

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

T-7

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

T-7

**Standing Committee on  
Regulations and Private Bills**

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

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament  
Tuesday 4 June 2019

1<sup>re</sup> session  
42<sup>e</sup> législature  
Mardi 4 juin 2019

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Chair: Kaleed Rasheed  
Clerk: Eric Rennie

Président : Kaleed Rasheed  
Greffier : Eric Rennie

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services  
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Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430  
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation  
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement  
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A2  
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430  
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-4319

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON REGULATIONS  
AND PRIVATE BILLS**

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

Tuesday 4 June 2019

Mardi 4 juin 2019

*The committee met at 0903 in committee room 2.*

**THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA  
ACT, 2019**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill Pr10, An Act respecting The United Church of Canada.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** I would like to call the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills to order.

We have one private bill on the agenda for consideration today. I'd like to introduce the sponsor from Don Valley West. Please come forward and introduce our applicants from the agenda. Or if you could, just introduce yourselves; you can come forward.

**Ms. Nora Sanders:** I'm Nora Sanders, general secretary of the United Church of Canada. With me is Heather Keachie, legal counsel with Gardiner Roberts.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Thank you. In the interests of time, and I'm sure everyone's had a chance to look through everything here, does anyone have any questions that need to be answered regarding this bill? Thank you, Mr. West, for getting that taken care of.

Seeing none, Ms. Wynne, do you have any comments on this bill?

**Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I am not going to make technical comments. I know that Heather and Nora are absolutely capable and immersed in the process.

I will just say that I wanted to be supportive of this bill. As a lifelong member of the United Church, I'm very aware of the in-depth process that has been undertaken to get to this point. I know that there are many denominations, with the United Church of Canada being the largest Protestant denomination in the country, looking at ways to modernize, to be sustainable and to continue to work, from my perspective, to do the good work in social justice that has been invaluable in this country.

So I am supportive and I'm happy to talk about my experiences, but I think that Heather and Nora have a lot to say about the process itself.

I thank the committee for this time.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Thank you very much. Do the applicants have anything to add?

**Ms. Nora Sanders:** Thank you very much. I appear before you as general secretary of the United Church of

Canada. I've been in that role throughout this lengthy process of consultation and decision-making that is reflected in the bill before you today.

Just to begin with a brief outline of our history, the United Church of Canada was formed in 1925 when Methodists, Presbyterians—most of the Presbyterians but not all—and the Congregationalists—

**Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Not my great-great grandfather.

**Ms. Nora Sanders:** Yes; same—came together to form a new church, and they were responding to the social and faith needs of their time in doing that. At that time, I guess the way that the world worked, the United Church of Canada was created by an act of Parliament and that was followed by legislation in the provinces.

Earlier this year, we have been through an act of Parliament, which has now been proclaimed, and now we're following with similar changes to the legislation in the provinces.

The amendments that this will bring about follow an extensive decision-making process in our church. Just to give you the snapshot, which won't sound too short, but in 2012 the General Council, which is our national body that meets every three years, met in Ottawa and directed the establishment of a comprehensive review task group to look at our structure and all the things that we needed to do to prepare for serving in the coming years. They presented a report in Corner Brook in 2015 which, with some discussion and amendment, was passed by the General Council—the General Council being the body that has representation from all across Canada in our church. Because of the way our polity is, perhaps because some of those churches coming together in 1925 didn't fully trust one another, they made it fairly complicated to change.

We have something called a remit process where, after major decisions by the General Council, they go out to every congregation and every presbytery across the country, and the majority of them—not just the majority that vote but the majority of all of them—have to approve these things. Suffice it to say, they did approve it, not just by a majority but by a very significant majority. Then the final step was, last summer, when the General Council met in Oshawa, they enacted those changes.

Just to get to the point of all that consultation and all those decisions, what was it that changed that is before you today? Not everything was changed, but the things that needed to be changed have to do with the fact that in our

previous structure we had four layers or courts: the pastoral charge, which most people would think of as their local congregation; the presbytery; the conference, which was a slightly bigger regional group; and the denomination or the General Council.

In the new structure, it's a three-level thing. Those two middle courts—presbytery and conference—have been replaced by a regional council. In the changes you see before you in the definitions section, “presbytery” and “conference” are both redefined to refer to the regional council as being the successor of those.

You'll see also a change in definition about Denominational Council and General Council because, through the process, it was decided that people would like to use the term Denominational Council rather than General Council, but that's the exact same entity.

The changes to section 6 have to do with how the church deals with property when it is being disposed of, when a congregation closes or something like that. That's spelled out separately because it has to do with property. The way it was set up, it has to be specified. The powers that formerly were held by the presbytery and conference are now dealt with by the regional council.

Those are the changes. They're technical things. They're designed to streamline our processes. The goal is that we will spend less time and money on governance and

more time on encouraging people in their faith and serving the bigger world.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** I would like to ask at this time, are there any other interested parties present here this morning? Seeing none, then I would ask, are there any comments from the government? Good. Then I would like to call for questions or comments from the committee members to the applicant or to the parliamentary assistant or any other interested parties. Seeing none, then I would ask, are the members ready to vote?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** We are.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Regarding Bill Pr10, An Act respecting The United Church of Canada, with Kathleen Wynne, MPP, as sponsor:

Shall section 1 carry? Carried.

Shall section 2 carry? Carried.

Shall section 3 carry? Carried.

Shall section 4 carry? Carried.

Shall the preamble carry? Carried.

Shall the title carry? Carried.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Shall I report the bill to the House? Carried.

That's easy. Thank you very much.

Seeing as there's no other business today, thank you, everyone, for your attendance. This meeting is adjourned.

*The committee adjourned at 0911.*



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