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Tuesday 28 June 2016

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

Mardi 28 juin 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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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
AFFAIRES GOUVERNEMENTALES**

Tuesday 28 June 2016

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*The committee met at 0900 in the Ottawa Conference and Event Centre, Ottawa.*

**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 Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** It's 9 o'clock. Good morning, everyone. How is everyone today?

*Interjections.*

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Good. I'd like to call the Standing Committee on General Government to order. This morning we're here to listen and hear from the public in public hearings with regard to Bill 201, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act and the Taxation Act, 2007. We have five individuals who will come before committee. The first individual will have 20 minutes to make his presentation, followed by up to 40 minutes of comments and questions. The balance will be the 10-minute presentation, followed by 15 minutes.

MR. ALEX CULLEN

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** At this time it gives me great pleasure to welcome former city councillor and former MPP Mr. Alex Cullen. We welcome you, sir. You have up to 20 minutes for your presentation.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, members of committee. Many years ago I kissed the Blarney Stone, so I'm hoping to be able to fill the 20 minutes that you've allocated here. I'm just giving you fair warning.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to address you on Bill 201, the Election Finances Statute Law Amendment Act. I am a four-time candidate for the Ontario Legislature—1987, 1997, 1999 and 2015—achieving success in 1997 as a member of provincial Parliament for Ottawa West. Besides being a candidate, I have been a fundraiser, volunteer and campaign manager in a number of provincial elections in Ontario, and have

worked in many federal elections. As well, I'm a former school board trustee and city and regional councillor in Ottawa who has participated in every municipal election here since 1982, except for 1997 when I was elected to the Ontario Legislature. Of these 10 municipal campaigns, I was successful in seven. As you can imagine, I have a keen interest in the integrity of the election process.

Besides my personal experience, I have also examined in detail the campaign finances in three municipal elections here in the city of Ottawa: 2003, 2006 and 2010. These reports and analyses, gleaned from examining the public election financial statements of candidates in those elections, provide information that should be helpful in the consideration of this important legislation to improve our democratic process here in Ontario.

Earlier in your hearings, Mr. Chairman, you heard from the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario, who quoted the Camp commission of 1972, which examined many of the issues that are before us today. Their goal, then, is applicable to us today; that is, to devise a set of rules that would "maintain a political system in which the various parties can function and campaign for public support freely and openly ... in an atmosphere above and beyond public doubt, suspicion or cynicism."

So let's follow the money. Money is said to be the lifeblood of politics. While the candidate, of course, is a crucial element in our election process—the name on the ballot that people can vote for—it is a huge challenge, as you know, for every candidate to try to meet people in a riding and knock on 40,000 doors or so in an election period. Money is needed to put up the signs to inform voters of who is running, to print the brochures to tell them what the candidate stands for, to rent the campaign space to organize volunteers, to provide the computers and phones and to buy the media that is necessary to promote the candidate's and, more often than not, the party's particular message in that election.

Therefore, the process of raising that money and spending it—so important to electoral success—clearly impacts on how well our democracy functions. If we are to believe in a fair electoral process where ideas and personalities can compete for votes on a level playing field, then ensuring effective regulation of the money aspect of politics is vital. This has been recognized by governments of all stripes in Ontario for the past 40 years in adopting and refining campaign finance legislation.

That brings us to the salient feature of this bill: the elimination of corporate and union contributions to Ontario's provincial candidates and parties. I strongly support this initiative for two reasons.

First, permitting corporations and unions to make political campaign contributions is undemocratic. While every individual voter is entitled to contribute to the candidate of their choice, allowing corporations and unions to do so creates an elite who can contribute twice by virtue of the corporations and unions they control. That is undemocratic.

Let me be more specific. The principle behind our democratic system is the equality of vote: one person, one vote. Consistent with that principle, individual voters are able to support candidates for elected office through contributions to their campaigns, as regulated by law. That principle is violated when some voters are able to use resources from organizations they control to support candidates and the parties they belong to, above and beyond their own personal resources.

This was recognized in 2003 when the Parliament of Canada was examining Bill C-24, the federal legislation that led to the prohibition of corporate and union contributions to federal candidates and parties. Thomas Kent, an expert witness from Queen's University who appeared before the parliamentary committee examining the bill, had this to say:

"Democracy means more than universal suffrage, one vote per person.... It means that everyone has the same freedom as the next person to promote the candidate or party or policy he or she likes. That democratic equality of opportunity is mocked—and I use 'mocked' deliberately—if organizations can fund parties and candidates. We then have a privileged minority of people who, solely because they're executives of corporations or unions, can back their political preferences not only with their own money, not only with their own votes, not only with their own powers of persuasion, but also with the resources of organizations that are established for other purposes."

I have many examples from Ottawa's municipal elections where individuals, along with their family members, use their rights as municipal electors to contribute to the candidates of their choice and then use the resources of the companies they control to contribute to these candidates yet again. Just one example—and I have many—from the public record would be the Malholtra family, who own Claridge Homes, a major development company here in Ottawa. Neil Malholtra, the vice-president of Claridge Homes, and his wife, Ainsley, plus Shawn Malholtra, another vice-president of Claridge Homes, and his wife, Louise, together wrote 11 personal cheques, worth \$8,250, to 10 municipal candidates in the 2010 Ottawa municipal election. This is their right to do so; that's not the quarrel. However, three Claridge Homes companies controlled by the Malholtras wrote an additional 10 cheques to these same 10 municipal candidates, providing an additional \$6,550 in campaign funds. Altogether, the Malholtras provided \$14,800 in 21 cheques to these 10 candidates through personal and

corporate contributions. Their candidates were successful, in part, because they were able to spend more than their opponents in promoting their campaigns.

While this is a municipal example—and I have lots of these in Ottawa—the parallels to the provincial scene are obvious. The fact that these were development companies contributing to municipal candidates for a city council that regulates development is another parallel. May I say that I am personally pleased that Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016, which eliminated corporate and union political contributions at the municipal level, was adopted by this Legislature.

The second reason is the need to remove the influence of big money in our electoral process. Corporations and unions are not philanthropic enterprises. Most corporations are for-profit enterprises; unions represent the interests of their members. They make political contributions based on their self-interest or, at best, as a form of investment. It raises questions about the relationship between elected officials, particularly those who form government, and their corporate and union donors. This leads to perceptions, whether true or not, that something is being given for something. More often than not, these contributions are coming from corporations and unions affected by government decisions involving tax policies, procurement policies, regulation policies and the like. It would come to the surprise of none to see these entities engaged in the political process in order to protect their interests.

While this is legitimate behaviour for these organizations, the Legislature elected by the citizens of Ontario operates on a different basis, or I certainly hope so: to protect the public interest. These interests—corporate self-interest and the public interest—are not always compatible. The Legislature, and the government that dominates the Legislature, to be legitimate, must be free of the taint of catering to self-interest. Candidates and their parties who accept contributions from corporations and unions which depend on their decisions for their welfare impair the legitimacy of their decisions. It creates an inherent conflict of interest and is bad ethics, all leading to cynicism among voters and contributing to lower voter turnouts. This bill corrects that defect in democracy by removing corporate and union political contributions.

These corporate and union contributions play, or have played, a large role in financing our provincial democracy. According to the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario, their contributions from 2012 to 2014 comprised half of all the funds contributed to candidates and their parties: \$50 million out of \$98 million. So what are the policy implications of eliminating corporate and union political contributions? Should contribution limits go up, as some have suggested before this committee? Should they be replaced through public funding, as the federal model proposed? These are issues that this bill before you attempts to answer.

#### 0910

Those of you familiar with legal concepts will recall the famous French example of equality: The law in Paris

treats rich and poor alike; none may sleep under its bridges. The same can be said to the notion of raising political contribution limits to compensate, so called, for the loss of corporate and union contributions. While notionally available to everyone, raising our already generous political contribution limits with its refundable tax credit only benefits the rich, not the average voter.

The Chief Electoral Officer in his testimony before this committee noted that 82% of individual political contributions in Ontario were less than \$1,525 a contributor. This should guide our thinking here, for the basis of our democracy is and should remain the equality of vote. Consistent with that principle, then, in my view, Ontario political contribution limits should not increase but, rather, should be reduced to reflect this reality.

There are two possible outcomes here. One could be the reduction in election spending—it's a notion that's on the table—forcing a more efficient approach to contacting voters and giving them the information they need to decide their vote. Politics, as many of you know, is a black hole that can absorb millions of dollars for consultants, focus groups, polling, robocalls and the like. Despite campaign spending limits, the cost of elections for political parties and their candidates continues to spiral, increasing the dependency on money. Here would be the discipline to make the political effort more efficient.

The more likely outcome, however, would be to broaden the base of supporters in order to fill the gap. This would have the benefit of engaging more citizens in the electoral process by making their contributions more meaningful. Certainly the recent example of Bernie Sanders in the US Democratic primary race is instructive. As a relative unknown he managed to raise millions of dollars to mount a competitive national campaign based on an average contribution of \$27. Making politics relevant to the average voter to the point where he or she would contribute to a candidate or party is a sure antidote to cynicism and apathy.

Lastly is the issue of third-party advocacy and the limits justifiable in a free and democratic society that permits the robust discussion of issues without compromising the integrity of the electoral system. Clearly, third-party advocacy that directly promotes the election or defeat of candidates or parties is an intrusion into the election regime that Ontario has built governing transparency, accountability and adherence to spending and fundraising limits which serve to protect our democratic process, and these intrusions should not be tolerated. However, the fact that a party may espouse or oppose a cause shared by another organization is fair debate as long as it deals with the merits or demerits of that cause. It is better, in my view, to regulate against obvious abuse than to grapple with ambiguity and imagined transgressions.

In sum, I am pleased to support this bill as it seeks to safeguard our democratic process and restore the principle of equality in provincial political finances. The removal of corporate and union political contributions is

necessary and should encourage political parties and their candidates to become more relevant to their electorate in order to garner the financial support needed to promote their causes.

I earnestly hope this committee and the Legislature will not succumb to the fallacy that the loss of these corporate and union revenues should be compensated for by raising the contribution limits for individuals, thus trading the privilege of one elite for another. I would urge the committee to tread delicately in setting rules for third-party advocacy, as robust debate is essential in a functioning democracy.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your time.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you very much, Mr. Cullen. I appreciate your comments. We're going to start with Ms. Malhi.

**Ms. Harinder Malhi:** Thank you for your presentation. I want to thank you for all your advocacy on electoral finance reform and thank you, obviously, for being here today.

There are a number of things this new bill is looking at and we need to find significant agreement between the three parties. Which of the following do you support? Do you support levelling the playing field by putting an end to corporate and union donations altogether?

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** The short answer to that is yes. I hope I made that point clear.

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

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** As a transitional measure, but not to make parties dependent upon it. The federal model did have public funding for transition. As you know, the last government began to reduce that element. Gradually, the parties are being weaned off that. But as a transitional measure, public funding makes sense.

**Ms. Harinder Malhi:** What about contribution limits? Do you believe in lowering them?

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** I don't believe in trading one elite for another. In my remarks, I made the point that it would be a fallacy to increase limits to compensate for the loss of corporate and union contributions.

As the Chief Electoral Officer mentioned in his remarks, 82% of Ontarians contribute \$1,525 or less. I think that Guy Giorno, when he presented here, said that the average contribution was around \$100. Who can spend \$10,000? Not everyone around this table; not everyone in the population.

Do not raise the limits. As a matter of fact, there's an argument to be made to lower them. Whether you take the Quebec model and lower it to that level—which would be brave—is before you, but do not raise it from the current level.

**Ms. Harinder Malhi:** And in terms of partisan political advertising six months before an election?

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** This is the delicate area that you need to walk on. This is about more than simply third-party advocacy, because you cannot ignore government

advertising in the same vein. My thinking is that you have to allow for public debate about the issues at hand. You cannot help but associate parties with issues.

Let's just take autism. I believe that there is a government announcement about autism today. There may be a party position on supporting a program to help children with autism. Should the autism society therefore be prohibited from commenting on that policy? It's their policy. A party may have adopted it. Can they not say, "We promote this policy," without naming parties?

The line you cross—and we do this at the municipal level—is when you specify parties and when you specify candidates: "We will support Alex Cullen because...." No, you can't do that. You can say, "We will support banning corporate and union contributions," something that Alex Cullen espouses, but you don't have to mention Alex Cullen and you don't have to mention the party in place.

So it's a delicate balancing act, and that's my response.

**Ms. Harinder Malhi:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Mr. Hillier.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Thank you, Mr. Cullen, for being here today and for your presentation. Central to when you start your presentation is, "Let's follow the money." I think that there are many people who would agree that following the money has been a difficult undertaking in provincial politics and in political financing in general. It's sometimes not quite as easy to follow the money and is difficult to do so.

You've done this at the municipal level and you've got some examples here, but you've also been engaged substantially with provincial politics as well.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Politics in general.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Politics in general.

You've given a municipal example here of financing and the relationship—have you got anything else to add on the provincial side?

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Sure. I mentioned that I did three reports on the municipal side. What was very clear was that the corporate community is not fully engaged in municipal politics. You don't find the Bank of Nova Scotia, you don't find Shoppers Drug Mart and you don't find Tim Hortons supporting candidates. But you do have about 30% of all contributions coming from the corporate sector in Ottawa's municipal elections, and it's targeted. So who are the players at the municipal level in the corporate sector? They're the development companies, the construction companies and the waste management companies: companies that do business with city hall. It's in their interest. They're not generous in their—well, I'll have to rephrase that. They are not broadly based in giving their contributions. It's not as if they're supporting a candidate in their local ward. They tend to give to the maximum permitted and they tend to focus on a select group of candidates. As a matter of fact, 75% of those donations in the three elections that I looked at went to 20% of the candidates, mostly incumbents. So it's targeted.

**0920**

Right away, you have to say that these companies, who have a clear, demonstrated interest in what goes on at city hall, are targeting their funds, and there has to be a reason for it. Similarly, at the provincial level, corporations do not give their donations to every party. I think you had a presentation from the leader of the Green Party, and he's not seeing that same love from the corporate sector in Toronto—

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Surprisingly.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Well, you know—but why? But it leads to the point that these corporations and unions are focused on a particular agenda, and the parties clearly depend on this money. It's half their revenues.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** You brought up a phrase there that I think is important. It was "doing business with"—

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** That's right.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** And that's what we've seen. Some people call it pay-for-play or cash-for-access. It's people doing business with one another, or who have the authority or the jurisdiction in that business field. We've seen it—I think the minister who represents your riding had one of the largest quotas for fundraising, and stakeholders of that ministry were the ones invited to the fundraisers. Contracts are being let out in that industry.

You make a good argument here, in your example on municipal, that they can still make all those donations, but personal now.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Every individual has that right, and we don't want to take that away. The United States takes it one step further, though: They require you to identify your employer when you give contributions at the federal level. This is not in this particular piece of legislation, and I don't know if it's that necessary.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Disclosure helps following the money. Without disclosure, you can't follow, unless you're magical.

There are other states and other jurisdictions that also prevent people who are doing business—that if you're making political contributions, you cannot do business with that government as well.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Okay. There's a line here, because everyone has a right to try—it's a democracy, and everyone has a right to present their opinion, even if it's self-interest. What we hope in the large scale of things is that there are choices, there are competing demands, and the merits of the case—the public debate, transparency—would lead elected officials to make the right decision. Democracy is not perfect. Churchill had a famous line that it was a terrible system except for all others, which didn't help very much.

I don't think you can prohibit someone from going to a city council or a school board or the provincial government and saying, "Hey, I've got a great idea for renewable energy. You guys really should do this," and him making a personal investment in the business. I don't think you want to cut that off.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** You'd allow personal investment into the political decision-maker as well, then?

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** He gets to play as an individual, and he can use those resources to promote his plan. The line he crosses is when he gets treated separately and, as additional privilege, if he can use those corporate resources to promote his idea in government through contributions.

We see, all the time, businesses promote their positions, whether it's renewable energy, the pipelines or what have you. They are seeking to mould public opinion, and that's part of debate. They have resources. They're using their resources. That's part of the public debate. We worry about the way to that—

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** We did see the examples this year with the renewable energy contracts, where people—renewable developers—who didn't contribute didn't get contracts.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Yes. So the difference is contribution and being able to espouse your case. I'm not talking about restricting your ability to espouse your case, although there's a big difference between Apple espousing its case and me espousing my case. They've got billions; I don't.

We're talking about how our political process is financed and who gets to participate, who writes those cheques. It should be restricted to the individual voter. That's what this legislation is doing and that's what I support.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you very much. Mr. Fraser?

**Mr. John Fraser:** Alex, it's good to see you this morning. Thank you very much for your presentation. It's well thought out, very well written and well presented. I appreciate very much—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Fraser:** Catherine, do you want to—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It's okay. You started. I thought we were going around this table. That's usually how it works in committee.

**Mr. John Fraser:** If you want to go ahead, Catherine—

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Just for clarification purposes, this is not a strict, regimented way to move forward. There are 40 minutes, so I try to get 13, 14 minutes out of each party. For me, it really doesn't matter who puts their hand up; I will acknowledge them.

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you. Mr. Fraser?

**Mr. John Fraser:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I agree with you on the support of banning union and corporate donations. I think that will be at all levels of government. It's evident that that's important.

But I do want to talk to you about two things. The first is about not increasing limits, which I agree with as well. A question I wanted to ask you, because I think you've run as an independent as well—you spoke about lowering those limits. How would you feel about that in terms of how that would affect the ability of an independent

candidate to be able to raise the kind of money that they need? Do you think it's going to affect it at all? Is it a red herring? Or do you think that maybe you'd have to look at lowering those donation limits with respect to independent candidates and how it would affect them?

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** I've been a fundraiser—as a matter of fact, a fundraiser for your party at one time. The easiest thing to do was to call a small group of people and get the cheques—so minimal effort and greater return.

As a candidate, though, money is always appreciated in a campaign, but you want to broaden your base. You want to increase your base of support because if you have more people who will write a cheque for your campaign, they'll tend to work harder and have more invested in your success. The more people who do that, the greater my chances are of being elected.

When I ran municipally in 2006, 2010 and 2014, I did not take corporate cheques. We relied on a base of individuals. Those individuals, over 300 of them, had an interest in my success and that translated, for at least a couple of those campaigns, into my success.

When you look at the manual that's handed out to riding associations—and I'm only familiar with two—

**Mr. John Fraser:** Probably the same.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Yes. Those manuals promote increasing your voter base, increasing your donor base, because it translates to better chances of success.

We know that there are situations where money can't buy an election but it sure as heck is helpful. We know that if you are able to broaden the base, you have more people working on your campaign and you're better able to get your message out. That increases your chances of success.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Thank you very much. One other question. It's very interesting: You're looking at possibly more than half of the money coming out of the election process and that would probably drive down, depending on what happens with the per-vote subsidy, the money that's available to run campaigns.

But my question does relate to that money that's sitting there that's now not going to be there in terms of a third party. There are arguments for and against how you would handle a third party before an election and whether you should regulate it or not, and what's the best way to do that. There's a potential for a proxy that pops up on the other side. How do you actually prevent that, or maybe not prevent, but make sure there's a balance?

**0930**

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** I think you should look at the federal example because it came into play in 2007, and of course there were a bunch of elections after that. It was a minority government for a while. I think the federal experience has basically shown that political parties have been able to survive the transition. I guess the best example is the Conservative Party, which really broadened their base of supporters. More recently, the Liberal Party has done that, and of course every party is trying to do so because that's where the revenue will come from, federally.

There is the notion that this money, the corporate-union money, is participating in the process because they want to influence the outcome, and if they can't do it directly through supporting parties, they'll do it indirectly. There's some truth to that because they have an agenda to advance and they have resources. You have to draw lines. The line that was used municipally was that you cannot directly support a candidate, otherwise, as a contribution. You can't free up resources to support a candidate; you can't say to someone, "Oh, take the day off. We pay you here and you can go work in Joe Blow's campaign." That's a contribution.

You also can't launder money. Everyone knows that it's against the law to take money from somebody else and then use it to support a candidate. There have been examples of that, which has not worked well. Most Canadians would find that very icky. They know it's wrong, and in the long run such devious behaviour will be exposed, in my view.

The fine line of promoting a program—and I used the example of autism; you could use free trade, you could use whatever—you can't divorce that from the political process. Just look at any large issue that becomes an election issue. People have views and they get to play, and there is that rub-off effect. You can't sterilize the two. What you can do is stop it from crossing over into what is clearly the election forum, which this Legislature and previous Legislatures have defined: the election period, who gets to play, the transparency, the reporting, the accountability—that's where you have a role to play. But you can't say, "Well, gee, someone has made"—I don't know what—"the lowering of the voting age an election issue"—one party or another. —"Therefore you, youth services bureau or YMCA, can't talk about it." No, that would be crossing the line.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I think what I'm hearing from you is there has to be a distinction between what's advocacy and what's trying to directly influence a particular outcome for a particular party or a person, an individual. Is that what I'm hearing?

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** That's right. I know there's going to be disquiet about how that line is drawn, because clearly if you're promoting free trade and you have one party that's running on free trade, there's a rub-off effect. I can't see how—short of saying you can't devote money directly to the party and resources directly to the party you can't eliminate that rub-off effect.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I guess what you're saying or suggesting is that wherever that line gets drawn, that line leaves more room for advocacy, gives the benefit of the doubt—it's based on the advocacy side.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** To go back to first principles, what is the most essential principle to make a functioning democracy? It is the ability to speak freely on issues, to have that debate. You can curtail that in a free and democratic society if you run into another problem. For example, no one can come in here and willy-nilly cry "Fire!" That's the classic legal example. We don't allow people to run in here and yell "Fire!" and cause all kinds

of upset when there is no fire. We accept that limitation on free speech. The Supreme Court has already pronounced on this once—more than once, I think.

There are other examples elsewhere. It's difficult, it's disquieting, but there are first principles. One first principle is that you can't achieve by one method what you cannot achieve by another. Because you can't give directly to a party that espouses—you can't then free up resources in another way. However, there is free debate on issues and everyone is permitted that opportunity.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I'll just make one point here because I know that we look at—I agree with you, but when you look at the challenge of the coal people saying they want to spend \$3 million in advertising six months before an election that says, "Burning coal is a good thing and coal is clean," maybe it's not the best investment, but do you see what I'm saying in terms of the—

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Oh, I understand. But six months, three months, a year—I mean, that's arbitrary. You have to go back to first principles. Just because you have a period, are you going to say that parties can't espouse things? Of course they can. No, the differentiation is between the ability of individuals and the organizations that they're engaged with, whether it's Greenpeace or the coal people, to talk about their issues. That's public debate. So they can talk about coal being clean all they like. You expect other people to join that debate and hopefully present a countervailing viewpoint.

You know, money does not always buy every election. I can recall being engaged in the Charlottetown accord referendum. There was a yes side and a no side. The political establishment was pushing the Charlottetown accord. It didn't go so well. Even though the political establishment was pushing this and the major businesses were pushing this, it didn't go so well because the common people said, "Eh, there's something wrong here. We're not buying it," and it has gone away.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I want to leave time for everybody else. Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Ms. Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you very much for being here, Alex. You've given us a lot to think about.

I want to pick up a little bit around the free speech issue, because all of us around the table have come to the place where we are very supportive of removing union and corporate funding from politics. It took a long time, but we're already there. But this bill, as it's crafted, has a major flaw in it, and that pertains to the six-month period, pre-writ, where issue-based advocacy is being severely restricted. As you point out, free speech is one of those basic tenets of our democracy.

When the electoral officer gave his presentation, he quoted from the United States Supreme Court decision that said, "What separates issue advocacy and political advocacy is a line in the sand drawn on a windy day." What I like best about your presentation is that you say, "It is better, in my view, to regulate against obvious abuse than to grapple with ambiguity and imagined transgressions." This is problematic with this particular

government, because at the same time as they have contained within this piece of legislation that limitation on issue-based advocacy, they changed the Government Advertising Act in 2015. The Auditor General was quoted as saying that the changes to the Government Advertising Act—she described these changes as gutting the restrictions on partisan advertising and said it would allow the government to run partisan ads. We have seen some evidence of that post-June 2015.

My question to you is, can you talk to this committee and share your views on having very restricted issue-based advocacy on the part of the electorate and the citizenship, and having unfettered, unlimited funding on the government side of the House? I'm not talking about government advertising that warns citizens about texting and driving. I'm talking about releasing a commercial on a climate change plan that the citizens have not yet seen.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Well, there is a contradiction, clearly. A restriction on third-party advocacy, yet one of the players that is going to be influencing people's attitudes, whether it's on climate change or employment or you pick it, doesn't have those same restrictions—it's a contradiction. We all understand that the vehicle of government can sometimes be used for partisan advantage. This is not new. It is a problem. From time to time, from Legislature to Legislature, there are attempts on behalf of the Legislature to restrict the power of what was then the crown but is now the government in terms of how it spends public monies and how it advances its case. When you are looking at third-party advocacy and saying, "No, no, no. Six months before, you can't influence things," but you have advertising that clearly seeks to influence issues of the day, it's a contradiction.

0940

Let's go back to first principles. It's not enough to say that we're going to ban the government from talking about these issues. That's not sensible. What are we going to say—that the opposition can't talk about these things? That's not sensible either. The issue is to be able to talk about these things. The line that should be drawn is devoting resources to political players to enable them to advance their issues.

Devoting those resources: You go back to freedom of speech and you go back to, "What are those resources?" So we say—we've all agreed—that it's up to the individual voter. We talked about entities like corporations and unions. Well, government is an entity, right? Government comes from the largest party that has the confidence of that Legislature, so it's clearly partisan.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** And someone is going to have to regulate this. Someone is going to have to oversee, because enforcement is the other side of the coin, right? I was encouraged that the electoral officer recommends that the definition of political advertising proposed in the bill apply only during writ periods; in other words, that it not apply to that six months. That's a recommendation of the electoral officer.

You did reference—and your municipal example is very powerful, I think. It's almost \$1,550, but the actual new donation cap is \$7,750.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Way too large.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Way too large. You consider that still to be "big money."

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Oh, come on. It's a major decision for people to buy a car, right? Yet not every household in Ontario has a car. As a matter of fact, there's a significant minority of Ontarians who don't have cars, and think of how easy it is to buy a car and get 0% financing. So, \$7,000 for politics: Who can do that? Who can write that cheque?

Go back to first principles: You want voters to participate in the political process. You want to make it easy for voters to participate in the political process. You want an incentive for the political process to engage voters. You don't want to create a situation, which I was in, where I could pick up the phone and phone 30 people and get 20 cheques. That's not right. So you want to be in the position where people are engaged in the political process. You do not want to swap one elite for another, because it is a small group of people who can say, "Seven thousand dollars for you, Catherine? Sure."

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** That doesn't happen, actually.

My final question, though—and this is around the public financing of parties, because we have to find a way where politics and the financing associated with our parties is truly transparent. That also involves some sort of disclosure which is open and transparent, and currently it is not.

Yesterday, we heard from former cabinet minister John Gerretsen, and he talked about the culture shift in the role that money played and the expectations of a political party on cabinet ministers and politicians to raise funds. He's very supportive of the public financing of political parties. He's not sure if the actual amount is right or if the mechanisms are right, but he criticized this piece of legislation—that it reduced the public funding for parties over a five-year period down to 70%. He said, "Why do that? If you're serious about having an open and transparent financing model of supporting political parties, including the Green Party, why would you reduce that subsidy to a point where they have to go back to big money to survive?"

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** The fallacy there is "if you have to go back to."

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Well, use the federal example as—just speak to public financing, if you will.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Sure. I support the transitional element. It makes some sense to have some public financing: "Because of the restrictions in reporting that are being imposed on the political process, here is some compensation for all that effort that is happening." That makes sense.

In the end, the political process belongs to the voter. It's not the property of parties. Parties are there. They appeal to voters. If voters don't support them, they do not last long. Where is the party of joining with the United States? There was once a party so registered, and it's now gone; no public support. And you're dealing with public funds, which there is lots of competition for.

So I accept that as a means of transition, there ought to be public funding. And I accept, because of the cost of enforcement of adherence to a publicly regulated regime, that there would continue to be a public subsidy. But I am very leery of saying that this should be a major source of revenue for any political participant. The political participant should live and die on public support. If you're not relevant to the public, then you're not going to play anymore. That's the issue. You cut off easy access to those who will trade on your desire for money because they want to advance their interests. Okay, that link is being broken, finally—federally, provincially and municipally.

So the short answer is, I accept transitional funding to a point. I accept that it stays there to a point because you've got a publicly regulated system. But I don't accept that it becomes a predominant feature.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Okay. Thanks.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** How much time do I have, Chair?

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Five, six, seven—six minutes, maximum.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thanks, Mr. Cullen, for your presentation. I appreciate especially the example of the corporate donor that you outlined in the municipal campaign on page 3 of your presentation.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** I have many more.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I'm sure you do have many, many more. I'm quite interested in the comment that you made before the committee in response to Mr. Fraser's question about, at the municipal level, not having the ability for a corporation to provide a paid volunteer at a campaign office. Yesterday, for example, we had a young gentleman present to us who was a member of a union. He admitted that he had been paid book-off at two provincial campaign offices.

Seeing your example, I just want to make sure that I know unequivocally where you stand. You would support a provision in this legislation that would very clearly outlaw a loophole that would allow a corporation, rather than be able to give a financial donation, to be able to do a paid volunteer at a campaign office. You would agree that should be outlawed in this bill.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Absolutely. Quite frankly, my interpretation of the bill is that it's a financial contribution. You've hired someone to look after your books at corporation X. Telling them, "You can take today and go work for Alex Cullen while still getting paid"—basically, he's being paid to work on my campaign. That is a financial contribution that should be forbidden. Whether you write a cheque to my campaign for that day's worth or you provide me with a person who is going to run around and do that—put up signs, deliver brochures, work on the phones; whatever it is—it comes to the same thing.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** That was my question. I know Mr. Hillier wanted to follow up on the group contribution section, so I'll defer to him.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Thank you. The important element—just for clarification, you said "prohibited" the paid volunteer. Are you really saying—

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** If it's a paid volunteer, it's not a volunteer. That's a contradiction in terms.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Well, it's an oxymoron; I grant that.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** What someone does on their own time is their own business. That's fine.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** But my question is, do you want that to be identified as a contribution, or for it to be prohibited?

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** No. If it can fit under contributions, it's a contribution. That's fine. But that doesn't carry you very far, right?

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Right.

**0950**

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** The maximum contribution at the municipal level is 750 bucks. That's not going to carry you very far.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** No.

The other part of that, in your presentation—municipal financing laws recognize that as a financial contribution where Bill 201 doesn't.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** It ought to.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Yes.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** It would be consistent.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** In the other part of your presentation, you use the term "money laundering," moving money around from one organization to another. I'm not sure if you've looked at subsection 21(1) of Bill 201 under "Group contributions," where we allow unincorporated associations or organizations etc. to provide group contributions. If the contribution is less than \$100 per individual of that group, then it is not deemed as a contribution. So the disclosure becomes—there is no disclosure. It's another backdoor way of funding—

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Let's differentiate between third-party advocacy, because organizations—

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** No, this is just about election finance—campaign finance.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** In election financing, the rock has to be the individual voter—no double-dipping; no doing it twice. You have an individual voter—I have people in my community who are very strong environmentalists. They have so much money to spend on a campaign and they are trying to sort out how to do it. You do not give them a double dip.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Right. So even that environmental group ought not to be allowed to put a couple of hundred people into a campaign—

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Ah, now, a couple of hundred people—

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** —and be paid—

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** See, the environmental group hasn't hired them. It is not a contribution because someone is paying their salary. That salary is being redirected for a campaign effort. These are members of a volunteer group, whether it's Greenpeace or the Council of Canadians, and they come—

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** I'm talking about paid people.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Okay. So paid staff—sorry, no. It's a contribution. That rock has to be solid there.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Ms. Fife, you had three minutes left. Are you interested in taking that?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I do want to clarify that with the delegation that was here yesterday, he did make it clear that he wasn't speaking on the part of his union, but he was a union member. That was his personal perspective that he was sharing.

Around Bill 201, just to clarify: You share the concerns around the six-month issue-based advocacy. You think the \$7,750 is too much.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Correct.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** That's the takeaway for us today. And you have some concerns around government advertising, that it's completely unfettered.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** That's correct.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you. Now, Ms. Hogarth, you have two minutes, maximum.

**Ms. Ann Hogarth:** Thank you, Chair. The government is looking for important feedback in strengthening the proposals in Bill 201. Many of the presenters have advocated for improving donor disclosure by asking donors to list their employer as a way to ensure that corporations and unions are not able to funnel donations to the political parties through individuals. Is this something you support? Why or why not?

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Hmm. I pause only because, is it necessary for the integrity of the process? If it is necessary for the integrity of the process, then regretfully, we would have to do that. So I would go step by step. I'm a little cautious on this. Is the suggestion that there are companies out there that will do that? It's already illegal to funnel money—for anyone to give to anybody else funds to then contribute to a political party. That's already the law. Is it necessary to take this step?

If the judgment of the Legislature is that it is necessary, well, okay; that's what you're elected to do. I am not convinced that it's necessary. I would be saddened if it was necessary. But if it was necessary, I would not hesitate. I'm just not there yet.

**Ms. Ann Hogarth:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you very much. I'd like to thank Mr. Cullen for coming before committee this morning. I appreciate your comments.

**Mr. Alex Cullen:** Thank you. I wish I'd had this time with Bill 181. There, I had 10 minutes and had to rush through everything. But it has been delightful, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** You're quite welcome. Thank you very much.

#### MR. GARETH JONES

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Next on the agenda we have Mr. Gareth Jones. Mr. Jones, how are you today?

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** Fine, thank you. How are you?

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** I'm well, thank you. You have up to 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by 15 minutes of questioning from the committee members. Again, welcome. The floor is yours, sir.

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** Thank you. Good morning. I'm Gareth Jones. I'm a correctional officer in Brockville, a member of OPSEU Local 440 and a regional vice-president for OPSEU.

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to present to you today about the proposed changes outlined in Bill 201 to election financing in Ontario. As a member of OPSEU and as a citizen of this province, I think this is a very important issue. In particular, today I'd like to talk to you about two things: donation limits and the importance of public financing for political parties.

I admit to some bias when it comes to donation limits. I'm not likely to be able to pay for a \$10,000-a-seat dinner to get a private audience with a cabinet minister—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Chair (Mr. John Fraser):** Excuse me, Mr. Jones. Could you just pull your mike closer?

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** Absolutely.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. John Fraser):** Thank you.

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** So to be honest, it upsets me when I read in the papers that ministers who have important decisions to make every day that impact everyone in Ontario have fund-raising quotas that have almost forced them to end up in these types of high-finance situations. I know from talking to my neighbours and from talking to my members that I'm not the only one who feels this way.

In a democracy, my elected representatives and my government should care what I think. They should care what the correctional officers in my local think—and every constituent, for that matter. It shouldn't matter whether I can only afford to give \$10. That should not make my point of view, my members' point of view or anyone's point of view any less relevant than that of someone who can afford to give \$10,000.

But the reality is that, with the current rules, I know and they know that that isn't true. It's simply not the case. If an MPP needs to raise, say, \$100,000 and has two people wanting to help her campaign, one who can afford to give \$10 and one who can afford to give \$10,000, I know which one will be the priority. And the next year, when both of those people ask for a moment of that representative's time, I know which one will still be the priority.

The current rules put representatives into positions that they should not have to be in. Namely, the need to fundraise, coupled with the current and proposed limits, leaves candidates seemingly beholden to large contributors in the public's perception. This perception, along with the fact that these large donors stand to benefit from the actions of those candidates, creates cynicism and a feeling of disenfranchisement among the electorate. That's just simply wrong. What should matter to parties is what's in my head and what's in my heart and how I feel about the issues, not what's in my wallet.

The challenging question that you're grappling with—and I'm glad that you're doing it, because it's a very important one—is a fundamental one to the functioning of democracy: “How do we get there?” I think there is a very simple answer, and this bill already talks about this. The answer is to limit donations so that everyone can participate, regardless of their means, and to take that question of “How much can you afford to give?” off the table completely.

My concern is that the limits that are proposed in this bill—dropping from \$33,250 to \$7,750—still don't put me or my members in the same league as someone who owns a Canadian Tire or has a Bay Street advertising agency. I looked it up. The average salary in Ontario is \$49,000—\$49,000. I doubt that many people earning \$49,000 can afford to give \$7,750 in a year. I know I can't.

**1000**

Further to that, \$49,000 is the average salary. It's a measure of income; it's not a measure of wealth. That's an important point. When you add wealth into the equation and do not simply look at income, the ability of who is or is not able to pay is skewed even further in favour of the few and away from the many.

What I'm saying is that if you're going to try to even things out, it should be at a level that everyone can reach. For me personally, I would say \$50 or less, maybe \$20. I suppose that may sound extreme, given the variation between that number and the proposed number in the legislation.

Everybody says it: Let's take a look at Bernie Sanders in the United States. He is running a campaign that is inspiring people across his country and around the world, engaging people in the process. Just as importantly, it is a solid, well-financed campaign with an average donation of \$27—\$27—so clearly it can be done.

I hope I'm pointing the right way. Here in Canada, we only have to look one province over to see that Quebec parties seem to be able to function quite well with a limit of \$100.

It makes sense that people feel a greater sense of connection to a campaign like the one Bernie Sanders is running. When donations are limited to a level that lets everyone participate, it makes everyone feel that their contribution matters to the campaign and that their support is valued by the campaign. In an age when too many people are feeling cynical and disengaged from politics, that's important. The engagement of the electorate is vital to having a meaningful democracy, and any measure that you take here, in my opinion, needs to have that first and foremost in mind.

There is no arguing with the fact that eliminating these \$10,000-a-plate dinners will decrease the amount of money that political parties are receiving in individual contributions—absolutely, it does. But there is a way to replace that money that does not require giving greater access to those with greater means, and that way is public financing.

When we support political parties through public financing, we create a situation where parties are able to

focus where they should: on winning support and votes from the public. It's really just extending and, indeed, in my opinion, sustaining the principle behind “one person, one vote” to all aspects of politics—and the Supreme Court has referenced this with decisions regarding section 3 of the charter—ensuring that the support of a person who has \$10 in their pocket is worth just as much to a party as the support of someone who has \$10,000.

I'm not an expert on the mechanics of exactly how you implement that public financing. I'm sure that people can tell you why one method works better than another or how to ensure that incumbent parties versus independents versus emerging parties—how to create that balance so that no one ends up with an advantage. But what I think is easy to talk about is the principle of public funding because, in the end, it's about fairness, and that's something that people are experts on. I think we know ourselves when something is fair and when something isn't.

I look at the current system, where a small group of elite people with lots of cash get the minister's time, while my members don't get a phone call. That doesn't feel fair. And the fact that you're all here today looking to fix this system means that you don't feel it's fair, either.

So to wrap up, to finish, I would ask you, as you look at these changes to election financing in Ontario, please ask yourselves the following questions:

Do the numbers you're proposing for donation limits sound like amounts that everyone can donate, whether they work in a Bay Street office, in a Brockville jail, like me, or a part-time minimum wage job? Because if they don't, then you're setting the wrong targets.

Will these changes to election financing encourage engagement and participation by the electorate in the political process with all the benefits that brings?

And does the system that you're creating by how parties are funded lead to a situation where parties care equally about every voter's support regardless of the size of the cheques they can write? In short, will this promote fairness?

Our Chief Electoral Officer said on June 6 before this committee—and I paraphrase—modern services for Ontarians that put the needs of electors first. I believe those are words worth considering.

Thank you for listening to me and best of luck with your deliberations. It's a very important issue and I'm glad that you're working on it.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you very much, Mr. Jones, for your comments. Five minutes for each party. We'll start with the NDP. Ms. Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you very much, Mr. Jones, for your presentation, in particular for focusing on the impact of, as it's described right now in Bill 201, the \$7,750, because our deliberations are supposed to put the elector at the centre and we are supposed to be focusing on fairness in election financing.

You said something interesting for me. You said that, as a member of OPSEU and as an individual citizen in the province of Ontario who works in a correctional

facility, you perceive that money does buy access to politics in the province of Ontario. I wondered if you'd like to talk a little bit more about that and if the proposed change you are recommending, which is a reduction in the individual contribution to politicians and political parties—what impact that would have, positively or negatively.

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** I'm not sure if this is maybe almost tangential, but I recall being at a Liberal golf tournament last year. It was \$800—\$3,200 a foursome. That just happens to be one that I didn't attend, because I didn't have \$800. I did march up and down outside the gates, though.

To me, that illustrated something very powerful, and that is that there were miles and miles of cars lined up with very wealthy individuals. They were able to spend \$3,200 to get a foursome and have access, whereas we, citizens and workers of Ontario, were standing outside the gates being held up by security. That was our access. In a nutshell, that answers it for me.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Okay. This is where we have to find the balance around the financing. Even for an individual who is not in a by-election year or a leadership race, that \$1,550 is still a lot of money. So you would have us have a hard look at that number and greatly reduce it?

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** Absolutely. When I talk to my friends and neighbours, and members as well—I don't know too many people who have \$1,550 that they can spare. Frankly, if they do have that kind of money, no offence to anyone at this table, I hope they find a better use for it. I really do. I don't believe that that should be the role that citizens are expected to play. I believe that anything that broadens the base is a good thing. It will improve access to democracy. It simply is that the larger the number is, the more restricted access is. There's no escaping that logic.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Okay. That's a very good description. For me, my takeaway from your presentation is that you very much see that money does buy access to politics and you want us to address it through this bill and through this committee.

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** Absolutely.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you very much. Ms. Hoggarth?

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** Thank you for your presentation. Ontario is taking steps to level the playing field—that's what this is all about—by limiting the role of third-party advertising in elections. Bill 201 accomplishes this by taking the important step of limiting the amount of third-party advertising in an election.

You're a part of an organization that may at some point have been or could be a part of third-party advertising, that spends funds on election advocacy. The third-party spending limits relate only to advertising in this bill. Not included in the cap are other political activities, such as mailings to union members, company employees or shareholders, or making telephone calls to electors to encourage them to vote, along with day-to-day

political operations and advocacy. Do you think that third-party advertising should be limited, or not?

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** I guess I would qualify my remarks with writ period or non-writ period. I think that you're going to find a delicate balancing act between allowing legitimate expression of advocacy by various groups. I heard an example when the previous presenter was talking about autism funding. There's an example where you have parents' groups that could well want to advocate and put out a public position on what they feel. And so, I think—

1010

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** Would that not be against a party or a candidate?

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** I think if it were explicitly directed against a party, then it may well be taken that way. But I would ask you this: Should parents be allowed to advocate for their children?

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** Have what?

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** Should parents be able to advocate for their children? Should a parents' group, representing the interests of their children, be allowed to advocate for what they see as those children's needs? It's a delicate act. It's a delicate balancing act; there's no doubt about that. So I don't know what the exact answer to that is, but I would say that if the answer ended up being, "No, you can't advocate for your children," maybe that's not a good answer.

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Gareth, welcome. I'm glad to see you before the committee. I appreciate the work that you do in my riding and the hard work that you do at the Brockville Jail. I toured your workplace freely. I agree with you in many comments about access. Certainly, in dealing with issues that affect your members—and I'd love to hear your comments—I think you share my view that you would much rather be an advocate for your members, whether it be at ServiceOntario closures, demonstration school closures or some of your members who perhaps would work with parents and children with autism, as opposed to being focused on more election activities. Would that be a fair assessment?

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** Well, this is certainly a departure from my normal activities; that's fair to say.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** One of the things that we've talked about at the committee—and I know you didn't cover it—is advertising and advocacy from a government perspective. One of the things that I brought up at committee a couple of times, and I used the example—some have used six months; I used the Manitoba example of three months, where, leading up to the election, the government would be restricted in the amount of advertising they use. In Manitoba, for example, it would be government tenders, job postings and emergency announcements, and you would have someone adjudicate it. In Manitoba's case, it would be the election commissioner. Is that something that you have put your mind to? Do you have any comment on a restriction for the government on

advertising that they would be involved in, leading up to the election?

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** Broadly speaking, it's recognized that there is a certain weight that comes with incumbency in government. I would, in general terms, be supportive of anything that reduced that incumbent advantage, so I guess, broadly, yes.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** In terms of your strong comments regarding quotas and cash for access, I agree with many of the things you said. Certainly you believe, I believe, that what we saw with the media reports about Minister Chiarelli's \$6,000-a-plate access for himself and Premier Wynne—you as an advocate for your membership shouldn't have to buy a ticket to a fundraiser, for example, for your former minister, Mr. Naqvi, if you were advocating for your members for better conditions in our correctional facilities in Ontario.

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** No, and that is a real problem because part of my role, frankly, is advocacy for my members and part of it is advocacy for the community at large in a variety of settings or issues. It's difficult when—and I've protested outside of a number of members' offices here and a number of other members across the province—yes, Mr. Fraser.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Oh, yes.

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** Having said that, I'm perfectly happy doing that. But it's just as important to be able to get inside that office and have access. This is what I'm talking about with respect to fairness. A citizen is a citizen is a citizen. No one citizen should be more valuable than another. It's an unequal world, but we have the ability here, through this legislation, to make it more equal in one of the most fundamental aspects of our society, and that is having a vibrant participatory democracy. If we don't have that, we don't really have very much. That's something that we should be defending passionately and fiercely, because I believe in this very strongly.

This is an important piece of legislation. It's going to very much govern the actions and abilities of people to participate in the political process. Therefore, anything that broadens that base, engages citizens and allows a meaningful participation in every aspect of political life, that should be your in. Thanks, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you very much. We have a couple of minutes. Mr. Fraser.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I just want to say hi, Mr. Jones. We've met before on a couple of occasions.

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** Yes, we have.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I want to thank you for your presentation this morning. It's very thoughtful, and I know that you're very passionate about it. I can tell by how you're delivering that.

One of the questions that I did want to ask was around—I wanted to make sure you're clear with the banning of corporate and union donations as something that you support unequivocally inside that bill.

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** So to be clear, you're asking me if I support the banning of corporate and union donations?

**Mr. John Fraser:** Yes.

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** Yes, as a matter of fact, I do. This flows from the same principle of fairness, that the voice of one person should not be louder or more valued than another.

**Mr. John Fraser:** One of the things that I asked one of the previous presenters around third parties: How do we actually strike that balance? Because there is a risk of a proxy inside, once you restrict or diminish inside the political process, either by funds or by any other kind of limitation. There's a potential for that to drift over to a third party or a proxy. Is that of any concern to you?

I think, as the previous presenter said, there is a balance. Do you think that's a problem? If you do, how do you get that balance?

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** I think it's definitely an issue. I think it was Mr. Hillier who was talking earlier about making it easier basically to follow the money. I hope I'm paraphrasing you accurately.

I would be in favour of any measures that increased transparency, I guess, for want of a better word to put it. So yes, if that meant, when you're talking about the proxy stuff—and I believe Mr. Cullen referenced several acts that are already illegal, so I don't think we need to re-legislate what has already been legislated. But if there is a mechanism in this legislation to make it easier to account for any cash or paid activity, then absolutely, I would support that. I hope that answers—

**Mr. John Fraser:** I guess it's the division that I'm driving at, the division between advocacy and partisanship, because that's the risk. Right? That's the risk, that the money that's freed up inside the system goes to a proxy. Some people don't think that's a risk or a danger; other people do. I'm just trying to get where you're at on that. What I hear is you think there might be a problem.

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** I think there might be a problem, and it is delicate. I used the example before of a parents' group, and there are several ongoing issues working with parents' groups. I think you need to allow people who are representing special interest groups such as that on matters of public policy a voice.

When you're saying a partisan part, well, that's difficult. I'm not trying to beat that example to death, but again I'm part of a parents' group advocating for their autistic children. The fact that I advocate saying that I believe a government policy should be changed, does that make it anti-Liberal? Does that make it partisan? Because there is always a party in power.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I guess what I'm asking—I agree. I agree that there has to be an ability to advocate for issues that you believe are important. The question is, where do you draw that line from partisanship? I think you have to err more on the side of advocacy, but where do you actually draw that line? So that's why I wanted to draw that out of you to see if you thought that was a concern.

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** I see the point you're getting at, and yes, I can see that being a concern. It's difficult, and frankly, there's probably someone with more expertise who can give you a better answer. For me, I am

concerned about limiting people's voices. However, along with the same principle, it's not having one voice larger than another. I take your point.

1020

**Mr. John Fraser:** Yes. That's absolutely correct. It's all the voices close to the same volume.

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** And that's an admirable goal.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Hillier, two minutes.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Thank you. I'll be very quick.

I was glad to hear your comments about disclosure as well, and the importance on disclosure. I just want to ask: Have you heard, or have you been briefed at all by your organization, about subsection 21(2) of the act, where group contributions, if under \$100, can be deemed not to be a contribution, and if there is any impact or effect on OPSEU that you are aware of?

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** I guess my viewpoint on that would be that a contribution is a contribution, and transparency should be the goal.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** There shouldn't be exemptions?

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** No, I don't believe there should be.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** No? Okay.

Just to finish off: If you ever want to come out golfing to Perth, it's only 30 bucks, and I'll be glad to go with you—30 bucks; it includes the cart.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** No meal.

Thank you very much. We appreciate you coming before committee, Mr. Jones. We appreciate your comments this morning.

**Mr. Gareth Jones:** Thank you.

#### OTTAWA AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Next we have on the agenda, from the Ottawa and District Labour Council, Mr. Sean McKenny. He is the president with us this morning. We welcome you, sir. How are you today?

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** I'm good. How are you?

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Never better; thank you very much. You have up to 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by 15 minutes of questioning from the parties. Welcome. The floor is yours.

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** Okay, thank you.

Good morning. The Ottawa and District Labour Council is one of the oldest and largest labour councils of the approximately 110 labour councils across the country. Our history in Ottawa dates back to the year 1872. With over 90 union locals and a membership of over 50,000 working men and women in the city of Ottawa, we are the largest democratic and popular organization here. Our membership includes OPSEU, CUPE, USW, ATU, COPE, CUPW, carpenters, ACTRA, SEIU, the machinists, PSAC, UFCW, Unifor—and the list goes on. I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to present this morning.

A review of our electoral system is vital in order to ensure that the structure is a fair one, an equitable one and one that is truly democratic. Workers today are much more keenly aware of government policy, legislation and electoral politics than workers of yesterday. In my role as the full-time president of the labour council and 35 years active within the trade union movement, I know this to be so, and of that there is no doubt.

It continues to be incredibly frustrating for some of us that there appears not to be a distinction drawn between a union and a corporation. Policies, rules and legislation are enacted with the two in mind, yet the two are so very different.

Unions play a pivotal role in a democratic society. Its focus—whether that be social, political or economic—has been enshrined by legal commentators as well as the Supreme Court of Canada. The 1991 Lavigne decision of the Supreme Court of Canada recognized the importance and legitimacy of trade unions in engaging in political and advocacy activities. In speaking for the majority, Justice La Forest wrote, “Unions’ decisions to involve themselves in politics by supporting particular causes, candidates or parties stem from a recognition of the expansive character of the interests of labour and a perception of collective bargaining as a process which is meant to foster more than mere economic gain for workers.”

Whether focusing on issues related to health care or education, hydro or carding, unions don't solely speak on the needs or wants of one but those of many, including the many who do not have the benefit of a union.

We only need to look back a few weeks ago, when Canada's Minister of Finance announced long-awaited changes to the Canada Pension Plan—a plan that will see an enhanced CPP, thereby helping to ensure the many of our seniors who do not have a workplace pension are at least provided some dignity. It was the labour movement who were front and centre for many years attempting to convince federal and provincial legislators that an enhanced CPP was in the best interests of all Canadians—“all Canadians” meaning those who are members of unions as well as those who aren't. This was not self-interest. This was not for personal profit or gain.

The whole of the reason we're here today and at this juncture is the idea or the perception of personal or monetary gain—corporations that may have profited or benefited, depending on what was contributed to a candidate or to a party. Big money can mean, and certainly creates a perception, that there is easier access to a decision-maker. Some of the changes proposed in Bill 201, although not completely, will help to control that from happening and/or the perception of it from taking place.

Two specific issues that don't appear to be addressed in Bill 201 but that should be, could be: one, the idea that a sitting government can pour millions of dollars into advertising right before an election, all in the name of impressing upon the general public, the voting public, what a swell job they've done, with the reality being, it is

nothing more than campaigning. Campaigning for office using public dollars—lost upon some of the electorate—is a smoke-and-mirrors attempt to garner support. That all government advertising cease six months prior to an election ensures fairness within a complicated system.

Another area that needs to be addressed is the elephant in the room, so to speak. It's difficult, and it challenges all of us because we do live in a democratic country, province and society where free speech must always be allowed, where open and free communication becomes a part of that democracy. Through social media such as Facebook and Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and others, we use that communication, as an interested and opinionated public, to put our views and opinions forward. That's good. That's healthy. That's balance. Our press, our news media is important. Its freedoms are paramount to our democracy. Yet a news industry—inclusive of print, television and radio—owned by a few whose power and strength during elections in the arena of public opinion, and its influence, cannot be ignored. So if those freedoms are expected to continue, what of communication put out by unions in newsletters and the like, communicating with our membership about issues that are important to working people?

I stated during the beginning of my submission that the Ottawa and District Labour Council is the largest popular and democratic organization in the city. I think it was OPSEU president Smokey Thomas—and you just heard from Gareth, of course—who said it best when he said, “Democratic organizations should not be barred from communicating about politics any more than news organizations should be. Both are vital to the functioning of political life in this province. They should be encouraged, not repressed.”

Whatever the final recommendations are, the steps and initiatives taken and moved forward by this committee and this government must level the playing field. There is opportunity, but that opportunity must also create equality, not among a select few, but amongst all of us in the province.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you very much. Is the opposition ready? Ms. Hoggarth had her hand up first.

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** Thank you for your presentation, from one union member to another. Bill 201 attempts to level the playing field by banning corporate and union donations. I do agree with a lot that you say about union democracy. As a head of a union, I know that we voted on everything. That's the way it worked.

What is your organization's position on the ban on corporate and union donations? There is no corresponding ban in Bill 201 that bans corporate and union contributions to third parties. Should we ban corporate and union donations to third parties as well? If not, should there be a limit, and, if so, what amount?

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** Boy, that's a lot.

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** I know.

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** Wow. You may have to repeat some of that.

Let me go back to the first point about banning union and corporate donations. At the close, I talked about equality and the importance of equality and the importance of things being that way across the province. The fact of the matter is simplistic, in that a union is not a corporation. However, history defines us as stepping back when we have to. So in this particular instance, to ensure fairness, that's something that our organization would not object to, although, again, I think personally I see a significant difference in the two. One is on behalf of its membership in respect to those donations; the other is for profit.

**1030**

To answer the first question, in order to be fair, I think the corporations most assuredly have to—the banning of donations should certainly happen there. In order to ensure that that occurs, then I think unions in principle are willing to do the same.

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** Okay. The next part was, should we ban corporate and union donations to third parties?

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** Again, I think the important part of third-party advertising is a union's ability to get a message out. It's difficult. You can't lump all of it together. There's a difference. A union speaks on behalf of its membership. You've heard others talk about the importance of a health care system and the importance of education. We're the ones that speak out about that if there are cuts. It's the unions, and the unions that are associated with those respective sectors, that do that. So I'm not opposed to third-party advertising or to donations towards third-party advertising by unions.

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

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Mr. Fraser.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Just very quickly, I want to follow on in that, Sean. And thank you very much for your presentation. On the third-party piece, I just want to be clear: You think there should be no restriction on third-party. One of the things that I had an opportunity to ask a few of the previous presenters is this: When we start to restrict on one side, there's a chance that you'll get a proxy on the other side. That money will go from being in the political process to being in the third-party process, which means that if you don't—what's the line between advocacy and partisanship? Because you run the risk of all that money flowing over there and then having—I don't want to say “unregulated,” but a bit of the Wild West.

I use the example of coal. The coal guys or coal people get together and they say, “We have \$4 million to tell people that burning coal is good. So we're going to spend that in the six months before the election.” Maybe it's not a good way of spending money, but you can think of other examples where people are looking—not just from the corporate side; the union side as well—after the interests specific to their organization. There would be an unfettered ability to influence. What I heard from you is, you're not worried about that.

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** No, it's not what I said. Again, one of the difficulties here for you as a committee is to

try and decipher a lot of that. What I did say was that when a union does speak out on an issue, it's doing so on behalf of its membership; it's doing so on behalf of workers in general. On that part, you have to be careful because you can't stop that, because that's just not fair and that's not democratic.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I agree, but the point I'm trying to make or ask is, are you concerned with any risk in there at all?

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** I think there are a lot of concerns that I have about a lot that's contained in Bill 201, but a lot of confidence in this committee that when recommendations go forward and the government does vote, the appropriate decision is going to be made.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Thanks.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Mr. Hillier?

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Thank you, Sean, for being here today. A couple of things: First off, have you looked at the bill in the light of disclosure, and are you satisfied or not with the lack of changes to disclosure in that regard?

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** Give me an example.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** The disclosure of who is providing contributions and who is providing goods and services to whatever political campaigns or even on third-party advertising—or third-party advocacy.

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** You know, again, I think it—am I concerned? I have full confidence in the committee that they're going to flush a lot of this out. I think we have to get away from things that are not apparent. I think we have to ensure—the committee members have to ensure—that there is more transparency. If that involves identifying those individuals who are making those contributions towards the process, then that should be done.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** So you're in favour of that openness and transparency.

Just one other comment: Correct me if I'm wrong, but it sounded to me that you're very much in favour of fewer restrictions on third-party advocacy—I don't think that's a mistake—for unions because they're democratic organizations. Is that—

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** You know, Mr. Hillier, it's no secret that you're not a big fan of unions.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** No, I'm just asking a question. Actually, I was a member of a few unions, so—

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** Yes. Mr. Baird was the son of a very strong union member; it doesn't mean that he was any better in our books.

Yes, I think the transparency piece is important. I think that the more we're transparent, the more people are going to come out and vote. That should be part of the purpose of this. The difficult thing, even as we talk here, whether it's the people who are going to present to you today or in Hamilton or in Toronto or wherever else you're going to be, is that we have to, and that the role of this committee is to, I believe, ensure that more people come out to vote. If providing transparency in respect to the contributors is a way to cause that to happen, then it has to happen.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** No, but my question was that there appeared to be a difference in your view about third-party advocacy—that unions should have a greater freedom to be engaged in third-party advocacy than possibly others.

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** Like who?

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Corporations or whoever else.

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** There's a distinction. There's a difference, and I can read it again if you would like. There's a difference between a union and a corporation. I don't think there's any argument there, and we have the Supreme Court of Canada actually making those statements more than once.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Yes. I just wanted to be clear. Everybody has a view of levelling the playing field. That term has been used. Clearly, different people have different views of what a level playing field is, and that's one of the things that we need to sort out here. But I just wanted that to be clear.

Where I have a distinction with that—for example, you're suggesting that the newspaper guild union should be able to be fully engaged in third-party advocacy, but who they work for ought not to be.

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** There's so much of a distinction there, right? You have a newspaper that controls what's in the paper, that controls what kind of letters are in the paper, what kind of op-eds are written and in what ways articles, at certain times—and not all; I want to make that very clear. I'm not talking about reporters and I'm not talking about journalists; I'm talking about the owners of those newspapers. That was my reference.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Yes, but they're often union members as well.

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** The owners of a newspaper, union members? I doubt that.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** No, no, we've had lots of unionized members. The Toronto Star is fully unionized.

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** But the owners themselves are members of a union?

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** No, no. The owners aren't.

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** Right.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** But the employees—

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** Oh, absolutely. Our Ottawa Citizen here are strong members. Those individuals who work at the Ottawa Citizen are also affiliated with the Ottawa and District Labour Council as well—a great group of people; no question.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Ms. Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you very much, Sean, for coming in and for sharing your concerns as it relates to Bill 201.

I think you can hear that the challenges we're having primarily, I think, have to do with that six-month pre-writ period around issue advocacy, paired with the very strong upper hand, if you will, of the government and their ability to advertise at will using our money.

I don't know if you know this, but the electoral officer has recommended that the definition of political advertis-

ing proposed in the bill apply only during writ periods and not that six-month period. So we're very hopeful that that actually does get changed, because this is only a first reading, right? So there's an opportunity, and that feedback is valuable to us. I suspect that if it's not removed, there will be a charter challenge because we are ultimately talking about freedom of speech.

Can you give this committee some sense as to how you and your members feel about the government having carte blanche—full access, full funding ability—to advertise pre-writ and even during elections, and what that does to the democratic process and the integrity and the confidence that we have in the democratic process?

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** I referenced that during the presentation that I made. I think it's wrong. I think that the unfortunate thing is not everybody sees it for what it is, and what it is is campaigning. I'm not suggesting that the general public and a lot of those within the general public are naive or not smart enough to be able to see through what's taking place, which is campaigning. I think that's very clear.

It's a way that a government has to sort of step around some of the policies. That certainly would be a concern that we have with Bill 201. It's a very important piece, so hopefully the committee will take steps to ensure that at least six months prior to the election, that is not allowed to occur.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Are you aware that the electoral officer has also recommended that all third-party political advertising should be regulated for the whole period between elections?

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** I am aware of that.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Okay. The goal of this committee is to put the electorate at the centre, to instill some confidence back in political financing, but also to get big money out of politics. That's the language that folks are using. What do you think of the contribution rate of \$7,750? Do you think that still ranks as big money?

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** I'm trying to think of how many of the individuals who are affiliated with the labour council—the membership; the 50,000 working men and women—have \$7,000 to put forward to donate. I can assure you not very many of them do.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you very much. That concludes your time. We thank you very much, Mr. McKenny, for coming before committee this morning and sharing your thoughts.

**Mr. Sean McKenny:** Thank you.

No golf, Mr. Hillier? I'm not a bad golfer, too.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Oh, anybody can come. I didn't think golfing was in your repertoire, that's all.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Next on the agenda is Democracy Watch: Mr. Duff Conacher. Is Mr. Conacher with us this morning at this time?

How about Mr. Kory Earle?

How about we take a five- or 10-minute break? We're a bit ahead of schedule, as well, so a 10-minute health break. We are now recessed.

*The committee recessed from 1043 to 1054.*

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** I call the Standing Committee on General Government back to order. Welcome back.

## DEMOCRACY WATCH

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Next on the agenda, we have Mr. Duff Conacher. He's the co-founder and chair of the Money in Politics Coalition of Democracy Watch. We welcome you, sir, this morning. You have up to 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by 15 minutes of questioning from the three parties. The floor is yours. Welcome.

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** Thank you very much for this invitation to appear before the committee on this historic occasion.

Democracy Watch and the Money in Politics Coalition, which is made up of 50 citizen organizations with a total of more than three million members, welcome the opportunity to participate in the policy-making process concerning Bill 201, which finally follows up, from our perspective, on the Ontario Liberals' 2003 election promise to democratize and make democratic changes to the provincial political finance system. Back in 2003, when we were hoping for action, I didn't have to wear these glasses in order to read my submission, but now, 13 years later, I do.

We approve, first of all, of the referral of Bill 201 to the committee after first reading. I have a submission that I will distribute to the Clerk electronically so that you will all have our full thoughts in detail. I'm going to summarize those today, and then I welcome your questions.

Overall, our point is that we hope the committee will make several changes to the bill to ensure it actually democratizes Ontario's provincial political finance system. We also hope that the government will go on to make similar changes to the province-wide municipal law to fully democratize the political finance system at the municipal level as well, of course taking into account the fact that political parties do not exist at the municipal level across the province.

Joined by almost 10,000 Ontarians who have signed a petition in the past few weeks, Democracy Watch and the Money in Politics Coalition approve of some of Bill 201's proposed reforms as follows: (1) the ban on donations and loan guarantees by corporations, unions and other organizations; (2) limits on political party and third-party advertising spending leading up to an election and during the election campaign period; and (3) the registration requirements and limits on donations to nomination race candidates and political party leadership race candidates. We approve of those new elements that are contained in Bill 201, and see them as democratic reforms to the current system.

However, our position is that the bill has significant flaws. I'll just summarize and go through those in summary form, and then I'm happy to answer and provide details during the question period.

First of all, the limit on annual donations by individuals to each party must be lowered to \$100 annually, as it is in Quebec, with an additional \$100 combined total allowed to be donated to each party's riding associations and, during an election year, to each party's election candidates.

To be democratic, a political finance system must uphold the fundamental democratic principle of one person, one vote. Bill 201 violates this principle because it allows individuals to donate amounts that the large majority of voters cannot afford to donate. One person could donate a total of more than \$4,500 annually to each party and its riding associations in between elections, and during election year a total of more than \$7,500 to each party, its riding associations and its candidates.

According to Statistics Canada, the average post-tax income of individuals in Ontario in 2012 was \$35,000 to \$40,000. As a result, the donation limits proposed in Bill 201 are clearly much higher than an average Ontario voter can afford, unless the government believes that average-income Ontarians should, as a top priority, disregard basic housing, food, clothing, etc. needs and spend a significant portion of their after-tax income on political donations. Even if the government compromised and these totals were reduced by approximately 50%, the system would still be far from democratized, as the limits would still be much, much more than an average Ontario voter could afford. Therefore they would still allow wealthy individuals to use money as an undemocratic way to have more say and more influence over parties and politicians, which again violates the fundamental democratic principle of one person, one vote.

To give just one stat from the federal level—and some like the Globe and Mail have said, “Oh, yes, reduce the donation limit and then everything is fine,” and the Toronto Star as well has taken that position somewhat, although the Globe has pushed for the Quebec system.

#### 1100

At the federal level, individual donations in 2014 were limited to \$1,200 per party and another \$1,200 combined total to each party's riding associations. Total donations in 2014, which is the most recent year for which full data is available, to the federal Liberal Party show that 9% of donors gave 40% of the total donated. Those people are obviously wealthy enough to afford the maximum, \$1,200. This is just 9% of donors to the party, not including the riding associations. Nine per cent gave 40% of the total amount donated. That's a system allowing wealthy interests to still use large donations as a means of undemocratic influence over parties.

If you believe in the fundamental democratic principle of one person, one vote, you simply cannot support such a system. Bill 201 essentially proposes the same system. It even allows larger donations, so you'll likely have an even more undemocratic ratio, where you'll have 9% or 10% of donors giving 50% to 60% of the amount to each party. That's not a democratic system.

As well, the high donation limits in Bill 201 will, as Quebec's and Toronto's experiences show clearly, also

facilitate and obscure ongoing large donations from businesses, unions and other organizations, funnelled through their executives and their family members. The Toronto Star did a study recently and found that although corporate and union donations were banned in 2009, big business and other special interest group executives and their families continued to give large amounts to city councillors.

Élections Québec did an audit just looking at 2006 to 2011. Even though corporate and union donations were banned in the late 1970s in Quebec, just in that five-year period, Élections Québec found \$12.8 million in likely illegally funnelled donations. No one has been charged because the donors say, “Oh, I gave the money on my own,” and the business says, “We didn't tell them to give the money,” or the union says, “We didn't tell them to give the money.”

Bill 201 also allows nomination race and election candidates to donate \$5,000 to their own campaign and party leadership candidates to donate \$25,000 to their own campaign. That, again, violates the principle of one person, one vote. Candidates should not be allowed to give more to their campaign than anyone else. It gives an advantage to wealthy candidates.

In 2013, to stop all of this, Quebec lowered its individual donation limit to \$100 annually. That's what should be done in Ontario, as well. Anything less will be an undemocratic charade that will simply obscure, not stop, corrupting, large donations from businesses, unions and other organizations.

Loans must also be prohibited above the donation limit of \$100. But if the parties feel that loans are needed to survive through election periods and have the money needed, then they should come from a public fund and be limited to the average amount donated to a party during the previous two years, so that no party can get a huge loan just to make up for the lack of popular support that they actually have going into an election.

Loans from financial institutions cause conflicts of interest because the provincial government regulates the banks in some ways and the credit unions fully. So loans must be limited, not just donations.

All donations and gifts of money, property, services and volunteer labour must be disclosed. The largest loophole is for volunteer labour. Donations of volunteer labour should be required to be tracked and disclosed—including the identity of the donor's employer and board and executive affiliations—to ensure businesses, unions and other organizations do not attempt to thwart the ban on monetary donations by volunteering their employees to parties and politicians.

Number four change: The base amount of annual per-vote public funding given to parties should be reduced from the proposed \$2.26 down to \$1. Per-vote funding is democratic, but it shouldn't be at such a high level that it encourages parties to make false promises during elections to bait voters and then get their per-vote funding through till the next election, even if they break all those promises and lose that popular support. So it

should be reduced to \$1 per vote. That will force parties to stay in touch with voter concerns in between elections if they want to attract their ongoing support and their donations.

In addition to the per-vote funding, in order to make up the gap that many of you are probably thinking will be there, matching funding for both candidates and parties should be put in place, as in Quebec. Matching funding is a very democratic way to ensure that those with popular support will actually get the funding that they deserve. That should be for both parties and candidates.

Finally, Elections Ontario and the Ontario Integrity Commissioner should be required to conduct annual random audits to ensure all the rules are being followed by everyone. The rules in any law are nice words on paper unless they are properly enforced. As Quebec's experience shows clearly—they finally did an audit in 2011; if they had done one back in the early 1980s, they would have stopped the corrupting donations that happened. They waited until 2011 and finally did it. They looked back five years and found \$12.8 million in likely illegally funnelled donations. Random audits should be required by Elections Ontario and Ontario's Integrity Commissioner on an annual basis.

I welcome your questions. Thank you very much again for this opportunity to present on Bill 201.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you very much, Mr. Conacher. Mr. Hillier.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Thank you, Mr. Conacher, for being here today. I liked your presentation and I look forward to seeing the complete presentation when you send it over to the committee.

You used some terms regarding volunteer labour, and you mentioned that they need to be tracked and disclosed in an attempt to prevent people from trying to “thwart” the system. That follows up on some comments that former minister John Gerretsen made to the committee yesterday. He used the term “conclave”—that as soon as the legislation is put out, specialized people will go through and have a conclave to find out how to circumvent the legislation. I think that's important for every member on this committee to understand. Parties, just like everybody else, will look at how to take advantage of whatever is written down in legislation.

I want to follow up. You're the first time that we've had anybody at the committee talk about the Integrity Commissioner's role in election financing. You've suggested random audits. Are you aware that under Ontario's existing integrity act, people aren't allowed to lodge a complaint against the actions of a member? Only another member of the Legislature can initiate an investigation.

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** Yes.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** You're aware of that?

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** At least in terms of the integrity act, yes. Under the lobbying act, anyone can file a complaint. I've experienced that myself recently. Democracy Watch, under my name, filed a complaint about the exclusive private fundraising events going on. The Integ-

riety Commissioner said that he would love to investigate but can't unless a member files the complaint.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** This committee, because we're looking at the bill at first reading, is allowed to look at aspects other than what's included in the bill. Does your presentation make any reference to strengthening or making reforms to the integrity act to allow organizations such as yours or individuals who become aware of possible wrongdoing to bring a complaint forward?

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** Not to the Integrity Commissioner in particular, no. But we certainly support that. We've been calling for that for 15 years now across the country. It's very common across the country that only members can complain about members. Federally, we were allowed to complain until 2007, and then the so-called Federal Accountability Act removed that ability to complain to the federal ethics commissioner.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** What about on the lobbying side? This act is fairly quiet on lobbying or making reforms in that regard. But we do know that lobbyists are a keystone in many election financing campaigns. We know that the federal guidelines prevent ministers from fundraising from their stakeholders. Although it's a guideline, it doesn't have any consequences; it's not codified. Does your presentation get into any of—your full presentation. Have you looked at beefing up or reforming the lobbyist side through Bill 201?

1110

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** If you lower the donation limit to \$100 and you require disclosure—I didn't mention this detail, but our position is also that disclosure should be made of anyone who organizes any fundraising event. Their identity should be in the registry, because that's—the colloquial term is a “bundler.” But if you lower the donation limit to \$100, you even deal with the bundler problem somewhat. If they can get—

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** If it gets down that low, but there's no—

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** If it doesn't, then we want to have bundlers' identities disclosed, so you know who they are.

The lobbying act actually says that a lobbyist cannot put a member in a conflict of interest. The gap is actually in the Members' Integrity Act. The Members' Integrity Act allows members to take part in discussions and decisions where they can make a personal profit because of the “general application” loophole. Ninety-nine per cent of the decisions that you take part in and that ministers take part in are decisions that apply generally. Therefore, a minister can own stock in a business that they regulate and make a decision that makes the business more money, and therefore themselves more money, because they would be changing the law that applies not just to one business, but to the whole industry and therefore the act does not even apply. So it really should be called the “almost impossible to be in a conflict of interest” act because of that loophole. Therefore, it's almost impossible for a lobbyist to put a minister in a conflict of interest as well.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** It looks like my time is out. Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Ms. Fife?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you very much, Mr. Conacher.

I'm interested in the matching funding that you were talking about. In your view, or in Democracy Watch's view, is this—speak to both the per-vote funding and then the matching funding, as you proposed. Do you see this as transitional? Do you see it as permanent? Should it be reviewed? This is the first time we've heard about matching funding, so it could be valuable for us.

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** I think the per-vote funding should be permanent—that's our position—but at a low level, so it just provides a base. What it does is it corrects the imbalance of public funding that parties receive because of our flawed voting system. Usually, one or two parties get more seats than they deserve in the Legislature. Each one of those politicians gets a huge annual budget that they can essentially use to campaign through their constituency office until the next election. That's a huge public-funding subsidy to some parties. Then, other parties don't get the seats they deserve. So the per-vote funding, because it's based on the number of votes you receive, is a proportional representation system of funding, and it balances that out somewhat.

The matching funding is more aimed at the ability of parties to get out there and convince people to give, but it balances things out as well because if you have a system where you get more matching funding for the first, let's say, \$10,000 you raise, then it balances things out even more. If someone could raise \$40,000 because they're supported by wealthy donors, and another person could only raise \$10,000, that's a 4-to-1 ratio. But if you match that first \$10,000 by \$2 per dollar raised, then the person raising \$10,000 would get another \$20,000 and they would end up with \$30,000, and the person raising \$40,000 would get \$20,000 and would end up with \$60,000. So then it's 60 to 30; that's a 2-to-1 ratio; that's better than a 4-to-1 ratio. So that's why the matching funding is a very democratic thing to do because someone who has a lot of popular support, but maybe from lower income voters, will get a boost and be more equal in the end if they're up against a candidate that is supported by wealthy donors.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Okay. Thank you for that. We'll probably follow up with research on that, but—

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** Yes, and it's in Quebec's system as well. The thing they don't—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** You hold up Quebec's system because they went through a lot of similar issues that we're facing here. You hold up Quebec's system as the model for us to—

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** It's the world-leading system in Democracy Watch's view. The one flaw is that they only give matching funding to candidates up to the first \$800 they raise. The parties get a lot of matching funding; that money should not all go to party headquarters. Candidates should get matching funding as well because

otherwise it's the candidates going to party headquarters saying, "I need some money for my campaign," and that increases the party's centralized control over each candidate. That's not democratic either because they're supposed to represent their voters, not represent the party headquarters.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Okay. On another issue entirely, I thought I would hear more from Democracy Watch on the pre-writ period around issue-based advocacy and the restrictions and the limitations that Bill 201 places on citizens who wish to enter into any sort of advocacy issue, like autism, climate change, natural gas—these issues.

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** Democracy Watch's position has always been that there should be restrictions on third-party advertising.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I'm not talking about advertising. I'm talking about 10 parents who are fighting for equal access to IBI therapy around autism, for instance.

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** Well, the only thing restricted is advertising.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It's the money; that's a considerable restriction.

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** It's a restriction on advertising funding, though. You can hold all the news conferences, issue all the news releases, hold all the events—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** But you can't advertise, you can't be vocal against the government, and at the same time, the government has unfettered access to all the advertising that they want. You don't see this as a fundamental issue of democracy?

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** It's not unfettered. I do disagree with the changes made recently that restricted—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** That's very interesting, because the Auditor General said that in 2015 the Government Advertising Act was gutted. That's what the Auditor General, an independent officer of the Legislature, said.

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** I agree. I don't agree with those changes. The Auditor General can still do a review. I'm just saying I think the "unfettered" is an exaggeration, because the Auditor General's role is still there. But those changes were a huge step backwards, definitely.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I'm still going to use "unfettered." Thank you very much, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you. Mr. Dhillon.

**Mr. Vic Dhillon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Conacher. I'm sure you're aware of the changes at the federal level, since the early 2000s, that the federal government has been making in relation to election financing, such as banning corporate donations and setting limits on donations. Are there any shortcomings of that system? If we were to examine that, how would it help us in improving this legislation?

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** I gave the one stat, and you'll see in my submission the details about how it breaks down, but yes, the flaw is that it allows wealthy individuals to give much more than an average Canadian voter can afford. So 9% of donors to the Liberal Party in 2014

gave 40% of the money. Those are wealthy people who have more influence over politicians and the party because they're able to give more. That's not a democratic system. It doesn't uphold the fundamental principle of one person, one vote.

The other flaw is that Elections Canada is not required to do a random audit. Elections Canada promised to do an audit back in 2011, and we haven't seen the results yet. I'm assuming they didn't do it. It's just kind of negligent. You can't enforce any law unless you are doing random audits. Police have speed traps for a reason: to catch people who are speeding. Elections Canada is essentially saying, "We have this new donation system"—and especially after witnessing Quebec and the audit there that was released in 2012, looking back from 2006 to 2011, that found \$12.8 million of funnelled donations, one would have thought a watchdog agency at the federal level would say, "I guess we should take a look at the federal level too and see whether there's funnelling going on." They would have to look at it for 2014. For the Liberals, they would have to examine about 6,000 voters—they were the ones who donated 40% of the money—and find out. Just start with them—they're the largest donors—and find out whether maybe they got the money from their business or their union, donated it to the party and it wasn't really their own money and was illegal funnelling.

Those are the two big flaws.

The Quebec system is the world-leading system: \$100 donation limit, per-vote funding—it's a bit too high in Quebec—and matching funding. The one thing they're missing is matching funding for candidates at a significant level.

The federal system is not a democratic system. It's a charade. It's obscuring donations that are continuing, I'm sure, from businesses and unions. If Elections Canada would just do the audit, we would see the details of it, as we have in Quebec.

**Mr. Vic Dhillon:** Okay. Our committee heard from Professor Pauline Beange—I don't know if I'm pronouncing that right. She stated that the Federal Accountability Act had led to an increase in third-party advertising in Ontario elections. What's your take on that?

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** The Federal Accountability Act led to an increase?

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**Mr. Vic Dhillon:** An increase. It led to growth in third-party advertising in Ontario elections.

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** You must mean federal elections. The Federal Accountability Act is a federal law. It wouldn't affect Ontario elections at all.

**Mr. Vic Dhillon:** Federal elections?

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** Federal elections. An increase? I'm not sure it would have increased, in that the spending limit didn't increase. The spending limit was established in 2002 and upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada in 2004, so I'm not sure how the accountability act would have increased third-party spending.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Mr. Fraser, you have one minute.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Thank you. Just on third-party spending, for every action there's an equal and opposite reaction. I've asked this question, and you must be getting tired of it. The potential for money to go to a proxy—and I know you just said that third-party advertising should be banned, and Ms. Fife was getting at this. What's the line between advocacy and partisanship? Where do you see that line in third-party?

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** Just to clarify, Democracy Watch's position and the coalition's position is not that third-party advertising should be banned, but just that it should be restricted.

**Mr. John Fraser:** It should be restricted.

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** Yes, because if candidates and parties face spending limits, so should third-party advertisers.

The line is not well defined. We haven't had cases yet. Elections Canada has either backed off on people doing issue advertising that may or may not, or they registered and stayed underneath the limit. The test case has not yet happened about what those words mean, as to whether you're sticking just to an issue or you've crossed the line to supporting a party or a candidate. We just don't know where that line would be and what the Supreme Court of Canada would say about it in terms of a violation of charter rights.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you very much, Mr. Conacher, for coming before committee this morning and sharing your insight.

**Mr. Duff Conacher:** Thank you again. I'll send the submission to the Clerk, so you'll receive it all electronically. I look forward to seeing the results of your deliberations. Good luck.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Much appreciated. Thank you very much, sir.

#### PEOPLE FIRST OF LANARK COUNTY

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Next on the agenda we have, from People First of Lanark County, Mr. Kory Earle, who is the founder. Welcome, Mr. Earle.

**Mr. Kory Earle:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** How are you today? We welcome you, sir. You have up to 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by 15 minutes of questioning from members of the committee.

**Mr. Kory Earle:** Perfect. Thank you and good morning, everyone. My name is Kory Earle and I am the founder of People First of Lanark County. Thanks for allowing us to have the opportunity to speak today, because certainly our organization will be affected in this, as someone that provides a viable role for people labelled with a disability.

I wanted to commend our MPP, Randy Hillier, for encouraging me to come forward because technically I wouldn't have been here.

What is People First? Let me just give an oversight, because sometimes it's—we're an autonomous organization. We're not controlled or directed by any organization in this province or across the country. We are non-partisan. We advocate for people labelled with intellectual disabilities. We also educate and create awareness on the challenges people face. And our board 100% is made of people labelled with a disability who actually make decisions.

We've been able to work, of course, with all municipalities in Lanark county. Over the last 10 years we've fought to end picketing in front of people's homes and we were the only successful local chapter to end picketing of the unions. Having said that, we've always had a good working relationship with unions across the board, but we were able to succeed to end bullying.

Our money is strictly fundraised, and we do get \$2,000 a year, of course, from the town of Carleton Place. Given that, one of the things that we do is, while we ask for money throughout the year, we also give it back by holding a free community Christmas Day dinner and the Bunny Run, which over 1,100 people have benefited from.

We are here today to talk about an important issue: an act to amend the election finances. First and foremost, if you're going to have an act, it is my hope that the committee and the government will get it right. First, as a local chapter, we are non-partisan; we are not funded by any corporations. We have concerns with the way things might go. As a local chapter, we simply don't have money to be attending these political events and to meet with the Premier, any member of provincial Parliament or any party leader. Our members are way below the poverty line. Our concern is that organizations that oppose governments won't be able to provide inputs that are so important and might affect those with disabilities. It's time that the government starts working for the people and not for what's good for them.

I've asked many times to meet with the Premier of Ontario and have been directed to the Ministry of Community and Social Services. I must say, the Ministry of Community and Social Services staff do a fine job, and they are certainly making a lot of changes at that level. In fact, I met the Premier when I was on a tour of the museum in Winnipeg, but I couldn't get a meeting here in Ontario. That is a concern for many of our members, who play a viable role in this province and I believe should be treated by any party with respect and dignity here in the province of Ontario. We have issues that need to be dealt with, and I firmly believe that the Premier of the day should give us the same equal opportunity, because at the end of the day, we are doing the groundwork. When we bring stuff up, it is real stories, real lives. We should not be directed to ministry staff all the time.

My question is: We don't have money, so do we matter in this? We can't afford to pay money to meet with the Premier or the leader of any party. Again, our members are, quite frankly, right below the poverty

line—and that's for people with disabilities in general, not just for our organization. Plus, as an organization, we would never jeopardize what we do.

Having an act might disqualify us and put us in a more vulnerable situation. So please put something in place that certainly protects people labelled with a disability. I say "labelled" because we were labelled with a disability.

No party should be influenced by large corporations or big organizations. Small organizations like us should be entitled to meet with any leader of any party, party members etc. At the rate things are, if money buys a meeting, whether it be at an event or one-on-one, then we will simply lose. Each political party should know that people labelled with disabilities do vote, too.

We support an act; it just has to be done right. I'd be more than happy to meet with anyone to talk about the issues that our members face. Let's not rush this act too quickly. This act should be fair.

As someone who watches Queen's Park every day—and I know everyone in here because I watch you at Queen's Park—I am simply concerned about the future of this province. I urge you to remember to not take away the voice of organizations that simply do the best work with zero or little funding. By working together, we certainly can and will achieve so much.

I'll leave it at that. Thank you for listening to our perspective today.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you very much, Mr. Earle. I appreciate it. I hope I'm one of your favourite MPPs at Queen's Park.

We'll start with Ms. Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I don't have a comment.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** No questions? Okay.

We'll move to the government side. Mr. Fraser.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Thank you very much, Mr. Earle, for being here today and making your presentation, and for all the work that you do to advocate, not just in the electoral process, but for services for people with intellectual disabilities.

I'll say right off, if you ever want to come and meet with me, just call my office. I'm more than happy to meet with you on any of those issues. I know that you've been a strong advocate with the minister's office, as well, in terms of some of the changes in the 2014 budget.

One of the things that we're talking about here this morning is exactly what concerns you, and that is, when we make a change to how we finance things, it could have a reaction on the other side, where money starts to be spent on the other side, where there's advocacy. That's where the political, partisan work is being done. So how do you separate what's partisan and what's advocacy and make sure that voices like your organization are heard inside that?

That's something that we'll have to grapple with as a committee and as legislators: how to find that right way forward to make sure that people's voices are heard, but that there's relatively equal volume on those voices. Do you have any thoughts about that?

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**Mr. Kory Earle:** I can certainly get back to you on that. It's a question I think you raised earlier as well.

Absolutely. That's why I say we need someone in there, in this act, who protects the vulnerable people as well. The kind of work that we've done—and we've worked with all levels of government, quite frankly. We don't go against them and get political and advertise and all that. What we ask is that we work together, because as I said, we're non-partisan, but at the same time, when there's an act in place, when we've asked for funding over the course of the years, the base thing is we don't support advocacy, so we of course change some of the ways that we do. But you have to justify what advocacy is as well, though—I think that's a first step—and what that will mean. I say a lot of that is to deal with a lot more bigger organizations than we are. We're a lot smaller. Our membership is very small.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I guess that's the point that I'm trying to make, that your voice is not as big as some of those other organizations are. Right?

**Mr. Kory Earle:** Absolutely.

**Mr. John Fraser:** So it's about how you actually ensure that those voices are heard, to whatever extent that we can, because I do believe there is a risk once we impose—and I think it's important that we're doing what we're doing on this side. But we have to recognize that it may be a bit of whack-a-mole: Squish it down here and it pops up there. I think that's the thing that we've got to get to, where your—I know that your organization is heard and you may feel at times, as a lot of organizations do, that your voice isn't heard because you don't get as quick progress on things that you want, but you do have successes, so you can point to those and recognize those. That's the thing that we'll have to grapple with as a committee.

Like I say, any time that you want to discuss an issue or it's something that's important to you, my office is open to you, and that's my responsibility as a member, whether or not you live in my riding. I'll let your member know. I'm sure that he has lots of opportunities to meet with you as well.

**Mr. Kory Earle:** Absolutely. I appreciate that.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you very much. Mr. Hillier.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Thank you, Kory, for being here, and thanks for your presentation. I think it's important that the committee hears, and I think what you stated really puts things in perspective for many of us, and that is, people need to feel that they are being heard. You've got to have some level of optimism, some level of confidence that your concerns are legitimate and that they're being heard, not just by others, but being heard by people who can effect change. I think, from listening, there are people hearing but not necessarily the ones who will make or have the authority to effect change.

You did mention you've sent a number of letters and a number of requests to the Premier and you've not been able to do so, but—correct me if I'm wrong or let the

committee know—you were at the United Nations a week or two ago making a presentation at the United Nations.

**Mr. Kory Earle:** I actually am very proud about that, and thanks to the federal government for sponsoring our organization. We had an opportunity to meet with New Zealand, Africa and all them, just actually a week ago, to talk about issues. I can say Canada is a leader, just not on disability issues, because the United States put up their hand right away and said, "We're a leader."

But I think a lot of people took away what Canada can do and can do better—what kinds of great things. Look, we're all about sharing positive stories as well and success stories, because, quite frankly, there are a lot of success stories in Ontario over the decades. But the United Nations was a great opportunity. I was proud to represent Canada there just a week ago and meet with people.

For the first time ever, there was a committee that dealt with just general public members across countries. Someone labelled with an intellectual disability was running for that committee. They held elections and there were 18 people elected. He campaigned for two years and made history at the United Nations by being the first person labelled with an intellectual disability to get elected to the United Nations. So that's how far we've come. He's from New Zealand—Robert Martin—and I had an opportunity to talk with him and chat with him about how we can collaborate.

But a lot of people actually came up to me and said, "How can we get involved in your organization?" Of course, I always reminded them that I'm from Lanark county, even though they go, "Where's that?" But it's a great opportunity, so absolutely: I think it's something that we all should be proud of. The message is getting out there.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** But there is a level of irony here, or at least it gives us pause to reflect and consider that you can be invited to be at the United Nations and you can meet with elected people and others far removed from the jurisdictions and authorities in Lanark county, but have difficulty reaching out and being heard by the people who do represent you in the Legislature.

**Mr. Kory Earle:** Absolutely. I was talking to the ministry staff of community and social services yesterday, and I said, "I commend the great work you guys are doing, but, as someone who is a taxpayer and as someone who votes, too, I think it's really important that we don't let money get in the way. Simply, people should be able to meet." Any party leader—and I refer to the Premier a lot because I'm talking about the Premier of the day, whoever is Premier of the day. I think it's really, really important. I don't want to go to Queen's Park and have to protest to get our message across. And I don't want something behind closed doors, because anything we do has always been public because I think it's fair for our members to know what's happening, but I also think it's important that the Premier should take an interest in vulnerable people.

Ms. Fife talks about autism and some other—those are big organizations. When you look at us, we're a lot smaller, and that really needs to be taken into account. We certainly didn't get \$333,000 in the budget, so you can tell we're small. I say that with all due respect, because we've worked with all organizations and have the most respect for the work that they're doing. But we have members coming to us going, "We play a valuable role. We want this; we want that in the community."

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** I do hope, Kory, with Bill 201, that at the end of the day, yourself and other organizations such as People First not only feel more confident that they are being heard but that the legislation is indeed providing greater access for you to be heard by those who are making decisions that affect yourself and others, the people that you represent.

Thank you very much for being at the committee today. Thanks for sharing your thoughts with us. It's very much appreciated.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** On behalf of the committee, thank you, Mr. Earle, for coming this morning. It's much appreciated. Have a wonderful afternoon.

**Mr. Kory Earle:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Final business: Mr. Clark?

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Just in light of Mr. Earle's presentation about voices being heard and the fact that we do have a distinguished member of the media here, our next committee meetings are in Toronto in July, based on presentations. I just want to verify with you, Mr. Chairman, and the Clerk about broadcast capabilities for live-streaming those committees. Are we all confirmed that, when we're in Toronto, we'll meet in the Amethyst Room so that our proceedings can be streamed live? What about the other hearings, as per the order of the House, the southern Ontario swing and the northern swing: Are we going to be able to live-stream those committee hearings as well?

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Madam Clerk?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Sylwia Przewdzicki):** The committee can make the request. My understanding is that live streaming from a travelling committee is still in a pilot-testing phase. There was a process pilot during the committee's pre-budget hearings. It's a request that, if the committee wishes to make through the Chair, I can certainly take.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Yes. I believe, if the pilot project—and I am aware of the pilot project. I believe that this committee, since it's the only committee travelling this summer, to my knowledge, should be part of that pilot. Those two additional weeks that we're travelling should be live-streamed. I would make that request, with the committee's concurrence.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** I agree.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Sylwia Przewdzicki):** Now, Mr. Clark, to be clear, my understanding from the pilot is that the stream was limited. It was not

live on the Internet. It went back to some staff in Queen's Park who were testing the feasibility of the broadcast. Again, the committee can certainly make the request, if that's the wish of the committee, and we'll see what we can do.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Yes, because there are programs—Periscope. There are a number of programs that we could be utilizing to live-stream the proceedings. I just want all of our options to be reviewed and, in the case of those hearings in southern Ontario and northern Ontario, that we use whatever technology—regardless of what the pilot has been to date, there are a number of programs that we could be utilizing to ensure that our voices are heard.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** As the Clerk has indicated, we will determine whether or not the pilot project is advanced enough that it's able to travel with us. Is there any opposition to that or is there a consensus? It looks like there is some consensus to that. Ms. Fife?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** In support of that, I think the pilot project started a full year ago because I remember in budget 2015, we were attempting the live stream. For us, I think it's a basic issue of accessibility and I think that the committee should, through the Chair, very strongly recommend that live streaming be applied for this committee. This is an opportune opportunity.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** I'll work with the Clerk's office to see what we can do to live-stream for future committee meetings as we travel this wonderful province.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Ask them what the status of e-petitions is while you're at it.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Ms. Fife?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I just wanted to follow up Democracy Watch's presentation. I want to thank research for giving us a review of electoral finance reform in Canada. Ontario is included in this but it's mostly focused on the limits around electoral financing. I think if research were able to give us an overview as to how matching funding, as a mechanism of supporting political parties, is operating in the province of Quebec, I'd be very interested in receiving that.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Mr. Parker.

**Mr. Jeff Parker:** Ms. Fife, after speaking with our learned CEO, I've also got a couple of other ideas for jurisdictions like New York state. Would you be interested in having those included as well, or just Quebec?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I definitely think that we should have all of that information, yes. Thank you.

**Mr. Jeff Parker:** Okay.

**The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack):** Thank you very much.

I do have a couple of announcements after we adjourn, so I will adjourn this meeting and thank everyone for their participation this morning, and to all our presenters. This meeting is adjourned.

*The committee adjourned at 1143.*





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