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Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

M-17

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

M-17

**Standing Committee on
the Legislative Assembly**

Committee business

**Comité permanent de
l'Assemblée législative**

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1st Session
42nd Parliament
Monday 9 November 2020

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42^e législature
Lundi 9 novembre 2020

Chair: Kaleed Rasheed
Clerk: Tonia Grannum

Président : Kaleed Rasheed
Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLYCOMITÉ PERMANENT DE
L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Monday 9 November 2020

Lundi 9 novembre 2020

The committee met at 1302 in committee room 2 and by video conference.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Good afternoon, everyone. I call this meeting to order. We are meeting today to consider the method of proceeding with respect to Bill 214, An Act to amend the Time Act and various other Acts.

None of the members are here in the room, but we do have all the members joining us remotely. We have MPP Faisal Hassan, MPP Logan Kanapathi, MPP Jim McDonnell, MPP Christina Mitas, MPP Sam Oosterhoff, MPP Sara Singh, MPP Donna Skelly, MPP Vijay Thanigasalam and MPP Paul Miller.

Staff from Hansard, broadcast and recording and legislative research join us remotely today.

To make sure that everyone can understand what is going on, it is important that all participants speak slowly and clearly. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Since it could take a little time for your audio and video to come up after I recognize you, please take a brief pause before beginning.

As always, all comments should go through the Chair.

Are there any questions before we begin? MPP Oosterhoff?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I would like to move that the committee enter closed session—

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Sorry, sorry. MPP Oosterhoff, sorry. Are there any questions in terms of the proceedings? MPP Paul Miller?

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, Chair, I have some grave concerns about this whole procedure. I certainly am one to follow protocol, but it appears the government doesn't want to. I don't know why there was no subcommittee meeting, which has always met to send forth the issues to deal with the main committee; that's been bypassed. I don't know why this is an in camera meeting. There are no land purchases, there are no personnel problems—

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): MPP Paul Miller, I sincerely apologize; I don't mean to cut you off, but right now, we're just talking about the proceedings themselves, whether everybody understood, from a technology perspective—

Mr. Paul Miller: So when do I get to say my concerns—

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): As soon as I start saying, "Are there any motions?" Then, you will be given an opportunity to speak. Right now, I'm just—

Mr. Paul Miller: It's not necessarily a motion, but I can certainly have input, I would believe, right?

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Sure. In terms of the committee, yes, go ahead. I was just referring to making sure that we have gone through the process of making sure that everybody is in from a technology perspective.

Mr. Paul Miller: So when are you going to be done with that? When can I start?

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Just give me 30 seconds, please.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Thank you.

Mr. Miller, I can promise you that you will have the opportunity to speak, but because MPP Oosterhoff had his hand up first, I'm going to recognize him.

Are there any motions? MPP Oosterhoff, go ahead, please.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I move that the committee enter closed session for the purposes of organizing committee business and that broadcasting staff be permitted to remain in the closed session meeting for the purposes of operating the electronic meeting technology.

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): A motion has been moved by MPP Oosterhoff. Is there any debate?

Mr. Miller, please go ahead.

Mr. Paul Miller: I believe MPP Oosterhoff has moved to go into closed session. I want it to go on record that I oppose closed session. There's no need for a closed session in this type of proceeding, so I want to go on the record as opposing it.

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Thank you very much. MPP Faisal Hassan.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: If this is going to go into closed session, I, too, want to go on the record that I am against this.

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Thank you. MPP Sara Singh.

Ms. Sara Singh: I echo the concerns of MPP Miller and MPP Hassan.

I think that MPP Miller was seeking to get his comments on the record prior to a closed session motion being presented. So I think we should also be giving MPP Miller the opportunity to share his concerns on record before we potentially move.

And I strongly oppose this move into an in camera session.

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): I actually did give the opportunity to MPP Paul Miller to share his concerns. But because MPP Oosterhoff had his hand up first, I had to recognize him. But MPP Paul Miller has the floor. He can speak now on the motion.

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Chair, through you: Obviously, my party and, I would say, the general public have great concerns about how this is being handled. First of all, I don't understand—the government is always telling the public that they want to work with the opposition to move things forward, especially during COVID-19, and to work in co-operation. I find it very irregular that the subcommittee has been shut down. There have been no meetings with the House leaders. The government seems to be railroading through things that they want to get through without any cross-debate, any discussion or any public involvement, which I find atrocious. I've never seen this in all the years I've been in the Legislature. This is a borderline dictatorship. I have never, ever seen anything like this, and I have grave concerns, especially when we're in a financial bind as a province at this point, that this government has decided to take the bill which I had, the Ditch the Switch Act, Bill 174, which was perfectly good—the government voted to send it to committee unanimously. In fact, the proponent, Jeremy Roberts, actually came over and shook my hand and stood up and said that it's a great bill. And all of a sudden, my bill has become irrelevant. They've moved forward with an unnecessary duplication of a bill that was already there. This is not only a waste of legislative time; it's a waste of resources. It's simply positioning themselves to get kudos for something they didn't even do. This is certainly going to be brought to the public in a major way, because this is outrageous.

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Don't stand up in the House with your House leader and tell me he wants to work with the opposition to get things passed when they pull stunts like this. This is unbelievable, and I certainly am going to be very vocal about this type of positioning. This is simply because of all of the negativity that has been going on. It's simply a government way of getting kudos for something they not only did not work on—my staff spent days and weeks working on this to try to bring this forward. In fact, the bill that Mr. Roberts is bringing through is almost a carbon copy of what I put in, with a couple of little switches of a couple of words here and there.

All I can say is that we certainly will not be supporting this type of procedure, the way it's being handled and the way it's being moved forward. It's unacceptable, it's outrageous and I don't know how any government person could stand up and say that this is being done properly. It's unbelievable.

I will sit back and listen to some of the feeble excuses that are going to come out of the government side in the next hour or so. I might say that I'm sure that my colleagues are in the same boat as I am. I'll have more to say as we go on.

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Thank you very much, MPP Miller.

I recognize MPP Faisal Hassan.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I do echo my colleague Paul Miller that there's no need for a closed session and privacy and a closed door to really move into this while we also have a bill exactly the same as Bill 214, a bill that the House has supported, Bill 174, which basically does the same things as Bill 214.

I do believe that there's no need to move this kind of behaviour and action, where it's shutting down transparency and accountability, where the government has been saying that we are working together to achieve things together. This is not working together. I do believe it's time to vote down this motion and to have discussions in a transparent way, so that we have an open way of transparency and accountability, to make sure the government is not working in secrecy where it is moving the subcommittee's work.

There has not been a meeting, as my colleague Paul Miller has stated. Also, there haven't been House leaders' meetings. This is not in the spirit of working together. It is not co-operation. This sounds like a government intentionally making—we owe it to the people of Ontario to listen, to hear what our debates are about this committee, so that people at home and in Ontario know exactly that we are transparent and accountable. Definitely, I want to go on the record to send a strong message that this kind of irregularity is unacceptable, and we need to move a way to make things better.

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Thank you very much. I recognize MPP Sara Singh.

Ms. Sara Singh: I just want to echo the concerns that my colleagues have raised. I can appreciate the motion that has been put forward, but this is a non-contentious bill, we aren't dealing with any private matters in this committee, and so why we need to move to an in camera session really just simply doesn't make sense. I think we're also limiting the participation of folks in this and also providing a transparent forum for the legislative process here for the people of this province. It is very concerning that this government would seek to do this. Again, maybe we'll get some clarity on why that is the case, but I think we owe it to Ontarians, especially throughout this pandemic, to seek that clarity, to understand the decisions that are being made by the government, again, on issues that are not contentious.

We have a great private member's bill here that seeks to address a concern—two separate bills—why we'll be choosing one over the other. Not being transparent with Ontarians about why that decision was made, I think, really is unfortunate. Hopefully the government members that are here and part of this committee today can help us understand why they would move to a closed session when, again, Ontarians are looking for transparency and accountability from this government throughout this pandemic. It just makes absolutely no sense.

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Thank you very much. MPP Sam Oosterhoff?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I'd just like to note that despite the outrage of the opposition, the subcommittee routinely organizes business in closed session. We believe that the full committee should be organizing business in closed session as well. We'll be proceeding with the motion.

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Thank you very much. Are the members ready to vote on the motion? I see—okay. Perfect.

Mr. Paul Miller: Is it on? Hello, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Yes, MPP Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like a recorded vote, please.

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Sure. As I had mentioned earlier, you actually have to make sure you keep your hands raised while—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): Okay, yes, because MPP Mitas is on the call, you actually, in fact, have to say “yea” or “nay” or “abstain.” Once the Clerk recognizes

you, we'll make sure your mike is unmuted so that you can in fact say “yea,” “nay” or “abstain.”

Ayes

Kanapathi, McDonell, Mitas, Oosterhoff, Skelly, Thanigasalam.

Nays

Hassan, Paul Miller, Sara Singh.

The Chair (Mr. Kaleed Rasheed): The motion is carried.

We are now going to move into a closed session. Just give us a few minutes, please.

The committee continued in closed session at 1320.

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