

NDP promising to scuttle bill targeting underage drunk drivers

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A Mississauga MPP's private member's bill aimed at motorists under age 19 caught drinking and driving has passed second reading, but it doesn't look as if it will be approved because of opposition from the government.

Liberal Steven Offer introduced a bill designed to plug a loophole in existing legislation. It would suspend the driver's license of those under 19 years of age for one year if

they are found drinking and driving. Offer introduced the bill after he discovered there was no penalty for drivers under the legal drinking age who are caught driving while impaired.

While other Liberals and Conservatives supported Offer's bill, and it received its second reading, NDP government members said they wouldn't support it at the critical third reading stage.

George D'Amo, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, argued that the government has already dealt with the situation through its new graduated licensing provisions.



OFFER

Those rules prohibit any drinking for those with the new licenses and provides for a 30-day suspension if anyone is found driving while under the influence.

Offer says he was disappointed with the government's response. Those under 19 should face the same one-year suspension on first offense that faces drivers who are already of the legal drinking age, he feels.

In his summation, Offer criticized the NDP for not supporting measures which will "reduce property damage, reduce injury, (and) reduce death on our roads."

Mike Cooper of the NDP accused the opposition parties of being hypocritical since they didn't support the government's introduction of photo radar in Ontario, despite numerous studies that shows it is effective in reducing accidents, damage and death.