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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

F-18

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

F-18

**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Committee business

Tax Relief at the Pumps Act, 2022

2nd Session
42nd Parliament

Thursday 7 April 2022

**Comité permanent
des finances
et des affaires économiques**

Travaux du comité

Loi de 2022 sur l'allègement
de la taxe à la pompe

2^e session
42^e législature

Jeudi 7 avril 2022

Chair: Ernie Hardeman
Clerk: Michael Bushara

Président : Ernie Hardeman
Greffier : Michael Bushara

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Thursday 7 April 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES

Jeudi 7 avril 2022

The committee met at 1500 in room 151.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael Bushara): Good afternoon, honourable members. In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, it is my duty to call upon you to elect an Acting Chair. Are there any nominations? Mr. Bouma.

Mr. Will Bouma: I nominate member Kusendova.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael Bushara): Does the member accept the nomination?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I accept.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael Bushara): Are there any further nominations? There being no further nominations, I declare the nominations closed and Ms. Kusendova elected Acting Chair of the committee.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Good afternoon, everyone. I call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to order. On the agenda for today we have consideration of committee business. Are there any motions? MPP Crawford.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I move that the committee enter closed session for the purposes of organizing committee business.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): MPP Sattler?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I oppose the motion to move in camera. I think that the discussion of organizing committee business is something that the public has a right to know, so I am going to be voting against this motion.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Any further debate? Seeing none, are members ready to vote?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Recorded vote.

Ayes

Bouma, Crawford, Cuzzetto, Kanapathi, Dave Smith.

Nays

Sattler.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): I declare the motion carried. We will therefore move in camera.

The committee recessed at 1503 and resumed at 1545, following a closed session.

TAX RELIEF AT THE PUMPS ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT
DE LA TAXE À LA POMPE

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to amend the Fuel Tax Act and the Gasoline Tax Act with respect to a temporary reduction to the tax payable on certain clear fuel and on gasoline /
Projet de loi 111, Loi modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur les carburants et la Loi de la taxe sur l'essence en ce qui concerne la réduction temporaire de la taxe à payer sur certains types de carburant incolore et sur l'essence.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs will now come to order. We're meeting today for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 111, An Act to amend the Fuel Tax Act and the Gasoline Tax Act with respect to a temporary reduction to the tax payable on certain clear fuel and on gasoline.

I will now open up the floor for comments and debate on the bill as a whole. Is there any debate? Okay. Seeing none, as usual, we will seek unanimous consent to stand down the first three sections of the bill, so we can consider the schedules first, and then we will return to the sections. Do I have unanimous consent to stand down the first three sections of the bill? Agreed? Agreed.

We will now move on to schedule 1, section 1. Seeing that we don't have any amendments on schedule 1, sections 1 through 6, I propose we bundle them together. Agreed? Agreed. Are there any comments on schedule 1, sections 1 through 6? Any debate? Are members ready to vote? Shall schedule 1, sections 1 to 6, carry? Those in favour, please raise your hand. Those opposed, please raise your hand. I declare schedule 1, sections 1 through 6, carried.

We will now be discussing schedule 1 as a whole. Is there any debate? Seeing none, are members ready to vote? Shall schedule 1 carry? Those in favour, please raise your hand. Those opposed, please raise your hand. I declare schedule 1 carried.

We will now move on to schedule 2. We don't have any amendments on sections 1 through 5. I therefore propose we bundle them together. Agreed? Agreed. Shall schedule 2, sections 1 through 5, carry? Those in favour, please raise your hand. Those opposed, please raise your hand. I declare schedule 2, sections 1 through 5, carried.

We will now discuss schedule 2 as a whole. Is there any debate? Seeing none, are members ready to vote? Shall

schedule 2 carry? Those in favour, please raise your hand. Those opposed, please raise your hand. I declare schedule 2 carried.

We will now be considering sections 1 through 3 of the bill. Section 1, contents of this act: Is there any debate? Seeing none, are members ready to vote? Shall section 1 carry? Those in favour, please raise your hand. Those opposed, please raise your hand. I declare section 1 carried.

We are now moving on to section 2, commencement. Is there any debate? Seeing none, are members ready to vote? Shall section 2 carry? Those in favour, please raise your hand. Those opposed, please raise your hand. I declare section 2 carried.

We will now consider section 3, the short title. Is there any debate? Debate, MPP Sattler?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes, debate.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Go ahead.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The short title of this act is “Tax Relief at the Pumps Act.” I think that during the brief debate that was held on this bill last night, members of the official opposition made clear our concerns that this is not going to actually be providing Ontarians with tax relief at the pumps. It adds up to about \$65 in total of relief, \$45 spread over six months at the gas pumps and then some indirect additional relief possibly that consumers would be seeing.

1550

I think it is misleading to suggest that this bill is actually going to achieve tax relief at the pumps and do anything to address the affordability challenges that people in this province are facing.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Any further debate? Seeing none, are members ready to vote? Shall section 3 carry? Those in favour, please raise your hand. Those opposed, please raise your hand. I declare section 3 carried.

We will now consider the title of the bill. Is there any debate? Seeing none, are members ready to vote? Those in favour of the title of the bill, please raise your hand. Those opposed, please raise your hand. I declare the title carried.

Shall Bill 111 carry? Those in favour, please raise your hand—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Recorded vote.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): It’s too late.

Those in favour, raise your hand. Those opposed, please raise your hand. I declare Bill 111 carried.

Shall I report Bill 111 to the House? Those in favour—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Recorded vote.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We shall have a recorded vote—is there any debate on this? MPP Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I just want to comment on the process that we are in right now, that is seeing this bill being imminently reported to the House. It was a bill that was introduced earlier this week that came for debate yesterday, and here we are, going through clause-by-clause and

reporting the bill back to the House without any opportunity to have had public input on this bill, without any opportunity to consider amendments and file amendments to this bill.

I think it would have been useful to hear from Ontarians as to whether they think this bill is going to address the affordability challenges they are facing, whether this is meaningful in terms of providing some financial support for the two years of the pandemic and the loss of income and now, more recently, skyrocketing inflation and rising hydro costs and rising insurance bills, housing that is becoming increasingly unaffordable.

I am very concerned that we did not have an opportunity to hear from people as to the impact that this legislation will have, how it could have been improved to actually fix the affordability challenges people are having. I personally think that we would have heard from people who would question whether about \$8 a month for six months is going to make any difference whatsoever to them, and the people of this province have a right to expect that the government is going to be open to hearing their concerns and open to considering the measures that really need to be taken in order to address the financial and affordability challenges that people are facing.

This was a missed opportunity. We could have delayed even just one afternoon to have heard some public input next week on this bill, to hear from Ontarians as to whether they think this bill is going to address the real issues that are causing them such a financial crunch in their daily lives and making it increasingly challenging to pay the bills.

There’s no question that the situation is urgent in this province. People do need relief, but they need real relief. They need relief that’s going to actually make a difference. We have not taken the time or the opportunity to hear from Ontarians as to their thoughts on what is proposed in this bill and, also, what kinds of measures they would like to see the government taking to offer that necessary relief.

So I guess I’m not surprised that the government has chosen to go this route. I have gone through a lot of committees where bills come in—we just had Bill 88 that came before committee; deputants spoke almost unanimously in opposition to schedule 1 of that bill, but the government refused to listen. It’s not that I think that anything would have changed as a result of public input, but we do have to do the due diligence, to hear from people, to be responsive to their concerns—unlike with Bill 88, for example, or many other government bills that come out of committee the exact same way they went in, completely ignoring the input from people. That is our obligation, as legislators in this place: to listen to not just the people that we represent. We have a collective responsibility, when legislation is moving through the legislative process, to make sure that the legislation responds to the priorities and concerns of people.

The public input process is also a really valuable opportunity for committee members on all sides to hear from experts. We’ve often had academics, people who have very deep knowledge of a subject matter because of the

work that they do, the advocacy work that they're involved in, and that should be informing the policies and legislation that are passed by this Legislature. Policies should be evidence-based. You need to listen to the people who have the knowledge and the expertise on these matters in order to develop effective policy. But most of all, as I said, you need to provide opportunities for people, for citizens, for Ontarians, to come before the committee and weigh in on the legislative measures that are being proposed in bills that are brought forward.

I just want to reiterate my deep disappointment that this government decided not to provide that opportunity to Ontarians and is not interested in hearing from Ontarians and stakeholders and other people with expertise as to how this bill could have been strengthened, but, most of all, what kind of relief people really need in order to deal with the challenges that they are facing.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Any further debate? MPP Bouma.

Mr. Will Bouma: Through you, Chair, just to confirm, we are prepared to vote on the final reporting of the bill to the House?

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Correct.

Mr. Will Bouma: Have we already asked for a recorded vote?

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): No. *Interjection.*

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Oh, we have? Okay.

Mr. Will Bouma: Very good. If that hadn't been done, I would. But that's already been taken care of. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Is there any further debate? Are members ready to vote? We shall have a recorded vote.

Ayes

Bouma, Crawford, Cuzzetto, Kanapathi, Dave Smith, Wai.

Nays

Sattler.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): It is carried. I shall report Bill 111 to the House.

Seeing as there is no further business, the committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Monday, April 11, 2022, when we will meet for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 106. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 1600.

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