

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Open letter to Doug Ford and Sylvia Jones

Dear Editor,

The press is filled these days with taxpayer-funded announcements telling us what wonderful things our current Conservative government is providing us ? a sure sign of a coming election. Missing from those self-congratulatory sound bites is any reference to the mess our court system is in.

Recent reports in the news media bring to public attention the fact that more than half of the criminal charges laid by police in Ontario never make it to trial because of delay. In 2022-23, the latest fiscal year of data available, 56 per cent of criminal cases ended that way ? a 14 per cent increase since 2013-14 when guilty decisions still made up most outcomes. The cause? Charges are stayed because of unreasonable court delay. The cause of the delays? Inadequate court resources ? caused by government inaction.

The impact of stayed charges is far greater than just an inefficient justice system. Every time a law is broken and the perpetrator goes free, the law is weakened, the victim is further victimized, and the criminal is not only freed to recommit but also empowered to do so. The police are then faced with a criminal back on the street for whom the law is now less of a deterrent. When all the resources that go into identifying, pursuing, arresting, and charging a person are tossed out, I can only guess what the impact on police service morale is when a perpetrator is set free. At a time when budgets for policing services are skyrocketing it is doubly important to take action.

Doug Ford, apparently, recognized the need to act with the ?Criminal Case Backlog Reduction Strategy? in 2021, earmarking \$72 million in funding. Six months ago it was announced that another \$29 million in new investment resources were allocated for the need, yet we are still not seeing new resources on the front lines. Why? Is there no one in government who knows how to effectively use the money? I believe the government owes it to the citizens of Ontario to produce the action plan, with specific goals and timelines, that it is using to resolve this crisis.

Michael Monahan

Mulmur