

Queen's Park notes

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For the week of February 26–March 2, 2018

NEW BILLS INTRODUCED

BILL 200, REMOVING BARRIERS IN AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY ACT

PC MPP Sam Oosterhoff (Niagara West—Glanbrook) introduced his private member's bill that would expand the acts that may be performed by a member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists in the course of engaging in the practice of audiology or speech-language pathology.

BILL 201, RESPECTING MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY OVER LANDFILLING SITES ACT

PC MPP Ernie Hardeman (Oxford) introduced his private member's bill that would amend the *Environmental Assessment Act*. Hardeman's bill would direct the Minister to respect the wishes of municipal councils, or council of the band, on the establishment of a landfill site in their local jurisdiction.

BILLS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

None.

BILLS PASSED

None.

IN OTHER NEWS

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE RESIGNS

In a stunning development, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, [Eric Hoskins \(St. Paul's\) abruptly resigned](#) as Minister and MPP. The next day, Hoskins was named by Federal Liberal Finance Minister Bill Morneau, as the lead person on a federal commission on pharmacare. Hoskins's sudden departure, three months prior to the provincial election, is not a positive omen for

Wynne's government. Unlike the pending retirements of former Ministers Deb Matthews (London North Centre), Liz Sandals (Guelph) and Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre), Hoskins leaves the Liberals scrambling to find a last-minute replacement in his riding to contest the election in what had become a relatively safe Liberal seat. Coupled with PC Leadership candidate Christine Elliott's declaration that she is considering running in the riding, it could become a difficult seat to maintain for the Liberals.

CABINET SHUFFLE

In response to Eric Hoskins' departure, [Premier Kathleen Wynne \(Don Valley West\) announced](#) that Minister Helena Jaczek (Oak Ridges—Markham) has been promoted to assume the role of Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Prior to entering politics, Jaczek was the Chief Medical Officer for York Region.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services and Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism, Michael Coteau (Don Valley East), will add Jaczek's former Ministry of Community and Social Services to his portfolio.

NDP CRITIC SHUFFLE

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath (Hamilton Centre) has appointed Catherine Fife (Kitchener—Waterloo) the NDP's new LGBTQ Issues critic to replace the recently retired Cheri DiNovo. Horwath has also asked MPP Peter Tabuns (Toronto—Danforth) to take on the role of critic for Greater Toronto Area (GTA) issues. Horwath has now assumed the role of the Urban Transit critic.

ANDREA HORWATH RE-INSTATES NDP CHIEF OF STAFF

Three weeks after placing her Chief of Staff and Campaign Manager Michael Balagus on leave for his apparent failure to support victims of sexual misconduct in the Manitoba NDP, Ontario NDP Leader [Andrea Horwath returned him to his posts](#). In re-instating Balagus, Horwath noted that she had had extensive discussions with him on the issue. Balagus apologized to the women for not putting proper systems in place to support them, in his role as Chief of Staff to the Manitoba Premier. Horwath added that she is committed to ensuring that the NDP is creating a workplace free of harassment.

PC LEADERSHIP—BROWN OUT, AGAIN

Since the writing of this last edition of Queen's Park Notes, former PC Leader Patrick Brown re-entered the race to replace himself, only to remove himself again a few days later. Citing strains on his family, friends and the Ontario PC Party, [Brown said he would no longer contest the leadership](#). The attacks on Brown from other Leadership candidates regarding the worthiness of his candidacy, the referral of his alleged financial impropriety to the Integrity Commissioner by his caucus colleague Randy Hillier (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington) and the revelation of his emails directing his campaign team to make sure certain candidates won nominations, was obviously all too much for him to bear.

With Brown out of the race, a certain sense of normalcy has returned to the campaign. While it may be politics as usual in some instances, the pronouncements of some of the campaigns are still making head-scratching headlines such as the denial of climate change by all of the candidates. Nonetheless, the campaign is moving quickly to its conclusion with voting ending on March 9 and the winner announced the next day on March 10.

At this point, it would appear that former MPP Christine Elliott and former Toronto City Councillor Doug Ford are the front-runners. Nominated PC candidate Caroline Mulroney seems to have slipped into third with Tanya Granic Allen bringing up the rear.

Both front-runners would seem to have a good chance of unseating Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals in the June election although conventional wisdom is that Doug Ford would be the Liberals' preferred opponent. However, as in most things—be careful what you wish for. Although Ford may be the most polarizing candidate, his late brother, Rob Ford, had been mocked in the race to become Toronto's Mayor in the 2010 Mayor's election and Rob Ford proved all the pundits wrong. On the other hand, while Christine Elliott may be a much less polarizing figure, her lack of passion may prove to be a liability. But, based on Elliott's performance in the [final PC leader's debate](#), she may have finally exhibited some fire, making her a difficult opponent for Wynne.