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COCA APPEARS AT BILL 88 HEARINGS

Bill 88 Working for Workers Act 2022 is an omnibus Government Bill which, if passed, will:

- enact the Digital Platform Workers Rights Act 2022
- make amendments to the Employment Standards Act,
- make amendments to the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act; and
- make amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

It appears that the Bill was slapped together rather recklessly in a hurried fashion without normal consultation. For example, the original version of Bill 88 also included a Schedule 5 to eliminate the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). However, after First Reading these provisions received such significant pushback from TCM practitioners (presumably some were PC supporters) that the government took the unusual step of referring the Bill to the Standing Committee on Social Policy after First Reading to have Schedule 5 removed and then referred back to the legislature.

Another example is the consultation that took place on the naloxone provisions that found their way into Bill 88. There was a short window of online consultation over the Christmas-New Year holiday period that received minimal feedback. The naloxone kit provisions were not supported by the Provincial Labour Management Health and safety Committee, our industry's bi-partite committee established under Section 21 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and through which most health and safety proposals are vetted.

COCA took strong objection to Schedule 4 of the legislation which if passed will: 1) require certain employers to have naloxone kits at their workplaces and to train employees in their use; 2) increase fines excessively for directors, officers and workers convicted of OHSA infractions; and 3) extend limitations periods for health and safety prosecutions from one year to two.

On March 28th Ian Cunningham attended at the public hearings convened by the Legislature's Standing Committee on Social Policy to provide advice and recommendations in respect of the Bill's Schedule 4 proposals including the following:

- COCA believes that opioid abuse is an extremely serious public health issue but that workplace overdoses are exceedingly rare and that there are other more impactful upstream steps the government should take to combat what has been called "the second pandemic"
- That the proposed increased fines are extreme and not only punitive, but they are also destructive to the spirit of enterprise in Ontario

- That the proposed one-year extension of the limitations period for prosecutions will only delay further the evidence and causal factors of workplace incidents that are used to inform new policy and program development and actually

As I write this article, Bill 88 is undergoing a clause-by-clause review at the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Because the government has a majority of members on the Committee, the Bill will pass through this part of the legislative process with minor if any amendments and referred back to the full legislature for Third Reading and Royal Assent. Our best guess is that this will happen before the writ is dropped and the election campaign is underway.

The provisions relating to naloxone kits do not come into force upon Royal Assent but at a later date, a date proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor. We will press the next government (according to some polls right now it's looking like another PC majority) NOT to have these provisions proclaimed.

ONTARIO'S CHILD CARE DEAL IN A NUTSHELL

Here's the skinny on the recently struck Canada-Ontario agreement in respect of childcare:

- Ontario is the last jurisdiction among all Canadian provinces and territories to come to agreement with the federal government in respect of childcare
- The federal government had previously been offering a \$10.2 B deal over 5 years, a term consistent with arrangements made with the other jurisdictions
- The final agreement has a price tag of \$13.2 B over a 6 year term
- Families with children under the age of 5 attending licensed childcare facilities will see their fees reduced by up to 25% to a minimum of \$12 per day and fees will be cut in half on average by the end of 2022
- Families will receive rebate cheques in May retroactive to April 1, 2022
- The average annual savings has been calculated to be \$6,000 per child
- The agreement is expected to allow for the addition of 86,000 new childcare spaces in the province
- In order to retain and attract workers, the agreement contains a wage grid that establishes a minimum wage of \$18 per hour for childcare staff and \$25 per hour for supervisors and that increases by \$1 per hour every year
- The agreement contains a provision that requires a financial review after three years
- Critics of the deal say:
 - Ontario's foot-dragging has put the province behind its peers in the getting savings to families
 - The deal only applies to children in licensed care and it's estimated that approximately half of children under the age of 5 in Ontario are in unlicensed care
 - The minimum wages established in the grid are too low to stem the flow of workers out of the sector

ANGUS REID POLL SHOWS PREMIER FORD'S APPROVAL TURNS UP

- The Angus Reid Institute regularly conducts polling about the approval of provincial premiers by their respective provincial residents
- In November 2018, Ontario Premier Doug Ford's approval stood at 42% and it declined steadily from there to 31% in February 2020
- However, when the novel coronavirus pandemic invaded the province with force, Ontarians got behind their Premier and Ford's approval rocketed up to 69% by May 2020
- It's been a steady downhill slide for Premier Ford ever since then to an all time low of 30% in January 2022
- However, with an election on the horizon and a plan to lift public health measures, Ford's approval ticked up to 43% in the Angus Reid March 2022 survey conducted between March 10 and 15
- Angus Reid Institute notes that still 36% of Ontarians strongly disapprove of Ford and 19% disapprove

For the full story, click on the following link: <https://angusreid.org/premiers-performance-march/>

DO YOU HAVE A JOB FOR A NEWCOMER FROM UKRAINE?

The governments of Canada and Ontario are providing considerable immigration and settlement supports to make it easier for newcomers arriving here because they are fleeing from the war in Ukraine. There's one area where the government of Ontario is asking for your help. If you are an employer interested in hiring a hardworking Ukrainian newcomer, call 1-888-562-4769 to be referred to an agency that can help you.

We're told that cross-ministry planning within the Ontario government is still ongoing through various efforts and initiatives. The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development has set up the following resources:

Webpage

<https://www.ontario.ca/ukraine> (A Ukrainian-language offering is currently in development).

Hotline

1-888-562-4769 (If a caller needs service in Ukrainian, the call centre is prepared to use an auto-translate feature that repeats their questions/answers in real-time with system translation). This is also the number we are directing employers/organizations in Ontario to for further collaboration.

Email

- ContactEO@ontario.ca
- Ukrainianjobs@ontario.ca

MORE RIDINGS TO WATCH ON ELECTION NIGHT

Vaughan-Woodbridge

We don't know why he waited so long but as fully expected Ontario Liberal Party Leader Steven Del Duca recently announced that he will be running in the Vaughan-Woodbridge electoral district in the upcoming Ontario general election. Del Duca previously held this seat after winning a by-election in 2012 caused by the resignation of Liberal Greg Sorbara and which he won with more than 50% of the vote. He was re-elected in the 2014 general election which he also won with more than 50% of the vote and became a minister in the government of Kathleen Wynne. He met his defeat in the 2018 general election that saw the Grits reduced to just seven seats in the legislature, at the hands of PC Michael Tibollo.

After graduating from law school, Del Duca became a political staffer for Dalton McGuinty when McGuinty was Opposition leader in the Ontario legislature and then moved over to the Carpenters' Union becoming director of public affairs.

Del Duca will face off once again against Michael Tibollo, the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions in the Doug Ford cabinet. Tibollo is a lawyer with 30 years in practice who has been active in community affairs in Vaughan with a special interest in men's mental health.

York Centre

The seat in the Ontario legislature assigned to York Centre is currently occupied by Roman Baber. Elected in 2018 as a PC, Baber was ejected from the PC caucus over his objections to public health measures and now sits as an Independent. He has turned his full attention to becoming the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada and will not be seeking re-election to Queen's Park. Prior to 2018, York centre was in Liberal hands for 19 years with Monte Kwinter as the MPP.

This time around the Tories are running Michael Kerzner, a business professional in the bioscience sector who volunteers with local synagogues.

The Liberal are fielding human rights and employment lawyer, Shelley Brown.

The NDP have not yet identified their candidate

Brantford Brant

This traditionally Liberal riding is currently held by PC MPP Will Bouma. Bouma was elected by a thin margin over the NDP candidate in the 2018 Ontario general election that saw the Doug Ford Tories annihilate Kathleen Wynne's Liberals and sweep into power. He lives outside of Brantford in the village of St George, is an optometrist by training and is considered to be a fiscal and social conservative.

Prior to Bouma's election in 2018, the riding was and held by Liberal Dave Levac for 19 years. The riding is the home of the staunch Liberal Nixon family that includes Ontario's 13th premier and longest serving MPP in the province's history, the late Harry Nixon, his son the former Deputy Premier and former Ontario Liberal Party leader Robert Nixon and Rober Nixon's daughter the former MP and federal cabinet minister Jane Stewart.

On June 2nd, Bouma will face off once again against Liberal Ruby Toor, who placed a distant third in the province-wide Grit rejection back in 2018. She is a homeopath by training and a retirement home administrator who is active in the Brantford community.

The NDP came close in this riding in 2018, their candidate only some 600 votes behind Bouma. This time their flag bearer is retired educator and former OSSTF president Harvey Bischof. Bischof is expected to put education issues at the front of his campaign

Windsor-Tecumseh

This Windsor-Tecumseh riding is currently held by NDP MPP Percy Hatfield. Hatfield, a former CBC reporter, union activist and city councillor, was first elected in a by-election in 2013 that was caused by the resignation of Liberal Dwight Duncan. Hatfield was re-elected in 2014 and 2018, both times with significant majorities. Prior to Hatfield's election in 2013, Duncan held the seat for almost 18 years. The Tories have never fared well in the riding. Hatfield will not be seeking re-election in 2022 so the riding is up for grabs.

The NDP flag bearer is Gemme Grey-Hall, a former sales person who is active in community affairs, is an advocate for women and is employed by the University of Windsor as Major Gift Officer

The Liberal hopeful is Gary Kaschak, a Windsor city councillor and former Canada Border Services Agency administrator.

Carrying the blue and white standard for the PCs is Tecumseh Town Councillor and municipal engineer at the City of Windsor, Andrew Dowle.

COCA AND MEMBERS DONATE TO UKRAINE

Thanks to our member associations and their members for their generous contributions to Ukrainian humanitarian relief. It goes without saying, democracy is under attack by the forces of authoritarianism. We all can play a role. If you haven't donated yet, it's not too late. The COCA Board of Directors unanimously agreed to donate \$10,000 to the Canada Ukraine Foundation and that donation has been made.

COCA HAS MOVED

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