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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

T-3

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

T-3

**Standing Committee on
Regulations and Private Bills**

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

2nd Session
42nd Parliament

Monday 29 November 2021

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42^e législature

Lundi 29 novembre 2021

Chair: Aris Babikian
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Président : Aris Babikian
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON REGULATIONS
AND PRIVATE BILLS**

Monday 29 November 2021

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

Lundi 29 novembre 2021

The committee met at 0901 in committee room 2 and by video conference.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Good morning. The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills will now come to order.

We have the following members in the room: MPP Paul Miller and MPP Billy Pang. The following members are participating remotely: MPP Toby Barrett, MPP Randy Pettapiece, MPP Lorne Coe, MPP Vincent Ke and MPP Ghamari. Did I miss anyone? Okay.

We are also joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording.

Please speak slowly and clearly, and wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Since it could take a little time for your audio and video to come up after I recognize you, please take a brief pause before beginning. As always, all comments should go through the Chair.

Are there any questions before we begin? MPP Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Chairman, this is highly irregular. I don't have any information about what this meeting is about. I have no background information. I have no idea what this is about. This is highly unusual, and I've been told by the Clerk that he can't divulge anything until the meeting starts. This is unacceptable. I'm just putting it on the record—and I want that recorded, Mr. Clerk—that I have had absolutely no information about what's going on today.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Miller.

I see that MPP Jamie West already joined us. MPP West, please confirm your presence and your whereabouts.

Mr. Jamie West: Good morning, Chair. I am MPP West. I'm in Sudbury, Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay. Thank you. Anyone else? That's it. Are there any other questions? Okay.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): On the agenda is committee business. Are there any motions? MPP Pang.

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

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We have a motion. Any debate? Yes, MPP Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to go on record as opposing this motion. It's highly irregular—I don't have any information—to put this forward as a motion at this time. I want to go on the record as saying that I'm opposed to this in-camera session without knowing the content.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Miller. Your comments are noted.

If there is not any further discussion, I'm going to—yes, MPP West, go ahead.

Mr. Jamie West: [*Inaudible*] into closed session or in camera, and I can't talk about what we talk about in it, obviously, but we never have any notification about why. I can tell you that I don't believe there's anything we've ever discussed in camera that shouldn't be open to the public, and the public wouldn't care too strongly one way or another about what we discuss in that area. I think that our business, as we discuss government affairs, should be as public as possible, so I would like to be on record as well as opposed to this.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. Any further comments or discussion? I see none. I will now put the question: Shall the motion carry?

Mr. Paul Miller: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Point of order, MPP Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like this recorded, please.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): You want this recorded?

Mr. Paul Miller: Recorded, on the record, this vote. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay.

Any other questions or comments before we start with the voting process? I see none.

Ayes

Barrett, Coe, Ghamari, Ke, Pang, Pettapiece.

Nays

Paul Miller, West.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The motion is carried.

Now, we will go into closed session. Just give us a few seconds to work out the details.

The committee continued in closed session at 0905 and resumed at 1501.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills will now come to order.

We have the following members in the room: MPP Billy Pang and MPP Daisy Wai.

Now, I'm going to go to our colleagues who are participating via Zoom. Please identify your name and your location.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Because three of our MPP colleagues already confirmed in the morning, we will just go to MPP Robin Martin. MPP Martin, please identify yourself and your location.

Mrs. Robin Martin: It's MPP Robin Martin. I'm in my constituency in Toronto, Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Great. Thank you.

We're also joined by staff from legislative counsel, Hansard, and broadcast and recording.

Please speak slowly and clearly and wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Please take a brief pause before beginning. As always, all comments should go through the Chair. Are there any questions before we begin? I see none.

I would like to acknowledge the presence of MPP Miller with us in the room here.

NON-PROFIT SECTOR APPRECIATION WEEK ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021

SUR LA SEMAINE DE RECONNAISSANCE
DU SECTEUR SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to proclaim Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week / Projet de loi 9, Loi proclamant la Semaine de reconnaissance du secteur sans but lucratif.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): There are two private members' public bills on the agenda today, which we will consider. We will begin with Bill 9, An Act to proclaim Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week.

Presenting today is the member for Richmond Hill. She will have 10 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 20 minutes of questioning and answers, divided into one round of seven and a half minutes for the government members, seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members and five minutes for the independent member. Are there any questions? I see none, so we will move on.

I will now call on MPP Daisy Wai. You will have 10 minutes for your presentation. You may begin.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Good afternoon, colleagues. It is a pleasure for me to present my private member's bill, Bill 9, An Act to proclaim Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week. The purpose of this bill is to recognize and

appreciate the dedicated service of the professional workers of Ontario's non-profit sector.

Ontario's non-profit sector is composed of organizations and charities that operate for our collective social benefit. This work impacts all of our daily lives. They are a major contributor to economic growth, innovation and job creation. The one million professionals, driven by their mission, are experts in delivering social, economic and environmental solutions, especially to the local community.

They enrich our quality of life by promoting mental and physical health, social equity, education, the arts, sports, child development, senior care and much more. They serve millions of Ontarians every year in every corner of the province.

The professionals who devote themselves to this sector are among the most reliable and enthusiastic workers in our province. They are driven by vision and a mission, and carry out their responsibilities with a deep sense of pride and passion. They also do that with a lot of persistence. Their work is indispensable and heroic, but it is all too often invisible. They are our invisible champions.

We need to celebrate these invisible champions in our communities. If passed, this bill will proclaim the third week of February each year as Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week. This special designation will provide all Ontarians with a week-long opportunity to express their gratitude and encouragement to the non-profit workers who have been impacting many lives and who play vital roles in building our communities.

I would like to bring attention to the significant impact the non-profit sector has on jobs and our economy. Ontario's non-profits employ more than one million workers, of which 600,000 are full-time workers. These jobs contribute to 2.6% of Ontario's overall GDP, which is more than \$50 billion in economic impact.

Another important fact to note is that 45% of the income earned by non-profit organizations is done through sponsorship and fundraising. By recognizing and appreciating them through an appreciation week, we will strengthen their credibility and thus enable them to be more self-reliant.

The work done by the non-profit sector has become more challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their responsibilities are already demanding in normal times, but this past year, they have gone above and beyond their limits to continue to deliver critical supports and assistance to the most vulnerable in our communities. Now, more than ever, they need the support and encouragement. While navigating the complex challenges of operating under such strenuous circumstances, they have managed to help those who are suffering from isolation and loneliness to find purpose and meaning in their lives.

Yes, the work has doubled, but the donations have diminished tremendously. I would have to say, because of the pandemic, one of the CEOs also mentioned to me that their organization has worried so much that it might not be sufficient to continue the work for the next two months. They need donations, but at the same time they need our appreciation, which will go a long way in encouraging them and bring awareness to the donors to support them.

To all the professionals in the non-profit sector: You truly have been instrumental in helping communities stay positive and hopeful during such a dark period. Words cannot express how much we appreciate your selfless contribution, but it is important for us to express it. Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week will help ignite the passion and the performance of workers and boost the morale of the organizations and charities that have been forced to downsize and lay off employees. Our simple gesture of solidarity can also be the source of strength and persistence for these unseen warriors and bring awareness for them and the donors to give support to them.

1510

With this appreciation week, we want to demonstrate to the next generation's youth that the non-profit sector is really valued. We want our province's youth to know that they can also fulfill their own passion and help, and also be involved in such a meaningful sector and contribute to the growth of our province. Let us encourage Ontarians to volunteer or to donate and to foster impactful change in their own communities through this bill. The non-profit sector has helped build our province. Now it is our turn to build them up.

In closing, I would like to share a story that I have experienced. I began serving the community as a teenager in Hong Kong. My passion grew as I arrived in Canada, now nearly 40 years ago. I volunteered in a cancer support group and also supported special-needs children.

But it has never been as impactful as when I served as a staff in a non-profit organization. I had this experience when I was on my maternity leave. At that time, I was invited to start a Christian newspaper ministry. During my maternity leave, not only did I have to produce a publication from scratch; I had to promote it in order to bring in the advertising to finance the printing. I worked with the support of some Christian organizations, but I was the only staff, with no pay. I had to share my vision and seek donations to support the operation.

I know and I understand what it is like to run a non-profit organization. I still recall the encouragement we received, and it was encouragement so that we could plow through with success, especially through these challenges.

Because of this, this organization, Herald Monthly, continues to thrive. It brings me great joy to know that Herald Monthly has been operating now for almost 30 years and is now having a positive impact on so many lives. Today the organization employs six staff and produces 35,000 printed copies in Canada's east, as well as 25,000 in Canada's west. Printed copies in Canada have also helped, and they also do audio and video programs. It has become one of the most respected Chinese media in Canada.

I'm happy that we can motivate and encourage many non-profit organizations through this bill. Today I'm joined by some of the province's leading non-profit sector advocates, and they support me. Some of them include the United Way, the Bhayana Family Foundation and the Ontario Nonprofit Network. They share my sentiments, and they have been a shining light in the sector. They have

been working very hard together with me on this bill. Many of the non-profit organizations are very—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Wai. Unfortunately, the 10 minutes are up.

Now we will move to questions. We will start with the official opposition. You have seven and a half minutes.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Chair. I'll split my time with MPP West.

Thank you for your presentation, MPP Wai—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Sorry. My apologies. I think MPP Sheref Sabawy joined us. MPP Sabawy, can you identify yourself and your location?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Hi. My name is Sheref Sabawy. I'm the MPP for Mississauga–Erin Mills. I'm joining from Queen's Park.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay, thank you very much.

Now, we will go back to the official opposition. You have seven and a half minutes.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I repeat, thank you, MPP Wai, for your presentation. I've got just a few quick questions for you. Non-profits have been around for decades and for many years. What possessed you to bring this bill forward at this particular time, about six months before an election? I'm just curious.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: It has nothing to do with the election at all, but it's really what I see, especially during the pandemic time. As you can see, they have been working—as I mentioned in my presentation, they work so hard. And because of the pandemic, they might not have as many sponsors and donors; and yet, because of COVID-19, the volunteers have diminished and they need a lot of support.

Putting this bill forward is just an encouragement, and also bringing the awareness for donations and the support that they need.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you. Secondly, non-profit organizations play a large role in our economy in that sector. What are you hoping they'll be able to accomplish on their own that they couldn't have accomplished before in one week? I'm just curious. What do you think is going to happen?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: To be honest with you, what we want to do is not only one week. This is something that we should be doing 365 days in the whole year. The week is just something that we can put some concentration on. We want to raise the flag and draw people's attention. Our goal—once this is passed, I would like to already start approaching each not-for-profit organization to get their successful story, their needs, and have them posted on a special site so more people can really see it on their own time. It will be a continuation.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you. As you know, these sectors, obviously, they have staff, they have costs—rent and space and things like that. What role do you think the government's going to play from an economic perspective to assist them, not just declare one week to help them through donors? It's tough enough now. Donors are cutting back. United Way is struggling. A lot of them are

struggling because donors, through these terrible times— as you know, the donations are down significantly. What is the government going to do in the way of economic relief for the non-profits? Because they operate similar to profit, except it's just classified as non-profit. What can you do to help them?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: In fact, I know that the government has been giving different kinds of funds to support the non-profit organizations. Just in my area, in Richmond Hill, I have announced this funding to different organizations, like food banks, like 360°kids. We have been doing that, but this is not enough. It's the encouragement, it's something that we pull our hands together.

Yes, our government can do the funding, but it's not just the funding that helps. And besides, the government is only a manager of all the money that we receive from our taxpayers, so there's only so much that we can put out. But when we pull our hands together across the province with all the donors' understanding, a little bit here and there will make a big difference to all of these organizations.

Mr. Paul Miller: A lot of these organizations obviously could be folding and struggling under the COVID situation. Are you reaching out to the ones—not just the ones that are hanging on or are reasonably successful, the ones that are also folding their tents because they don't have enough money? What are you doing in that sector?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: To be honest with you, all these organizations, they started the organizations because, as I say, of their vision and the mission. They will be biting their lips and they will be moving forward—and I know that. They have been going around, getting the support that they can get in different ways. So I know a lot of them are surviving, and that's why we have to call it now: soon enough to support them.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you. MPP West will take over now.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP West, you have three minutes and 25 seconds. The floor is yours.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, MPP Wai and MPP Miller, for your questions and comments.

Along the same lines, I think it's a great bill in terms of it feels nice. Everyone wants to thank non-profits. I'm sure most of us, if not all of us, have volunteered or have a favourite non-profit of our own. One that pops to mind: I volunteered for years for United Way. I was on their executive board for about five years before the election. I know they're struggling in Sudbury, because one of the bigger cornerstones of their campaign is the payroll deduction. If you are laying people off because of COVID-19, if your business is closing because of COVID-19, that takes a chunk out of your donations.

1520

Although it feels good to thank these non-profits, what we really need is money, so that organizations—I'm going to use the United Way as an example—can get the services and get funding to smaller organizations. Is this bill, as well, a signal that the government is going to provide more funding to organizations—not just the United Way, but like the United Way—that are struggling right now?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Yes, these non-profit organizations have been struggling, like any small businesses. In fact, the federal government realized that. That's why the federal government has reached out not only to these organizations, but also to small businesses. I realize some of them are doing it in the same way as small businesses, where they will have to lay off their staff in a way so that they can get support from the federal government in the meantime to carry them through.

This is one of the ways that they're doing it. Some of them, as I say, are really doing it out of the mission and the vision. Whether they have pay or not, they would still be working as volunteers for them, to make them float through.

This is why this bill is so important, and that's why I want to make that happen soon enough. It was originally scheduled for October, but we made it—

Mr. Jamie West: Let me just interrupt for a second.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Sorry.

Mr. Jamie West: Sorry. I appreciate that, and I'm only interrupting because of the amount of time we have.

You talk about the mission and the vision, and I think of local food banks. Shortly after your government came to power—and I know it had to do with the 15 years of Liberals—food banks announced that they hit an all-time high of full-time workers accessing the food bank on a regular basis. That's not a government policy, and I'm not blaming your government—you guys inherited the mess the Liberals took on—but I'm counting on the Conservative government to address this rise in the need for food banks, which is even higher with COVID-19.

Supporting and saying food banks are great. "Here's a day when we want to recognize all the hard work you do and all the volunteer work that you have" is great, but ultimately, we need to change government policy so fewer people are using food banks. We need to raise OW and ODSP. We need to fix the minimum wage. Are there going to be policies coming forward from your government to address these root causes that create these missions, to fill in the gaps of the government so far?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Today my focus is on the not-for-profit sector, and this is what we want to do to support them. In fact, I know the government has been giving funding. As I say, I went to the food bank in my local community in Richmond Hill and also I go to 360°kids and a lot of others—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Wai. Your time is up.

Now I see MPP Goldie Ghamari has joined us. You've already been identified in the morning, so we don't need to go through the process again.

I will give the government side the opportunity to start their questioning. Who wants to go first? MPP Billy Pang, the floor is yours.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, MPP Wai. I appreciate your services in different charitable and also non-profit organizations. I share your passion. I have been serving as a volunteer for decades as well, locally and internationally. In your point of view, what do you mean by "non-profit sector?"

Mrs. Daisy Wai: The non-profit sector—it's very clear that they are really doing this to service the community. They are not doing this as a business, to make money. As I mentioned in my presentation, the non-profit sector is made up of a lot of different organizations that support the social needs in the community, whether they are emotional or physical. Say, for example, the food bank: We support them for the physical. But there are a lot of others that support them in their emotional, spiritual, psychological needs. These are the organizations that really benefit and support our community, as well as our province.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, MPP Wai. I pass it to the next member.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Ghamari, the floor is yours.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you, MPP Wai, for your presentation and taking the time to speak on this important bill that you've brought forward. I just wanted to clarify something, because I took a little bit of umbrage with the fact the NDP seem to put it to you that you're doing this six months before an election. It seems like everything we're doing now they just try to twist it in that way. However, if they had actually done their homework, like we have on our side, they would have seen that you actually introduced this bill back in May of 2021, well over a year ago. Parliament was prorogued, which is why you're reintroducing it now.

So, just to clarify, MPP Wai, is it true then that this is something that you've been working on for well over a year and that it has nothing to do with the election and you're just reintroducing a bill that you worked on previously?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much, MPP Ghamari, and thank you for giving me the words that I want to say as well. For sure, we're doing it out of our own passion. It is my mission as an MPP to really make sure that we do things that are meaningful for our community. It was nothing to do with the election at all. As you say, I have already introduced that in May—but actually way before May; I was just waiting for my turn to submit.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: May of 2021, correct?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: That's correct, but even before then, I was just waiting for my turn to get my private member's bill to process. But this is something that's always in my heart.

Since you mentioned that, I want to jump into this just to say that I'm so impressed by my government. We have made a lot of great promises and we are working very hard despite the pandemic to make sure that all the things that we want to achieve have been achieved. This is one of the examples of how I am following my government by doing exactly the same thing, and that is our passion and our commitment.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you, MPP Wai, for clarifying. You're one of the hardest-working people that I know, and I have no further questions at this time.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: All of you are. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Ke, the floor is yours.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you, MPP Wai. Thank you for bringing this bill. This activity is very important to recognize non-profit organizations.

During the pandemic, I have seen so many non-profit organizations that came out to volunteer and donate. But I have also seen some private organizations that also give the money from their pockets to donate to hospitals, and also the supermarket riding in my riding donated some food for the people who really need it.

The question is, why do you just recognize the non-profit sector?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: In fact, we should appreciate everyone who pulls together and, for the sake of the province, makes sure we all pull through in this difficult time. I have to congratulate all of the other people doing this. But we have a group of people who are the non-profits that put themselves forward in really wanting to support, whether we're in COVID times or not. They have a special vision in supporting a special sector in doing something specific. Those are not the same as a one-off in the community that just pool their hands and do something together. We should appreciate all of us, and we should be very proud for all the Ontarians ready and willing to help each other in this very difficult time.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you. I don't have any more questions. Thank you, MPP Wai.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, MPP Ke.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The government side still has one minute and 52 seconds. I see MPP Coe. The floor is yours.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Chair, and through you to MPP Wai, that was an excellent presentation you made. One aspect stood out, and that was young people and the value of young people participating in non-profit organizations. Can you elaborate on that point, please? Thank you very much.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, MPP Coe, for asking that, because we have to do something by example. That's the only way we can teach our next generation. When they see what we're doing, they will follow. They see how meaningful it is, not only for those who receive but for those who give, from the parents and from the people who have been doing that. I think it is the best way to teach our young generation and, as I say, this will help the economy grow and this is going to make our young people's lives even more fulfilling when they do all of these things.

1530

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you very much for that response. Thank you, Chair.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, MPP Coe.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Forty seconds left. Anyone want to take them? MPP Robin Martin, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I don't have much time left. I just wanted to mention that I noticed in your comments that you talked about how these groups enrich our quality of life, and you gave an example of your own experience. Is there anything else that you wanted to highlight about non-profits that have enriched our quality of life?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I have so little time to say what I want to say, so I don't think I can tell you everything within these 40 seconds, but yes. As I say, just to use the example of the ministry that I was working—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Wai, the time is up. Thank you very much for your presentation, for sharing your passion and interest with us. Because the independent member is not present, we are going to take five minutes' recess—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay.

Thank you, MPP Wai, for your presentation.

We will move now to our next witnesses and the next bill.

POLISH HERITAGE MONTH, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE POLONAIS

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 18, An Act to proclaim the month of May as Polish Heritage Month / Projet de loi 18, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois du patrimoine polonais.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We will now move to consideration of Bill 18, An Act to proclaim the month of May as Polish Heritage Month. Presenting today are the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore and the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. They will have 10 minutes to jointly make an opening statement, followed by 20 minutes of questions and answers divided into one round of seven and a half minutes for the government members, seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members, and five minutes for the independent members.

Are there any questions? Seeing none, we will go to the witnesses, and we will start with MPP Hogarth. The floor is yours.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you to the committee for being here and for the opportunity to examine Polish Heritage Month at committee today.

In the second reading of the bill, all sides of the Legislature supported the proposed legislation, with members speaking in support of their Polish communities across Ontario. This is an important bill that would provide long-overdue recognition to a group of people, Ontarians of Polish heritage, who have contributed so much to the province's growth. With the passage of this bill, Polish Heritage Month would be celebrated each May, commemorating Constitution Day in Poland.

Poland implemented the second democratic constitution in the world and the first in Europe, in May of 1791. The Polish people have a long democratic tradition, but this constitution was too much for Europe's authoritarian regimes and Poland was attacked and partitioned for 123 years, only regaining independence in 1918. This lasted only until World War II, when the Iron Curtain descended in 1945. Poland has struggled for its freedom throughout history, regaining it, finally, in 1989, when the wall fell, largely in part due to the efforts of the Solidarity trade

union. Many of the people who served in that cause make Ontario their home today.

I am very proud to bring forward this bill on behalf the Polish Ontarian community across the province and, indeed, in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore. It is long past time to celebrate Polish resilience and love of freedom, together with the huge contributions to Ontario's vibrant diversity and economy. According to the 2016 census, some 524,000 Polish Canadians call Ontario home. That is far more than any other province, and nearly 12,000 live in and call Etobicoke–Lakeshore their home.

In support of this bill, the Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Toronto stated, "The Polish community has contributed significantly to Ontario, its development and culture ever since the first major wave of Kashubians immigrated in 1858. The recognition of the Polish community's contributions by the province of Ontario through Bill 18, Polish Heritage Month in May, honours this historic bond."

It may be of interest to committee members to know that after the passing of the second reading of this bill in the Legislature, the news was reported all across major media organizations in Poland and has generated extreme interest, as today a foreign affairs delegation from Poland is currently in Toronto laying a wreath at the monument of Sir Casimir Gzowski at this very moment.

During the First World War, Ontarians of Polish heritage made the choice to be trained to fight in the trenches of World War I France. They were trained at Niagara-on-the-Lake, where the Polish army was raised. Many of these soldiers from across Ontario would later defend and save Europe from the attempted Bolshevik invasion, shortly after the end of World War I, before returning home to Ontario.

The other major waves of immigration occurred throughout the world war to the Cold War and the battle for freedom from the Soviet oppression, led by the Solidarity trade union in the 1980s. All waves brought Poles from varying experiences and backgrounds that brought the desire to establish new lives and offered opportunity and freedom. In particular, after World War II, many Poles could not return home, because the Iron Curtain descended on Poland, and doing so would have meant death or imprisonment. They were relocated to Commonwealth and other nations, with many settling in Ontario.

After arriving, all had served a two-year contract, mostly in agriculture or mining in northern Ontario. When these contracts concluded, these new immigrants from Poland, now free to pursue their own careers and build their own futures and families, made numerous and significant contributions to all major fields—agriculture, industry, the military, government and political life—in Canada, and many were awarded for their respective achievements.

Generations of Ontarians of Polish heritage have been recognized with awards and appointments by the Queen, Canadian governments, universities and various organizations of law. I believe we can all agree that the positive achievements of the Polish community in Ontario have been significant. Ontarians of Polish heritage have in very

many ways contributed to the culture and traditions of our great province, and they deserve to be honoured this way through the passing of this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. This concludes my remarks. I will pass it over to my colleague the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his remarks.

The Chair (Mr. John Yakabuski): MPP Yakabuski, the floor is yours.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you to my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I want to begin by thanking you for bringing forth this bill. I'm perhaps maybe a little ashamed that after being here for 18 years, I didn't do it myself first. As the son of the first person of Polish heritage to serve in this Legislature, perhaps it should have been incumbent upon me to bring this forward. But nevertheless, I do want to congratulate you and thank you for that.

You have articulated so many of the accomplishments and why you've brought this bill forward. The Polish people, throughout history, have been victims of oppression by other regimes, and this is a great opportunity for us here in the Ontario Legislature to—as you have said, many have been rewarded for their accomplishments—reward them for their persistence and their commitment to their own culture and their commitment to Canada.

We are not talking about a group of people that have recently immigrated to Canada, but one that has a rich history here. As my colleague articulated, although we had people of Polish heritage come here even in the 18th century, the first significant wave was in 1858 when a group of Poles from the Kashub region of Poland made the first significant immigration to Canada. They settled eventually, and most of them would have been settling in and around the Renfrew area, but it wasn't a home for them, because they wanted to be amongst their own people. So they went further down the Opeongo Line to Wilno and made Wilno the first Polish settlement in Canada. There are plaques that honour that.

Of course, anybody who has been through Wilno has seen the magnificent St. Mary's church or has been there in the fall like my colleague from Mississauga Centre—Ms. Kusendova has been there for the St. Mary's chicken supper—and the first Saturday in May every year, the Wilno Heritage Society celebrates with the Polish Kashub Days to commemorate the constitution of Poland and independence.

1540

When we were bringing in the bill, I talked about the hardships of these people. They were not the immigrants of choice. They were given some pretty harsh land to make their way on, as they say, and through their hard work, persistence and a tremendous faith—the Polish that came here were exclusively Roman Catholic at the time and they had a tremendous commitment to their faith, because they believed that their faith is what has helped them survive through the various occupations throughout their history.

We have an opportunity here as a Legislature. As my colleague has said, over 500,000 people of Polish descent live in Ontario today out of approximately just under one million in Canada, so the majority live right here in

Ontario. This is an opportunity for us as a Legislature, as a province, to recognize that, and I think that the best way to do that is to just follow what my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore is asking us to do and to proclaim the month of May as Polish Heritage Month here in the province of Ontario, something that I wholeheartedly support.

Chair, I know that my colleague and I are both prepared to answer any questions you may have on this piece of legislation. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Yakabuski and MPP Hogarth, for your presentation.

Now we will move to the question section of our hearing. This time we will start with the government side. The government side, you have seven and a half minutes. I see MPP Pang wants to take the floor. The floor is yours, MPP Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: As a first-generation immigrant, I appreciate the diversity of Ontario. Also, it's a privilege to understand and learn more about our different immigrants' history and heritage. Can the member, either one of you, let me know why Ontario needs to celebrate Polish Heritage Month?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, thank you very much, MPP Pang. As we have talked about, the contributions that they make, and that people of Polish descent have made already, to this province and how they have added to the diversity—when I grew up, of course, the Polish people, the Kashubs, who I knew were local, but I've had the tremendous opportunity in life to see the contribution of other waves of immigrants, particularly the ones that came after the Second World War. Those are the ones that established Polish Scout camps up in my area. I talked about Janusz Zurakowski, the test pilot for the Avro Arrow, who fought in the Battle of Britain for the RAF after Poland was invaded by Hitler's army.

There has been a continuing enrichment of our own Canadian culture through these immigrants. We all came as immigrants. I'm a fifth generation. My grandchildren are now a seventh generation. But somebody had to start it all. You probably understand better than the rest of us what it's like to be the ones that came here initially, came here yourselves. We understand that, and we think that it's high time, as they say, that the Polish people that have contributed so much to our society and to the building of this nation be honoured in this way.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Hogarth.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I just want to jump in. I'm not Polish myself. One thing I've learned about being an MPP: all different backgrounds that people bring to the table. That's probably one of the biggest joys of my job is to hear stories of people's backgrounds. I grew up in a small town, Thunder Bay, and everybody was the same. Right? Now, I found out later on in life that my grandmother was Finnish. When she ended up having dementia, she started talking in Finnish and no one even knew she knew how to speak Finnish. So a lot of times people kept who they were and what brought them to Canada behind. It's just so great to celebrate other cultures' diversities, and I think it's a

testament to yourself and to my colleagues all across the floor that I get to meet every day and learn about you that I would like to bring something to the members of my community as well.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, colleagues.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Who would like to take the turn in questioning? The government side: MPP Martin, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I just wanted to thank both of my colleagues MPP Yakabuski and MPP Hogarth for sponsoring this bill. I have 13,500 people of Polish descent in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence, which is right in the middle of the city of Toronto, and I think that's another example of how the Polish community is a bit everywhere in Toronto and Ontario. They've settled in multiple communities and make a big difference in those communities. I want to thank you for taking this step to honour their heritage.

I guess what I would like to know is a little bit about the history. I know, MPP Hogarth, when you gave your second reading speech, you mentioned a number of distinguished people of Polish background here in Ontario. I don't know if you or MPP Yakabuski want to share anybody you wanted to draw our attention to as someone who we would say, "This is a great Ontarian, a great Canadian of Polish background."

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, MPP Martin. I know that Casimir Gzowski has been honoured here at this Legislature in a very special way for his contributions not only as an immigrant, but one who made such a tremendous engineering contribution to Canada.

Those are some of the things, quite frankly, that myself, as we've both articulated, coming from a very small, concentrated area where we were mostly all the same—we didn't even know about the contributions of those who came before us and made that absolutely—actually, when we were here honouring him, I felt so proud that this is a history of someone who, growing up, we didn't know anything about. This wasn't part of our curriculum in our school or something, to know about Casimir Gzowski—and then to know that his great-grandson Peter Gzowski, who we saw on television so often, was actually the descendent of this great man.

I think there could be story after story, the more we actually sat back and learned. There is a small book. It's called *The Poles in Canada*. I would encourage everyone to take a look at that just to see what the contributions are that we sometimes overlook, because we're stuck in this immediate world all the time, where it's only the news of the day that seems to have an impression on people. But, my God, we've got so much to be thankful for and proud of for those who set the table for us, as they say. So that's one, and I'll pass it to my colleague MPP Hogarth.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Go ahead.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Well, I think this is why we want to celebrate and educate: so we can learn more about these people who we didn't know because they didn't celebrate their background. One of them I read about just recently was Isaac Hellmuth. Did you know he was one of

the founders of the University of Western Ontario? I didn't know that.

I think the more we learn about each other and what we bring to the table—these are all exciting things. Hopefully, this May, if this bill gets passed through the Legislature, we'll be able to educate. The Canadian Polish Congress can get involved and help share some of the history of some of these famous people who maybe were not brought to the forefront. We didn't know. We're looking at a whole new generation of people to be educated on some of these cultural backgrounds and these exciting things that people brought to our province.

Mrs. Robin Martin: That's very interesting. I would love to read that book that MPP Yakabuski mentioned.

There was the first MPP of Polish descent. Who was that, MPP Yakabuski?

Mr. John Yakabuski: That was my father.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Oh, that one. That's right. So there's another trailblazer in Ontario from a Polish background. Being the first MPP of Polish descent is quite an extraordinary accomplishment. You must be very proud of him.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I wouldn't have even known that until it was told to me, because, quite frankly, there was never a big deal made about it—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Yakabuski.

We will move to the official opposition. Who would like to start first? MPP Miller, the floor is yours.

Mr. Paul Miller: I just wanted to thank MPPs Hogarth and Yakabuski for their wonderful presentations. I, being from Hamilton, an industrial town, have spent many, many hours working with my Polish comrades in the steel industry. They are hard-working, strong, law-abiding people. I have many friends who are from the Polish community in Hamilton and I'm very proud to call them friends.

1550

The history of Poles during World War II is that some of their young lads managed to make it to Britain and they were trained in Scotland, where my family is from, and England, for the air force and to fight in the British Army against the Nazis. Some of those young fellows ended up marrying some Scottish and English girls in our country, so they took some of our wonderful ladies other places: Canada, the United States, all over the place. I almost feel related to them in one way. They're a great people.

I guess my first quick question would be to John. Being from a Polish background, I guess you were quite proud the day they got a Polish Pope.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: There's no question that, as I said, the Polish Kashubs who settled in Wilno and the area of Barry's Bay and that surrounding area—Wilno being the first Polish settlement, I would say in that area it was like a celebration when Pope John Paul II was chosen to be Pope.

I know that there was a hope that when he made his visit to Canada, he may be able to visit Wilno, but the challenge at the time was being able to provide all of the supports that would be necessary for the tens of thousands—maybe

hundreds of thousands—of people who would show up in a hamlet that had no infrastructure that could support that. But there was a tremendous pride and celebration.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you. I just want to leave a couple of minutes for MPP West. How much time have I got left?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Five minutes.

Mr. Paul Miller: Five minutes? I've got a whole minute and a half.

Also, I guess this is long overdue. There are other communities that have been recognized over the years, and, like you said, I'm surprised this one hasn't been done earlier, because they're quite worthy and we're thrilled to be able to—from the NDP's perspective, we'll be supporting this 150%, because it's a recognition that we feel that people who have come from different countries in Europe certainly have helped build Ontario to where we are now. They brought their trades, their crafts and their history of building, and certainly gave our people here a good dose of European culture and architecture, which has made a big difference in our communities throughout Ontario. I'm quite thrilled that this is happening.

I'll now pass this on to my colleague MPP West. I'm sure he's worked with a few Polish fellows up in the steel industry up north—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: And women.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP West, the floor is yours.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, MPP Yakabuski and MPP Hogarth.

I don't know if I can correct my record, because we were in camera. I had mispronounced the bill. I thought we were tabling a different bill earlier. I was thinking about the Scottish heritage bill at the time, probably, because my family is Scottish, so I apologize for misstating the bill that we were discussing this afternoon.

As MPP Miller said, we're supporting this. It's very important. I think it was MPP Hogarth who talked about the many people from Poland who came to work in mining cities around Ontario, around Canada, and Sudbury being the nickel capital of the world, obviously we had our fair share as well.

I was actually thinking, interestingly the most that I've learned in the last little while as an MPP about Poland is during my French lessons, because my French tutor, Andrzej, who many of us from both sides of the aisle have, is from Poland, and so he often talks about the difference between English, French and Polish, and growing up on Poland and his parents and grandparents, so it's interesting to have that perspective.

I just thought maybe during the last remaining minutes that I have I would give the mike back to MPP Yakabuski to finish his thoughts he was saying earlier, or anything else that he wanted to say about what it was like to—perhaps about his dad or any other thoughts that he had on the bill.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Yakabuski, go ahead.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, MPP West. I'm not going to excuse myself for not doing this earlier, but the Polish people have generally been fairly humble too, and MPP Miller would know that first-hand.

Our area is visited every summer by people who would have been part of that more recent wave of Polish immigration to Canada, but they all want to see Wilno. They all want to see the Madawaska Valley and the Ottawa Valley and the part that brought those first Polish settlers here. As I said when I was speaking to the bill during second reading debate, when they got there, they saw something that reminded them of their homeland, and that's when they said, "We're home. This is it: We're home."

As I say, I certainly never heard from my father that he was the first person of Polish descent to serve in the Ontario Legislature; that was recorded somewhere else, and I read it. That probably would have been even after my father passed away. But every nationality, every group, has a first. Because I was actually reading a bit about this, I read that Stanley Haidasz was the first MP of Polish descent. That isn't that long ago either, because I remember when he was in the House of Commons.

This province was mostly settled by the English, the Scottish and the Irish, and it took a long time for people of different nationalities to break through. But today, to Mr. Pang and Mr. Ke's points, on the teleprompters there, this is an international Legislature. The diversity that we have there today is exactly what I think our forefathers saw when they came to this country, because they saw this tremendous opportunity for no matter who you were—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Yakabuski. Thank you, MPP Hogarth, for your presentations.

I see MPP Yakabuski became emotional, and I would not blame him, because it is truly an honour to serve with you, and remembering your father and how you discovered—it is a lesson to all of us. And I agree that all of us now, as you mentioned, MPP Yakabuski—the Legislative Assembly of Ontario represents so many firsts in the history of our province. So thank you very much, both of you, for your presentations.

NON-PROFIT SECTOR
APPRECIATION WEEK ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021
SUR LA SEMAINE DE RECONNAISSANCE
DU SECTEUR SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to proclaim Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week / Projet de loi 9, Loi proclamant la Semaine de reconnaissance du secteur sans but lucratif.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Now, we will move to the clause-by-clause examination of the bills. We will start with the clause-by-clause of Bill 9, An Act to proclaim Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week.

To the members, are there any comments or questions to any sections of the bill? I see none.

There are no amendments to sections 1 to 3 of the bill. I propose we bundle them. Does the committee agree? Agreed. Any questions or comments? Are the members ready to vote? All in favour, please raise your hand. Thank you very much. Sections 1 to 3 carry.

We'll move to the preamble of the bill. Is there any discussion or comments? None. Are we ready to vote? Okay. Shall the preamble carry? All in favour? Any opposition to the preamble? I see none. The preamble is carried.

1600

Shall the title of the bill carry? Any debate? Any comments? None? All in favour, please raise your hand. Any opposition? I see none. The title is carried.

Shall Bill 9 carry? Any comments? Any discussion? Are we ready to vote? All in favour, please raise your hand. Any opposition? I see none. Bill 9, as it is, carried.

Shall I report the bill to the House? All in favour? Any opposition? I will do so; I will report the bill to the House. Thank you very much.

POLISH HERITAGE MONTH, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE POLONAIS

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 18, An Act to proclaim the month of May as Polish Heritage Month / Projet de loi 18, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois du patrimoine polonais.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Now we move to Bill 18. We will begin clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 18, An Act to proclaim the month of May as Polish Heritage Month. The Clerk has distributed the amendments package to all members and staff electronically. On each section, I am going to go section by section.

Mr. Paul Miller: For your information, Chair, I don't have the amendments here.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Just give us a minute, colleagues. MPP Miller wants the amendments. We're okay, MPP Miller?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay. Are there any comments or questions to any section of the bill? Any comments? Any questions? None. Now, there are no amendments to sections 1 to 3 of the bill. I propose we bundle them. Does the committee agree?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Pang? Do you have a question?

Mr. Billy Pang: I want to make a motion.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Which section do you want to make—do you have an amendment?

Mr. Billy Pang: I want to make an amendment on section 3. You just said sections 1 to 3 are bundled, so do I have to read it out now?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Sure. We will go back. I'm going to propose that, for sections 1 to 2, we bundle them together, vote on it. After that we will come to section 3 and you can make your amendment. Agreed?

Mr. Billy Pang: Agreed.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay, colleagues. Sections 1 to 2, bundled together: Is there any discussion, or questions or comments? No. Are we ready to vote?

Mr. Paul Miller: I have a question, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Yes?

Mr. Paul Miller: What are sections 1 and 2? There's nothing here. What are sections 1 and 2 that we're voting on?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The bill is on the table over there, MPP Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: No one notified us of that. I didn't know that. There we go. Okay. We've got to be more organized, I think. But anyway—okay, there's nothing. There's zero. Is that correct, Mr. Clerk? There's nothing?

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: So what are we voting on if there's nothing here? Why are we bundling sections 1, 2 and 3 when there's nothing here?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We're bundling 1 and 2.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay, sections 1 and 2, but there's nothing there. Why are we bundling—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Miller, the bill was tabled in the House, and—

Mr. Paul Miller: No, the bill is not tabled until we send it there.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The Clerk is going to put sections 1 and 2 on the screen so that everyone can see it. I can read it, MPP Miller, if you're—

Mr. Paul Miller: No.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): But anyway, the Clerk is going to—

Mr. Paul Miller: If we're voting on something, it would be nice to know what I'm voting on, first of all. Because I didn't get it sent to me. If it wasn't sent to my office, it wasn't sent to me. If it was, I wasn't in today. I haven't been there.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Can you enlarge the text?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Can I read section 1?

Mr. Paul Miller: "The month of May in each year"—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): "The month of May in each year is proclaimed as Polish Heritage Month." That's section 1. Section 2: "This act comes into force on the day it receives royal assent." Now we are bundling sections 1 and 2 together. We are not touching section 3.

Mr. Paul Miller: So they're one-liners, right?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Yes.

Mr. Paul Miller: The reason—on these sheets, I don't have anything. Now I see that you're bundling one line as sections 1 and 2; and there's going to be an amendment to section 3, according to MPP Pang—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Let's leave section 3. We will discuss it later. The issue on our table is bundling sections 1 and 2. It is on the screen. The sections are on the screen. Are there any comments or questions? None?

Mr. Paul Miller: There's nothing to comment on.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay. Are we ready to vote? We're voting on bundling sections 1 and 2. All in favour? Any opposition? I see no opposition, so sections 1 and 2 carried.

Now we come to section 3. I understand MPP Pang has an amendment. MPP Pang, can you table your amendment?

Mr. Billy Pang: I move that section 3 of the bill be amended by adding "act" after "month."

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): All of us heard MPP Pang's amendment. Are there any questions or comments on the amendment? MPP Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: So all you're doing is moving the word "act" from the front to the back? That's it?

Mr. Billy Pang: No, the short title of the act is the "Polish Heritage Month Act."

Mr. Paul Miller: The short title of the act is the "Polish Heritage Month," and you want to put it to—

Mr. Billy Pang: It's not moving the word; it's adding one word.

Mr. Paul Miller: You're adding another "act." So you've got two "acts" in it?

Mr. Billy Pang: No, the previous "act" is not the name of the bill.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The first "act" is part of the sentence. It's not part of the act. So—

Mr. Paul Miller: You're going to bundle it together? Okay. All right.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any more debate? Any more questions on section 3? We're going to entertain

MPP Pang's amendment to section 3 first. All in favour of MPP Pang's amendment to section 3? Are you ready to vote? All in favour, please raise your hand. Any opposition? I see none, so the amendment to section 3 is carried.

1610

The issue now is section 3, as amended. Any questions or comments? If none, we will move to the vote. Shall section 3, as amended, carry? Please raise your hand. Everyone in favour, raise your hand. Any opposition? Seeing none, section 3, as amended, carried.

We move to the preamble. Shall the preamble carry? Any comment? Any discussion? None? We're ready to vote? All in favour of the preamble, please raise your hand. Any opposition? Seeing none, the preamble is carried.

We move to the title of the bill. Shall the title of the bill carry? Any questions? Any comments? All in favour, please raise your hand. Any opposition? Seeing none, the title of the bill is carried.

Shall Bill 18, as amended, carry? Any questions? Any comments? Seeing none, all in favour, please raise your hand. Thank you. Any opposition? Seeing none, Bill 18, as amended, carried.

Shall I report the bill to the House, as amended? Any questions? Any comments? Seeing none, are we ready to vote? Please raise your hand if you are in favour. Any opposition? Seeing none, I will report the bill, as amended, to the House.

There being no further business, this committee now stands adjourned. Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 1615.

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