

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

M-3

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

M-3

**Standing Committee on
the Legislative Assembly**

Committee business

**Comité permanent de
l'Assemblée législative**

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2nd Session
42nd Parliament

Thursday 18 November 2021

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42^e législature

Jeudi 18 novembre 2021

Chair: Laurie Scott
Clerk: Valerie Quioc Lim

Présidente : Laurie Scott
Greffière : Valerie Quioc Lim

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLYCOMITÉ PERMANENT DE
L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Thursday 18 November 2021

Jeudi 18 novembre 2021

The committee met at 1702 in room 151 and by video conference.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly will now come to order.

MPP Gélinas, if you would confirm that that is you and you are currently in Ontario.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Good evening, everyone. I'm France Gélinas, MPP for Nickel Belt, and I'm in beautiful Nickel Belt, with snow on the ground.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Well, we'll try to get you out so you can make a snowman or -woman sometime soon.

MPP Mantha has joined us in the room also.

Interjection: Snowpeople.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Snowpeople; thank you.

On the agenda for today's meeting is committee business. Are there any motions? I think there might be a motion over to my right. Yes, MPP Oosterhoff?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I move that the committee enter closed session for the purposes of organizing committee business and that broadcasting staff be permitted to remain in the closed session meeting for the purposes of operating the electronic meeting technology.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Oosterhoff has moved a motion. Any discussion? MPP Singh has her hand up, but I think that's maybe the Clerk's job. Should I—

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I recognize MPP Singh.

Ms. Sara Singh: I apologize. I did a hand clap when I meant to do a hand raise, so I apologize. I'm not clapping for the motion; I just want to clarify.

But I would request that we have a recorded vote on this motion, and I just want to state for the record here that I don't understand why we need to move into a closed session. This is just an organizing meeting, and I think that the public does deserve the right to know how we arrive at the decisions at this committee and deserves transparency. I'm not sure why we need to enter a closed session in order to discuss organizing our meetings for this committee.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I will refer to the Clerk.

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Oh, further debate? I'm sorry. Yes? There are a couple of hands. MPP Berns-McGown, I believe you were first. Please go ahead.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I would also like to ask that we keep this discussion open to the public. I think it's really important that our governance all together be transparent and that people be able to see how we make decisions.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further debate? I know that MPP Gélinas did have her hand up.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm just curious to see the reason why we would need to go into closed session. Sometimes, it is required if we're dealing with information regarding a person, but right now, organizing sessions and picking dates and times—there's nothing personal, there's nothing confidential and there's nothing private in this.

If MPP Oosterhoff could explain why he feels that going into closed session is granted or needed, maybe that would help make our decision.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Is there further discussion? I see MPP Oosterhoff has raised his hand. Would you like to respond, please?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Yes, for sure. Thank you so much, Chair, and my thanks to colleagues. This is not the first time, and it won't be the last, that this is the approach taken to ensure that the organizing committee stage, when we're making some of the judgments as a committee about where those scheduling decisions are, is done in camera. That has been the practice now for some time and will continue to be the practice.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further discussion? I believe MPP Mantha would like to start.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I wouldn't mind if my colleague could add to that explanation. Just because this has been the new practice that the government has established doesn't mean it's the right one.

It would be beneficial—again, there is no confidential information that we're going to be dealing with. There is every opportunity for us to be open and transparent about this meeting. There are no contentious issues we're going to be dealing with, so going into closed session really is something that is to the extreme.

Again, although the government has established that practice now, time and time again, it doesn't mean that it's the right one for the public.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Any further discussion? MPP McDonell.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I find this discussion—I've been on a number of committees since COVID happened, and the opposition party constantly brings this up, but this has been the practice since they were in government, since the

Liberals have been in government and since we've been in government.

This is just an organizing committee meeting. All of a sudden, it becomes an issue. Subcommittee meetings to set up the meetings for the process for our committee meetings have been happening for many years, so I'm just surprised that all of a sudden, after years of them following the practice and agreeing to it with the governments they were in opposition to, now it's an issue.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. I will just remind members: If they could physically raise their hands so the Clerk can see them.

MPP Gélinas.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to disagree with MPP McDonell. I have been a member of a legislative committee since 2007. I have never agreed to go into closed session unless I knew exactly why we were going into closed session. I'll give you an example: On Wednesday, I agreed to go into closed session in public accounts because we were discussing an interim report, and I knew that those discussions—some of what was in the report was not ready to go out. I agreed.

But unless I know why I'm going into a closed session—for the last 14 years, I have been on legislative committees. I have never agreed to go into closed session unless there is a valid reason to do this. Right now, nobody has given me a valid reason to do this, so I will do the exact same thing that I have done for the last 14 years and ask why we're going into closed session. And if no good reason is given to me, I will vote against it.

For myself, I can assure you that I have been consistent and I have been doing this for 14 years.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. Any further discussion? If you could, I remind you, physically raise your hands again if you want to participate. Okay. MPP McDonell.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Yes, I may have [*inaudible*]. For years, or since the time I am talking to at least, this has

been done in subcommittee. This is just an organizing committee, which has been done in my time here, and I'm sure forever, in the official opposition's west boardroom, where you met and we decided as a subcommittee. Now COVID has forced us out of the subcommittees, but maybe we should go back to having three people decide and the rest of the committee not being known. But these are just organizing committees and have never been done in public before. It is just a simple setting up times, as we see from the motion that's included in here.

Anyway, I am just surprised that they have raised this issue time and time again, because the process has been going on for decades and we're just continuing with the previous practice.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Is there any further debate, or would you like to move to the voting? Okay. I know that MPP Singh has asked for a recorded vote—I'm sorry, did you have anything else, MPP Singh?

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): No, okay. MPP Singh asked for a recorded vote.

Ayes

Ghamari, McDonell, Oosterhoff, Thanigasalam, Yurek.

Nays

Berns-McGown, Mantha, Sara Singh.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): The motion is carried, 5 to 3. Thank you very much.

We're going to recess for a few minutes to go into closed session—and I have to put the gavel down.

The committee recessed at 1713 and later continued in closed session.

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