

Queen's Park Report

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 More than 50 pieces of legislation were passed during the spring session of the Ontario Legislature which has just ended. However, with only a few exceptions, the legislation was of a housekeeping or local nature. The following bills were of more general interest.

Bill 24: An Act to Amend the Environmental Protection Act.
 Among other things, this Bill imposes clear responsibility for control, cleanup and restoration of damage upon those who cause and could control pollutants.

It is the most wide ranging piece of environmental legislation with respect to pollutants in Canada.

Following committee hearings this summer, this legislation will be returned to the Legislature for approval.

Bill 163: An Act to Reform the Law respecting Residential Tenancies.
 In effect, this Bill repeals both the Landlord and Tenant Act and the Residential Premises Rent Review Act. It is a revised and consolidated approach to landlord and tenant law in Ontario.

The passage of this legislation marks the conclusion of months of committee hearings. Major changes include the following:

- (a) creation of a Residential Tenancies Commission which will determine rent increases and other landlord-tenant matters previously handled by the courts;
- (b) removal of the previously built-in December 31st, 1980, expiry date for rent controls; when the section dealing with rent increases takes effect, it will limit them to 6 per cent a year; if a landlord wants more, he'll have to make his case before the Tenancies Commission;
- (c) provision for the protection of tenants against unfair eviction;
- (d) increase of the interest rate on security deposits to 9 per cent;
- (e) permission for tenants to divert payment of rent to the Tenancies Commission if the landlord fails to maintain the premises satisfactorily or does not repair a substantial defect.

Bill 106: An Act to Amend the Municipality of Metro Toronto Act.
 This was a Private Member's Bill proposed by Herb Epp (Liberal MPP for Waterloo North). It proposed the reinstatement of a three-year term for councils and boards in the Metropolitan area.

In addition, it would have required that the Metro Chairman be an elected member of one of the area municipalities.

The Bill received support from all sides of the House. However, the support of the Government was not forthcoming, and the Bill was blocked.

Various committees of the House have been very active. A broad range of issues have been discussed and several of the committees will sit through the summer months.

General Government Committee: Hearings on Bill 163 (An Act respecting Residential Tenancies) were held from October 1978 until June 1979. Scores of witnesses were heard and more than 130 amendments were considered before the Bill was sent back to the Legislature for passage.

Administration of Justice Committee: Public hearings began in May and will continue into the summer on a Bill amalgamating the Ministries of Colleges and Universities and Education. Interested parties are taking this opportunity to discuss a variety of issues relating to education.

Social Development Committee: During the spring this Committee concentrated upon consideration of the closing of Lakeshore Hospital and the general reduction in hospital bed allocation.

Resources Development Committee: This Committee has been holding hearings in three areas, and is expected to bring in reports for the fall session of the Legislature.

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