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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 October 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 octobre 2021

*Report continued from volume A.*  
1700

YORK REGION  
WASTEWATER ACT, 2021  
LOI DE 2021 SUR LES EAUX USÉES  
DANS LA RÉGION DE YORK

Continuation of debate on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act respecting York Region Wastewater /  
Projet de loi 5, Loi concernant les eaux usées dans la  
région de York.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** And just before we move to further debate, I know we're all a little bit rusty the first time back here in a long time, so when you hear either "question" or "answer," it's kind of the warning that you have 10 seconds to finish and wrap up and then be seated so I don't have to stand up. Thank you very much.

Further debate? The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you flexing your muscles. I like that. We will make sure that we follow your guidance.

This is an important bill—that should be an important bill—that's before us, and it's something that I take very seriously, not only for the people of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, but I am Ontario's official opposition environment critic, so this is something that's very, very important to me.

I've listened to everyone in the House. In particular, I want to just say to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, I hear what you're talking about. I too am very connected and think that the Grand River watershed area is remarkable. I mean, it's a remarkable extension of our water and waterways and it's something that we need to protect. So I hear what you're saying, but when you ask us just to trust you and work with you on this important protection of our water and our environment, you can certainly understand why we're a little skeptical, why we can't really take at face value what you're saying, what you're asking us to do, because it needs to be clear that there's absolutely nothing, rien, in this bill that we're talking about that is talking about the environment. There's nothing here. I wish that were not the case, but that is true.

This is really not surprising, because we just had a throne speech on Monday where there's so much missing from that—I mean, there was absolutely nothing in the

throne speech that talked about helping the people of Ontario, nothing for small business, not even a mention of education in a throne speech. Certainly there was absolutely no mention of climate, climate change, climate emergency in the throne speech. So you can understand why we're a little skeptical when you come forward with the first bill that I've had the opportunity to talk to, which is being purported as a bill that addresses the environment, when you missed a huge opportunity in the throne speech to signal to the people of Ontario that you actually care about the environment.

What we have seen from this government doesn't instill confidence that you actually get what's important to the people of Ontario when it comes to climate change and when it comes to the environment. Maybe today is an opportunity for us to put on the record what not only the official opposition feels about your lack of fighting for the climate and the environment but what the people of Ontario feel about your record when it comes to climate change and the environment.

This bill, Bill 5, An Act respecting York Region Wastewater, is just a really odd bill. Let's just say that it's a really odd bill. Really, listening to the government all day today, you would think this is a bill about protecting Lake Simcoe, but again, let's be clear, if you read the bill, Lake Simcoe is not mentioned once—not once in this bill. Instead, this bill is more about protecting the government than it is about protecting Lake Simcoe. It is all about the government's liability. Doesn't that sound familiar?

Let's talk about the government who inserted legislation in an unrelated bill to protect them, making their what-were-illegal MZO's legal retroactively. Let's talk about that this government is moving forward with development at any cost. It doesn't matter what the legislation is, what the rules are. This is a government that, in the middle of a pandemic, moved to give immunity to for-profit long-term-care corporations. It's not really surprising that this government's first act is to talk about giving themselves protection from their actions.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, it's a very short bill. Again, so we're actually clear what's in it, I'm going to read just a portion of it, the section when it comes to no cause of action. Section 4(c) says, "any representation or other conduct that is related, directly or indirectly, to the application for the Upper York Sewage Solutions Undertaking that was submitted for approval by the regional municipality of York, whether made or occurring before or after this section comes into force, subject to subsection (2)." In other words, this government is broadening crown liability provisions to now include a ban on any lawsuits

against the crown over representation and conduct which is directly or indirectly related to the Upper York Sewage Solutions. Under this legislation, it's not about the environment; it's not about Lake Simcoe. The government can't be held liable for misrepresentations about the Upper York Sewage Solutions or engaging in misconduct.

So the obvious question is, exactly why does the government believe it needs this protection? What is the government planning on saying, what conduct are they planning on engaging in that this is what we're talking about today? This is what we're debating today, not a real bill about the environment, not anything to support education workers, to look at the kinds of challenges we're seeing in our hospitals. We're talking about a bill that is simply about covering this government's backside—sorry, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't think of another word. I'm trying to really be good today.

In contrast to the rosy picture that we're hearing from this government, that it's all about protecting Lake Simcoe and protecting the environment and our watershed, actually reading the bill shows that this legislation does nothing to respect Lake Simcoe, nothing to respect farmers or precious farmland in the area and nothing that will reassure residents who rely on this vulnerable watershed every single day—not in the bill.

1710

It's not unsurprising that this government wants to represent a bill that talks more about protecting themselves than Lake Simcoe as action to protect the environment because, unfortunately, this is the same government that's trying to represent their made-in-Ontario plan as a serious plan for climate action. Really, let's be clear. We know it; everybody in Ontario knows it; you probably know it: You don't have a credible climate plan in the province of Ontario.

What could we expect from a government whose first act was to cancel any climate-change projects? And then they continue to meddle in areas that would actually help to serve the climate and to serve protecting our environment, like kneecapping conservation authorities and their ability to protect watersheds. You've gutted almost all the environmental protections that existed in the province before you came to town, and you've violated Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights not once, not twice, but three times. Three times, you've broken the law when it comes to the slim protections that you've left for the people of the province of Ontario. But, like how no mention of Lake Simcoe is in this bill, any mention of the climate emergency is not in this bill and as I said was absent from the throne speech—and it has been clearly absent from the government's agenda these past three years.

If you recall, this government's first acts were to cancel cap-and-trade and any clean energy projects. They're talking about clean energy projects now on the other side, but they cancelled clean energy projects, and that had serious impacts to the finances of the province. The Financial Accountability Office estimated that the province's budget balance will worsen by a total of \$3 billion due to the cancellation of the revenue coming from the

cap-and-trade program—\$3 billion. That's a lot of money. Do you know what? If you contrast that to what would be the cost of sharing a phosphorus-reclamation plant with the federal government, that would be about \$16 million, so why has there been no mention of that?

Really, the government's priorities are being made clear: It's not really about the climate, the climate emergency or the people of Ontario; it's about politics. The fact that you're not talking about the federal program—I can only assume that's more about politics than it is about the environment. And the people of Ontario, while they're still struggling with the impact of COVID, are paying attention. Your action on climate is really what I'm hearing in my riding, hearing at the doorstep and hearing from all kinds of folks, that climate is something that they're increasingly concerned about, and they see this government's failures on that file.

I just want to say, I always love to hear from the member for Ottawa Centre. He always brings new ideas and, as the member from Kitchener–Conestoga said, passion. I learn so much whenever Joel gets up to speak, and I liked how he centred what he had to say around someone in his life. So what I would like to say is that what I'm thinking about today is the young people that I meet all the time in my role as the environment critic. While this government spent the last several months doing I don't know what—where the Premier was apparently in hiding, the people are saying—I joined the youth in my community at all kinds of events, including what they called their Uproot the System climate strike. The youth of this province made clear to me that they know that this government is failing them, and they know what we're doing is not enough. Unfortunately, this government won't even take the basic steps to recognize the crisis we are facing. I mean, this government blocked us, blocked the official opposition of the province of Ontario's motion to declare a climate emergency. So how can you sit there and say that this is a priority for you when you wouldn't even declare a climate emergency in the province?

I found it odd this morning when the parliamentary assistant celebrated the new Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks—and congratulations—as being the youngest in Ontario's history. I thought of the youth in my riding who are growing up around and on the shores of Lake Ontario and I also thought about the youth in the parliamentary assistant's riding who are growing up on the shores of Lake Simcoe. They are demanding of us real climate action. They're demanding that of their government, and they deserve, really, so much better than, I would just call them the platitudes that we are hearing about today. I mean, really. Age is irrelevant. Our age, the age of the minister is completely irrelevant if the mindset of the government is stuck in the last century when it comes to our climate.

The other thing we keep hearing about is science. Absolutely, we need to follow the science, but there's absolutely no guarantee, no indication that this legislation actually follows the science or, in fact, any guarantee that the government intends to follow the science when it

comes to climate change or any indication that the government even plans to listen to the expert panel. Because we know this government has expert panels. They had an expert panel when it came to the impact of long-term care, when it came to the devastating tragedies that we saw in long-term care, and they ignored the advice of their own expert panel. Where is any kind of guarantee that they're going to listen to the expert advice of this panel, a panel that we know nothing about to date? This government's new claim, I would say, to want to follow science when it comes to climate change is kind of curious.

I just want to say that when it comes to their own plan, if you will call it that, to address the climate, here's what the independent Auditor General had to say. The audit found that the ministry's projected emissions forecast and estimated emissions reductions for all eight areas of the plan are not yet supported by sound evidence or sufficient detail. The auditor stated that the plan is not likely to achieve its proposed emission reduction target.

So the government's talk about science—has a plan that is not supported by science, but so far, that's the only thing that the government has when it comes to climate change and it is clearly being identified as not backed by science. Great. Let's follow the science. Let's listen to science. But that goes all the way; not just here but in all of the things that you do when it comes to climate change. You can't pick and choose what science you want to listen to and what science you want to ignore.

I just want to ask this government—stop hiding things from the people of Ontario when it comes to climate change. We need to confront the reality that not only are we facing a climate emergency but the actions of this government, unfortunately, are actively making this looming crisis worse.

Real action on the climate requires transparent and evidence-based decision-making and real, meaningful, deep community consultation. Ontarians deserve a plan of action that reduces our carbon emissions and restores and enhances our natural areas, like Lake Simcoe, like the Grand River conservation area and like Cootes Paradise and Lake Ontario in my riding.

But we already know. We see, we know, we read about it: This decision-making around the bill hasn't been transparent, and it's not transparent to this very minute. There are no details; there's no information. The people that this government are saying are going to be on a panel haven't heard from this government. Indigenous leaders are saying they don't know nothing about it. So it's not transparent.

Now, what we understand is the government is cancelling the Upper York Sewage Solutions project but is providing absolutely no answers: what they intend to explore instead, who is going to pay for it, how will they ensure with real protections that our water and our lakes are protected, and ensure that in a law. You can talk about your made-in-Ontario plan but it's not enshrined in law; it's just like a nice brochure, really, of things that you would like to do. But it's not in legislation.

So is this bill based in science? Is this bill evidence-based? No. The answer is no. How could a page—a page—be an evidence-based bill?

What we do know is that Lake Simcoe already has twice the phosphorus levels that all parties have agreed to in the passage of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan. We also know, unfortunately, that this government is two years late in responding to the statutory review of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan. So if we're going to talk about Lake Simcoe, how can we do that without talking about the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan? It just makes absolutely no sense. We don't have any answers to when the government is going to release the results of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan review.

**1720**

I just have to say, and I don't mean this to be as harsh as it sounds, but what we're hearing is a greenwashing of this legislation and the government's actions to protect Lake Simcoe, because they're not here in the House. We don't hear about them; we don't know them. Really, Mr. Speaker, it's political spin at its most cynical.

I joined the community advocate Pekka Reinio's town hall on protecting Lake Simcoe with the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, and we heard directly from engaged residents who were concerned that this government's actions were putting the lake at risk. I share these concerns. I know first-hand what it's like to have your community's watershed put at risk; to have your natural areas, the areas that you enjoy the most as a community, put at risk.

In Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, we had 24 billion litres of raw sewage contaminate our beloved Cootes Paradise, which is a protected wetland in my riding. Rightfully, Hamiltonians were shocked and were angered by this. In response, I introduced the Cootes Paradise Water Accountability Act to ensure that the Ministry of the Environment used their jurisdiction to ensure that residents were informed of future spills. I was disappointed that the government chose not to bring this bill to debate, and now, because the government has chosen to prorogue the Legislature—we don't know why; to benefit their federal friends has been a speculation—but when this government prorogued the Legislature, the Cootes Paradise Water Accountability Act, which is an important bill, died.

Just this week, we had millions more litres of untreated sewage flow into Lake Ontario. So Hamiltonians know that the province has a long way to go when it comes to protecting waste water infrastructure. I'm pleading with the minister that this government learn from the tragedy that occurred in Hamilton and ensure that any sewage solution for the York area ensures and enshrines that our lakes and our waterways are protected. I would like to see that in the bill, but currently it's silent on any real protections.

The people of Ontario see the controversial tools that this government is using to push through development at any cost: their MZO's that are issued to developers that exempt them from any environmental assessment; huge

developments like Orbit, for example, exempt from any kind of environmental assessment; and also this government's push to expand urban boundaries into natural areas, into wetlands. This government's MZO and their urban boundary expansion are simply tools to expand development at all costs.

I'm just going to tell you that, in Hamilton, we see this. Hamiltonians have understood that this will lock in climate change for 30 years to come. It has a huge impact on our ability to address climate change, and we have pushed our council to put a no-boundary-expansion option on the books. Some 90% of Hamiltonians who participated agree that we need to have a no-boundary-expansion option, but we recently received a letter from the government that many councillors describe as heavy-handed and threatening, saying that the city of Hamilton was going to potentially be in violation of the act by considering a no-boundary-expansion option.

I'm just going to say that I got a chuckle, because I don't think that the government has met Hamiltonians and understands that we don't take kindly to threats of intimidation, and that we believe that the municipality has the right to come to a democratic decision without the interference and meddling of this government. This decision will be based on science, it will be based on consideration for the climate, for the environment, and based on the future of the youth in our city and our province. I wish this ministry would do the same.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** The member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas has previously stated in this Legislature, "It is time ... to listen to the voices of those on the front lines and commit to protecting our water." What about an advisory panel made up of experts in infrastructure and waste water management, and one that is tasked with engaging with the community, including First Nations? Speaker, does she still believe it's important to listen to those on the front lines? And does the member share our commitment to making informed decisions for our water in Ontario? Does she support the bill and not again say no?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** What I support is real action on climate change, real action in protecting our environment and real action to protect our waterways and our natural watershed areas. I am proud of that statement because I believe that it's the people on the front line, the people in the province of Ontario, the not-for-profit organizations all across this province that are challenging you and this government and calling you up on your record and saying that you need to do better. It is my guess that if they saw a bill that is one page long—here it is—and they heard a government claiming that this bill is action on the environment, action on climate, and that you're talking about a task force that you're going to listen to that's not even in the bill, if you're mentioning Indigenous leaders but they haven't even been consulted—my guess is the people of Ontario, including myself, would not support this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** Further questions and comments?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I remember in previous debate hearing my friend from Hamilton hold forth about what happened with the terrible story of Cootes Paradise. I'm just wondering if you can help—because it's one of the things I love in this Legislature—bring us down to a community level. What have you heard from neighbours of what they learned from their experience of Cootes Paradise and how that can inform making sure this happens in the right way, putting community voices right at the heart of this project?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thanks, Joel. I appreciate that question. The tragedy of Cootes Paradise is a lesson for all of us in this House and at the community level. Really, what it was is it was a failure of a system that was slowly, over the course of four years, letting raw sewage into Cootes Paradise—24 billion litres over the course of four years. How could this happen? How was there not a Ministry of the Environment that was testing E. coli, that could report to the city and report to residents? How was it that this was happening for so long?

Now that it has happened, what we understand is that we have so far to go to create the kind of good green infrastructure that will prevent this from happening again.

What we have is a government that's pushing growth—growth into rural areas, growth everywhere—with absolutely no credible plan to address the sewage, and so it's just another disaster waiting to happen. It happened in Hamilton, happened at Cootes Paradise, and it's a disaster that's waiting to happen in other areas like Lake Simcoe, like with Lake Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** The member from Kitchener—Conestoga.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Just to touch a little bit more on Chedoke Creek and Cootes Paradise, I think this is a perfect example of what we're trying to achieve. We're trying to look at ways that we can put best practices in place to make sure that tragic accidents like that don't happen again.

I'll ask the member, and I'll be very direct: Does she support an expert panel that is going to lead this process forward to make sure that we don't dump 24 billion litres of raw sewage into the East Holland River? Does she support that?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thanks to the member from Kitchener—Conestoga. I put forward a bill in this House called the Cootes Paradise Water Accountability Act that was detailed and would have accomplished some of the things that you're talking about, but this government would not bring it to debate, and it died on the order paper when you prorogued the House.

Again, what I support is real action. I loved what you had to say about the Grand River conservation area. It's a remarkable area. The Grand River is the mighty Grand; it's spectacular. It needs to be protected. But honestly, with all due respect, it needs to be protected more than a little page here. And a task force, yes, but if you really mean it, if you're really serious, put it in the bill. Until such time, I can't sign a blank cheque, because your government has shown it does not have a good track record when it comes to the environment.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** The member from London West

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I listened carefully to the comments from my colleague the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. I think that she really showed that the main purpose of this bill is actually to block lawsuits from being launched against this government for any representation or conduct related to the Upper York Sewage Solutions project. And she made the comparison to legislation that had been introduced by this government to protect private long-term-care-home operators from legal action based on negligence in long-term-care homes. Are those the only two cases of the government using legislation to protect itself from lawsuits?

1730

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Absolutely not. We like to joke that when the government said “government for the people,” we thought it was “government for the lawyers,” because this government spends so much time in court and spends millions and millions of taxpayers’ dollars protecting themselves in court, and losing.

They have a terrible track record of going to court and losing. And then when they don’t get their way in court, as we have seen, they will use the “notwithstanding” clause to get their way. So this is a government that likes to get its way, doesn’t like to be open and transparent, and is prepared to spend taxpayers’ dollars to defend their actions and to embed in bills things that protect them. So, no, this is a modus operandi of this government and I hope it would stop.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** I recognize the member from Barrie–Innisfil.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Well, it’s no surprise that the opposition does not support this bill, because they haven’t supported anything on the environment. They haven’t supported our transit plan which reduces greenhouse gas emissions. They didn’t support our budget that encourages green bonds. Time and time again, they voted down any environmental bills or protections in this Legislature. And then they had hundreds of days to come up with a plan, and they didn’t. They just sat on their hands and had no environment plan. So it’s rich to hear that from the member of the opposition.

But today they can make a difference. They can actually vote for what they’re talking about. The member from Ottawa Centre talked about this great Canadian collaboration. This is exactly what we’re talking about today. You have the chance to do it. For a change, will you actually stand up for the environment instead of voting against it every single time?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Not only am I proud to be the MPP for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, I’m proud to be Ontario’s official environment critic. It’s an important role, and I support science-backed evidence, evidence-based action, when it comes to the climate change and the climate emergency that we’re facing.

I also applaud all of the community groups, the front-line groups, like Ontario Nature, like Environmental Defence. In my riding, we have Hamilton conservationists

who work every day to protect the environment, to provide us good ideas, complete ideas, fully expanded ideas on what we need to do to protect the environment and to prevent more erosion when it comes to climate change.

So that’s what I stand up and support every day. I’m proud of the people of the province of Ontario who get this, who aren’t real scientists, and that’s the kind of action that I’d like to see.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** Further questions and comments? The member from Niagara Centre.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you to my friend from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for her presentation. I also want to thank her for all the work that she is doing on the urban boundary issue in Hamilton, which is a huge environmental issue.

On that vein, York region projects that an incredible amount of farmland is possibly going to get paved over with urban expansion and growth projections. Can the member let us know what she thinks of the urban expansion and development on urban boundaries and how it affects York region?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you very much for the question. Just like in Hamilton, we understand that this urban boundary expansion is rushed and it’s not based in science or based in evidence. In fact, the member has written to the Auditor General to ask where did the growth projections come from that all this expansion into whitebelt, into rural areas, into prime class 1 agricultural land—where did these growth projections come from? And the Auditor General has agreed to look into that and report back to us in December.

So I say to all the municipalities across the province, including Hamilton council, what is the rush? There’s no rush to make these decisions to lock in this kind of expansion that will only make the climate change worse, until you have all the evidence before you. That is the way that any government should expect municipalities—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** Thank you.

Before we move forward with further debate, I beg to inform the House—

*Interruption.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** Someone’s calling.

**Interjection:** Sol.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** Sol. Sol, you’re going to lose your phone, pal. Kiiwetinoong’s calling.

I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 101(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members’ public business, such that Mrs. Wai assumes ballot item number 4 and Ms. Park assumes ballot item number 39.

Further debate?

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** I am really pleased to rise today and join the debate on Bill 5, the York Region Wastewater Act, 2021. I’m going to enjoy having my mask off for a while too; thank you for that.

This bill is an important piece of legislation that, if passed, would ensure that Ontario and York can continue

to grow while updating vital public infrastructure and protecting our environment.

I wanted to mention I like to watch shows on TV where I learn things, and one of the shows I watched was a history of, I think it was, Chicago and the issue with waste water in Chicago. It was quite startling, the issue that developed in Chicago, because they didn't have a proper set-up for waste water when the place was settled. They actually had to go around elevating entire buildings to put in the sewer system that hadn't been there before.

These things don't sound that interesting, maybe, and we've had a few jokes about the number 2 side of this, but it is so important for communities to properly deal with their waste, especially because we are so concerned about the environment and we want to make sure that all of this is done in the best possible way.

I also just wanted to mention, Mr. Speaker, that in addition to our work to ensure the highest-quality waste water services for communities across Ontario, we're also undertaking now, and some of you may know this, a water surveillance initiative for COVID-19. As our government continues to respond to COVID-19, the province has committed over \$22.8 million over two years to the COVID-19 Wastewater Surveillance Initiative to take waste water samples from communities across the province. Monitoring the waste water is a way for us to track COVID-19 in real time to find possible spread of the virus before people actually begin coming in for tests and we realize that they already have COVID. So it's an early indicator. The data is allowing our public health officials to identify hot spots for the virus and take early action that could prevent further transmission.

The province has partnered with 13 academic and research institutions in Ontario and in co-operation with various public health units and municipalities to expand waste water sampling and analysis province-wide, including in some First Nations communities, long-term-care homes, university campuses, homeless shelters and correctional facilities. It really is an important tool, and it just goes to the point of really recognizing how important our waste water infrastructure is to our communities, even helping with the fight against COVID-19.

Better waste water service is the key goal of the government in bringing forward this act. That's why we're doing it. To ensure a prosperous and healthy York region that benefits all of Ontario, the proposed act acknowledges the reality, frankly, of the regional municipality of York and that it needs this sewage servicing capacity. This is due, as we have discussed, to forecasted growth and development in the upper York region waste water service area.

York, as we have said in an earlier discussion, is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Ontario—I think everybody would recognize that—with its population expected to reach one and a half million people in the next decade and more than two million people by 2051.

As we all know, Mr. Speaker, this issue that we're discussing today is not a new issue. The Minister of the Environment apparently, in 2004, asked York to undertake an environmental assessment, which included researching

proposed alternatives. Following this, the Upper York Sewage Solutions environmental assessment was submitted in 2014 to the Minister of the Environment for approval.

As my colleague the parliamentary assistant mentioned earlier, the environmental assessment identified a preferred alternative that would involve a new waste water treatment plant discharging treated effluent into the East Holland River within the Lake Simcoe watershed. We discussed earlier today how important the Holland Marsh is and that river. I personally get very excited by what I think is called black chernozem soil in that area, and it's because they don't have that kind of soil everywhere. It is beautiful soil and you can grow anything, and so we have some of our best fruit and vegetable farms there in the Holland Marsh, so it is an important resource.

**1740**

The proposed waste water treatment facility would be located in the town of East Gwillimbury, which would have a sewage treatment capacity of approximately 40 million litres per day.

As this House is aware, the issue at hand here today is the confidence, really, in being able to proceed on the best scientific evidence available about how this would impact the environment. Years have passed, frankly, since York region's environmental assessment began and the prior government—the government under the current Liberal leader who was a minister in that government—delayed the assessment for many years, a decision that we think was influenced by political considerations. Our government is intent on regaining confidence in the evidence and information so that we can make the best possible decision for York region and for Ontario, frankly.

Our government is committed to making informed decisions, informed by the latest science and up-to-date environmental information. We believe best practices and the latest science must really make up the backbone of our approach to these issues.

This is a complex issue, I think, as we have really heard today, and I'd like to echo my colleague the parliamentary assistant, who correctly identified that there are significant environmental, social and financial implications of any waste water servicing solution for York region. It's not a decision, of course, that will only impact the present. It's an issue that will affect the people of York region for years to come and as such, it really is imperative that we understand the environmental effects of the proposed solutions and particularly a solution that has been selected on the effects on Lake Simcoe, which, as we've talked about, is a very shallow lake.

I used to spend a lot of time at Lake Simcoe. You can walk very far out in Lake Simcoe without getting the water to be over your head, and I'm not that tall, so it is not a deep lake. It's because of that that it's a very nice warm lake in the summer, even in Ontario, not like Georgian Bay, so it can be very beautiful to swim in, but it is a very shallow lake. That does make a difference for fish, as we heard from the member for Kitchener-Conestoga, and for other things. It just is a small and shallow lake and we have to be careful with it.

It's important that the government gets this decision right based on the science, using the most up-to-date environmental information and technological solutions that are available to us. This government does not take our lakes or our waters for granted. I think you've heard from a number of members how important that is to them and I would say, also, to me.

As the minister stated during his introduction to first reading, the act will help York region to find the right solution. It will do this by pausing the current process, the Upper York Sewage Solutions environmental assessment, to allow for an expert panel and expert voices and consultations that haven't happened, to happen.

The proposed act will allow the recently established advisory panel on waste water to do its job: to provide advice on important factors, such as the need and timing for additional sewage servicing capacity; alternatives that include increased sewage capacity in other regions, such as Durham; as well as the costs associated with such decisions, which of course is something that we have to consider, and there are a whole bunch of other considerations, of course.

Because this government recognizes the importance of protecting our air, our land and our water, as well as those who rely on it, the advisory panel will reach out to local communities, including of course Indigenous communities, and will consult with them and keep working with them and municipalities on the solutions. I think it is an ongoing effort that happens. The advisory panel will provide advice, once appointed, to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and to the government.

Because these issues are of very high priority, I want to emphasize that, if passed, the bill will create an expert panel specifically tasked, among other things, with engaging with Indigenous communities. As an example, we heard earlier that the concerns of the Chippewas of Georgina Island must be heard and that the panel will want to hear from that community and will want to work with that community to ensure that their input is reflected in options going forward for this project or whichever project is determined to be the right one.

It's not just that community either. It's important that the parliamentary assistant had noted—and I think this is a quote—that “consultation with First Nations and Métis communities is a key part of any and all environmental assessment applications we process as a government. We take the duty to consult very seriously, and respect Aboriginal or treaty rights, established or asserted.” This is an important message that deserves attention, and it's why, going forward, it will be an active part of all current and future environmental assessments.

As we heard, this advisory panel's membership will be finalized by the end of September of this year, with a report due no later than one year from then, in September 2022.

At this point, I would like to just return to a comment I made earlier about the importance of having confidence in the decision. Due to the delay by previous governments, at this point, people have lost confidence in the information

and the process, frankly, and perhaps more importantly, in the currency of the scientific studies etc. that were completed. Furthermore, on the ground, during that time, as we have heard, much has changed. This includes the very technology that will go into whatever infrastructure is decided upon. That was one the reasons I wanted to mention the waste water surveillance that we're doing. These systems have lots of implications for the future. We want to make sure that everything is designed in the best possible way, that we're dealing with the best technology, the newest technology, and we're able to use our waste water infrastructure to do things like that, which I think is a fantastic innovation which is really helping in our fight against COVID-19.

Going forward, we have to have the most up-to-date information available to us as a government, and the pause proposed by the York Region Wastewater Act, 2021, will give us time to re-examine all relevant issues so that when a decision is made, it can be a final decision that all interested parties, including our Aboriginal partners, can have confidence in and know that any decision that we've made is the best decision, fully consulted with, fully understood by everybody and engaged with by everybody going forward.

While the previous government delayed, the regional municipality of York has kept working on this project. In the more than a decade since the process started, York region has really put a lot of time and effort into this project. This government really doesn't want to minimize the importance of any of the work that has been done by York region, but unfortunately, the reality of the situation is that with the passage of time, new information and new technology must be considered to make sure that we're making the best decision we can. That's why it's necessary to take this time to gather the relevant information, seek the advice and counsel of experts along with impacted communities and partners who are working with us in the area, and then, when the decision is made, we'll have some confidence that it is the best one available to help ensure the continued prosperity and growth of York region but also of the province.

The millions of Ontarians who already make York region their home or who are projected to make York region their home in the next 30 years need to have confidence in the public infrastructure, and they need to have confidence that we have looked at these issues with the best information and made the best possible decision. I think we owe them that, and this infrastructure will support their lives without them having to worry about it on an ongoing basis, and about some of these things we've heard about with Cootes Paradise etc. We don't want things like that to happen. We have to make sure that the infrastructure is sustainable and the best infrastructure to provide the services required.

**1750**

Earlier in the day, we also heard that it's important to respect taxpayers, and of course it's always the government's duty to ensure the best possible use of our public money, because it's money that the good residents

of Ontario pay. And I think they assume that we're going to make every effort we can to use that money in the best possible way, and wisely, to make sure that the investments that we make are good investments for Ontario. I strongly believe that it's the government's responsibility to ensure that that standard is met, always.

I don't really think we can settle for "just good enough" when dealing with such vital infrastructure projects. The proposed act will help to ensure that we're getting the best results, and that's really what it's all about. By utilizing the expertise of the advisory committee, we as representatives of the people can have the most up-to-date information possible at the time of the final decision, so when you pay your taxes or your constituents pay their taxes, they can be assured that they're getting their money's worth for the decision and the decision has been made on the best available information.

Looking more broadly, I'm happy to repeat the commitment that my colleague made earlier today: that our government is committed to working with municipalities and Indigenous communities and partners to ensure municipal sewage systems can meet today's environmental standards, and that people are informed of sewage bypasses and overflow incidents that happen in their community in a timely manner. I know the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas had mentioned the importance of transparency, and this is really all about transparency. We want to make sure that communities are notified about sewage bypasses and overflow incidents.

This has been aided by our government's 2020 budget, which included investing \$10 million to improve transparency around monitoring and public reporting of sewage overflows and bypasses from municipal systems in the Great Lakes, and \$15 million as well to optimize waste water facilities in the Lake Ontario basin. I would just say that those are critical investments in infrastructure to ensure that our communities grow and thrive. To make sure that we are managing these bypasses and overflows is really not something that we can afford to forget about, and we have to deal with it properly.

Finally, at this point I really wanted to just mention, on a broader basis, Ontario's incredible water resources, which we've talked about a bit. We've worked hard, I think, to ensure that they're protected for the future, and I think it's important that we continue to do that.

Of course, my friend from Kitchener mentioned already that there are 250,000 lakes in Ontario, which is kind of astounding even for those of us from Ontario to believe, but we are very blessed. They have helped shape our long history, as was mentioned, and determined patterns of settlement.

I think another key factor that we need to consider is Lake Simcoe and the impact on Lake Simcoe, which we've talked about a lot here today. As I mentioned, I have some familiarity with it on a personal basis, but there are the phosphorus issues which do come up a lot in Lake Simcoe, and perhaps that's partly also because it is so shallow. I think we want to make sure that we're managing waste water effectively, so we don't make any more problems in places like that.

I'd also like to say that it really is a top priority of this government to protect those vital resources. I'm hoping the MPP for Haldimand–Norfolk's bill does go forward, because I know that he's very intent on this issue.

I think there has been some good news today. We've heard about Lake Simcoe, so I'm not going to go into that in detail, but I think that's very important. Those projects are protecting the lake, and we all want that to happen.

To conclude, because I'm running out of time, the act will help to build on the work that has already been done by the regional municipality of York and get us the best possible waste water solution. That's really my message. After more than a decade of deliberation, we want to get on with it, but we want to make sure that we're doing so on the basis of the best information available. We're hoping that we can pass this act, appoint the expert panel and proceed accordingly.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** Out of respect for the member from Eglinton–Lawrence who spoke, and seeing as it's my first day, we want to go right to the dime. We don't want to take a second out of here. We will continue with a couple of questions and answers until six o'clock.

I will turn to the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I listened very closely to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I was hoping to hear some of the details that she had spoken about earlier in some of the responses that were going forward. In the first five minutes of her presentation, she talked about the importance of waste water, but then she talked about everything but the bill. You talked about the advisory panel, you talked about the scientific study, you talked about infrastructure design and you talked about new technologies, none of which are within this page-and-a-half bill.

We've been raising it from the opposition side all day, and we can't seem to be getting any of those details that this government is talking about: these fantastic individuals who are going to be participating, the advisory panel. It's not in this bill. "Where is it?" is what we've been asking for. When you're looking for us to be supportive or not supportive, we're looking for details. Where are they?

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you very much for the question from the member for Algoma–Manitoulin. We think residents, current and future, deserve a solution for their growing waste water needs. This bill, if passed, is really designed to allow for a panel to be appointed to provide the most up-to-date information on the environmental, social and financial impacts of the potential waste water solutions.

I mentioned earlier that the panel would provide advice on a number of issues. We think that this is the best way to get to a decision based on expertise. The legislation is required to allow this to happen, and that's why the legislation has been brought forward. There are all kinds of great things that they're going to be able to provide information on, which I mentioned before in a question I asked.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** The member from Barrie–Innisfil.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** I want to thank the member. She very much understands the environmental process, what is in the bill and the impacts of the bill to different waterways like Lake Simcoe, which would be impacted by the EA, which is the bill we are discussing today. Kudos to the member for understanding that process and the relevance that it does have to this bill.

I want to ask her: We talk about affordable housing and growth, the importance of balancing the environment and the economy, all those factors, and why that's so important and why it's important to gather all of that detailed information so we're not making decisions lightly.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thanks very much for the question. I think that these decisions are really critical. What we really have to do is make sure we're making them on the best information available and, frankly, that we're consulting with everybody that we ought to be consulting with and working with our partners—municipalities, Indigenous communities—to develop the best possible solutions and plan for these waste water facilities.

I think there's a lot of work to be done that hasn't been done yet. The other important thing is that the information is changing so much. We need to have the best up-to-date information about these things. I think the member from Oshawa mentioned that waste water—or somebody else may have mentioned it—could be used in cooling nuclear

facilities. That's an interesting concept. I'd never heard of that. We should consider all kinds of uses and pick the best possible solutions.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** That will be the end of debate for today.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

#### MEMBERS' ANNIVERSARIES

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker):** If the House would indulge me, I would like to, on behalf of the class of 2011, acknowledge humbly that it is our 10th anniversary. To all of those members that were elected that year who are with us and those who aren't, I thank you for your service. Thank you so much to the colleagues on all sides of the floor. It's been an enjoyable 10 years.

To all of our staff, both at Queen's Park and our constituency staff; to all of the House staff that make sure that we do our jobs as well as we can; and, of course, most importantly, to our families and our loved ones and our friends who support us on this journey, it truly is a privilege to serve and be a public servant, and we will honour it always and be thankful for it. Thank you very much.

Now, it being 6 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, October 7, 2021, at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1800.*





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Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
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Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
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<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
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Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
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Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	

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Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto  
Randy Hillier, Jane McKenna  
Judith Monteith-Farrell, Michael Parsa  
Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly  
Peter Tabuns  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /  
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Amarjot Sandhu  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts  
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho  
Catherine Fife, Mitzie Hunter  
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa  
David Piccini, Jeremy Roberts  
Amarjot Sandhu, Dave Smith  
Vijay Thanigasalam  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité  
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner  
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey  
Guy Bourgouin, Stephen Crawford  
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover  
Mike Harris, Sheref Sabawy  
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner  
Daisy Wai  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité  
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian  
Aris Babikian, Gilles Bisson  
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe  
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin  
Norman Miller, Rick Nicholls  
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard  
Marit Stiles  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de  
la justice**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp  
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard  
Will Bouma, Lucille Collard  
Parm Gill, Daryl Kramp  
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison  
Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh  
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Kevin Yarde  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité  
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam  
Rima Berns-McGown, Faisal Hassan  
Logan Kanapathi, Michael Mantha  
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas  
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed  
Donna Skelly, Vijay Thanigasalam  
Vacant  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent  
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak  
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas  
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett  
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais  
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto  
France Gélinas, Christine Hogarth  
Daryl Kramp, Taras Natyshak  
Michael Parsa  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité  
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser  
Will Bouma, John Fraser  
Logan Kanapathi, Vincent Ke  
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller  
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts  
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai  
Jamie West  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de  
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand  
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche  
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian  
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee  
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden  
Mike Harris, Christine Hogarth  
Belinda C. Karahalios, Bhutila Karpoche  
Natalia Kusendova  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan