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GOVERNMENT CLEARS THE DECK, READIES FOR BUDGET AND ELECTION CAMPAIGN

With all remaining Government Bills passed into law, on Thursday, April 14th the Ontario legislature passed a motion to extend the constituency week originally scheduled for the week of April 18 to April 22, to Thursday, April 28th, the date earmarked for the delivery of the provincial budget. The current legislative session is scheduled to conclude on May 5th which leaves little time for the budget to be passed. We expect the government will call an abrupt end to the 42nd Ontario Parliament shortly after the delivery of the budget address in the legislature and then wait for the Writs of Election to be issued marking the official start of the province's 28-day election campaign. The budget will be a political document designed to serve as the PC's re-election platform providing funding for all the goodies that have been doled out and promises that have been made over the last several months. The Ontario general election is scheduled for June 2nd

Here is list of the government business that were passed into law in the week before the constituency week-and-a-half break:

- Bill 93 Getting Ontario Connected Act 2022 passed Third Reading on April 11th and received Royal Assent on April 14, 2022
- Bill 100 Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act 2022 passed Third Reading on April 13th and received Royal Assent on April 14, 2022.
- Bill 106 Pandemic and Emergency Preparedness Act 2022 passed Third Reading and received Royal Assent on April 14, 2022
- Bill 109 More Homes for Everyone Act 2022 passed Third Reading and received Royal Assent on April 14, 2022.
- Bill 111 Tax Relief at the Pump Act 2022 passed Third Reading and received Royal Assent on April 14, 2022.

OPPOSITION BENCH LOSES ONE MEMBER

Kevin Yarde is the MPP for the riding of Brampton North. He was elected to the Ontario legislature in June 2018 as an NDP member and served as the Opposition critic for auto insurance. Yarde recently failed to win the nomination contest to serve as the NDP's candidate in the riding for the upcoming general election.

As a display of his displeasure with the NDP for their lack of support for a sitting MPP, on Friday, April 22nd Yarde announced that he will sit as an Independent for the remainder of the session (which is currently on an extended constituency week and will likely sit for only one day before it is terminated). It's believed that Yarde may be considering another run at the Brampton-North seat in the Ontario legislature as an Independent.

CONTRACTORS OPPOSE FORD GOVERNMENT'S NEW OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY LAWS

It's hard not to notice how seriously ticked off contractors are at the current government for quickly passing, with almost no consultation, hurriedly drafted legislation that is detrimental to our industry. That legislation came in the form of amendments to the province's Occupational Health and Safety Act that are contained in Schedule 4 of Bill 88.

Bill 88 rocketed through the legislative process in almost unheard-of speed. It was introduced in the Ontario legislature for First Reading on February 28th, passed Third Reading on April 7th and received Royal Assent on April 13th. It would have moved even more quickly had the government not suffered the embarrassment of being forced to remove provisions which, if passed, would have eliminated the College of Traditional Medicine. With heavy pushback from Tory TCM practitioners, the Bill was steered to Committee after First Reading to have those provisions removed before it was reported back to the legislature for Second Reading and then back to Committee again for public hearings and clause by clause review.

The legislation was rushed through over the strong objections of employers not only in construction but in all sectors. Making their opposition to Schedule 4 of Bill 88 known through written submissions to the Minister's Office and through written submissions to and presenting at public hearings convened by the legislature's Standing Committee on Social Policy were the OGCA, Rescon and OSWCA (by video conference) and COCA (in-person). The Greater Golden Horseshoe Contractors Association and the Prevention Employers Partnership (a large multi-sector employers' coalition that was originally assembled by Tony Dean as his primary employer sounding board when he conducted his review of the province's OH&S system and continues to work

on health and safety and prevention issues to this day) also made written submissions to the Minister's Office and to the Standing Committee.

There are three issues of serious concern. Here's the 101:

1. Employers Must Have Naloxone Kits

An employer who becomes aware, or "ought reasonably to be aware" (what does that mean?) that there may be a risk of a worker having an opioid overdose at a workplace where that worker performs work for the employer, is required to provide naloxone kits. The employer must ensure the naloxone kits are in good working order and that workers are trained in their use.

The provisions of the Bill regarding naloxone kits will come into force at a later date when proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor. (Let's hope this never gets proclaimed.)

2. Huge Increases in Fines

The maximum fine for convictions under the Occupational Health and Safety Act is increased from \$100,000 to \$1,500,000 for directors or officers of corporations and to \$500,000 for other individuals.

The provisions relating to the increase in fines takes effect on July 1, 2022.

3. Limitations Period for Prosecutions Doubled

The limitation period for instituting a prosecution is extended from one year to two years.

The provisions relating to the extension of the limitations period for instituting a prosecution take effect on July 1, 2022.

MPP SUFFERS HEART ATTACK, COMMITS TO SEEK RE-ELECTION IN JUNE

It has been reported that sometime on the weekend of April 9-10, Gilles Bisson, the MPP for the riding of Timmins, suffered a heart attack and had triple bypass surgery in Toronto.

- Bisson was first elected in 1990 in the riding of Cochrane South, was re-elected in the same riding in 1995, was re-elected in the reconfigured riding of Timmins-James Bay in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2014 and in the rejigged riding of Timmins in 2018
- Bisson will soon turn 65
- Bisson says he is doing well and resting with family
- Shortly after his heart attack, Bisson said he plans to take a four-week break from his duties as a legislator
- The popular Bisson is committed to seeking re-election in Timmins on June 2nd when he will face off against senior mining executive and PC candidate and first term mayor of Timmins, George Pirie
- Bisson won re-election in 2018 with more than 55% of the votes cast
- Bisson is one of three longest serving MPPs who are currently serving; the others who were first elected in 1990 along with Bisson are Speaker Ted Arnott (PC MPP for Wellington-Halton Hills, who like Bisson will also be seeking re-election in June) and Jim Wilson (MPP for Simcoe-Grey, first elected as a PC but now sitting as an Independent, who will be retiring from the Ontario legislature in June)

On behalf of COCA, we wish our friend Gilles a speedy recovery.

TOBY BARRETT TO RETIRE AFTER 27 YEARS AS MPP

It appears from media reporting that the loyal and long-serving PC MPP for Haldiman-Norfolk, Toby Barrett, was pressured if not pushed into retirement by his own party.

Premier Ford has appointed the mayor of Haldiman, Ken Hewitt, to run in Barrett's place in the upcoming Ontario general election. Hewitt admitted that he was approached by officials from the premier's office about the appointment sometime early in April. Hewitt announced that he would be the PC candidate in the riding before Barrett was able to announce that he would be stepping down.

The 76 year old Barrett was first elected in 1995. He is enormously popular with the voters in the riding winning in 2007 and 2011 with more than 60% of the votes cast and in 2014 and 2018 with more than 50%.

LIBERALS INCHING UPWARD IN ABACUS POLL

Abacus Data conducted a survey of 1,500 eligible Ontario voters from April 14 to 19, 2022. Here are some highlights:

- If the election was held at the time the poll was conducted, 36% of respondents would vote PC (down 1% from January 2022 and down 5% from the 2018 election), 32% would vote Liberal (+4% from January and + 12% from the June 2018 election), 23% would vote NDP (-2% from January and – 11% from the last election), 6% would vote Green (an increase of 1% from both January and June 2018) and 4% would vote for another party (down 1% from January and up 2% from the 2018 election)
- 10% of respondents found Doug Ford’s performance to be excellent, 26% said it was good and 25% said it was acceptable
- Doug Ford’s net approval rating has improved to +3%, Andrea Horwath’s has slipped to +1%, Steven Del Duca at -5% and Mike Schreiner at – 3%
- 35% of respondents believe Doug Ford would be the best premier, 17% for Andrea Horwath, 12% for Del Duca, 5% for Mike Schreiner and 31% were unsure
- 49% said that it is definitely time for a change in government, 20% said a change would be good but not that important, 13% said it would be good to keep the same government and 18% said it would be best to keep the PCs in government
- Key issues among respondents in order of importance are: reducing the cost of living; housing affordability and accessibility; improving the healthcare system; keeping taxes from going up or reducing them; growing the economy and creating good jobs; responding to the COVID19 pandemic

For the full story, click on: <https://abacusdata.ca/ontario-election-2022-release/>

IPSOS POLL SHOWS GRITS GAINING ON TORIES

A survey of 1001 Ontarians aged 18+ conducted on April 13th and 14th by Ipsos on behalf of Global News produced the following results:

- If the election was held at the time the survey was taken, 35% of respondents would vote PC (down 3% from the previous Ipsos survey), 32% would vote Liberal (up 4%), 23% would vote NDP (down 1%), 5% would vote Green (up 1%), 5% would vote for another party (unchanged)
- 7% of respondents said they would not vote (unchanged) and 14% remain undecided (up 1%)
- 42% believe Doug Ford would make the best premier (-1%), 24% for Del Duca (+2%) and 33% for Horwath (-1%)
- 12% of respondents strongly approve and 39% somewhat approve of the performance of the Doug Ford led PC government (in aggregate up 2%) while 24% strongly disapprove and 25% somewhat disapprove of the government’s performance (down 2%)
- 41% of respondents are inclined to think that the Ford Government has done a good job and deserves re-election (down 1 point) while 59% responded that its time for another party to form government at Queen’s Park

For the full story, click on <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/ontario-election-race-tightens-official-campaign-draws-near>

MAINSTREET POLL REFLECTS TORIES IN THE LEAD

Here are the highlights of the Mainstreet Research poll conducted on April 5th and 6th and published on April 11th.

- Among the decided voters who were polled, 39.2% said they would vote for the PCs; among all who were polled 33.9% said they would vote PC
- Among the decided voters who were polled, 25.8% said they would vote for the Liberals and among all those who were polled 21.5% said they would vote for the Liberals
- Among the decided voters who were polled 24.1% said they would vote for the NDP and among all of those who were polled 20.6% said they would vote for the NDP
- Among the decided voters who were polled 3.4% said they would vote for the Greens and among all who were polled 2.5% said they would vote for the Greens
- 7.6% of the decided voters who were polled said they would vote for another party which represented 6.1% of all who were polled
- 15.3% said they were undecided at the time the poll was taken
- If the election was held at the time the poll was taken, the PCs would have won a majority government with 76 seats, the same number that they won in 2018
- The NDP would have won 24 seats, down 16 from the 40 seats they won in 2018
- The Liberals would have won 9 seats, up 2 from the 7 seats they won in 2018 (remember their numbers were bolstered when MPP Amanda Simard, who was elected as a Tory, resigned from the Tory caucus to sit first as an Independent before joining the Liberals)
- The Greens will hold onto the one seat in the legislature that they won in 2018
- At the time the poll was taken, 14 ridings were too close to call; those ridings were:
 1. Kiiwetinoog where the PCs and NDP are neck and neck
 2. Mushkegowuk-James Bay, another PC- NDP toss-up
 3. Ottawa West-Nepean, an NDP-Liberal duel
 4. Peterborough-Kawartha, a PC – NDP dust-up
 5. Scarborough-Guildwood where the Libs are duking it out with the PCs
 6. Scarborough Southwest, a close contest between the PCs and the NDP
 7. Eglinton-Lawrence where the PCs and Libs are within the margin of error
 8. Humber River-Black Creek, another Tories versus Grits battle
 9. Mississauga East-Cooksville where the PCs and Libs are nearly at a polling draw
 10. Brampton Centre, a close contest between the NDP and PCs
 11. Brampton North where the PCs and NDP are in a tight race
 12. Kitchener Centre where the Libs and the NDP are neck and neck
 13. Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas, a PC-Liberal-NDP three-way
 14. Niagara Falls where the NDP and PCs are polling almost even Steven