

NEW BILLS INTRODUCED

BILL 230, FRONT-LINE AND ESSENTIAL SERVICE WORKER WEEK ACT

PC MPP Kaleed Rasheed's (Mississauga East—Cooksville) private member's bill would proclaim the third full week of March in each year as Front-line and Essential Service Worker Week.

BILL 231, PROTECTING ONTARIANS BY ENHANCING GAS STATION SAFETY TO PREVENT GAS AND DASH ACT

PC MPP Deepak Anand's (Mississauga—Malton) private member's bill would amend the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to require customers to prepay for their purchase of gasoline. Anand's bill also passed 2nd Reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

BILL 232, LOCAL CHOICE FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS (RANKED BALLOT BY-LAWS)

Liberal MPP Mitzie Hunter's (Scarborough—Guildwood) private member's bill would allow municipalities to use ranked election ballots in local elections, as long as at least 50 per cent of voters supported the voting procedure. Hunter's bill is a response to Attorney-General Doug Downey's (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte) [Bill 218, *Supporting Ontario's Recovery and Municipal Elections Act*](#) that eliminated the option for municipalities to use ranked-ballots in local elections.

BILL 233, IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE ACT

NDP MPPs Jill Andrew (Toronto—St. Paul's) and France Gelinias (Nickel Belt) co-sponsored this bill that seeks to conduct reviews to determine whether health care funding is sufficient for patients with sickle cell disease and for communities impacted by the disease. As well, the bill seeks to ensure that information relating to the race of patients in Ontario is collected.

BILLS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

BILL 43, FREEING HIGHWAYS 412 AND 418 ACT (TOLL HIGHWAY AMENDMENTS)

NDP MPP Jennifer French's (Oshawa) private member's bill, introduced in October 2018, passed 2nd Reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. French's bill would eliminate tolls on highways 412 and 418.

BILL 231, PROTECTING ONTARIANS BY ENHANCING GAS STATION SAFETY TO PREVENT GAS AND DASH ACT

Please see above in "New Bills Introduced."

BILLS PASSED

BILL 218, SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S RECOVERY AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ACT

Attorney General Doug Downey's (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte) government bill passed 3rd reading and was granted Royal Assent. Downey's bill would protect certain organizations from getting sued for spreading COVID-19 if they had acted in good faith. Downey's bill would give liability protection to certain health-care workers and institutions; long-term care homes; businesses; non-profits; and front-line workers, including grocery store clerks and restaurant servers. Downey's bill would also eliminate the power of municipalities to use ranked-ballots in local elections.

BILL 207, MOVING ONTARIO FAMILY LAW FORWARD ACT

Attorney General Doug Downey's (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte) bill passed 3rd Reading and was granted Royal Assent. Downey's bill seeks to make it easier for families to navigate and resolve legal matters, while bringing the province's divorce and custody laws in line with federal law.

BILLS DEFEATED

BILL 205, PROTECTING RENTERS FROM ILLEGAL EVICTIONS ACT

NDP MPP Jessica Bell's (University—Rosedale) private member's bill was defeated at 2nd Reading by the Progressive Conservative government. Bell's bill attempted to tighten protections for renters from evictions, particularly from the practice of "renovictions" whereby landlords use renovations, repairs or demolition as a means to evict tenants.

IN OTHER NEWS

EDUCATION MINISTER'S CONFUSING SIGNALS ON EXTENDING WINTER BREAK

One day after indicating that he was seriously considering extending the traditional two-week winter break in order to limit Covid-19 exposure, Education Minister Stephen Lecce (King—Vaughan) reversed course and said that schools would only have the two-week break. Initially, Lecce had promised to review the proposed extension and report back in one or two weeks. In explaining the fast-tracking of his decision [Lecce said](#), "An extended winter holiday is not necessary at this time, given Ontario's strong safety protocols, low levels of transmission and safety within our schools."

In the midst of Lecce's announcement, a child and youth worker at a Toronto Catholic elementary school died after contracting Covid-19 this past week. The source of the transmission has not yet been confirmed.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

Having collapsed the duties of Ontario's Environmental Commissioner inside the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, the Ford government was still not able to escape criticism for its lack of action on environmental issues. In a series of reports, auditor general Bonnie Lysyk and her Commissioner of the Environment, Jerry Demarco, [concluded](#) that Ontario was not doing enough including:

1. Flouting its own Environmental Bill of Rights;
2. That the government was on track to miss its Green House Gas emissions reduction targets;
3. That the building sector makes up the third-largest source of emissions;
4. Ontario doesn't actually know if it's conserving endangered species, protected lands;
5. More action needed to protect parks.

The Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, Jeff Yurek (Elgin—Middlesex—London) [replied](#), "We have met all of our legislative requirements." Meanwhile, Green Party leader, Mike Schreiner (Guelph) disagreed [saying](#), "The auditor general's report is a total and complete rebuke of the Ford government's plans to pave over the beautiful places we love in their made-to-fail climate plan."

FORMER ENVIRONMENT COMMISSIONER NAMED DEPUTY LEADER OF ONTARIO GREEN PARTY

Ontario Green Party leader Mike Schreiner (Guelph) [announced](#) that Ontario's former Environmental Commissioner, Dianne Saxe, would become deputy leader. Schreiner also said that he hoped that Saxe would be nominated as the party's candidate for the riding of University—Rosedale for the upcoming provincial election in June 2022. NDP MPP Jessica Bell currently holds the riding.

NDP NOMINATIONS OPEN

NDP MPP Faisal Hassan became the first NDP incumbent to be nominated in his riding of York South—Weston for the next scheduled provincial election set for June 2, 2022. Hassan was first elected in 2018.

PC MPP DECLARES FOR FEDERAL NOMINATION

PC MPP Gila Martow (Thornhill) has declared her intention to seek the nomination for her riding at the federal level. First elected in a by-election in February 2013, Martow is seeking to replace the retiring incumbent PC MP Peter Kent. If Martow officially becomes the federal Conservative party candidate, she would have to resign her provincial seat in order to be eligible to run in the next federal election. At this point, PC backroom operative and lobbyist Melissa Lantsman, has also declared her intention to seek the nomination. The nomination is expected to be held early in 2021.