wear the mask.

It might sound a little cryptic just putting that out there, so let me explain. When Miles stated that anyone can wear the mask, that even the viewers could wear the mask, he was telling us that anyone can step up and become the best version of themselves. It taught the children in the theatre that they could reach their highest point if they just believed in themselves. Even though it sounds a little unrealistic to an older audience, it’s a good message for the younger audience, allowing themselves to work a little harder and to never give up.

Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse also changed the way people viewed Spider-Man. Spider-Man wasn’t just Peter Parker anymore. It was also Miles Morales, alongside other characters like Penelope Parker and Spider-Gwen. In fact, only up until recently did most people even see Spider-Man as more than Peter Parker. Miles brings hope to all colour kids who dreamt of being superheroes. He represents Afro-Latinos, seen speaking Spanish to his mother and friends multiple times at the beginning of the movie. Miles being biracial showed that Spider-Man didn’t have to be white: anyone of any race could be Spider-Man.

At the end of the day, despite so many people believing that the award for Best Animated Feature Film would go to Incredibles 2 or Ralph Breaks The Internet, Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse took home the award instead, and with it, our hearts.
Struggles of Being an Ambivert

LILI YAO

You may categorize humans into two groups -- those who choose to spend their typical Friday nights by partying with their friends, meet up with tinder dates, or go out with colleagues following their business meetings, or those who stay home and either watch a new Netflix show, sing their favourite song to their goldfish, or take a nap.

As Friday nights are known to be a time to de-stress and have fun, the main difference between these two people is where they derive their energy from. Although both are enjoying themselves, their methods to recharge greatly differ. For example, extroverts, who comprise up to seventy-four percent of the population, enjoy meeting new people, group work, and openly communicating their feelings through words. Furthermore, they are typically outgoing, action-oriented, and talkative. To put oneself in their shoes, they tend to feel isolated when they are alone. Thus, whether it’s family, friends, or peers, their spirits are lifted after surrounding themselves with people.

On the other hand, introverts take pleasure in being alone and are more reserved when interacting with others. Despite making up only around twenty-six percent of the world, introverts are exceptionally self-aware, drawn to independent activities, and prefer to have a smaller group of friends. Due to the fact that these two are practically polar opposites, the majority particularly resonate with one more than the other. However, a small percentage of people identify as ambiverts. Living a Hannah Montana scenario, ambiverts switch and share qualities of both personality types, endlessly facing struggles of their own that the rest of the world is oblivious to.

As an ambivert, several characteristics of theirs are a combination of those that extroverts and introverts possess. Although many of the traits found in extroverts and introverts are positive on their own and suit their needs, they become an issue when they overlap in an ambivert because they have to seek a balance in social settings. For example, an ambivert looks forward to meeting and speaking with new people like extroverts, but similar to introverts, they are not the best at keeping up with small talk. As a result, they value rich conversations with loved ones instead. This can, therefore, prompt an awkward situation for an ambivert because engaging in small talk would be trivial and may not show the best version of the ambivert, based on first impressions. On the contrary, very few people would be open to sharing personal details about themselves right off the bat to a stranger. Consequently, it leads the ambivert to feel conflicted as for how to act and come across to new people. Another example of how maintaining a balance is difficult for an ambivert is their desire to collaborate and learn from others, but also being able to work more efficiently when independent. Thus, the ambivert must weigh out the pros and cons of each decision.

In a nutshell, an ambivert is presented with a variety of problems in social environments that extroverts and introverts do not have to worry about. Nonetheless, being an ambivert definitely has its benefits such as being flexible, well-liked, and finds it easy to adapt to new situations. In addition, they are the bridge between extroverts and introverts, learning how to be empathetic and understand the ways that both people interact.

SARAH AN

Health has many subcategories, but what does it mean to be healthy? Perhaps you define ‘healthy’ as, “the well-being of one’s physical and mental state”. Are you healthy? What is a healthy lifestyle?

Our definitions of ‘healthy’ may not be exactly the same, but they might not be so different. Since elementary school, we were taught about health living. To name a few, topics such as nutrition, smoking, and mental health. Why do we leave this knowledge in our heads, but refuse to take action? Many of us do not go out to exercise, even when we know that it is necessary in our daily lives. We do not get enough sleep—we decide to stay up all night, although we know the effect it will have the morning after—and continue this routine. All these examples were of physical health. In fact, physical health tends to be the main thought when we think about healthy living. What about mental health?

We face disappointments everyday. Often times, we may be disappointed in ourselves. When this disappointment builds up, it leads to poor mental health.
This is how my past week went—maybe it will help you connect. I am in the middle of (what feels like) an extremely long week. Assignments, evaluations and extra-curricular events are piling up. I list down my tasks, and plan a mental schedule for my day. I have a math test tomorrow, but my homework questions are barely completed. I know that I cannot procrastinate tonight, otherwise I will drown in work. When I come home from school, I snack on chips and roll around. There are too many tasks, but again, I am fully aware that I have to get work done. A few hours pass, but I did not get to check off many of my tasks. I do not review math. Until nighttime, the best time. I do not end up reviewing all the math questions I would have liked to. Unable to fight my need to sleep, I go to bed, disappointed in myself. I planned out my day, and thought I would be productive. Yet there I was, lying in bed, without sufficient sleep nor completed studies. Here is the question: why did I procrastinate even when I knew that I would only be more anxious later on? Why did I procrastinate even when I knew that I would eventually have to do my work? Why didn’t I start earlier? Honestly, I don’t know. What I have learned however, is that procrastinating did not help me in any way. I was not confident with my math test, nor myself. I physically and mentally felt the effect of the sleep I lost. But I am glad, because through that, I had a reason and motivation to why I needed a healthy lifestyle. Without it, I obviously would not function very well. Nonetheless, being ‘healthy’ is not easy. But with strong motivation, I think it is possible.

At any point in my story, did you see yourself? Perhaps you should evaluate yourself, and think about how you are. Are you healthy?

**SOPHIA MA**

“Sorry, I can’t go, I have band rehearsal!” This phrase has integrated itself into my life and is now almost an automatic response. Despite the hour long rehearsals, corny band jokes, and losing my voice from vocals; music is something I wouldn’t give up for the world. There are countless studies showing the benefits of music on your mind; creativity, higher self-confidence, time and stress management. However, these are often changes that we don’t notice right away. Without seeing sudden changes, many people believe that music has nothing to offer them except the sole purpose of learning how to play an instrument or learning how to sing. These changes have to be felt. One day you’ll be going about your life and you’ll realize how music has shaped your path in life. It’s the little things that make music so special, and are ones that early musicians overlook.

Gratitude is one of the gems that music has given me. Small accomplishments such as reaching a high note and being able to play sixteenth notes eventually add up. Musicians become grateful for every step they take to achieve perfection in their songs. It induces a sense of accomplishment and propels music students to continue improving. The gratitude that students learn from music also reflect into other areas of their lives. Music requires attention to minute details and appreciation of those details, which is a concept that can be applied to all aspects of life.

It is common belief that music will not help students in their post-secondary application towards a science or business program despite the fact that this belief has already been dismantled by countless articles and cases. An example of this includes students such as Brenden Rodriguez and Kwasi Enin, who succeeded in their applications to top Ivy League schools with their supplemental essays about music. However, we forget that every skill we learn can help us in the future. Despite enrolling in academic heavy programs, both stu-
A Puzzling Support System

EMILY ZHANG

On April 1st, 2019, Ontario’s Progressive Conservative government will put into action their overhaul of the Ontario Autism Program, which supports the families and caretakers of children with autism. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, one in 66 Canadian children is diagnosed with autism. Approximately 100 000 people in Ontario, 40 000 of them children, are on the autism spectrum. Autism is characterized by difficulty with social interactions, struggles with communication, and restricted and repetitive behaviours. There is no one way to help those with autism, but research shows that applied behavioural analysis (a type of therapy) is one effective and widely-used treatment. It helps children with autism learn interaction skills and overcome the difficulties of their disorder. It is most effective at a young age—between two and five years old. It is important. It is a matter of vital healthcare. And it is expensive. Incredibly, incredibly expensive. The previous Liberal government promised in 2016 to invest over $500 million into their autism program, maintaining waitlists of those in need of funding and paying for children’s therapy in full with no age caps. 8 400 children with autism are currently in ABA therapy under this program. Unfortunately, that program led to a 23 000 person long waitlist for therapy, meaning that many families were not receiving the necessary support for their children. The PC government’s new changes aim to cut that waitlist. Funding will be based on the child’s age, not severity of disorder. It will not go to therapy specifically but to any service of the family’s choice in the private sector. Children who enter the program under the age of six will be eligible for $20 000 a year until they turn six, after which it drops to $5 000 a year until they are eighteen. They have a maximum lifetime amount of $140 000. Children who enter the program above the age of six are eligible for $5 000 per year up to a maximum of $55 000 before eighteen. Children with severe autism may require more than forty hours of ABA therapy a week, which can cost $50 000 to $80 000 annually. Add on speech therapy, tutoring, and school aids, and families who are only trying to support their child are looking at a bill upwards of $100 000 every year. Based on just a cursory glance, those numbers do not seem to match up. How can a family receiving $20 000 annually pay for $100 000 treatment? Where do they expect the rest of the money to come from? The government has also doubled funding to the five publicly funded diagnostic centres for autism across Ontario, hoping to clear the 2 400-person waitlist for their services. They have allocated extra funding for school boards that must support new students with autism, since some parents will no longer be able to afford as much therapy time for their children, who may have previously only attended regular school for a few hours a week but now must attend class full-time. School districts will receive approximately $12 300 per student for new students with autism transitioning from therapy to full-time school, excluding children who already attend on a modified schedule of a few days a week transitioning to full-time. The education minister has also requested for school boards to dedicate a professional activity day to train teachers in supporting students with autism. However, teachers and principals have brought up concerns that these improvements will not be enough to support these new students, since teachers are already stretched thin in the education system and are not specialized in help-

Music is a universal language and can reach the hearts of everyone. It is something that travels with you wherever you go and can be shared with the entire world. It’s never too late to start singing or to start playing an instrument. Music and the memories it provides are timeless.

THE FACTS WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR
ing children with autism—one day won’t fix that. The president of the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association, Cathy Abraham, says that the support teachers can provide these students “is not going to be the same as what they have—it’s not the same as intensive, one-on-one behavioural training.” Staff will be overstrained and out of their depth, and students both with and without autism will suffer in their education. According to an interview on CBC, Will and Nev Dundas have a young son on the autism spectrum, and he receives intensive behavioural therapy under the previous government’s program. After these changes take place, their son will have to move into a regular school in the TDSB, since they cannot afford to pay for treatment on their own. That school has already expressed to his parents that there will be little or no support immediately available for their child when he starts school. Will and Nev are now trying to sell their home so they can afford their son’s therapy. “We are selling our home to be able to support our son. What parent would want to make that decision? What options do we have?” Will asks in desperation. Activists and parents have already begun protesting these changes. A group gathered on the lawn at Queen’s Park on March 7, 2019, provoking memories of an incredibly similar protest in 2016, when many of the same protestors rallied against the Liberal government’s own changes. Many parents are terrified that they will no longer be able to afford their children’s treatments, since families who previously received full financial support for therapy will no longer get that kind of subsidization. In response to the uproar, the PC government announced in early April that it would double the $320 million initially invested into this program overhaul and allow a six-month extension of services for kids already using the province’s current programs after the changes go into effect. While these improvements are good news for parents, planning for the program is still in progress. If you look at world rankings, Canada is one of the wealthiest nations in the world. Ontario is home to its capital and its biggest city. Unlike our neighbour to the south, we do not usually bankrupt our citizens for medical treatment. And yet, though autism affects people’s lives just as much as a physical injury or disease does, we force parents to sell their homes to afford the care that is necessary for their children. That does not sound like a wealthy country—nor a responsible province—to me. Evidenced by frequent protests, it appears that no government is able to properly provide assistance for the numerous children with autism and their families, even though this appalling lack of support should be a priority. This problem doesn’t go away when you throw funding in its direction. This problem affects more than children with autism. This problem concerns healthcare. It concerns education. And it concerns children. When it comes to this society’s future, I am hard pressed to think of something more important than those three things.
Whether the weather is cold or hot, We’ll weather the weather, Whatever the weather, Whether we want to or not!

Crazy Weather in Toronto

Temperature in Toronto

The Leviathan in Toronto

Winter to Spring
Toronto’s March
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