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Monday 4 March 2013

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Lundi 4 mars 2013

**Standing Committee on
General Government**

Committee business

**Comité permanent des
affaires gouvernementales**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES GOUVERNEMENTALES**

Monday 4 March 2013

Lundi 4 mars 2013

The committee met at 1401 in room 228.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll call the meeting to order of the Standing Committee on General Government on Monday, March 4, at 2 p.m. I have an agenda here: organization, whatever the committee wants to discuss.

Ms. Scott.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to move a motion, please. I know you have the papers in front of you. A couple of ministries have just changed the name a bit, so I will read that into the record the way it's changed to the new ministries.

I move that, pursuant to standing order 111(a), the Standing Committee on General Government restart its study and report upon the mandate, management, organization and operation of the Ministries of Economic Development, Trade and Employment; Research and Innovation; Environment; Infrastructure; Labour; Municipal Affairs and Housing; Tourism, Culture and Sport; Consumer Services; Finance; and Transportation vis-à-vis the economic, social and environmental impacts of traffic congestion or "gridlock" in both the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area and the Ontario side of the National Capital Region.

The committee would, as necessary, call upon the aforementioned ministries, as well as appropriate stakeholders, to study the issue of gridlock and solutions to it so as to bolster economic development, job creation and to recommend more ways to enhance the flow of people and goods throughout the GTHA, NCR and connected regions. The study would include but not be limited to:

—determining the level of any adverse effects that gridlock may have on economic development and job creation;

—assessing the true economic costs of traffic congestion in the GTHA and NCR;

—determining any human costs associated with traffic congestion and the impact it may or may not have on families;

—determining the localized effects in the GTHA and NCR of traffic congestion vis-à-vis economic development, business improvement areas, localized job creation and the business/personal profitability and productivity of small businesses;

—assessing and reporting on ways to lessen the burden of gridlock, burden on businesses and labour vis-à-vis enhancing and promoting productivity, logistics, flow of goods and commuting times;

—determining innovative short-term and long-term solutions on improving the efficiencies of highway, rail and other transportation corridors and how to improve transportation methods in those corridors to move people and goods in the GTHA and NCR more efficiently, cost-effectively; and

—studying new models of affordable, sustainable and viable public transportation and identifying innovative options that enhance modalities of regional, inter-regional and municipal public transportation within the GTHA and the NCR, whether public or private, and assessing the costs of implementing those options and operating them, including capital funding and operation fare/payment models;

—studying new and/or alternative and sustainable approaches to funding transportation and transit solutions in the GTHA and the NCR; and

—determining innovative ways to enhance efficiency of freight in the region, including regional freight rail options, grade separations, intermodal freight facilities and methods to improve environment efficiencies to reduce fuel costs and environmental impact.

Notwithstanding the above, the Chair of the committee shall seek authorization from each of the House leaders of the recognized parties in the Legislature so that the committee may be able to adjourn from place to place in Ontario for the purposes of holding public hearings in such locations.

The acronyms I used I think everyone knows, but I'll just clarify that GTHA is the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, and NCR is the National Capital Region.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Would you like to speak to your motion first?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I think that we've restarted the work that the committee had been doing on gridlock—can I summarize?—in these areas before, and we want to continue and hopefully be afforded maybe some travel opportunities to go to the regions I've mentioned, as well. I think that we have the support of the third party also in progressing with this, and hopefully the support of the government, as we did before.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further comments? Ms. Cansfield, and then Mr. Colle.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm very supportive. I think it's virtually the same as you had before.

The other question I had—and it's really an issue of the art of the possible around the freight rail, because of the jurisdiction federally; we don't have as much authority on freight and rail. We could probably do some, but we might not be able to do quite what you anticipate here because of that jurisdictional issue.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Sure, but they can still report on the economic, social and environmental impacts indirectly.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I was just thinking, more from the other—that it would be nice to be able to get some light-freight options and really look at that issue, but they may not be as amenable to that—as long as we know. But I'm very supportive.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further comments? Mr. Colle.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, I was just wondering—we had three things we were dealing with. Should we be talking about the process here, or are we talking about the motion? Are we dealing with the auto insurance file?

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): On the agenda, we have "Organization." So we can discuss anything, and the Clerk will advise on what we have to do on each one.

Mr. Mike Colle: Okay, then I'll speak on this. One of the glaring omissions here is that there's nothing about cycling infrastructure and cycle-safe roads in urban centres and in regional centres to relieve road congestion. So I wonder if we could use that as a friendly amendment, that we could also include the role of cycling infrastructure to relieve congestion and to enhance cycling safety throughout the province at the same time.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Are you suggesting a particular amendment, like you have worded? Or do you want some help?

Mr. Mike Colle: No, my amendment is that, along with looking at regional freight options, grade separations and intermodal freight facilities, we also look at cycling infrastructure throughout Ontario as a way of relieving road congestion and making roads safer for drivers and cyclists.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll get him to move it later. Any further comments?

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Sorry, for the last bullet, Mike—because I think it captures a little bit of what you want—just put "such as cycling"; "cycling matters," right?

"Determining innovative ways to enhance efficiency of freight in the region including regional freight rail options, grade separations, intermodal freight facilities, and methods to improve environment efficiencies to reduce fuel costs and environmental impact, as well as the use of cycling matters."

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Any further comments or questions of the last speaker on his suggested amendment? Ms. Scott.

Ms. Laurie Scott: The witnesses that want to appear before committee could talk about that topic if you wanted to, without making an amendment to it. I mean, we wouldn't be opposed to that. There have been some examples in Toronto, I think, with cycling lanes and what has gone on—good or bad.

1410

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, in fact, Norm Miller had—

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): One on highways.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes. I wasn't on the gridlock committee last time, but we did hear from them on several occasions.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Since I have no further comments, I have an amendment moved by Mr. Colle. It's going to be added to the last bullet, at the very end: "And to examine cycling infrastructure as a means of reducing congestion and at the same time enhancing road and cycling safety."

All in favour?

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This is the amendment. All in favour? Any against?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Excuse me, where is it being amended?

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Okay, I'll read it. It's the main motion moved by Ms. Scott, the very last bullet point; this is going to be added at the very end. It reads: "And to examine cycling infrastructure as a means of reducing congestion and at the same time enhancing road and cycling safety."

I'm just going to take a vote on the amendment. Is there any debate on it, or should I take the vote?

Mr. Mike Colle: Recorded vote.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A recorded vote is requested; I have to take it.

Ayes

Armstrong, Bartolucci, Campbell, Cansfield, Colle.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Carried.

We'll move on. I have the main motion as moved by Ms. Scott. Ms. Cansfield?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: If I may, I'm going to move an additional amendment to the motion, and I would add it just as a new paragraph, a new bullet: "Including a discussion of the new investment tools, a national strategy on infrastructure and transit, and the special transportation needs of Ontario's north."

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Everybody heard the amendment? Do you want to speak to it?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Yes. In fact, what we're trying to do is to look at what the new investment tools are so we have an opportunity to have those discussions. Is there a national strategy that somehow we can clue into, on infrastructure, that is going to be debated? That has been discussed by the Prime Minister—and not just on the infrastructure but also on transit and the special

transportation needs of Ontario's north, for the obvious reason that if you're going to look at rail, for example, you can't exclude some of the issues in the north. If you're going to look at the distribution of freight, for example, you might want to look at the whole issue around what I call the H₂O highway, the Great Lakes, which is not captured in your motion.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, some of it is.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: It might be, but you specified freight on rail. I think of freight on the water, and I think that should also be included. I remember actually putting that desk back into the ministry, both waterway and air and rail, because it had been taken out.

I'll give this as an amendment to the main motion.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I think that they want to do a little bit of a consult here because we're getting away from what was agreed upon before.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: We're just trying to enhance it, not to—

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's just that if you bring in the north—I'm not opposed. It's just that we're doing the gridlock down here. I don't disagree with what you're saying about northern issues and transportation of freight. It's just that we could be travelling forever; this may go on and on a lot. So it might be better to have a separate motion on that.

Can we ask for a recess for—

Mr. Michael Harris: Five minutes.

Ms. Laurie Scott:—five minutes, 10 minutes, to see what they want to do?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Don't forget: I'm serious about the H₂O highway and the whole fact that that's a federal jurisdiction, but it's definitely on our doorstep and should be included in the transportation to relieve the gridlock.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Could I take control of the meeting? I've got a lot of hands up. I know you guys want to debate it, so I'm going to have to follow procedure.

Before I get into the debate, I'm going to read you the amendment. It's moved by Ms. Cansfield, and it will be the last bullet point: "Including a discussion of the new investment tools, a national strategy on infrastructure and transit, and the special transportation needs of Ontario's north."

Further debate? I had Ms. Campbell with her hand up.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Chair. Are there a number of amendments that the Liberals are planning on proposing? I would like to have some of these in writing, and I'd also like us to have a 10-minute recess so we could discuss them. A little bit of advance notice would be nice.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Campbell has requested a 10-minute recess. All in agreement? Agreed.

Okay, we'll recess for 10 minutes and reconvene at 2:26.

The committee recessed from 1416 to 1427.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll reconvene the meeting.

Before we broke, I had a motion, an amendment from Ms. Cansfield:

That the motion be amended by adding the following as a separate point: "Including a discussion of the new investment tools, a national strategy on infrastructure and transit, and the special transportation needs of Ontario's north."

Any debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Can we have a recorded vote?

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): First I have to go through this.

Is there any debate? Comments, questions? Ms. Campbell.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would support this, because I think it's important for us to look at some of the transportation challenges in the north. We don't necessarily have gridlock per se. Our main issue is really lack of transportation routes or access.

In addition to road transportation, like with highways and whatnot, I'd also like to see us look at passenger rail service, which is also something that we're in desperate need of.

I'll support this.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Colle.

Mr. Mike Colle: I think this is a reinforcing of what the main motion is, because as Ms. Campbell, the member from Kenora-Rainy River, said, there are significant transportation issues in terms of rail and what's the most effective way of using rail transport. The technology in rail transport—as you know, Mr. Speaker, we're one of the few countries in the world that doesn't have high-speed electric rail. They've had it in China, Taiwan, Japan and all over Europe for the last 30, 40 years. Here we are in Canada and we still don't have fast, reliable electric rail.

This might be part of the future in terms of what kinds of rail technology or transportation technology might be used in partnership with northern municipalities to develop transportation modes.

As you know, the ironic thing is that Thunder Bay, in the north, is the great producer of heavy rail or electric rail for Toronto, so there is a link between transportation issues that occur in the north, the jobs that are in the north, and the jobs and congestion and transit issues that exist in the GTA. You can't really separate them out, because we're all interconnected.

This is a very good way of putting things into a provincial perspective and paying some attention to the transportation challenges that affect all of Ontario and also affect people in the north. This is, I think, a very progressive and a very, very positive addition to the main motion.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Cansfield.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I would like to make an amendment. I apologize for this, but you'll understand why when I said no, I wouldn't make another amendment. I'd like to amend the amendment so that at the end

of paragraph 1, where it says “in both the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area and the Ontario side of the National Capital Region,” I’d like to put “and Ontario north” or “northern Ontario,” whichever is preferable.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Okay, does everybody understand her requested change? Any discussion? Mr. Harris.

Mr. Michael Harris: So you would disagree that Ontario north is not part of the connected regions to the GTHA or NCR?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: If I may respond, I would respectfully submit that transportation is an issue in all of Ontario, not just specific to a particular region, and that’s why I included Ontario’s north.

Mr. Michael Harris: All right. I guess my only statement is we want to reiterate the initial intent of this motion, and that’s to study gridlock in the GTHA and NCR. We can go on and on and on—and not to suggest that these amendments aren’t worthy of possible further discussion; however, the intent, again, is to continue the committee’s work on gridlock in these two areas important to the Ontario economy. I simply want to state that for the record. Anything else is great; however, it takes away from the committee’s intent to study gridlock within these two important areas of Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Campbell, did you have your hand up? Okay. Ms. Cansfield.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: If I may, in terms of responding, I appreciate that, but I guess I’ve sat in so many committees where everything is south of Highway 7. There is the great Ontario north that has just as many challenges as they do in the south; they’re just different. So I think it’s time to think of Ontario inclusively, not exclusively, as one particular region. I believe that if we are looking at a national strategy, there’s no question in my mind that it must include the north. It can’t just be something that is a rail train from Montreal to Windsor kind of thing; it has to be far more inclusive. That’s the reason for—and also looking at using the natural resources in the north such as the waterways in order to increase the capacity for transportation, which in fact could relieve some of that gridlock that’s in southern Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Harris?

Mr. Michael Harris: I don’t disagree with you. However, the motion that’s in front of us, again, asks this committee to study gridlock in both the GTHA and the Ontario side of the National Capital Region—the impacts of traffic congestion or gridlock.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: That’s why I amended it.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Campbell.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would argue that in a manner of speaking, northern Ontario does experience gridlock; it’s the fact that we’re limited in the routes that we can take. I know this is an aside; it’s not necessarily what

we’re talking about right now but, for instance, winter road maintenance. Because we only have very limited transportation corridors, when something like winter road maintenance can shut down a highway, we are experiencing these problems. So I would argue that it is important for us to look at northern Ontario as well.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Okay, I have no more speakers, so I will take the amendment to the amendment, which is the main paragraph of the motion, to add the words “and northern Ontario” after the words “connected regions.” All in favour?

Mr. Mike Colle: Recorded vote.

Ayes

Armstrong, Bartolucci, Campbell, Cansfield, Colle, Harris, Scott, Yurek.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Carried.

Now the motion itself, which is, Ms. Cansfield moved that the motion be amended by adding the following as a separate point: “Including a discussion of the new investment tools, a national strategy on infrastructure and transit, and the special transportation needs of Ontario’s north.” All in favour? A recorded vote.

Ayes

Armstrong, Bartolucci, Campbell, Cansfield, Colle, Harris, Scott, Yurek.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Carried.

Any further business?

The Clerk Pro Tem (Mr. Trevor Day): We didn’t actually carry the—

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Oh, the motion itself? Okay, sorry about that. I’m moving faster than my head.

Now we’ll take the main motion, as amended: All in favour? Carried.

Any further business? Ms. Cansfield.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Can I ask that the subcommittee meet to discuss this process, and then report back to the committee on how they wish to go about it? Presumably, something similar to what you did before on the aggregates or something.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I have a request by Ms. Cansfield for the subcommittee to have a meeting to discuss this, and how we proceed, at the call of the Chair. Everybody agree? Agreed.

Anything else? Any further business? Committee is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1436.

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