

NEW BILLS INTRODUCED

BILL 251, COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING ACT

Solicitor General Sylvia Jones (Dufferin—Caledon) introduced this government bill regarding human trafficking. The bill would allow police access to information from hotel guest registries without a warrant. Under the bill, hotels could be fined \$5,000 if they let people register with fake information.

The bill would also allow child protection workers to remove 16- and 17-year-olds from dangerous situations linked to trafficking. It also give the province the ability to collect “non-personal data to better understand the impact of the strategy and respond to human trafficking.”

BILL 252, HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT ACT

NDP MPPs Sara Singh (Brampton Centre) and Faisal Hassan (York South—Weston) co-sponsored this bill that would be guided by the principle that housing is a human right. The bill would also provide that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing shall establish a Housing Inequities and Disparity Working Group. As well, the bill also creates the Office of the Independent Housing Commissioner. The bill moved quickly through 1st and 2nd Reading but was defeated by the PC government.

BILL 253, SUPPORT FOR ADULTS IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE ACT

NDP MPP France Gélinas (Nickel Belt) introduced a new private member's bill entitled Bill 253, *Support for Adults in Need of Assistance Act*. The bill would require health-care workers to report signs of abuse or neglect among patients over 16.

BILL 254, PROTECTING ONTARIO ELECTIONS ACT

Attorney General Doug Downey (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte) introduced this bill that would amend the *Election Act* and the *Election Finances Act*. While the introduction of bills is the prerogative of the government or any MPP, this sweeping election bill was completed without any forewarning or prior consultation with Ontarians or the opposition political parties. The need for this bill is not clear except to make it easier for any governing party, particularly the current PC government, to fundraise more money and to stifle democratic debate by imposing severe limits on the expression of political dissent prior to an election.

Amongst the most egregious elements of this bill is that the PCs have extended certain conditions on third-party advertising. Currently, strict rules on spending and collusion were outlined by the previous Kathleen Wynne Liberal government limiting third-party advertising to six months prior to an election call. At present, a third-party advertiser can spend \$637,200 in the six months before the issuance of the election writ and \$106,200 during the campaign for a total of \$743,400. As well, the PCs concerns around third-party collusion further limit the sharing of information,

NEW BILLS INTRODUCED (CONTINUED)

vendors or “a common set of political contributors or donors” with another third-party advertiser that represents the same political causes. The PCs have now extended that deadline to third-party advertisers to one full year without, at this point, outlining any danger to Ontario’s democracy other than to their own re-election (or any government).

Other changes that the PCs are proposing are to increase the annual contribution rates for political parties, constituency associations, leadership candidates and election candidates from \$1,650 to \$3,300.

In one surprising twist to the legislation, the PCs have proposed to continue the current per-vote subsidies for political parties until 2024. The amounts currently are \$5.9 million annually for the PCs, \$4.9 million for the NDP, \$2.9 million for the Liberals, and \$672,000 for the Greens.

BILLS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

BILL 228, KEEPING POLYSTYRENE OUT OF ONTARIO’S LAKES AND RIVERS ACT

PC MPP Norm Miller’s (Parry Sound—Muskoka) private member’s bill would require persons who sell, offer to sell or construct floating docks, floating platforms or buoys to ensure that any expanded or extruded polystyrene in the dock, platform or buoy is fully encapsulated. The bill passed 2nd Reading and has now been referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

BILL 238, WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT

The Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, Monte McNaughton’s (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex) government bill would limit the increase on certain workplace insurance premiums for employers for 2021. The bill passed 2nd Reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

BILLS DEFEATED

BILL 252, HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT ACT

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MOTIONS

BILL 239, STAY HOME IF YOU ARE SICK ACT

In order to fast-track NDP MPP Peggy Sattler’s (London West) bill, the NDP is using the procedural option of a motion to quickly move the bill through the legislative process. Sattler’s bill would grant employees 10 days of sick leave, seven of which would be paid leave. In addition, Sattler’s bill mandates another 14 days of paid leave in the case of declared emergencies or infectious disease emergencies.

Despite support from the Liberals and Greens, the NDP motions failed again to gain PC government approval. The PCs continue to insist that they were taking adequate measures to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill is now scheduled for a 2nd Reading vote after Question Period on Monday, March 1, 2021.

IN OTHER NEWS

ANOTHER OSSTF/FEESO MEMBER NOMINATED FOR 2022 ELECTION

Michele McCleave-Kennedy, an OSSTF/FEESO member from District 2, Algoma was nominated again to be the NDP candidate in Sault Ste. Marie. Kennedy lost by 400 votes to PC Minister of Colleges and Universities, Ross Romano, in the 2018 election. Kennedy joins Allison Cillis (Flamborough—Glanbrook) and Jill Andrew (Toronto—St. Paul's) as the third OSSTF/FEESO member to be nominated by the NDP in the last few weeks.