

Province not trespassing on the Property Act



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Recently there has been a great deal of comment about the Ontario Government's proposed changes to the Trespass to Property Act. Unfortunately, much of the comment has been based on very bad information about the intent of the amendments.

In answer to a recent question in the Legislature, the Hon. Ian Scott, Attorney-General of the Province explained the Bill in the following manner. "... the bill was the result of a commission study done about access to property to which the public is invited (amusement parks, malls, stores etc.). The conclusion of the study, incorporated in the bill, is that a person who is excluded from property to which the public is ordinarily invited such as a mall, should be given a reason for the exclusion. The giving of the reason and the notice of objection does not prevent the exclusion, it simply provides an issue that may be tested."

This statement provides the answer to the first piece of misinformation - "a group of people enter your store and create unrest among your customers. You ask them to leave and give them written notice that they have broken the rules as posted. The group returns 20 minutes later with written notice that the rules were not reasonable. Under the new law they can stay until a court decides on the validity of the rules." This is not the truth of the matter. That group of people would be banned from your store for the length of your notice or until a decision was reached in court about the facts of the matter.

The second fallacy has to do with the giving of notice. The impression seems to be that every store owner in town is going to have to post, what amounts to, a rule book on their front door. That large signs full of forbidding do's and don't's are going to have to spring up on every avenue of approach. All this is being used to scare business people in spite of the fact that the act clearly states - "A notice under this Act may be given, by direct communication, whether orally, in writing or otherwise." The act goes on to say that signs can be used but it does not say that they have to be used. Indeed, even

if store owners want to post signs I don't think that it would be any different from the signs we already see in shops which say such things as 'Please do not handle the merchandise, the staff will assist you.'

Allegations have been made that the bill will limit the business person's right to protect his or her own interests or ensure the safety of the public. The fact is that all the bill does is ensure that when someone is 'thrown off' your property they know exactly why they have been removed. Asking that rules be reasonable in nature and not discriminatory does not seem to be much of an imposition. Business people have a right to protect their business and the public has a right to expect that they can shop where they want if they are not causing problems.

The bill will be the subject of Legislative Committee hearings and at that time I am sure that a great many amendments will be proposed. This intense examination of a piece of legislation is why we have committee hearings. At that time business people and public interest groups will be able to bring forward suggestions to improve or clarify parts of the act which they feel need more work.

Developing new legislation is a long process. Acts go through many changes and revisions as government and those affected try to work out the best possible solutions to problems. If you have problems with proposed laws you can contact me and I will try to provide you with the information and explanations that you need to come to a decision on the matter.

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No rest for MPs during break



On The Hill
With
Garth Turner

I guess you can't blame some people for thinking MPs do nothing but lie around taking holidays when Parliament is not in session-like now. After all, that's the impression that reporters who are left in Ottawa give.

Well, don't believe it. This is one tough job - with no set hours, and no days off. But it's also a stimulating challenge, and each morning I'm certain of one thing - today I will learn something new.

I learned more about the dairy industry last week, sitting in the kitchen of Roy Westlake's farmhouse outside Bolton, for example. I learned about the concerns of gun enthusiasts in many conversations I had with people over proposals the feds have to restrict automatic weapons. Certainly I've been talking with others about the abortion issue, in the wake of those recent court rulings. And I've been working with municipal officials on a variety of issues, from Canada Post to the thorny topic of garbage.

This last item is of particular interest to me, as I devote part of this summer to writing a book on the environment. It will be a much-expanded version of the Citizen's Guide to a Better Environment, which Dorothy and I put together earlier this year, and then sent to every home in the riding. It strikes me that the time is right for a book which tells Canadians exactly how they - as individuals and families - can do things which will benefit the planet. Too many of us sit back and despair about the environment,

when there are actions we can take which will help.

The book is scheduled for publication next January, and will go on sale then. The point, however, is not to make money - and any profits coming to me will be turned over to Mike Wilson, the finance minister, to be applied directly against the deficit.

As I proceed with this project, I'd like to have your help.

Included in the book will be dozens and dozens of tips for people - like substituting natural cleaners for hazardous household products or ways to make your car environmentally-friendly. The point is simple: Not to wait for governments or conservation groups to solve our pollution problems, but to start tackling them ourselves. I believe we can make a difference, on our own.

So, do you have suggestions? Are there things you do which are environmentally-friendly and which you're willing to share with me? Are there ideas you have about raising awareness of the issue with, say, your children? Or methods we can use to cut down on the amount of waste we generate?

On the garbage issue, there are some things going on which disturb me deeply.

The continuing proposal to turn the huge quarry outside Acton into a private mega-dump is wrong. There are too many risks involved. Too much evidence that groundwater would be contaminated. Too many questions about the impact of the whole project on the surround-

ing community. So, I certainly support the citizens who have been staging a long and tough fight against the idea.

I'm also concerned about what's happening in the south end of the riding. Years - and millions of dollars - have been spent trying to find a new dump site in Halton Region. Now that one has been identified in Milton, it appears new court challenges will be launched to block it. The only result will be more millions spent and more years of delay, while the Region continues to export its garbage to a polluting incinerator in the U.S.

Meanwhile both Halton and Peel regions are part of a larger problem - what to do with the waste generated by the whole greater Toronto area. Clearly we're heading into a crisis, and governments appear to be paralyzed. I have said in the House of Commons that the feds should get involved, and help play a leadership role, and I hope that happens.

But until solutions are found, we can all do our share. That means recycling and recovering and reusing. It certainly means avoiding excessively-packaged products. It means taking your own bags to the store, composting kitchen and yard waste and thinking about the environmental impact of everything you do.

And if there's something more you can share with me, then please write. I want as many names as possible in that book. The address: Garth Turner MP, 27 Main St. S., Georgetown L7G 3G2.

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