

Queen's Park notes

FOLLOW US  @Mobilepk

For the week of October 16–20, 2017

NEW BILLS INTRODUCED

BILL 167, FAIRNESS IN CONSUMER REPORTING ACT

Liberal MPP Arthur Potts (Beaches—East York) introduced this bill that would require consumer reporting agencies to provide free credit reports no later than two business days after receiving the inquiry.

BILL 168, PUTTING YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD ACT

Liberal MPP Cristina Martins (Davenport) introduced this bill that would prohibit employers from requiring an employee to wear footwear that is not appropriate to the protection required for the employee's work or that does not allow the employee to safely perform his or her work. Martins' bill is particularly aimed at restaurant wait staff that are required to wear high heels as part of their work.

BILL 169, ONTARIO FORESTRY REVITALIZATION ACT (14 STOREY WOOD FRAME BUILDINGS)

PC MPP Vic Fedeli (Nipissing) introduced this bill that would provide that the building code shall not prohibit a building that is 14 storeys or less in building height from being of wood frame construction. This does not prevent the code from imposing requirements on or prohibiting specified classes of wood frame buildings.

BILL 170, CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH ACT

Liberal MPP Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland—Quinte West) introduced this bill that would proclaim the month of October as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

BILLS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

BILL 148, FAIR WORKPLACES AND BETTER JOBS ACT

The Liberal government's reply to the "[Changing Workplaces Review](#)" finally passed 2nd Reading this week with the support of the NDP. The Progressive Conservatives opposed the bill citing concerns that the increase in the minimum wage to \$15 by January 1, 2019, would severely impact the business community. The bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

BILL 162, INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (LIFE SETTLEMENTS)

Liberal MPP Mike Colle's (Eglinton—Lawrence) bill passed 2nd Reading by voice vote and was referred to the Committee of the Whole House. Colle's bill 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 gained near unanimous support with only Trillium Party MPP Jack MacLaren (Carleton—Mississippi Mills) opposing the bill. Naqvi's 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. The bill will now be reviewed by the Standing Committee on General Government. And, in a very troubling occurrence, a noted white supremacist, Paul Fromm, was initially scheduled to make a presentation to the committee but his invitation was revoked when MPPs were reminded of his background.

BILL 167, FAIRNESS IN CONSUMER REPORTING ACT

Liberal MPP Arthur Potts (Beaches—East York) bill moved quickly and passed 2nd Reading by voice vote and was referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. Potts' bill would require consumer reporting agencies to provide free credit reports no later than two business days after receiving the inquiry.

BILL 168, PUTTING YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD ACT

Liberal MPP Cristina Martins (Davenport) also moved quickly through the legislative process. Her bill passed by voice vote at 2nd Reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. Martins' bill would prohibit employers from requiring an employee to wear footwear that is not appropriate to the protection required for the employee's work or that does not allow the employee to safely perform his or her work. Martins' bill is particularly aimed at restaurant wait staff that are required to wear high heels as part of their work.

BILLS PASSED

None.

IN OTHER NEWS

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT ON FAIR HYDRO ACT

Auditor General **Bonnie Lysyk** [released her findings](#) on the Liberal's plan as outlined in [Bill 132, Fair Hydro Act](#). The Act would ultimately reduce hydro-electric rates by a total of 25 per cent. In outlining the reason for issuing her report, Lysyk [said](#),

"When governments pass legislation to make their own accounting rules that serve to obfuscate the impact of their financial decisions, their financial statements become unreliable. This is particularly concerning when a government states that it follows Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) when in fact, the accounting rules being applied are actually not in accordance with Canadian PSAS. When organizational structures and transactions are designed to remove transparency and accountability, and unnecessarily cost Ontarians billions of dollars, the responsibility of an Auditor General is to apprise the Legislature and the public in accordance with the Auditor General's mandate."

Lysyk continued by [saying](#), "...the intention was to avoid showing a deficit in the Province's budgets and consolidated financial statements for 2017/18 to 2019/20, and to likewise show no increase in the Provincial net debt."

Lysyk also [remarked](#), "Applying the government's complex accounting/financing structure could result in Ontarians incurring extra interest costs over 30 years that could total up to \$4 billion more than necessary."

Lysyk's report was quickly challenged by the Liberals with Energy Minister Glen Thibeault (Sudbury) and Treasury Board Secretary Liz Sandals (Guelph) attending a news conference to state that their accounting methods were appropriate. Thibeault [said](#), "There were no fast ones being pulled at all."

While the Liberals may believe that their accounting processes were appropriate, this Auditor General's report does little to help their re-election prospects.

PROVINCE APPOINTS ADMINISTRATOR TO REVIEW SCHOOL CLOSINGS IN HALTON

The Minister of Education, Mitzie Hunter (Scarborough—Guildwood) has appointed Margaret Wilson, a former Registrar and CEO of the Ontario College of Teachers, to [review the process](#) that led to the closing of two local high schools in the Halton District School Board. Wilson has been mandated to consult with local accommodation review committees, the school board and people who participated in the process. The mandate of an administrative review is to determine if the board followed its locally developed accommodation review process.