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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 19 February 2014

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Mercredi 19 février 2014

**Standing Committee on
Regulations and Private Bills**

**Comité permanent des
règlements et des projets
de loi d'intérêt privé**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON REGULATIONS
AND PRIVATE BILLS**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
RÈGLEMENTS ET DES PROJETS DE LOI
D'INTÉRÊT PRIVÉ**

Wednesday 19 February 2014

Mercredi 19 février 2014

The committee met at 0901 in committee room 1.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills will now come to order. At the last meeting, on December 11, 2013, Mr. Fraser moved “that the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills continue its clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 6 on February 19, 2014, and February 26, 2014.” Then Miss Taylor moved an amendment to the motion to add that the committee conduct public hearings on Bill 132, the Energy Consumer Protection Amendment Act, on March 5, 2014, to March 19, 2014.

At the end of the meeting, the committee was in recess before taking a vote. The committee will now resume to vote on Miss Taylor’s amendment on the motion.

All those in favour? All those opposed? The amendment fails.

We are now considering the main motion. Any discussion? Ms. Wong.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Chair, I have an amendment to the main motion, so I’ve got a copy for the committee.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): If you would like to read your amendment first.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Chair, can I read my—

Mr. Michael Harris: No—

Ms. Soo Wong: Okay. Yours, okay.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Mr. Harris.

Mr. Michael Harris: I’d like to propose an amendment.

I move that the words following “Private Bills” be deleted and substituted:

“authorizes the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, to arrange the following with regard to Bill 69, An Act respecting payments made under contracts and sub-contracts in the construction industry, 2013:

“(1) One day of public hearings on February 26, 2014, and two days of clause-by-clause consideration on March 5 and March 19, 2014;

“(2) Advertisement on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the committee’s website and the Canadian NewsWire;

“(3) Witnesses to be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis;

“(4) Each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members;

“(5) The deadline for written submissions is 3 p.m. on the day following public hearings;

“(6) That the research officer provide a summary of the presentations by 5 p.m. on the second day following public hearings;

“(7) The deadline for filing amendments with the Clerk of the Committee be 11 a.m. on the day of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill;

“And that the committee continues its clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 6 on March 26, 2014.”

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Do you want to speak to that?

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes. You know, it is obvious that Bill 69 has been in the Legislature for some time. There’s a strong willingness from plenty of stakeholders across the province to move this bill forward. It’s an important piece of legislation ensuring that suppliers and contractors get paid. A lot of other jurisdictions in North America already have this legislation, and it’s time that it move forward in the Ontario Legislature. That’s why we’re proposing public hearings on the dates that we’ve mentioned in this amendment to the main motion, where we can then resume Bill 6 following on March 26 going forward. I think it’s pretty self-explanatory in terms of what we’d like to see. We encourage the government to vote in favour of this amendment so that we can move this important piece of legislation, Bill 69, forward.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Okay. I have Ms. Wong who would like to address this.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect to Mr. Harris’s motion, what I’m hearing, if I’m correct, is that he’s asking us to deal with Bill 69 before we finish Bill 6. Now, I don’t know about other committee members, but we’ve already started the process with Bill 6, and it is pretty disrespectful, with all the work we have done to date, that we are now going to another bill. Meanwhile, unless I’m wrong, Mr. Chair, we’ve already started clause-by-clause, and you’re going to freeze what we have done and go directly to Bill 69. Is that fair for those who have been waiting to see this bill through? I challenge you not.

So, with due respect, Mr. Chair, I will be voting against this motion by Mr. Harris because it is not appro-

appropriate, and furthermore, it is disrespectful because the community out there is expecting us to go forward with clause-by-clause and finish that section of Bill 6. And now you're saying to freeze what we just did and go directly to Bill 69.

So my motion, Mr. Chair, is to keep us finishing Bill 6, and then go to Bill 69 after we've completed Bill 6.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Any further comment on your amendment, Mr. Harris?

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes. I would just like to respond to that. In essence, voting against this amendment would be voting against one of your own members who brought this important piece of legislation forward. I want to highlight the fact that Bill 6, a government bill, shouldn't have been sent to this committee in the first place. So to say that this is disrespectful I think is—you know what? It's unfortunate that you use that language.

This committee is meant for regulations and private bills, which Bill 69 is. It is an extremely important piece of legislation. I don't need to tell you the amount of contractors that are writing me, sending me letters and begging for this legislation to come forward. So in essence, if you're voting down this amendment, that means that you're against this piece of important legislation brought forward by one of your own members.

I'm suggesting that we simply move quickly to Bill 69, get the hearings done, move it out of committee and back to the Legislature, where this important piece of legislation can be given royal assent so that those folks in Ontario have that important prompt-payment legislation. We've just started on Bill 6. We've only had an hour and a half of clause-by-clause. Again, I remind you that that bill likely should not have even come to this committee in the first place.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Okay. I have Mr. Fraser on my speakers list.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd like to remind the member opposite that 80 minutes of that hour and a half were 20-minute recesses. So we've started the process of clause-by-clause on Bill 6. It's been dragging along. It is an equally important bill. It's about protection of the Great Lakes—80% of our drinking water and 95% of our agricultural land lies around the Great Lakes.

We have a motion in front of us here that my colleague is putting forward that will allow us to move forward on Bill 6, get it done and get to Bill 69, which is an equally important piece of legislation. But let's finish the work that we've started, stop the delays and get on with it.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Okay. I have Ms. Wong.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Chair, I just want to be on record to reiterate what Mr. Harris is talking about. We have letters from municipalities—including your municipality, Mr. Harris—supporting Bill 6. I'd like you to go back to your city council to say to them why we're doing delay to pass your motion. We have municipalities across the province that are supportive of Bill 6. It's our respon-

sibility, not just, "Which committee? Is this the right committee?" I don't really care. I don't think the public really cares. The fact is that we have already spent 90 minutes of public time to address this very important bill—the legacy of Ontario, but more importantly, to protect every Ontarian's public water. So to say that we put it in the wrong committee—I don't really care. I don't think the public cares. The fact that we have used public time, and you're telling me that we're going to suspend what we're doing with Bill 6 to go to your Bill 69—I don't think that's fair for the committee members who have spent a lot of time on this particular matter. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

0910

Mr. Michael Harris: I need to respond, obviously.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Yes, you may respond.

Mr. Michael Harris: Bill 69 isn't my private member's bill. In fact, it's one of your own members'—Steven Del Duca's—private member's bills, prompt payment legislation, Bill 69.

Listen, the government has had 10 years to address protecting our Great Lakes, and you've done nothing. A decade later, talking about protecting the Great Lakes, is a bit too late. It's a bit rich, perhaps.

Again, we've put a clear amendment to the main motion on the table to get to Bill 69 quickly. There's clearly disagreement and some concerns with Bill 6. I find it puzzling, in fact, that you as the government would have tabled so many amendments to your own piece of legislation. It's the reason why we're going to take longer than we actually need to in this committee. I think that shows itself that this piece of legislation needs major work.

How many amendments do we have in total, Clerk, if you don't mind? How many total amendments were tabled?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): About 90-plus.

Mr. Michael Harris: Ninety-plus amendments. Can you tell me how many of those were by the government?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): I'll have to check again to see.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd say that it was a substantial amount of amendments, which basically says that this government has got some major concerns with its own legislation and that they rushed to get it here in the first place. So we're going to need a lot more time. Clearly, that was the case the last time we went through this. We need this committee process to go through and make sure that the bill that was presented is thoroughly debated and changed and modified in the manner in which we see fit. I think we've proposed a lot of good, substantial amendments to Bill 6, but it is important that we get Bill 69 in and out of committee. I mean, the contractors that are simply going out of business because of their receivables in Ontario is significant, and I can assure you, with this tight timeline of the amendment that I've put forward, that contractors in your community will be well served

by you voting in favour of this amendment to get Bill 69 in and out quickly.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Mr. Fraser has the floor. I'd suggest that most of the arguments that need to be made have been made, but Mr. Fraser, if you want to, proceed.

Mr. John Fraser: Okay. I respect the member across. I don't think really think he wants to get Bill 6 through committee; otherwise, we wouldn't have had four 20-minute recesses. Your own community is telling you that they want it. We have an ability to get both of these things done here. Half of the amendments are yours. I'm sure that once the Clerk counts it up, 50 of them are yours. The rest are divided between us and the third party. I'd just like to remind him of that. There's an ability for us to get all of these things done if we just move on it.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Okay. Mr. Walker.

Mr. Bill Walker: Just some clarification, Ms. Wong: If you could tell us why you're preventing Bill 69 from going through. Your member introduced this. We are getting a number of people calling us saying, "Why isn't this legislation"—which truly should be at this committee—"through?" So can you please tell us in detail why you would prevent this bill from moving forward? All we're suggesting is that you have a number of amendments to your own Bill 6, which, to my colleague's reference, you've obviously rushed us to get here. You want amendments to your own legislation. If you had done the proper planning, it would have been done and full-scale finished. So why can we not do Bill 69 and defer Bill 6, which is not going to get done in one session anyway, with all the amendments that you've proposed, along with the concerns that we're sharing on behalf of our constituents? So please articulate to me why you would hold up your own member's bill, which could be doing some good for contractors and creating jobs that people are crying about every day of the week, and which you, supposedly, as a party, are willing to support.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Ms. Wong.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Chair, through you to the member opposite: Let's not forget what the opposition party cost Walkerton. I clearly remember, as a former public health official in York region, the tragedy of Walkerton. This particular bill is protecting drinking water across Ontario. We have already started the process. I'm not saying that we're not going to go through Bill 69, Mr. Chair, but I'm very clear that at the end of the day, we've already started the process dealing with Bill 6 and are doing clause-by-clause. Bill 69 is a private member's bill. Government bills do have priority, and the fact is that Bill 6 is protecting every Ontarian in terms of water, in terms of workplaces, in terms of play. It's critically important that we pass this particular piece of legislation, but more importantly, get through the process. If we hadn't started this process, yes, I would consider entertaining Bill 69. But the process has already begun for Bill 6. I challenge anybody in this committee—we've already spent 90 minutes of public time to deal with clause-by-

clause—to say that it hasn't been a priority. That's not true.

Bill 69 is a private member's bill, and I want to remind the member opposite.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Walker.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you back to Ms. Wong: I find it a little bit offensive that you would bring up the Walkerton water tragedy again and try to compare it to this. This piece of legislation has a lot of tentacles to it. A lot of other groups are going to have to be consulted. There is a joint international committee that's also looking at it. So even with this piece of legislation, again, with the number of amendments that you've proposed to your own legislation, it's going to take some time. I would hope that you would expect all of us to do our due diligence to ensure we're putting a good piece of legislation forward rather than rushing it through for some partisan concern that you may be trying to move.

I have great concern that you're actually suggesting this, and yet you're holding up another whole group of people. You keep suggesting that we're holding up something. What about Bill 69 and the ability for that legislation that should be here and should have already been through? All we're saying is, let's just reshuffle the deck. Let's get 69, which has already come through, let's finish it off, get it back to the Legislature to get royal assent and actually become law, and then we'll come back to Bill 6 and review it with the care and caution that we should all be taking when it is something as important as our Great Lakes.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Mr. Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to remind the member across that you requested four 20-minute recesses in going through the clause-by-clause—not necessary, okay? That's what is delaying getting our work done here at the committee. There's an ability, through my colleague's motion, to get both of these pieces of legislation done in an expeditious manner. I would request that the member consider supporting that motion.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I have Mr. Walker.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would respectfully, Mr. Chair, through you to Mr. Fraser, suggest that we respect what you're saying. However, I would trust you would expect us to do our due diligence on behalf of our constituents and taxpayers, so if we need to take a 20-minute recess to review the facts and ensure what we're going to agree to rather than rushing something through because you have an expedited reason to move it—it's disingenuous. We will always stand on behalf of taxpayers, our constituents, and their concerns and do our due diligence. We should be putting good, proper and well-thought-out legislation through this place rather than rushing it through and then having to come back and amend and spend innocuous amounts of time doing that. So I actually take a little bit of offence that you suggest that we don't have the right to ask for a recess to do our due diligence.

In my case, such as you, we're new members of Parliament. A lot of this is brand new to me. I want to read

it. The document is fairly significant. The number of amendments that you've proposed, I need to think through to make sure I understand what you're doing. So I will always take the opportunity to ask for a recess to ensure that I'm doing my due diligence on behalf of my constituents.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Mr. Harris?

Mr. Michael Harris: Just for the committee's sake, for the members opposite, I think it might be important to note that actually Bill 69 was referred to committee on May 16, whereas Bill 6 was referred to committee on October 9. That important piece of information shows that in fact Bill 69 had been referred to committee back in May, Bill 6 in October. Obviously, Bill 69, prompt payments, has been an issue since your government had a majority and failed to move on this important piece of legislation. We now, in a minority Parliament, as opposition members, feel that it's about time Bill 69 comes through.

Again, May 16 for Bill 69, October 9 for Bill 6: It's been in committee a lot longer. Let's get it out, get it back to the Legislature, and then move on with Bill 6.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Okay. Ready for the vote?

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to have a five-minute recess.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): With the permission of the committee. Everyone is agreeable to—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I hadn't called the vote. You want a five-minute recess?

Mr. John Fraser: Five minutes.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): And everyone's agreeable? Five minutes.

The committee recessed from 0919 to 0925.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Mr. Walker.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just through you, I just wanted to put on the record that we've also been in contact with or been contacted by the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ontario Headwaters Institute, who also have expressed a number of concerns with Bill 6 and who do not want the government to rush this through. They want to see that this is done in a diligent manner, that we actually have good thought and we've thought this through long and hard before we do it. Their concern is that it's being rushed through. I just want that to be on the record.

I want all of my respected colleagues to ensure that that's exactly what we are trying to do, to ensure that this is a good piece of legislation. There's no one in our caucus not wanting to protect the Great Lakes. Most of my riding is surrounded by the Great Lakes, so it's obviously very critical to all people of Ontario, specifically those in my backyard. So we will be doing this with the greatest of intent. We want to see good legislation passed, but we're not going to rush it, and we're certainly not going to usurp.

I think my colleague Mr. Harris brings up a good idea. My colleague Ms. Wong earlier said that we're not being

fair by not getting this piece of legislation, but how fair is it for a piece of legislation that was introduced in May to be superseded by a piece of legislation in October? Those people from May too are waiting and expect a timely resolve to their concerns and issues that are in fact impacting their business on a day-to-day basis.

I would respectfully, again, suggest that we follow my colleague's amendment, that we do Bill 69, we move that, we get it back to the Legislature for a vote and royal assent, and then we resume Bill 6, which allows us the time to consult and ensure that we're putting our best foot forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Thank you. Mr. McNeely.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Mr. Chair, I'd just like to comment that there has been extensive consultation on this bill. There are a lot of amendments which are great amendments, with ideas from all three parties, so this is not rushing it through. It's ready to be looked at clause by clause, and I would just like to call the vote on the motion.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Mr. Walker, I've had a request by Mr. McNeely that we proceed to a vote on this. I've heard, I think, from a variety of people a variety of times saying effectively the same thing. I think we've heard the arguments and—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I gather I'm being given a suggestion that I give you one more shot at this, so why don't you give it a shot?

Mr. Bill Walker: Well, just again, I think I need some clarity from my colleagues across why they will not allow Bill 69 to be finalized, to be finished and get it back, particularly when it's one of their colleagues' bills, and then we resume Bill 6. I just don't understand. You're telling me you're not rushing it, but why can we not allow the people who had theirs on the floor in May to have their resolve, on your member's behalf, and then we come back to Bill 6? No one's wanting to not do Bill 6. All we're saying is, there's a bill here that you're holding up. It's people's livelihoods at stake today. The Great Lakes Protection Act is not going to get done tomorrow. It's not going to have the same impact as the prompt payment can, an immediate impact on people's livelihoods, on people who are requiring a paycheque and their livelihood.

I still find it a little bit strange that you will not give me a straight answer as to why you will not consider what I believe is a good, common sense amendment to allow your member's bill to get to the Legislature, to honour those people who, in May—they've been waiting since May of last year. It's almost a year that it's been there. This one just started in October. We have almost 100 amendments that we're going to have to—so it's not going to happen tomorrow anyway, but we can get Bill 69 through, I believe, if we make it the priority, and get that piece of legislation finalized and show true concern for those who have raised it and your colleague.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Thank you, Mr. Walker. I see no further hands. I call the vote.

Mr. Bill Walker: May I request a 20-minute recess?

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I've called a vote. You've requested a 20-minute recess. I grant the 20-minute recess.

The committee recessed from 0930 to 0950.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Members, back to order. We are voting. The motion before us is the amendment put by Mr. Michael Harris. All those in favour of Mr. Harris's motion? All those opposed? The motion loses.

Ms. Wong?

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Chair, after consulting with the Clerk—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I'm sorry, Mr. Harris. I had understood that her hand was up.

Ms. Soo Wong: After consulting with the Clerk, I made some minor amendments to the motion that I put forth. I have copies of it here. I just want to make sure that I read it on the record.

I move that Mr. Fraser's motion from December 11, 2013, be amended by striking out "February 26, 2014" and replacing it with the following:

"upon reference of Bill 6, Great Lakes Protection Act, 2013, upon reporting of the bill to the House, the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 69, Prompt Payment Act, 2013:

"(1) Two days of public hearings and two days of clause-by-clause consideration, commencing on the first sessional day after Bill 6, Great Lakes Protection Act, has completed clause-by-clause consideration, during its regularly scheduled meeting times;

"(2) Advertisement on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the committee's website and the Canadian Newswire;

"(3) Witnesses be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis;

"(4) Each witness will receive up to four minutes for their presentation, followed by six minutes for questions from committee members;

"(5) The deadline for written submission is 3 p.m. on the day of public hearings;

"(6) That the research office provide a summary of the presentations by 5 p.m. on Friday of the same week following public hearings;

"(7) The deadline for filing amendments with the Clerk of the committee be 12 noon, two days following the second day of public hearings."

That's it, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Thank you, Ms. Wong. Do you have any remarks? None? All right.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will we be receiving a copy of that, Mr. Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): They have been circulated.

Mr. Bill Walker: I thought she said she made amendments to it.

Ms. Soo Wong: No, I was corrected.

Mr. Bill Walker: You didn't make amendments to the amendments that you thought you made?

Ms. Soo Wong: I just put the words "upon reporting of the bill." That's all I put to what you have in front of you, because the Clerk said to me to clarify that piece. That's what I said, not about "to the House for third reading." I just put that once this bill is done clause-by-clause and goes to the chamber, whether there is third reading or not, that we finish the clause-by-clause. That's all I asked; okay?

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Mr. Walker?

Mr. Bill Walker: So just a point of clarification, because I'm still—we're trying to protect, obviously, those people in our constituencies who are asking for prompt-payment legislation to be enacted, again reminding my colleagues across that it's your member's bill that was brought to this House in May. This is October.

You used the word in your very first opening reference, Ms. Wong, to "fairness," and those people who are being delayed. So I'm still struggling with why you would continue to bring this forward and not be willing to allow us to move Bill 69—your piece of legislation—through first. Why such a rush? I don't believe Bill 6 is going to be able to be rushed through, so why would we not get Bill 69 out, done, and those people can move forward?

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Ms. Wong, if you want to reply to that, and then I will have Mr. Fraser.

Ms. Soo Wong: Just a quick comment, Mr. Chair, through you to the member opposite. It is very clear that what I am observing for the first time in this committee is that there's no intent by the opposition party to pass Bill 6. Let's be on record with that piece.

We have always supported our colleague, Mr. Del Duca, on Bill 69.

There was an earlier question, Mr. Chair, by the opposition asking about how many amendments the government made. We know that on the record the PC motions were 63, the government motions were 27, and the NDP had 14 motions. Regardless of what it looked like, what I'm seeing right now here is there are more motions made by the opposition on this particular Bill 6. So I want to be very clear: We do support Bill 69 but we already started the process—the gate had already gone out—with regard to Bill 6. In fairness, and the fact that it's the committee's time—90 minutes have been spent, or is it 80 minutes? Whatever it is. But we want to finish this bill. The sooner we don't delay the clause-by-clause, we can go to Bill 69. That's all I ask.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Okay, I've got Mr. Fraser and then Mr. Walker.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. There is no rush on the other side to get Bill 6 done. That's very clear. Number five, 20-minute recess—I respect the fact that they need to study their own amendment again before we go to a vote.

The reality is, we can get both of these pieces of legislation done. We can get that. The members opposite have proposed more than half of the amendments to Bill

6, and we should be getting to those. I fully support Bill 69 and my colleague. I believe, and I am restating myself, that this motion will allow us to get both of these pieces of legislation done, as long as we don't have a 20-minute recess every time we talk about an amendment.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Mr. Walker.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, some points of clarification: Ms. Wong, you're presupposing. You've already made your mind up that we don't want this to pass. We obviously, in your numbers, are putting forward over 50% of the amendments, which obviously tells me that my constituents have very significant concerns about this piece of legislation.

I would remind you, every day of the week when I'm in my riding, I hear things about a piece of legislation that your government introduced, being the Green Energy Act, that you rammed through the House. You took away the democratic rights of our municipalities.

So, with all due respect, we're going to be very cautious with any piece of legislation you put in front of us from here on in. On behalf of our constituents, we will take the due time and consideration to ensure that we know exactly what effect the legislation is going to have, because I don't believe some of the concerns have been addressed with regard to the long-term impacts of this legislation. So what I'm actually suggesting: You're saying that we do not wish to pass it. You're actually taking the exact opposite, trying to railroad and ram it through as quickly as possible without due diligence.

I would remind you again: A group such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada has major issues, concerns with the way the legislation is currently worded. So we will continue, as we should be in opposition, doing our due diligence to ensure that the legislation is properly reviewed. If I need to take 20-minute recesses with my colleagues to consult and ensure that what we do is put our best foot forward on behalf of all of the taxpayers of Ontario, not special-interest groups, then I will continue to do that. I trust my colleagues will do that as well.

I still do not understand, when you have your own piece of legislation, why you will not agree and do Bill 69 and get it out of the way, and then we'll return to Bill 6. No one is suggesting that we're not going to do Bill 6. We're just suggesting that there are a lot of taxpayers and businessmen out there, and many of your constituents, who want the prompt payment action. Mr. Del Duca introduced it, I trust, wanting to get it through as quickly as possible. So why are we delaying that piece? Why can we not accept the amendment, do it first, and then return to Bill 6?

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Mr. Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. We don't need any lessons from the members opposite about downloading on municipalities and enforcing amalgamations.

I would like to say that I believe the member's municipality supports Bill 6. Mr. Harris's Kitchener supports Bill 6—the municipality. So they're all in support of that.

I don't know if farmers are what I would call a stakeholder interest group. The people who are interested

in Bill 6 are average, everyday people, people who rely on the Great Lakes for clean water, for agriculture. It's an important bill.

I would also like to remind you that you put forward 63 amendments. I respect your right to have a 20-minute recess, but not for your own amendments. Maybe with our amendments, if they're new to you, but they're your amendments. So you have the right to do that. That is very clearly a tactic to delay. We know that; it happens.

I would strongly suggest, again, that we can get both of these pieces of legislation done, which are important to a lot of people, if we just get down to business. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Thank you, Mr. Fraser. Mr. Harris.

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes, just a comment. In my Ontario, farmers are everyday folks, at least in my neck of the woods.

But I've got a subamendment that I'd like to move with regard to this amendment. Can I go ahead and read that out now?

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Read it out, and then we'll have to circulate it.

Mr. Michael Harris: All right. I move that "upon reference of Bill 6, Great Lakes Protection Act, 2013, upon reporting ... to the House, the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 69, Prompt Payment Act, 2013:

"(1) Two days of public hearings and two days of clause-by-clause consideration, commencing on the first sessional day after Bill 6, Great Lakes Protection Act, has completed clause-by-clause consideration, during its regularly scheduled meeting times;" be removed and replaced with:

"for two additional regularly scheduled meeting days, at which point the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 69, Prompt Payment Act, 2013:

"(1) Two days of public hearings and two days of clause-by-clause consideration."

Mr. John Fraser: Can we get a copy of that?

Mr. Michael Harris: Absolutely. Absolutely.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): We'll recess for a few minutes to get copies, if you'll hand that over.

Mr. John Fraser: Five minutes.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Five minutes.

The committee recessed from 1001 to 1011.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Mr. Walker, you were next to speak.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Again, I direct back to my esteemed colleague Mr. Fraser. He made some comments, and I trust he didn't imply that we would be stalling this purposely, without regard to our constituents. We want to ensure that this is the best piece of legislation, considering that the Great Lakes is our greatest water resource for the entire country.

I would be remiss, though—I think I have to parallel and take a little bit of offence to the use of the word

“stalling” when they are very adept in their own right at wedge issues and spin. I will reference, if I can—he brought up municipalities, and I think that many of the municipalities that they have tried to wedge us on have had sober second thought and are now asking questions like, “How much is this going to cost my municipality if in fact it is rushed through and we don’t really understand the ramifications, long term? Who is going to implement and enforce? Who’s going to be responsible and carry the baggage for this piece of the act that people, again, who will be unelected, who will be appointed people, will be able to enact—legislation and regulation?” So there is a lot of sober second thought.

I draw a parallel, again, to the Green Energy Act. That is a piece of legislation where they stripped municipalities of their democratic right. They stripped the people, who actually pay the freight for this great province, of having their locally elected representatives have an ability to speak. They have spun the “clean, free and green” of the Green Energy Act to the general public, and yet the first thing we turn off is Niagara Falls and the capture of water, which is truly the freest, cleanest and greenest form of power. I wonder if the people of Ontario understand that with regard to the Green Energy Act, that’s what this Liberal government has done.

Then they turn around and they call our nuclear operators, who are the second-least-expensive and cleanest, and tell them to shut down a unit so that they can put up what they consider more clean, free and green.

I would be remiss if I didn’t suggest that our soaring hydro rates are causing businesses, with reckless abandon, to leave this province, and the jobs with them. Certainly, those homeowners who cannot afford their hydro bills in today’s world—my phone lines, my emails and my website are jammed with people who are saying, “I have to”—

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Mr. Walker, could you try and focus in on the amendment?

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes, I will. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to finish that sentence. Those people at home in my riding are calling, almost in tears, saying, “I have to choose between food and/or my hydro rate.”

This is a piece of legislation that, in our minds, could be very similar. It could cause great hardship to people if we don’t understand the ramifications, hence the reason that there are over 100 amendments that need to be given due deliberation.

We just once again say that this needs to be thorough. It needs to be done in an expedited manner, and we’re okay with that, but we need to give true and proper diligence and thought. All we’re suggesting again is, as I believe my colleague has once again attempted to say, that Bill 69 can be done fairly expeditiously. Let’s do it first, let’s get it and appease one of your own.

I mean, I’m wondering what Mr. Del Duca is thinking right now, when all of you continue to not want to have

this one put forth first, when it was introduced in May 2013, and you want to supersede it with this piece of legislation. What are the real reasons that you want to ram this through like the Green Energy Act? And I draw the parallel. That’s why I was using that example, Mr. Chair. Thank you for allowing me that indulgence of providing that context. But we need to really take a sober second thought as we need to understand this legislation—what it will do, what the ramifications are to municipalities that at first blush support it, but have definitely called me and said, “We need to know more because we really didn’t really look at this in fine-toothed detail, and we do have some concerns now.”

We are going to continue to look at this in a very thoughtful and efficient manner, but we will do it at the pace at which we feel comfortable, so that we’re not putting in bad legislation which we are now experiencing with something like the Green Energy Act.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I have Mr. Harris and Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Michael Harris: The amendment that I’ve put forward, I think, is balanced. It’s meeting you halfway in terms of getting back to Bill 6, laying out clear timelines to deal with that and moving forward with Bill 69.

That’s it. I’m ready to vote on it, if you guys are.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Okay. Mr. Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I apologize to my colleague across the way if he was in any way offended by what I had to say.

I would like to say that we support Mr. Harris’s motion and look forward to going to a vote on this now.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Okay. It seems to be that people have spoken. All those in favour of the amendment to the amendment? Okay, I’ve got six. All those opposed? Abstentions? It is carried.

Now we go to the main motion—to the amendment by Ms. Wong, as amended by Mr. Harris. No debate. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Carried.

To the main motion, as amended: All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? Carried.

It’s done?

Mr. John Fraser: Can we start with clause-by-clause? I know we’ve got about five minutes left, but we can start working on it where we left off, which I think is motion 6.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I believe we can. Do you have your materials?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Ah. You know what, Mr. Fraser? No, we’re going to have to get staff up here. Five minutes is too little time to convene. We can reconvene at our next meeting in a week.

Mr. John Fraser: Great.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): We stand adjourned until next Wednesday morning at 9 a.m.

The committee adjourned at 1018.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 19 February 2014

Committee business..... T-105

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Chair / Président

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth ND)

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Mr. John Vanthof (Timiskaming–Cochrane ND)

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