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Thursday 28 July 2016

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

Jeudi 28 juillet 2016

**Standing Committee on  
General Government**

Election Finances Statute Law  
Amendment Act, 2016

**Comité permanent des  
affaires gouvernementales**

Loi de 2016 modifiant des lois  
en ce qui concerne  
le financement électoral

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
AFFAIRES GOUVERNEMENTALES**

Thursday 28 July 2016

Jeudi 28 juillet 2016

*The committee met at 0901 in the Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites, Windsor.*

**ELECTION FINANCES STATUTE LAW  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2016**

**LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS  
EN CE QUI CONCERNE  
LE FINANCEMENT ÉLECTORAL**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 201, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act and the Taxation Act, 2007 / Projet de loi 201, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** It's 9:01. I'm going to call to order the meeting of the Standing Committee on General Government and welcome deputants dealing with Bill 201, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act and the Taxation Act, 2007.

We have some new faces here today. Just a quick update on the process of the committee: We'll have 10-minute presentations from deputants, and then we'll have 15 minutes for questions. It's not your typical five, five and five. We try to keep it as a dialogue. If you have a question—I'm talking to members now—or need something clarified, please put your hand up, and I'll try to distribute within the time frame to the best of my ability. It might not always be five, five and five, but I'll certainly try my best.

**MR. ENVER VILLAMIZAR**

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** The first deputant is Mr. Enver Villamizar. Welcome. As you've heard, you have up to 10 minutes for your presentation—you don't have to use all 10 if you don't need to—and then there are 15 minutes for members to ask questions. As you begin, if you could please state your name for Hansard so that it will be recorded, it would be much appreciated. Welcome.

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. My name is Enver Villamizar. I'm a high school teacher, and I'm the political action officer for the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation District 9, which represents teachers and education workers in this area who are

employed by the Greater Essex County District School Board.

I'd like to raise concerns today with the process that is being implemented surrounding the passage of Bill 201, the Election Finances Statute Law Amendment Act, as well as the proposed bill itself. In my view, if passed, the legislation will deepen the crisis of credibility of the electoral and political system in Ontario, which has gone to a new low with the revelations of the pay-for-access system.

The proposed legislation and this process come in response to the fact that ministers of the Ontario government gave access to those who agreed to pay, in some cases, thousands of dollars to the Liberal Party. Media reports have revealed that this was part of an elaborate "system"—in the words of former minister Dwight Duncan—in which ministers of the crown agreed to use their positions to meet fundraising targets given to them by their party.

It has also been revealed that higher targets were given to ministers in charge of portfolios that were responsible for handing over bigger amounts of public funds to private interests, such as the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development, as opposed to ministers in charge of ministries where so-called stakeholders might not be able to pay as much, such as those overseeing social assistance.

The means by which this was done was by using pay-for-access meetings, which were called "receptions" or, in other cases, "events," in which ministers would give access almost exclusively to private interests who deal with the ministry they oversee. According to an investigation by the Globe and Mail, some of the events had tickets sold to five or six people, while others had sold to 30 or 40 people.

No official inquiry has been launched into this whole scheme and its relationship to government decision-making and the exercise of power. We are told by the same government that used it that this scheme did not influence government decisions. We are supposed to trust those who carried it out to tell us whether or not power was abused.

Bill 201 does not hold anyone accountable now or in the future for this breach of public trust. The fact that the legislation has already been written by the government implicated in the whole affair and then imposed on the Legislature with a new process of so-called consultation

agreed to behind closed doors with only the parties in the Legislature participating raises serious questions of the credibility of the whole process and the aims of this bill in particular. Is it really to address pay-for-access or something else? The fact that the process is starting with legislation being tabled, rather than an inquiry, lends credibility to the view that it is about something else that has already been decided behind closed doors.

While not addressing the actions of ministers of the crown in this whole affair, including the Premier, the legislation does seek to strengthen the grip on politics of the political parties in the Legislature and their privileged position while at the same time imposing increased policing on the electorate and their social and political organizations, who are referred to as “third parties.”

The legislation proposes to hand over a per-vote subsidy to the parties currently in the Legislature based on the results of the last election as well as reduce the threshold for reimbursement. It appears as if the parties in the Legislature are in agreement to give themselves a per-vote subsidy that would amount to millions of dollars in public funds. Shockingly, this is over and above the \$514 million that the parties in the Legislature have received between 2012 and 2014 in the form of public subsidies of different types, according to the testimony of the Chief Electoral Officer on your first day of hearings. I repeat: \$514 million in two years.

What is all this money used for? What kind of a political system do we have in which parties require tens and even hundreds of millions of dollars to participate and in which the majority of the electors still do not participate? What has happened to the right of Canadians to elect and be elected and to cast an informed vote? Why do these campaigns require so much money and why are parties permitted to spend this much money, much of which ends up being paid by the public purse?

Ontarians should not be forced to finance political parties they do not support. This is in effect what a per-vote subsidy as well as other subsidies currently amount to. It's a violation of the right to conscience and freedom of association of the electorate, who should be free to support the parties that they wish and that they feel represent them.

If people aren't donating to political parties, in my opinion, it's linked to the type of activities they are seeing taking place, such as the pay-for-access scheme, or the parties are not political, but electoral machines will do anything to win. This cannot be resolved by providing guaranteed public funds to the same parties who themselves are the problem.

While there appears to be complete consensus on the committee regarding the subsidy, the major concern of the committee in its deliberations thus far appears to have been to what extent the actions of what are defined as “third parties” in elections should be policed. This is by sleight of hand linked to the pay-for-access schemes when, in fact, they are two different matters. The pay-for-access scheme reveals the actions of ministers of the government who use their positions to get money for

their party from various corporate and private donors as well as a number of unions. This is said to be legal because donations from these entities are legal. It may have been legal for them to give, but the issue is the actions of government ministers in collusion with the Liberal Party. Even by banning corporate and union donations, the issue remains the ability of ministers to abuse their power and the public interest and a lack of any measures to hold them to account. Once in majority, government can do as it pleases.

It is concerning that the emphasis is being placed on policing the participation of Ontarians in politics. Combined with rules banning donations from unions and corporations, the measures targeting the participation of third parties do not appear to be based on any democratic principle, but rather on limiting control over the process of elections to the parties currently in the Legislature and no one else. The only example given for why the role of third parties has become a problem was provided by the Chief Electoral Officer who, in his intervention, indicated that there was increased spending by third parties in elections, and in particular in by-elections. This in and of itself does not justify bringing in new arrangements to regulate and police electors' activities. It is not the actions of third parties in elections that brought us the pay-for-access scheme.

#### 0910

In this respect, it's telling that one of the examples given by the Chief Electoral Officer is that of the KW and Vaughan by-elections held in September 2011. The spending of third parties in that by-election amounted to 61% of the total spending. This was cited by the Chief Electoral Officer as an egregious example of the role played by third parties. However, what took place in that by-election? What were the factors involved, and is it evidence of undue influence of third parties over elections or something else? None of that has been discussed.

Those by-elections resulted directly from the attempts of the McGuinty government to win a majority at all costs, which they failed to achieve by one seat in the previous general election. The Liberal government used their control over the government to give a plum position as chair of the WSIB to a Conservative member who subsequently resigned her seat, freeing it up. The Liberals, I'm sure, had hoped to capture that one seat in order to gain the majority they wanted; they were one seat shy at the time. They appointed Elizabeth Witmer as part of this. This was not only cynical, but a slap in the face of Ontarians. It was a slap in the face of injured workers, who saw the head of WSIB being handed over to a former labour minister of Mike Harris. At the time, the WSIB was being restructured on the backs of injured workers.

Significantly, the by-election also took place at a time when Liberals and PCs were waging an all-out war against teachers and education workers, and public education in general, having collaborated to pass Bill 115, which sought to give broad dictatorial powers to the Minister of Education. The Liberals and PCs seemed to

both hope that that by-election could be won by vilifying teachers and education workers and their unions, with the Liberal candidate in particular campaigning openly in this vein.

Many people took action to intervene in that by-election, to prevent a Liberal majority and make a political statement against what they saw as the corruption of the Liberals and their attacks on workers' rights. There was a lot at stake because of the brutal actions of the government in power and the chances for people to make a statement against it by defeating them both: Denying a majority to the Liberals and preventing any momentum for the PCs and their new leader, Tim Hudak.

The turnout was over 60%, something unheard of for a provincial by-election. This itself shows the importance that this by-election took on.

This is all to say that the by-election in particular became a contest between those who oppose government corruption and abuse of the public interest and violations of workers' rights on one hand, and those who sought to gain power for themselves on the other. The people prevailed in that case, defeating both the Liberals and the PCs; and in that case, those who were defined as "third parties," including many unions and union centrals, participated in order to defeat the Liberals' attempts at an electoral coup. Along with their campaign to destroy the post-war labour relations regime—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Mr. Villamizar, you have about a minute left.

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** Thank you.

These people were forced to intervene—and by "these people" I mean the unions and many activists—in order to uphold the public interest, one of the reasons why there was so much spending in that by-election. The recent Supreme Court ruling, which indicated that Bill 115 violated fundamental freedoms, reaffirmed the importance of people being involved in that by-election.

It's interesting that the participation in that by-election is being used as an example of the need to limit the participation of third parties. This is a real cause for concern. The parties themselves do not face limits on what they can and cannot do with their funds in an election under the proposed new legislation, while unions and other organizations are to have more limits imposed on them, possibly even before the election has begun—for example, the requirement that unions only be able to encourage their members to vote and nothing else, lest it come under third-party advertising regulations.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Can you please wrap up?

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** Just to wrap up, an appropriate reform of elections financing law should be done by involving Ontarians in a broad discussion about existing problems and how elections should be run to sort them out. A rushed process with decisions made behind closed doors on who can and cannot participate that excludes the vast majority of political parties and Ontarians will not produce a reform of the law that increases empowerment of Ontarians. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Thank you so much. Now we'll turn it over to members. As I said, we have 15 minutes total. Please respect the other members and do not monopolize the time, and I'll try very much to get everybody involved. First is Ms. Wong.

**Ms. Soo Wong:** Thank you very much for being here this morning. I just want, before I ask you the question, to give you some background. The Premier had publicly said that when we brought in Bill 201 to the public, there would be travelling on first reading. That's what we're doing this summer, sir. I just wanted to clarify your statements to the committee for record purposes.

We're still in the drafting stage right now. Normally, bills that come before the Legislature don't travel or have public hearings until second reading. We're still in first reading, just so you can be clear about this. There is still opportunity. After this presentation this morning, you can submit your comments to the Clerk so that the committee can have a chance to look at your written submission. This is the first time that I'm aware of as a member that a committee is travelling on the first reading to hear from Ontarians. We have been travelling this week to south-western Ontario and here is an opportunity to say what you want to say about this particular bill. So I just want to be very clear: This is not done behind closed doors. It's still in draft stage. It's only in first reading.

My question to you this morning, sir, deals specifically with Bill 201. What do you support or what can we do to strengthen the legislation? So first of all, I want to hear from you, in terms of a level playing field—because we heard from many witnesses this week to end corporate donations as well as union donations. Do you support that position?

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** I'll address your first, I guess, comments by saying that my concern was not—the process is very open. You're travelling. I'm aware of that. The problem I was raising is that the process began with legislation. It didn't begin with an inquiry into what actually took place with the pay-for-access scheme and then from that inquiry figuring out how to come up with legislation that will address that problem.

**Ms. Soo Wong:** We have a draft bill. There's no legislation.

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** A draft bill, right.

**Ms. Soo Wong:** A draft bill. We've got to start somewhere. There's a draft proposal before this committee and the public, all Ontarians. My question to you this morning, sir, is, do support corporate donations and union donations to political parties?

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** To continue addressing what you're asking, I think the process is being set up to have a discussion that doesn't relate to the problem. The draft legislation or the draft bill does not address the actual problem, so to have people respond pro or con to something that doesn't even deal with the problem in my opinion doesn't do justice to what this committee should be dealing with.

As far as my personal view as to whether corporate and union donations should be banned, in the context

within which it's being proposed in the bill, I don't think it's going to solve any problems. If the problem the committee is trying to address is how to stop pay-for-access and those types of things—if that's the aim of the legislation, I don't think banning union and corporate donations will address that in the least. I think it will cover up new forms of influence peddling, because the central issue, which was the pay-for-access scheme, has not been dealt with or even investigated at this point. Out of context, union and corporate donations being banned or not can be discussed, but in the context of this overall legislation, it's not going to solve the problem that this legislation is supposedly meant to address.

**Ms. Soo Wong:** The other question I have for you is with regard to individual donations. There have been numerous witnesses coming forward saying we should eliminate them; others have said to lower the contribution limits. What are your thoughts about that?

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** The fundamental principle I would put forward is that people should be allowed to support the political party that they are either members of or support. I don't necessarily think that limits are the issue in that case.

**0920**

My main concern is that I don't think the people's public funds should be given to political parties without their consent. The per-vote subsidy, as well as the reimbursement in elections, in my opinion, is a form of taking people's tax dollars and giving them to parties that they may not support. That, I think, violates people's right to decide who they want to support politically.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thank you very much for your presentation. I appreciate your comments.

I want to make sure that you get an opportunity to explain the need—you mentioned an inquiry on this issue many times. I still believe that one is needed to explore the possible links between this government's fundraising practices and the awarding of government contracts. Do you believe that is the top priority for the Legislature to move forward with this pay-for-access scandal?

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** The Legislature itself has to decide what its priorities are. I would say that if that is what the government and the Legislature want to address—in my opinion, a big problem is the crisis of credibility now.

*Failure of sound system.*

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** You've had people testify in front of this committee very eloquently saying that this is a real problem, that people with money get access and we, as individuals, don't. To address that credibility gap or people's concerns, I think there has to be a public airing of it, a public inquiry.

It's interesting that when there were allegations that OSSTF and other unions were getting money from the government during provincial negotiations, there was a big call for an inquiry. There was even a committee set up, which the Liberals agreed to, to investigate receipts and everything. But when it comes to this, there hasn't

been the same interest in really going into what took place there.

Whether or not it's the number one priority, in order to give people confidence in a political system, they have to see that it's not corrupt. I think there's a perception out there that it is, and all the anecdotal and other investigations point to the fact that it may well have been. So if the government wants to address that problem, going into that issue is definitely a priority.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thanks for your support of an inquiry. If the government is still adamant that they're not going to move forward with that vehicle, do you believe that this bill, once it has had first reading discussion—as Ms. Wong said earlier, once it goes back to the Legislature for second reading—do you recommend that the committee do exactly what we've done this summer and go back at second reading and take this bill out to communities as part of this committee process?

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** One big problem is that this is being done during the summer. For people to really participate and give their views—young people especially, who are in university and other things—this is the worst possible time it could have been done, the timing of it. Going through a process during the fall would be positive.

But for me, the problem, again, is the starting point. The starting point of this legislation, when I look at it, is not dealing with pay-for-access. It's good to have public airings of these things, what's being proposed, but in my opinion people are being set up to be pro or con something that doesn't even deal with the actual problems.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** And that's why you want an inquiry.

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** Exactly.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Mrs. Gretzky.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Thank you for coming to present today.

I just want to clarify something, because there is some confusion as to whether this is a draft bill or it's not a draft bill. This bill was actually tabled in the House on May 17 of this year, so this is not really a draft bill because it has been tabled in the House.

To that end, I want to explain that in the beginning, New Democrats, along with the Conservatives, were pushing for a non-partisan committee to draft legislation. We wanted the input from Ontarians prior to a bill being brought forward. So we do share concerns about the fact that this was a draft bill that was drafted by the Liberals, who said to the Legislature, "This is what we've come up with, and we're going to travel it in the summer to get input."

We would rather have seen Ontarians, a totally non-partisan panel, not made up of MPPs all sitting around, have input into actually drafting a bill that would then be tabled and debated in the House. So we do share concerns about that. In fact, on April 19, we tabled a motion to have just that happen, to have a non-partisan process, and that was defeated by the Liberal side.

We share your concerns about the fact that it was drafted without input of Ontarians. We do know how difficult it can be, once legislation is tabled, for changes to be made even through the committee process. We still continue to have concerns, but at least this is a start, having people have the opportunity to come out and share their concerns.

What I'd like to know is, would you scrap this particular process altogether, and the bill that has been tabled, and start from scratch? Would that be preferable, to have a completely non-partisan panel of Ontarians to bring a draft forward? Or is this the ideal situation, for us to continue on with the legislation that has been tabled and move forward, and then potentially, after second reading, have more input from Ontarians?

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** I would say, if the legislation is passed, not just in its current form, but where its focus is, it will make matters worse in Ontario. So in that sense, I think this legislation—its goal isn't to solve the problem that it was meant to, so you can't turn it into something positive. In my opinion, this legislation should definitely be scrapped, and the process should be worked out very publicly as to how to consult on changing the political laws, whether it be electoral financing or federal electoral reform. People should be involved; it should be a very open process and it should include all those involved.

For example, the fact that the vast majority of political parties in Ontario don't have a seat at this committee, and didn't have a say in the legislation under which they're going to be regulated, is itself a problem.

The fact that the Chief Electoral Officer himself said that he was not formally consulted is a huge issue as well. This is the person who is going to be in charge of policing and implementing these regulations, and the fact that he wasn't consulted in the beginning reveals further that there's something else afoot.

I think definitely it should not be proceeded with. A more participatory process that establishes what's needed first, and then legislation drafted to solve that problem, I think, makes much more sense than the current process.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** To build on something you said, then, you're of the opinion that it was just the three major political parties that have been consulted to this point. We had asked that the Green Party be included as well. Are you thinking that it should go beyond even extending it to the Green Party, and extending it to any political party that is a registered party, a party that you may see having a representative on a ballot come election day?

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** To say that because the Green Party was included is a step forward. The issue is, what's the principle guiding it? If the principle is everyone who is going to come under the authority of this legislation, which is all the parties, then they should all be consulted. To pick and choose which should and shouldn't, based on arbitrary criteria, doesn't do justice to this—to the Legislature, even. Those parties that have gone through the process to register and have fulfilled those requirements are legally registered and should be consulted in legislation that's going to directly affect them. In my opinion, that's a no-brainer, for sure.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Do you think that it should then be taken outside of even those political parties to the general public, so that the electorate has an opportunity to have a say in the legislation?

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** For sure. Everyone is free to speak at these hearings, for example. A new process, I think, definitely should be open to the public. Also, experts in the field should be invited. All the political parties should have the opportunity to speak, and all those who have a stake in the legislation—not just those chosen by either the party or the committee, but those who will objectively come under its rules and regulations.

Unions, for example: As the legislation currently stands, they're going to come under it, and they're free to come, but they should really have a seat at the table as well, because this is going to police their activities much more so than it would in the past. But again, we're talking about if we were going a different process. So I think, for sure, all of the political parties, experts and the general public should be involved.

0930

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Mr. Potts, you have 30 seconds.

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** Thank you for your very thoughtful comments.

Back to this whole process argument: You can't have everyone at the table. It's a very big table that you'd be talking about.

I gather that you ran as a candidate, so what I wanted to talk to you about is the threshold for gaining that dollar subsidy per vote. Do you think the threshold is too high or too low? When you ran, what percentage of the vote in the riding did you have? Would you have made the threshold so that your party and your candidacy would have benefited from that kind of a threshold?

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** First, to clarify, provincially I did not run for a party; I ran as an independent. So the party wouldn't have been affected that way. That was in 1999.

As far as the threshold, if certain parties are going to be funded based on an arbitrary threshold, then I think you're violating the right to conscience. I think you're then using someone's public funds, through their tax dollars, to give to a party that they may not support.

I don't think political parties in general should be reimbursed by the government for their spending. They should be supported by their members and supporters. That's where they should get their money from. I think once you finance them publicly—not only on principle—compromising the right to conscience, but then there's an incentive to spend more. If you spend \$20,000, you're going to get a higher percentage of the vote because everyone knows you're running.

I'd like to see a system where the government would fund the process of elections rather than the parties themselves, where they would ensure that every elector is informed and would receive information on all the

candidates and all the parties and be able to cast an informed vote. I think that would be a much better use of the spending.

Otherwise, I think the cut-offs of threshold are arbitrary. If it's based on a democratic principle that if you vote for a certain candidate or party, you're saying that that's where you want your \$1.50 or whatever to go, it should go regardless of any threshold.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Unfortunately, the time is up. Thank you for taking the time to come and speak to us today. We very much appreciate it. If you'd like to send your comments to the Clerk in written form, that would be much appreciated as well.

**Mr. Enver Villamizar:** I'll do so. Thanks a lot.

#### MR. PHILIP SHEARER

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Next is Mr. Philip Shearer. Mr. Shearer, welcome. I'm not sure if you were here at the beginning. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation, and we'll have 15 minutes for questions from the members. Please state your name for the record as you begin. The floor is yours.

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** Thank you to the Chair and members of the committee for this opportunity to speak to you today. I'm Philip Shearer. I am a behaviour consultant with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, working as a child care worker in mental health. I'm also an elected board member for region 1 of OPSEU, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, from Woodstock to Windsor. I represent them.

I asked for the opportunity to present today in order to talk to you about one particular piece of Bill 201, and I think it's important for this conversation: the public funding of political parties. I know that public funding is a contentious issue, and I'm sure you've heard from people who support it and people who don't. There are valid arguments in favour of it and also valid arguments and concerns with the way it's proposed here. But public funding exists in many jurisdictions across the country in a number of different forms.

I am here today because I think there's a way to address some of the concerns that people have about the per-vote model without losing the benefits that come from reducing the influence of big money in politics—not to throw out the baby with the bathwater, as they say. The benefits of reducing the role of big money are hugely significant. When we find a way to fund the political process that doesn't require parties to chase the donors with the deepest pockets, we allow parties to instead focus on winning support from the broadest cross-section of Ontarians. We create a level playing field, where my support means the same as someone in a precarious minimum-wage job and theirs, in turn, means the same as someone making millions each year. That should be the goal. After all, every citizen gets one vote. My vote should mean just as much as the vote of a wealthy businessman in Toronto. But with donation limits, I can never hope to match that. The truth is, I know it doesn't, and that needs to change.

While it's important to make sure there's a level playing field, it's equally important to make certain that people are able to change where their financial support is going between elections. The fact that I voted for a party in one election shouldn't mean that I'm funding their next election. What we need is a system that allows people to support the party they choose, not the party they chose last time.

There's an easy way to do this, and the best part is that it doesn't require any additional paper. It's as simple as adding a single question to my income tax return. Right now when I file my taxes, I check off a box as to whether or not I want to share the information with Elections Canada. In another section is the Ontario Opportunities Fund, which lets me contribute a portion of the return to paying down the debt. By adding one more section, you could allow each Ontario citizen to designate one or more parties to receive a share of the \$10 in financial support for the year. They could do it all to one party, they could split it, they could withhold it; they could do as they choose, as per the question. They could also choose to provide it to an independent candidate who could then receive the funds when they are registered as a candidate for the next election. This would be paid out quarterly and would last until the next year's return, at which point I could choose where it was going to go the next time.

Just imagine the benefits of this approach. This would provide sufficient funding to offset the elimination of corporate and union donations, which I agree with, and it would also provide more funding than the current bill does, which would allow you to significantly reduce the individual donation limit, further levelling the playing field. It would let people send a message to the parties they feel are doing something wrong right away, and, of course, to the ones that are doing something right. Rather than having to wait for the next election, voters can dock a party's allowance until they shape up. If a party suddenly finds its annual revenue cut, perhaps they'll clean up their act a little quicker.

You could offset a significant portion of the cost by eliminating the tax credit for political donations. This credit, currently, cost more than \$13 million in 2014-15 and, right now, only amplifies the donations of those who can afford to donate the most—which certainly isn't child care workers—while doing little more to empower those who are already marginalized. Instead, this approach would give everyone, from the millionaire lawyer to the gas pump attendant, the same amount of financial influence.

Here's the best part: On top of all the benefits I've already mentioned, it would also allow parties to spend less time fundraising. I'd get a lot less emails, calls, letters, requests for the \$10, the \$17, and all the rest of those that you send out quite regularly. Just think of the ideas we could come up with if all the parties were rewarded for spending all that energy developing solutions rather than coming up with phone scripts. I imagine that I'm not the only one in this room who would be happy to see a lot less emails requesting money—instead offering ideas for Ontario.



The reality is that something needs to change. The current system, which gives the most influence to those with the most money, is really broken. The media stories we keep reading about \$10,000 dinners are clear evidence of that, along with the little golf tournaments that seem to go on all summer.

I want to thank you for the work you're doing because this bill contains some good proposals. It's time to level the playing field and take big money, and the special access it buys, out of the picture, but the idea that the vote I cast four years ago could determine the strength of the party's campaign four years later doesn't seem like the solution to me. Instead, let's provide public funding in a way that gives equal weight to everyone, regardless of their income, while allowing people to adjust their support based on the party's actions. Let's create a system where what matters to parties is the number of their supporters, not their net worth. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Thank you very much. Now we'll go to some questions: Mr. Fraser.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Thank you very much, Mr. Shearer, for being here today and for your presentation.

That's an interesting idea that you have. I can see where you're getting to. It may be hard to actually implement through the taxation, but I see where you're going on that. I do, in terms of the influence of big money, because it comes from all directions, agree with you: I think that we should ban union and corporate donations. But one of the things we've been talking about is with regard to third parties; we've heard "no restrictions" and "restrictions."

**0940**

The challenge is, once you start to ratchet down on the fundraising, which I think is a good thing, the next risk you have is that it's going to pop up somewhere else. If you can imagine this, go back to 2003, and banning all the coal plants. There are no restrictions on third-party spending. The coal consortium decides that they're going to spend \$3 million. There are no restrictions on them. Or, quite frankly, the power workers' union decides, "Well, we don't want to get out of coal, because it actually employs more people than if we go to this mode." That's in their interests.

Those two entities are doing those things that are important to the people they represent. The challenge is that it doesn't necessarily represent the interests, maybe—it doesn't represent the interests—of everybody in terms of what would have been the importance of making sure our air was cleaner.

I want to ask if you have any thoughts on that. What do you think we should do? Do you think there should be some limitations? Do you think there should be no limitations? Because once we crank this down, it's going to come up somewhere else; it will. It's just displacement, because those are out there. We're having a debate about that, and I'd be interested to know what your thoughts are on that.

I didn't mean to put you on the spot, because I know that wasn't—

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** Yes, because it's a pretty broad question.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Yes. Do you think that we should in some way consider some sort of restriction or some sort of monitoring on that? Because I'll tell you, personally, I think that's something we have to ensure that we don't ignore. I think there has got to be some sort of—that's my personal opinion. Now I'm getting down to a yes-or-no answer, but you don't have to—

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** You're getting down to a yes-or-no answer, and I'm one of those child care workers who says, "I need a lot more detail to make a decision," because everything impacts something else. When I look at those sorts of things, I'm saying, "Okay, power workers and coal, they want business. They're really pressuring us. But some people are going for social issues."

I find that question very difficult, because it depends on whether or not we are doing stuff and pressuring the politics because we want to keep and sell Hydro One, or whether we want to put up those windmills every stretch of the way, in the water, on the water, or whether or not we are pushing for social justice issues that are going to be something else.

To me, there are a lot of different things that really have to be weighed in every one of those decisions. I don't know how you'd put one big blanket on it.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Yes. The thing is, I'm not trying to put a big blanket on it. I'm just trying to ask, do we have to put some restrictions on that? Because the rub is that after you take a look—and I don't want to take up too much time, because I know my colleagues have questions as well. We have real-time disclosure for political parties, so the thing is, people know when things are happening. It's evident and transparent. People have different interpretations and different opinions about what has happened. But if you have a whole other entity over here that has no restrictions or limitations—if you look south of the border, you can see the impacts on that.

I don't want to belabour that anymore, because I know we have more questions.

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** Yes, and I don't have a really distinct answer for you.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thanks, Mr. Shearer, for your presentation. I appreciate your suggestions and your recommendations.

You did talk about levelling the playing field, and big money. One of the things that has come up at our hearings is the tremendous amount of money that the government can spend on advertising. Many deputants have talked about restrictions. Some have mentioned six months. The example I have used at these hearings is Manitoba. Three months prior to an election, the government of Manitoba can advertise public safety, public health advertisements, tenders—if a government agency or a corporation of the government needs a tender or there's a job vacancy, they can advertise—but other than

that, that's not something they can do. Many people have agreed with that.

As well, the Auditor General—I'm not sure if you're familiar with her recommendations in her report last year. The government actually removed some of her oversight. A number of deputants have talked about putting that oversight back in as part of Bill 201.

What are your comments on those two items?

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** I support putting her powers back in. I'm not a big supporter of them ever telling me what they're doing. I think there are certain things around youth suicide and that sort of stuff where yes, if there are new things coming out, they should probably advertise those. But as for selling the story that they sell, I don't even buy it.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** They would be those self-congratulatory ads.

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** Yes, I think they should be banned between elections, not three months before. I think they should be constantly banned. If there's a new program, great. Do it. Advertise it; get it out there. But to just congratulate yourself and pat yourself on the back for a bunch of garbage? No. I would say not three months, not a month—never.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Ms. Gretzky.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** As the previous presenter had brought up, we're talking about fundraising and access to political parties, to MPPs and ultimately to ministers. What are your thoughts around ministers having fundraising quotas and events where people are basically paying for access to a minister and, in some people's views, potentially influencing decisions that ministers make? Do you feel those should be allowed to happen, but within a certain limitation, or that they shouldn't happen at all? What are your thoughts on that?

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** If a minister is looking into something, they should maybe go out and seek people, but they shouldn't be having big parties that cost a lot of money. They shouldn't be having golf tournaments with Mercedes, Audis and Maseratis showing up, spending money and influencing how the outcome is going to come at the end of the day. Those people have a lot of money to influence who is going to be building what hospital and who is going to be doing what down the road. It appears to an average child care worker that those folks who show up at those things end up with a lot of contracts.

So I would say no, those should not be happening. Those events should not be there. If I was a minister and I needed to talk to somebody about certain things, I would hold one of these and invite the public out to talk about those things. I think this is a better use of our time and money to find out information than having a golf tournament that's \$800 a hole. For sure, I think they should all be banned.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Thank you.

You had talked about having a box on an income tax return. It's an interesting idea. I'm not sure how exactly

that would be implemented, because now you're talking about affecting federal politics as well as the provincial level, so I'm not sure how they would divide that up.

Not everybody files tax returns on a yearly basis. In your opinion, how would it work, then, if somebody were to not file a tax return—if they filed this year, but they don't file next year and wait until the following year to do two years' worth of tax returns? Would it just be assumed that what they had checked off on that box the year they did file would be the way they wanted their money to continue to be forwarded? Or would no money be forwarded in the year that wasn't filed, and then it would be dealt with when someone actually does file—so you would then have the potential of two years' worth of that money going forward? How would you see that working?

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** Your latter comment. First, I think that Justin and Kathleen are cozy enough that they could probably figure out how to put a box on my income tax form. They seem to be doing some much harder stuff than that at this point.

Second, at some point, we do file income tax returns. Some folks, depending on their income level, their mental health and whatever else they're dealing with, don't file for seven or eight years. I think when they do catch up, they would be checking off the boxes, and that money could be transferred then. I don't see any reason to rush the money there. I don't know that those numbers are high, and if those numbers are high, perhaps somebody should be running some other questionnaire to figure out how we support those folks to get them in a little quicker, if those numbers are that high that it's hurting the political parties.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Ms. Hoggarth.

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** Thank you very much for your presentation. I understand that you said at the beginning that you have been a member of a political party and you've donated to a political party. Do you mind me asking what party that was?

**0950**

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** Over the years? Probably everything but Conservative.

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** Okay.

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** I took biology and chemistry at Western, so I have donated to the Green Party. I have donated to the NDP and, years ago, I would have donated to the Liberals.

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** Great.

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** I'm from Grey-Bruce. Conservatives, I think, have always been there, and I've never donated to the Conservatives.

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** Thank you very much. Is increased disclosure of information—for instance, your city of residence, who your employer is—something that you would support? Why or why not? That when you donate, you might have to put down the name of your employer. The reason is that it would show whether you are working—you know, you might be there, and

OPSEU might be paying you or OSSTF might be. Do you think that's a good idea? Why or why not?

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** I think it's an interesting idea, because I think if some employers are helping me to pay my donations or whatever else, that's very handy information, to know where I'm getting \$50,000 to donate or \$3,500 or \$4,700 or \$1,550. So I do think it's rather interesting.

Given that I have two employers—working for the ministry, you know where our raises are at, so I do work part-time in the broader public sector in a group home with developmental adults as well. I don't know that that information would be handy for you.

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** So you don't think that would help to track how corporations and unions—

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** Whether I make \$4,000 a year at the group home? I don't think that's going to help you a whole lot.

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** Okay.

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** Do I think that in some cases it could help? Yes. Again, I'm rather waver-y on that. I see benefits and I see no use.

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** I see no negatives with it.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Mr. Shearer, thank you very much for your time this morning—I think that the most important thing—and for taking the time to come here and speak to us. You made some very good points. Thank you.

**Mr. Philip Shearer:** Thank you. Have a great day.

#### WINDSOR AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Next, we have Mr. Brian Hogan, president of the Windsor and District Labour Council.

Mr. Hogan, welcome. I'm not sure if you were here before and heard my spiel. You have 10 minutes to do your presentation, and then we have 15 minutes for members to ask questions. As you start, for Hansard, if you could say your name so that it will be on record. Welcome, and the floor is yours.

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** Thank you very much. I don't know if I can ask the audio people if they could, or even the speakers—my hearing aid is misbehaving a little bit, so if everybody could do their very best to help me on that, that would be awesome.

Good morning. Thanks for coming down to Windsor-Essex. I really appreciate that you're actually in my riding and Lisa's riding.

My name is Brian Hogan. I'm the president of the labour council, a council made up of about two dozen union locals and approximately 30,000 members. On a regular basis, we tackle numerous issues affecting workers and the broader ordinary citizens. We work on behalf of the members, but we work also with socially active groups. We deal with things like the health coalition, poverty activists, the \$15 and Fairness campaign, the

current OFL Make It Fair campaign and the hydro privatization fight-back campaign. We work with aboriginal people and impoverished people.

During the federal election, we ran an issues-based campaign. The five topics were poverty, environment, democracy, good jobs and health care. This info is not just meant as a backgrounder but also—obviously, as you would imagine, we're politically involved 12 months a year. In particular, we're involved in elections.

Now to the bill: We really don't agree with the drastic changes to an already transparent system. As late as July 9, it continues—the articles. Their job is to obviously sell papers. Some of these changes that were made, if you will, as a fight-back to the media will be affecting ordinary citizens that we advocate for.

As I said, the pushback against the media—unfortunately, the media jumped on about somehow really portraying unions, and thus labour councils, as big fat cats spending lots of money. In a recent 2011 study, it was found that union donations to political parties amounted to about 5%, while corporations were responsible for nearly 40%. I'm not here to bash corporations; I'm here to say that the portrayal, because of the pushback that the politicians have to make because of what the newspapers are saying—we kind of got caught in the middle of it.

The topic of third-party political advertising is a big one for us. As I told you, we were involved heavily in the federal election. It's important to deal with lots of issues. The broader, new definition, that balance of issue advocacy with electioneering—they're two different things. Limitations on third-party advertising can encroach on free speech.

The current wording that you have is fair and it works. In contrast, the proposed legislation radically expands upon the definition. You know the definition, obviously. The two words, "issue" and "associated"—what does it mean to be associated with an issue? There are dozens of issues—the aboriginal, the impoverished people—we deal with on a regular basis. We, as a labour council, and a number of unions, deal with that regularly with our allies. There are dozens of issues that we deal with 12 months a year.

One of the features of any healthy democracy is the ability of citizens to voice, debate public interests. However, the overly broad definition of "political advertising" threatens to capture every issue of public concern under the scope. Regulating the funding for this free speech is tantamount to regulating speech itself, an intervention that threatens citizens' freedom-of-expression rights. We recommend that you retain the current definition.

Campaign period limitations: The proposed legislation places several problematic restrictions on third-party advocacy before and during election periods and will unjustly limit third-party spending on political advertising. We advocate, as I said, 12 months a year. Certainly, a big concern is the establishment of a lengthy, six-month, pre-campaign period during which issues advocacy would also be restricted. This stifles debate.

Often, individual citizens—that impoverished lady down the street or the homeless person—lack means and a platform to raise issues of public concern. Unions and labour councils—we worked on the federal election with a poverty activist group. Collectively, we're speaking for and helping that impoverished woman. The increased restrictions, specifically during election periods, silence voices at the precise moment when the government should be encouraging more widespread debate.

In addition, there's the issue about the six-months-before-the-campaign spending. You probably know: \$76,000 for a one-page ad in the *Globe and Mail*. There goes, essentially, the \$100,000. We recommend that the government make third-party advertising unrestricted at all times outside of election writ periods, and that you contemplate raising third-party political advertising limits during the campaign period to match limits at the federal level. It seemed to work in the last election.

The issue of contribution limits—and there's also one new loophole: Lowering contribution limits is a positive step. It's a good idea. However, there's still going to be influence because some people have money and some people don't. It's really about levelling the playing field. I think we already heard that word before. The challenge, I think, was kind of tied to one of the questions about—attached to where you work.

Eliminating corporate involvement with the proposed contribution limits merely shifts the influence. Instead of the corporations, it will be a bunch of individuals who work in the corporations—and lo and behold, before the election they got a bonus. You probably know what happened in the 1970s in Quebec. It just happens, right? That's the way the game, unfortunately, can be played if there's a loophole.

You probably know that a big loophole is that amounts of \$100 or less “may be considered not a contribution.” I went to a function for Lisa. It cost 20 bucks, 50 bucks. I had a beer and had a good time. That's my little donation. Some of it I get back; some of it I don't because that was the cost of the beer and the salad I had. Any amount of \$100 or less “may be considered not a contribution.” This language is carried over from the current legislation; however in Bill 201 the government has chosen to remove the key clause which says that any contribution made during a campaign period, or a part thereof, must be reported. That has to be taken out.

**1000**

We recommend that the government set individual contributions at a very modest and fair rate so that ordinary citizens are at the same level as the Bay Street people.

I think a question was asked earlier about government advertising. I agree with you wholeheartedly. I've got it here in my notes: Manitoba and Saskatchewan have not as, if you will, high a level. That has to happen.

Advertising in a commercial saying, “Look how good we're doing; we're glad the government's doing good work”—tell us later if you get re-elected. Stephen Harper was a pro at it for sure, right?

I think that ends my talk. Once again, thanks for the opportunity. I think another person said about the job you do—and I meant to say it in my opening remarks—I don't want your job. I do come to these things when I'm invited, and thanks for inviting me. We do give suggestions. We do give criticisms. But the dedication of any level of politician goes beyond. What they pay you on an hourly basis is—well, we would be fighting for you if we were your union.

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** For \$15 an hour.

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** Exactly—\$15 and Fairness. That's why you're in on that campaign. For sure.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Thank you. I know that comment was captured in Hansard so we'll use it to lobby for an increase in pay.

Anyway, thank you so much for being here. We have a few minutes for questions. First, Ms. Wong.

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I defer to my colleague Ms. Malhi.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Okay. Ms. Malhi.

**Ms. Harinder Malhi:** The drafting of Bill 201 has been looking to implement election financing reform, as you know, and it took a significant amount of agreement amongst the parties to get to this point. I'm going to ask you some things and I would like to know which of them you would support.

You talked a little bit about levelling the playing field by putting an end to corporate and union donations. I just want to clarify: You would agree that there should be no corporate or union donations?

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** As I said, we got kind of caught in on the unions. I'm going to live with that union thing. The public says “big corporations and big unions.” If you're going to have one you're probably going to throw in two. Do I want the union thrown in that mix? No, but I get it.

In terms of the third parties, that's my biggest push. Listen, there are three or four candidates in the region. This candidate is going say, “I am for X.” The other candidates might say, “That's full of crap. I'm for Y.” Who should we really be hearing from about poverty but from poverty activists? Or about trade deals but from Unifor? You name it; there are third-party groups that need to be thrown into the mix.

Then the citizens are going to do the research: “Unifor is full of crap. My union, the Catholic teachers, is full of crap about student wellness, but I really like candidate X. I really get their point.” So the third party—that has to push.

I talked about the individuals paying. I used the word “modest.” I do know my union, OECTA, talked \$100: \$100 for a party; \$100 for this, and so on. I'm not exactly sure. I did a little bit of research. I didn't garner all the numbers from the other unions. As I said, we're in a group that's made up of affiliates. I think the numbers have gone down, but they're certainly not going to match ordinary citizens. They're certainly not going to match a unionized worker. They're certainly not going to match ununionized workers, to some extent.

That loophole about \$50 here and \$20 there has to close. I don't know how you get that loophole about, "I'm going to give my brother and my aunt money."

I do know how you're going to get the loophole about the bonus. I'm okay with saying who I work for. I'm okay with saying that. If all of a sudden there are lots of people spending lots of money from OECTA, holy crow, you must be very well paid, or somehow there is some money coming. But all of a sudden, with some Bay Street firm, everybody's donating.

My dad used to say years ago—he used banks; I don't know if anybody's from the banking world—that Stanfield and Trudeau are going to give him the same amount. They're just going to cover ourselves. My dad's an old CCFer from back in the day.

**Ms. Harinder Malhi:** How about introducing a per-vote allowance of funding to help in the transition to a more grassroots-funded system and to help enhance democracy?

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** The \$2—sorry, you're talking about the per-vote thing?

**Ms. Harinder Malhi:** Yes.

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** Thanks. Again, I'm a little hard of hearing.

We like the idea. The OFL likes the idea. We would prefer that it not gradually go down.

**Ms. Harinder Malhi:** And lowering contribution limits for individuals?

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** As I said, our union, OECTA, has talked about \$100: \$100 for a party, \$100 for a campaign and so on. There will likely be some others who might say that might be a little too low, but certainly you're going in the right direction by lowering it. Close the loopholes and perhaps lower it to a more modest one.

I've donated forever. My dad and mom taught us. We donated forever. I've never donated to your number, and I've never donated to the level that you're lowering it to. It's more than \$100, but it's not at that number.

**Ms. Harinder Malhi:** How do you feel about limiting partisan political advertising six months before an election? Do you think it should be limited?

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** I'm sorry?

**Ms. Harinder Malhi:** How do you feel about limiting partisan political advertising six months prior to an election?

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** The parties, yes. Third parties, no. Let me just take a peek at—this is off the OFL notes, and I agree 100% with them. We agree here at the labour council.

"The new legislation would introduce a \$1 million spending limit on political parties in the pre-writ"—we're fine with that, but not the government infomercials.

**Ms. Harinder Malhi:** How about removing the by-election contribution period for central parties?

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** I'm not in favour of the by-election one. I never knew it even happened until the Globes and the Toronto Stars of the world told us about that.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Thank you, Ms. Malhi. Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** We're okay time-wise, Chair?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Yes, yes.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Okay, perfect. Thanks for your presentation. I appreciate that you addressed my question for the previous deputant regarding government advertising.

At the very front end of your presentation, you spoke about your five-point issues-based campaign in the last federal election. Can you give me an idea of what you would have spent? Because it was a long election period. Can you give me an idea of what you would have spent on that issues campaign during the election?

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** I think I have a rough idea of what the number is. I do know that CLC was monitoring it, because they were the umbrella group for—we were one of their labour councils across the country.

It was 10 grand, maybe? It was an important election.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** And it would have covered all of the Windsor ridings, Windsor and the area?

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** Yes. It was an issue-based campaign. For example—I should know the group; it was a poverty activist group. We have a group—help me out here. That's terrible.

Anyway, a poverty activist group was doing billboards across the nation. We donated a couple grand to them. Then we did flyers and we had members drop off flyers about health care. We had David Suzuki in town for the environment. It was just little things, but it went pretty far, like dropping off flyers for candidates.

Do you know what the best part about it was? It really was. We had members, at least in my local—they're busy teaching. They vote, but they're not super politically active. But when it was an issue that they really thought was important, they got involved in the issue. They might not even have voted for the party that I hoped they might vote for, but they got involved in the issue and they got educated, and they educated a hundred people in the neighbourhood when they dropped the flyer in their mailboxes.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I just want to reiterate it, because I think you covered it with Ms. Malhi's question: You're fine with the suggestion to increase openness and transparency, so that part of the Elections Ontario disclosure lists people's names and their contribution levels? You're okay with an amendment adding their employer?

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** I'm okay with that, and the reason I'm okay with that is that citizens need to know stuff. That's what transparency is. Overall, I think the current law is very transparent. Again, the media stuff has put pressure to add things that don't need to be in there. I'm going to guess there's going to be more from a company on Bay Street than from our union.

#### 1010

People say, "Why are all these people doing it?" Because they're political activists. Being involved is political activism. I suppose working on Bay Street, in some way, is political.

So, absolutely not. Not a problem at all.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thanks, Chair.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Ms. Gretzky.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Thank you for coming to present. I didn't want to interrupt anybody, but I believe the fellows running the sound actually set something beside you with an earpiece, if you're having trouble hearing us.

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** I've done okay. Thank you for that. I didn't see you put it down. Thanks, for next time.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** I have a question around the third-party issue. In your opinion, should all third parties, those that are advocating—and I like the way you're putting advocating, because in many cases that's what they're doing. They have a concern, and they're advocating on behalf of everyone else who shares that concern.

Do you think that all groups, whether it be a union, whether it be the health coalition, or an independent poverty reduction group—do you think that they should all be considered to be the same thing? Should they all be under one—often, when we're talking about third-party advertising, people automatically go to, "It's unions doing it or large corporations doing it." What I'm asking is, do you feel that independent community groups like our poverty reduction groups, those that provide shelter for the homeless, should also be included under the same umbrella as a union or a corporation would be, when it comes to third-party advocacy or advertising?

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** I don't think I would have a problem with it. The challenge is clearly—as I said, we donated to that poverty group, and they were the voice because they know the stats.

If more full disclosure helps the citizens—I mean, if poverty group X spends 500 bucks, but if this labour council or this union helped, I'd be okay with that. To me, disclosure is not going to hurt this system.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Do you feel, as the legislation is presented through first reading, that it gives an unfair advantage to the government—the current government, and any government that may form after them? Do you think it would give them an unfair advantage, as drafted, when it comes to using public dollars?

We heard another presenter when we were talking about the government trumpeting all their successes and the wonderful things they're doing or have done. Do they have an unfair advantage because they can use public dollars to talk about the great things that they've done as a government, and then they also have a separate opportunity as a party to advertise? Do you think that creates an unfair advantage for them over the advocacy groups, the third parties, that would come forward and say, "We have concerns about the current government," or "We have concerns about a particular party that is now up for election and potentially forming government"?

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** I don't think there's an upside. For the citizenry, there's no upside for infomercials. Spend the money, do good work that a government is doing and plod along. If we need the MPPs to say, "Look, we just built you this new bridge" or whatever, that didn't cost any money. That's the MPP doing their work.

The three parties, pre-writ: Here's your money, here's your \$1 million max. We don't need infomercials; we just need the government to keep working hard.

I can call my MPP. I can write to cabinet ministers. I can watch Queen's Park on television to know the infomercial or the good stuff that's happening. I go on websites. The websites have been improved over the years, obviously.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** So then are you suggesting that the government should not be using public dollars and putting out those commercials—

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** That's correct.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** —that advertising, during an election period? If so, what would the limit be? Would there be a limit? They shouldn't do it three months prior, they shouldn't do it six months prior to an election—

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** I would say—sorry.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Where would the cut-off be? Should they not do that kind of advertising and put out that information at all, ever? Or should it be allowed up until a certain point before an election?

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** I think in Manitoba, it's six months. I would say at least the six months. You know what? It seems like the ministers are getting together—sorry, the Premiers are getting together quite a bit lately. It would be interesting to have—I know they have lots of important issues to talk about. They did some good stuff on trade. It would be interesting to have all the Premiers get together—and perhaps Trudeau—and talk about these kinds of things. Let's be fair to our citizenry. Let's spend the money on taking care of them, and not have the perception of taking care of ourselves.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Do you think there should be a distinction, and if so, do you have a suggestion on what is considered advocacy as opposed to political advertising? Is there a difference between saying, "We don't think you should vote for this particular party," or "We're not happy with the current government and we don't want you to elect them again," as opposed to—as we saw here in Windsor around health care, that became a big issue in the federal campaign. For advocacy groups, smaller groups—for instance, we're seeing families with children with autism that came out and rallied. We see families who have children in provincial and demonstration schools who are not happy with the direction that's going, who have come out and shared those concerns. Is there a line between what those people are doing and what is actually considered political advertising? Do you think there's a line?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** You have about 30 seconds to wrap up, please.

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** Sorry, sir?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Thirty seconds to wrap up.

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** Thank you.

I think that's maybe where unions get kind of thrown in the middle. Candidate X is nasty or party Y is nasty. I think we can ask simple questions: What is your candidate in your region doing about precarious work? What

are they doing about poverty? What are they doing about free trade, or whatever the case would be? I think citizens would realize—when the three or four candidates speak, they'll say, "Oops. That's the party I'm going to vote for."

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Thank you, with that last comment. Thank you very much for being here—

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** Thank you. It has been great.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** —and for bringing your insights to the debate. Much, much appreciated.

**Mr. Brian Hogan:** Thanks for coming to Windsor-Essex. I appreciate it.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** It's good to be here.

#### THUNDER BAY AND DISTRICT INJURED WORKERS SUPPORT GROUP

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Next, we have Steve Mantis, treasurer of the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group. He is via teleconference, and from Thunder Bay, I presume.

Mr. Mantis, are you there?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** Yes. Hi.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Can you hear us okay?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** Yes, loud and clear.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Very good. The process is that you have up to 10 minutes—you don't have to take the 10 minutes, but you're welcome to—for your presentation. Then we have 15 minutes for possible questions or clarifications from the members who are sitting here in Windsor, to deal with Bill 201.

If you could state your name at the beginning of your presentation, it would be much appreciated, and that's for Hansard. Mr. Mantis, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** Okay, thank you very much, Chair. My name is Steve Mantis, and I am the treasurer of the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group.

Thanks so much, as well, for the opportunity to present. I was hoping you'd come to Thunder Bay. This is the first time I've ever presented over the telephone, so I'm kind of going, "How does this really work? Oh, my gosh."

My opening comment would be that Bill 201 is a good step forward, particularly around strengthening democracy. I think that's a really important component, as we look at the future of our society in Ontario and Canada.

Let me tell you a little bit about our group. The Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group was started in 1984. We have two or three main things we do. Number one is we provide information and support to injured workers and their families, trying to let them know how the system works and how they can navigate it more easily. The second is to engage with policy-makers and decision-makers in the government

and in the bureaucracy to try to make the whole system work better for all workers. In my case, I was both a worker and an employer, and I would like to see the system work better for both of those groups.

We're also part of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups, which is our provincial organization that has 22 local groups involved. I am the chair of their research action committee. We have been working closely with academic researchers in a number of universities in Ontario and across Canada to try to really understand what happens to workers once they get hurt, particularly those with a permanent disability, a permanent impairment—a serious injury that will last their lifetime.

#### 1020

Coming back to strengthening democracy, what we see are growing disparities in society. We see them clearly with injured workers. I lost my left arm in a work accident back in 1978. I've seen both personally and then documented through the research, and by talking to full-time advocates, how the system has really deteriorated in terms of the level of support that it provides to people with a permanent impairment.

At the same time, we see right across society growing gaps in terms of income inequality. For many years, following World War II, really, in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, Canada was at the forefront to really provide some social justice and to reduce those income gaps, which resulted in a stronger society. We're seeing that direction reversed, where most of the wealth that gets created ends up with that top 1% or 2% in society.

What goes along with that—and we see this documented more and more—is that the political power in our country seems to follow that same pattern. Individuals and workers are losing out big time in terms of access to that political power. Of course, all the foofaraw that started this journey on Bill 201 was that fundraising dinners that are \$100, \$500 or \$1,000 a plate, which are impossible for most people to participate in, seem to be the way to access government officials.

I think that's entirely wrong. It leads to alienation, depression and despair in society, where normal people—and you hear this all the time—say, "It doesn't matter what we think. The politicians aren't going to really listen to us. They're listening to the big boys. It's all about supporting big business, big corporations." I think that is weakening our society across all kinds of levels.

We see it in our own world with injured workers. Research we've been involved in found that 46% of all injured workers with a permanent impairment—these are the long-term disabled—are clinically depressed; 57% of the homeless people in Toronto were hurt at work. The system that is supposed to provide support to vulnerable workers when they become impaired or disabled is no longer providing the support that it was intended to, and the focus is really on reducing premiums, primarily to big corporations. Billions of dollars have been shifted from workers, who spent their time, were loyal employees, got

hurt and are more or less thrown on the scrap heap. So this bill, in terms of election financing, is one opportunity to start addressing this growing disparity in society.

We think that the idea of tax-funded dollars tied to votes is a good idea. We're seeing more and more emphasis on raising lots of money and spending that money on the big advertising campaigns that oftentimes don't really talk about the issues in an important way. It's all spin, and that doesn't really strengthen our democracy. Let's talk about the issues. Let's engage more and more people in our communities to talk about what we can do together because the solutions are not going to be done, clearly, just by government or any one group. It's really by working together that we'll find the solutions for the challenges in our society.

Also, I support the reduction of contribution limits, in terms of campaigns. I think that's good too. The more that people feel like that is more of a level playing field, that everyone can participate in that election process and that my \$100 is as much as the rich folks' \$100, I think that's a good step.

In terms of strengthening our democracy—and it's really strengthening our society—I think it plays out in many ways. Certainly, with injured workers we see that when you feel like you've got more control and you are being supported, your recovery is more rapid and you're able to participate more fully again in society. But, when you feel that you don't have the support, that the system is rigged for those who are well off, that's where you end up having more problems like family breakups. There are all kinds of social problems that happen as a result of that.

I think we see that in the general population as well. It's reflected; people are not even voting anymore because they go, "Well, it doesn't matter. They're all captive to the corporate elites and Bay Street." I think we really need to—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Mr. Mantis, I don't want to interrupt, but you have about a minute to wrap up, please.

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** Okay.

A couple of the things that weren't addressed and, I think, that are important to think about are—really, the impact of the monopolies we have in our media these days. I found it interesting—I ran provincially in 2011 against my friend Mike Gravelle, and we hardly got any media coverage at all in our local media, which are mostly owned by conglomerates. They focus on, really, the whole spin thing rather than addressing the serious issues we need to talk about.

The other thing—and it was talked a little bit about—is volunteering in election campaigns. Now, you get a tax credit if you put in money, but how about getting a credit if you volunteer time? Because that is way more important, I think: engaging the people as volunteers in the political process and finding ways to acknowledge the work that they're doing and give them credit for that.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Mr. Mantis, I'm going to have to—I don't want to cut you off, but you have about 20 seconds.

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** No, I'm good. We can move to the Q&A.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Thank you so much. First up: Mr. Fraser.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Thank you very much, Mr. Mantis, for presenting here today. It would have been great to have been up in Thunder Bay, but we actually set a fairly high threshold to be able to travel, I thought—or a fairly low threshold, I should say—of about two hours. It would have been good to be there. We appreciate you taking the time to present to us today.

First, I want to thank you for the work that you do. Advocacy for people who have been injured in the workplace is a very important thing, and in a lot of our constit offices, we're all familiar with that, the importance of that and of people in our communities who need that kind of advocacy and who come to us looking for help sometimes.

I know that when we go through these committee hearings and some of the media reports, it looks really bleak, that politicians aren't actually listening to the people that they serve. I want to assure you that I know, myself, when I look at my colleagues around the table and my colleagues in the Legislature, there are very good people who do connect with regular people, who have challenges and problems and ideas.

It is a bit more of a challenge for ministers, but I know ministers as well who do that. I know Kevin Flynn has been to my riding. I know he has met with individuals to hear their story and to get that request. I think that sometimes it looks very bleak, but we have a lot of good people in the Legislature.

**1030**

One of the hardest things in politics, and this is why we're here, is that affluence, money and sometimes education enable people to have a fairly loud voice, a voice that can be heard very easily because they can afford to advertise it, they can afford to get whatever wherewithal they need to be able to be heard. Our challenge is to try to listen for those voices that are harder to hear, which are the people who aren't as affluent and can't speak up quite as loud or have two jobs.

I was talking a bit earlier about third-party support or third-party advertising or third-party involvement in elections. I think it is important that people have the right and organizations have the freedom to speak on behalf of the people who they represent, but there is a risk when we throttle down on political donations—which I think is the right thing for us to do—that it will pop up somewhere else.

For an organization like yourself, I think the work that you're doing and your involvement in an election would be important. But you could have a situation where—not necessarily your organization—an organization was a proxy for another third-party organization that said, "Here, I'm going to give you \$200,000. Knock yourself out," because they had a special interest. And it doesn't matter whether that's a corporate or union or what kind of interest that is.



I'd be interested in knowing what your thoughts are on how we actually ensure that in the electoral process, the influence of third parties is appropriate in terms of how we manage that, how we regulate that and what restrictions, if any—do you have any thoughts about that?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** For me, the biggest risk is the stuff that doesn't ever get counted, and that is the control by the media that we have. It's crazy. Here in Thunder Bay, for instance, we have one daily newspaper and they're owned by a big chain right across the country. We have almost no news left here. They've laid off almost all of our reporters, so the news they have is done by fewer and fewer staff with more of a philosophical—or right-wing, really, oftentimes—angle. So the news we're getting isn't representative, certainly, of our community, and it's not representative of the broader debate. None of that is counted at all in terms of political advertising. That's the free market; they're allowed to do whatever they want.

The drawback is that we have fewer and fewer sources of mainstream news and most of it, it seems to me, has got a political slant to it. So to me, that's where the biggest risk is. Some of the advertising that you see during a campaign by third parties—to me anyway, it's really clear that they've got a real bias and they're pushing it. I really don't pay much attention to it, honestly, so I'm not sure how much that plays out with the rest of society. I can't really say.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Very quickly: I know the influence of the media. I think it's very hard to regulate or restrict or monitor that. But what I would say is that I think the diversity of people's ability to get information now has expanded. Mainstream media, as we see, is shrinking and shrinking, and the ability for people to pump out information to people is almost universal and accessible.

We thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Thank you, Mr. Fraser. Ms. Gretzky.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Thank you, Mr. Mantis, for phoning in today. It's unfortunate that the committee didn't go to northern Ontario, but I'm thrilled that you were able to call in to us down here in the deep south of Ontario.

You talked a lot about equity, specifically to the group that you work with, the injured workers. We've expressed concerns, as have others, around the ability for people such as the injured workers you work with—limiting their voice during an election campaign and their ability to advocate and say that these are concerns that they have, these are the realities that they're living and they don't feel that a certain party, whether that happens to be the government side or another party—they don't feel that their needs are being met or their voices are being heard.

There are concerns about limiting organizations like yours from being able to advocate on behalf of the people they serve. This was a question I asked another presenter: Do you have concerns around the government's ability to put out advertising talking about the work that they've been doing, but then also being able to put out ads as a

political party? Do you feel that is fair compared to a group such as yours? Do you think that's a level playing field? Do you think it needs to be changed and if so, what would you like to see changed?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** I find it offensive that the government of the day, leading up to an election, spends my tax dollars to promote themselves so that we'll vote for them again. Let's have the discussions on issues rather than the spin.

You know, it's funny. I went to university back in the 1960s and early 1970s in the States and we learned that Governor Rockefeller in New York was the first one to do this, to much success. Now you see it all over the place. I find it offensive that they're using my money and our money to promote themselves.

I think government has a valid role in using advertising to engage us in discussion about serious issues, but just using it as a way to promote themselves I think is certainly unfair and unjustified.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** To build on that, then, do you feel that pre-election—I'm talking about outside of an election period—there is a place for government advertising so that they're getting information out to the public about what they're doing, but maybe there should be a limit? When we're going into an election period, should that advertising stop, should there be a certain period of time when they're not allowed to put those ads out? Or are you suggesting that the government should never be able—whichever government it may be, regardless of what party it is—to put out advertising at any time, whether it's during an election or not, putting out information to people about programs and such?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** I support that the government can do advertising to inform folks about programs and services that are available. I think that's just fine. Leading up to an election, probably we should restrict that.

Once again, in my mind, it's fine to say, even leading up to an election, "We've got valuable programs and services, and here's what they are and here's how you access them," but I think the risk is that it's really hard to police that. It's so easy to turn it into spin that says, "Look how good we are," rather than really sharing valuable information. So probably a restriction leading up to an election is a good idea.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Thank you, Ms. Gretzky. Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thanks, Steve, for your presentation. You're the treasurer of the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group, right?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** Yes.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** How many of your support group members could afford a \$10,000 fundraiser to access the Minister of Labour?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** Absolutely none. Some of our members can't even afford the \$10 annual membership fee, honestly.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** One of the deputants we had this week was the Chief Electoral Officer for Canada. One of

the loopholes—because let's face it, there are a lot of loopholes in this bill right now that people have brought to our attention. One of the things that I asked him was about legislation that they have at the federal level—I think it's actually at the ethics commissioner level—where there's a restriction on lobbyists and cabinet ministers. One of the things we have that govern our behaviour and cabinet ministers' behaviour is something called the Members' Integrity Act. That's a piece of legislation that's administered by the Integrity Commissioner. Do you think that given the cash-for-access scandal that we've seen with this government, we should really consider strengthening that Members' Integrity Act when it comes to cabinet ministers and access to lobbyists? Do you think we should shine a light on that section and try to look at what they've done at the federal level?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** I don't know enough about that act to comment specifically on it.

I think that we in Canada operate in a global world. You just have to look south of the border to see some of the big influences we have. It's scary to see more and more of those practices coming in. They talk about that to become a congressman in the States, it's going to cost you \$500,000. When I ran here, I think we raised \$32,000 or something like that, and we had a good campaign. I would hate to see us moving in the direction

further as we are in the States. I mean, the idea that Premier Wynne would ask each cabinet minister to raise \$500,000 for the party is irresponsible and disgusting, really, especially for a so-called social justice Premier.

Strengthening our abilities to be able to defend against those with the big bucks—and oftentimes that's the pharmaceuticals, the insurance industry and some of the big industries that have lots of money. And we see it in workers' compensation, the lobbying that's gone on. They spent \$1 million and they got \$1 billion back in return because that's how much premiums were reduced, \$1 billion a year. They see that's a good investment. "If we can influence those decision-makers, we'll be able to get a big return on our investment." I think we really have to defend against that.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thanks very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi):** Mr. Mantis, thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with us today. Once again, if there are any further comments you would like to add, or your submission, can you please send it to the Clerk?

I'd just like to remind members of this committee that our next scheduled meeting—subject to change, as it has been all along—is August 11 in Toronto. Having said that, for good behaviour, we're done for the day. Meeting adjourned.

*The committee adjourned at 1042.*



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