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For the week of February 21–24, 2017



After a two-month winter recess, the Ontario Legislature resumed with Premier Kathleen Wynne's Liberals facing continued pressure on hydro-electric prices. Since her mea culpa late last year that she "took her eyes off the ball" on hydro-electric prices, Premier Wynne promised to focus her energies on this file and to make hydro more affordable for Ontarians. In the Legislature's first week back, the opposition parties wasted no time and effort in making sure that the political heat was kept on the Liberals, with Question Period being dominated by this topic.

## NEW BILLS INTRODUCED

### **BILL 91, STOPPING ELECTRICITY DISCONNECTIONS IN THE WINTER ACT, 2017**

In their effort to embarrass the Liberals on hydro-electric prices and the cut-off of customers who could not pay their bills, PC MPP Todd Smith (Prince Edward—Hastings) brought a bill forward to stop cut-offs.

### **BILL 92, SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2017**

Education Minister Mitzi Hunter (Scarborough—Guildwood) introduced this bill that would amend the previous legislation regarding collective bargaining in the education-sector. One of the amendments to the bill includes the provision to allow current collective agreements to be extended

beyond their current expiry date. The previous legislation did not allow for collective agreements to be extended. Despite the Minister's praise for her new bill, two education unions, OSSTF/FEESO and [CUPE](#), argued that the new bill does not help the process. In fact, [OSSTF/FEESO](#) says that the Minister did not consider any of its proposed amendments.

### **BILL 93, GASOLINE TAX FAIRNESS FOR ALL ACT, 2017**

PC MPP John Yakabuski (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke) introduced a bill that would help municipalities recover a portion of the provincial gas tax for local use.

## BILLS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

### **BILL 88, ASBESTOS USE PROHIBITION ACT**

PC MPP Bob Bailey's (Sarnia—Lambton) bill passed 2nd Reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Assembly. Bailey's bill would ban the use, reuse, import, transport or sale of asbestos in Ontario.

### **BILL 94, HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SCHOOL BUS CAMERA SYSTEMS), 2017**

The House also debated PC MPP Rick Nicholls's (Chatham-Kent—Essex) Bill 94, *Highway Traffic Amendment Act (School Bus Camera Systems)*. Nicholls' bill would allow footage from school bus cameras to be used as evidence under the *Provincial Offences Act*. Within two days of introduction, Nicholls' bill passed 2nd Reading by voice vote and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

## BILLS PASSED

### **BILL 95, PROTECTING VULNERABLE ENERGY CONSUMERS ACT, 2017**

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury) introduced his bill and it passed on same day.

The *Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998*, is amended to give the Ontario Energy Board the power to make rules and licence conditions respecting the periods during which gas or electricity may not be disconnected from low-volume consumers.

### **BILL 96, ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING ACT, 2017**

With growing awareness that human trafficking, particularly in the sex trade, is a growing issue in Ontario, the Minister for the Status of Women, Indira Naidoo-Harris (Halton), introduced legislation that makes an attempt to stem its growth by increasing the legal penalties to human traffickers.

## MOTIONS DEBATED

### **ANTI-ISLAMOPHOBIA**

In the wake of the Quebec City Mosque shootings, Liberal MPP Nathalie Des Rosiers brought forward a [motion against Islamophobia](#) for debate. Unlike a similar attempt in the Canadian Parliament, all three parties spoke out against anti-Muslim hate and the motion passed unanimously 81–0.

## IN OTHER NEWS

### **MINISTRY OF LABOUR ANNOUNCES FAIR WAGE REVIEW**

Labour Minister Kevin Flynn (Oakville) [announced](#) a review of the province's Fair Wage Policy, which sets wage and worker safety requirements for contractors. The review will begin in March.