

**Overview of Bill 5: The Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act
Delegation to the City of Richmond Hill Council by Kathleen Wynne on behalf of:
#thewomenofontariosayno**

February 8, 2023

The Issue at Hand

Municipally elected leaders do not have an appropriate accountability structure when it comes to perpetrating violence and harassment in the workplace. In fact, if a claim of egregious (the most severe) harassment is substantiated; the maximum penalty that can be imposed is three months without pay. But the councillor can retain their position, return to the workplace and seek re-election. This differs from any other workplace in the province, where not only are workplaces mandated to have violence and harassment in the workplace policies (Bill 168), these policies outline consequences for egregious violation which includes termination.

Why this Bill is so important

The Bill was introduced as a private members bill, as a response to a sitting councillor in Ottawa who was able to seek re-election, even with outstanding claims of egregious sexual harassment (investigation by the integrity Commissioner was underway). Other instances of councillors perpetrating harassment include Brampton, Barrie and Mississauga. Since this advocacy effort has started, there are further instances cited in many other municipalities across the province of Ontario.

What will the Bill do?

The Bill has three primary components:

1. Require councillors to comply with the workplace violence and harassment policies of the municipality they represent.
2. Permit municipalities to direct the Integrity Commissioner to apply to the court to vacate a member's seat for failing to comply with the municipality's workplace violence and harassment policies.
3. Restrict councillors—whose seat has been vacated—from seeking immediate subsequent re-election.

The Consequences of Doing Nothing

When councillors are able to perpetrate harassment without being held to account, a toxic message is sent to the community.

It means that as an elected official:

1. You are immune to the communal standards of treatment we have come to expect from the population at large, and;
2. You can abuse your power, unchecked, and continue to have the privilege of serving the population that elected you.

A fundamental, underlying principle of broadening diversity, equity and inclusion in politics rests on the assumption that the workplace is SAFE. This is currently not the case. As such, despite the most recent municipal elections in October, 2022, councillors currently can perpetrate the most egregious acts of harassment and keep their jobs. This has an immeasurably negative impact on communities.

1. Community members and/or municipal staff may not feel safe meeting with their local ward councillor.
2. If a person is harassed, they may not see the point of filing a complaint with the Integrity Commissioner—if suitable action cannot be taken.
3. There is no deterrent for councillors when it comes to perpetrating harassment when they know they can still keep their job.
4. It stifles diversity of voice at the local decision making table—when personal safety is at risk, quality people may be deterred from seeking election.
5. When councillors who have perpetrated harassment to staff or fellow councillors can retain their position, no matter how serious, it creates and protects toxic workplaces, which in turn has an adverse effect on mental health in the workplace and throughout the community. An Overview for Bill 5*: The Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act To learn more check out: <https://womenofontariosayno.squarespace.com> * In reference to Bill 5, once passed, it will be applicable to ALL municipalities in Ontario at the same time.
6. Lack of accountability supports current systems of privilege and immunity of a certain segment of the population, which is not optimal for healthy communities.
7. It sends the message that if you have power, you are different, and superior to the average citizen

The Bill would amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and the City of Toronto Act, 2006.

I ask that Council support Item #14.1 on your Agenda: Member Motion-Mayor West seconded by Councillor Davidson