

Queen's Park notes

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For the week of October 2–6, 2017

NEW BILLS INTRODUCED

BILL 161, NICK'S LAW (OPIOID ABUSE AWARENESS)

PC MPP Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton) introduced this bill that would require that at least 10 per cent of the Ontario Government's Bulk Media Buy Program be marketed for campaigns aimed at raising awareness regarding the risk of prescription opioid abuse and the risks associated with fentanyl abuse. Presently, the Ontario Government spends about \$57 million annually on advertising. MacLeod is naming her bill in honour of the first constituent to meet with her regarding this issue. The constituent subsequently died of drug addiction. MacLeod's bill quickly passed 1st and 2nd Reading and has been referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

BILL 162, INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (LIFE SETTLEMENTS)

Liberal MPP Mike Colle (Eglinton—Lawrence) introduced this bill that would allow seniors to trade their life insurance policies for a cash settlement. In explaining the reason for his bill, Colle [said](#), "It is a very important bill, given the example of so many seniors living so long that they are basically dying poor because they can't access these assets in life insurance."

BILL 163, PROTECTING A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO ACCESS ABORTION SERVICES ACT

Attorney-General Yasir Naqvi's (Ottawa Centre) bill sets out restrictions on activities around abortion clinics. In explaining his bill,

Naqvi [said](#), "This includes the establishment of safe access zones, prohibiting set-out conduct, such as advising or persuading someone to not use abortion services or harassing behaviour. These zones around clinics would be 50 metres and can be increased up to 150 metres. It would also provide safe access zones of 150 metres or prescribed lesser distances around the residences of protected service providers." Many abortion providers and advocates have long argued that protesters around abortion clinics have been harassing and intimidating women.

Just prior to the announcement of this bill, Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown (Simcoe North) posted a [video](#) claiming that he is pro-life and that the Liberals are only advocating this bill to create political division. Afterwards, his Tory colleague, Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton) brought forth a [motion](#) in the Legislature to pass Bill 163 immediately without debate. The Liberals rejected this by saying that various interested parties and individuals needed the opportunity to speak on this bill. Based on the reaction of the Brown and MacLeod, it is obvious that the Tories know that debating this bill could cause one, or more, of their MPPs to express anti-abortion views, which would cause some challenges as Brown is trying to position himself and his party as more moderate and progressive. The Liberals know this very well and are doing everything possible to exploit this potential political weakness.

BILL 164, HUMAN RIGHTS CODE AMENDMENT ACT

Liberal MPP Nathalie Des Rosiers (Ottawa—Vanier) introduced her bill that would amend the Human Rights Code to include immigration status, genetic characteristics, police records and social condition as prohibited grounds of discrimination. The Act currently includes race, place of origin, gender identity, family status and disability, among other things, as prohibited grounds of discrimination.

BILL 165, PERSONAL INJURY AND ACCIDENT VICTIMS PROTECTION ACT

Liberal MPP Mike Colle (Eglinton—Lawrence) also introduced this bill to prohibit licensees from soliciting, accepting or paying a referral fee in respect of a personal injury claim. The bill would also prohibit licensees from referring a client with a personal injury claim without their express written consent and without maintaining confidentiality. In justifying the

need for this bill, Colle [said](#), “This bill would call for a number of measures to protect accident victims so when they go to their solicitor to ensure they get a clear, transparent agreement in Canadian Tire English, that there are no referrals allowed without the consent of the injured; and also that any advertisements done on buses, television, radio, or urinals at Blue Jays games are not allowed unless they’re approved by the Law Society of Upper Canada.”

BILL 166, STRENGTHENING PROTECTION FOR ONTARIO CONSUMERS ACT

The Minister of Government and Consumer Services Tracy MacCharles (Pickering—Scarborough East) introduced legislation that would ban computer bots that excessively mark-up event tickets. The bill also [proposes](#) measures to strengthen conflict-of-interest rules for real estate agents.

BILLS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

BILL 100, HONOURING OUR VETERANS ACT

Former PC MPP and newly-minted Trillium Party MPP Jack MacLaren’s (Carleton—Mississippi Mills) bill passed 2nd Reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. The bill would allow an individual to request that they be identified as a veteran on their driver’s licence or photo card.

BILL 142, CONSTRUCTION LIEN AMENDMENT ACT

Attorney General Yasir Naqvi’s (Ottawa Centre) bill would require prompt payment rules for the construction industry. The bill would also include other measures to speed up and simplify the dispute resolution process. The bill passed 2nd Reading with unanimous support and was referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

BILL 155, LIFE LEASES ACT

Liberal MPP Ann Hoggarth (Barrie) introduced Bill 155, *Life Leases Act*. In proposing her bill, Hoggarth [said](#), “Life leases are a form of housing targeted towards seniors. Unfortunately, they are not covered by legislation in the province of Ontario. This bill provides that life leaseholders

be given protection, similar to renters and condo owners, by providing clear disclosure to leaseholders and improving communication with their sponsors.” Hoggarth’s bill passed 2nd Reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

BILL 161, NICK’S LAW (OPIOID ABUSE AWARENESS)

Please see above.

BILLS PASSED

None.

IN OTHER NEWS

AMERICAN SECRETARY OF EDUCATION VISIT TO ONTARIO SCHOOLS

In the wake of the announcement that the American Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, was planning to visit Ontario’s schools, many public education advocates demanded that the visit be cancelled as a result of DeVos’ anti-public education views. OSSTF/FEESO President Harvey Bischof added OSSTF/FEESO’s voice to the calls for the trip to be cancelled.

Meanwhile, in the Legislature, the NDP echoed those words by demanding that the Liberals cancel DeVos’ trip. NDP Education critic Peggy Sattler (London West) [said](#), “It’s not just DeVos’s position on school choice and privatization that has people worried. She rolled back rules on gender-neutral washrooms in schools and watered down college policies on handling sexual assault. Public education advocates strongly denounce her views. The president of the Ontario Teachers’ Federation wants DeVos to keep her backward ideas out of Ontario.” Sattler further said, “Why won’t this Liberal government listen to teachers and take a strong stand against privatization, against trans exclusion, against gender-based violence, and retract its invitation to allow DeVos to tour Ontario schools?”

Education Minister Mitzie Hunter (Scarborough—Guildwood) defended the visit by [saying](#), “If Secretary DeVos wants to learn about public education, there is no better place in the world to come than to Ontario to learn about public education and how we are serving the needs of Ontario’s two million students. Some 95% of students in Ontario attend our public education system because we have an excellent system, and we are proud to tell the secretary and anyone else—.”

Just as the week was concluding, it was announced that DeVos’ visit had been cancelled due to scheduling difficulties. Despite that news, Premier Wynne Kathleen remarked that DeVos is welcome to visit Ontario again. Wynne [said](#), “I don’t agree with the positions that Secretary DeVos has taken in the past, that’s true, but I think that’s all the more reason to have an opportunity to showcase what we do in our schools and how strong a publicly funded education system can be.”

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY ACKNOWLEDGED IN THE LEGISLATURE

MPPs from all three of the main parties acknowledged World Teachers' Day this past week. First, the Minister of Education Mitzie Hunter (Scarborough—Guildwood) [said](#), "As we celebrate World Teachers' Day today, I want to once again say thank you to all the teachers and education workers across Ontario for your outstanding work. Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for your passion. Thank you for your dedication to ensuring that our students are successful and on a path to reaching their full potential. Happy World Teachers' Day, and thank you for your ongoing commitment."

NDP MPP, and former elementary teacher, Jennifer French (Oshawa) [added](#), "On this year's World Teachers' Day, on behalf of Ontario's New Democrats, I want to sincerely thank teachers for the invaluable work that they do every day. But more than that, New Democrats will always fight for strong public education. Educators shouldn't have to wear bite-proof and bullet-proof Kevlar in classrooms. Teachers shouldn't be fearful to go to work. Teachers should be respected and protected. They should be recognized as highly educated professionals with the capacity to change the world and inspire bright futures, instead of being forced to teach to standardized tests and checklists."

The statements concluded with PC MPP Associate Education Critic Lorne Coe (Whitby—Oshawa) [saying](#), "World Teachers' Day is an annual event that highlights the work of millions of teachers and education workers around the world. Teaching Ontario's next generation requires immense generosity, compassion and, of course, hard work. We see the evidence of that every day. For the thousands of teachers across Ontario, this is no small task. Each and every day in the classroom, teachers and education workers use innovative techniques to engage students and explain difficult concepts, all the while taking the time to understand the needs of individual students and allowing them the ability to satisfy their curiosity in a variety of subjects."

MINISTERS MATTHEWS AND SANDALS TO RETIRE

Deputy Premier and Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development Deb Matthews (London North Centre) and Treasury Board Secretariat Liz Sandals (Guelph), both announced that they would not be seeking re-election in the 2018 provincial election. Both Ministers were first elected in 2003 and gradually rose in prominence, particularly under Premier Kathleen Wynne. While other Ministers have either already resigned or declared that they would not run again, both Matthews and Sandals were seen to be particularly close to Wynne.

**The Legislature will be adjourned the week of October 9-13.
It will resume on October 16, 2017.**