

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

HE-7

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

HE-7

**Standing Committee
on Heritage, Infrastructure
and Cultural Policy**

Committee business

**Comité permanent du
patrimoine, de l'infrastructure
et de la culture**

Travaux du comité

1st Session
43rd Parliament
Monday 31 October 2022

1^{re} session
43^e législature
Lundi 31 octobre 2022

Chair: Laurie Scott
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Laurie Scott
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<https://www.ola.org/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

House Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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

CONTENTS

Monday 31 October 2022

Committee business.....	HE-69
-------------------------	-------

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE,
INFRASTRUCTURE
AND CULTURAL POLICY**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DU PATRIMOINE,
DE L'INFRASTRUCTURE
ET DE LA CULTURE**

Monday 31 October 2022

Lundi 31 octobre 2022

The committee met at 1511 in committee room 1.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We are joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording.

Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. As always, all comments should go through the Chair. Are there any questions before we begin?

On today's agenda is committee business. Are there any motions? MPP Thanigasalam.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I move that the committee enter closed session for the purpose of organizing committee business.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We're just going to put the motion up on the screen, but as soon as we do that, I'll ask if there's any discussion or comments. We've already got a lineup. I'll just wait for the motion to come up. One sec.

Okay. The motion is up on the screen now. For discussion, MPP Bell, I believe you are the first one. Please, go ahead.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I don't see any good reason why we would want to go into closed session to organize business. The time frame that we set for people to submit written comments, as well as the time frame we set for them to speak in committee, is pretty important. It determines how much consultation we have on the bill and the quality of the consultation that we receive, especially since this bill is really significant. It's a sweeping omnibus bill. It's over 130 pages long. It has a significant impact on the housing sector. It has an impact on renters. It has an impact on conservation authorities, on municipal budgets.

I see every reason to keep this stage of the meeting open, so the public is aware of how this government is trying to move this bill through as quickly as possible. I would like to move an amendment, to say that I think we should vote against this and have these conversations around organizing committee business done in public.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Do you want an amendment, or do you want a recorded vote?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for being kind and asking for clarity. I would like a recorded vote on this motion. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Any more discussion? Yes, MPP Harden.

Mr. Joel Harden: I appreciate what my friend from University–Rosedale just said, but I have to admit, I see a pattern here. My friends want to go into closed session to talk about who gets to appear before a significant piece of legislation. Somewhere else in this precinct, someone else is in closed session talking about how they can legislate education workers back to work. I see a parallel here.

It's truly unfortunate, because those education workers—MPP Bell, correct me if I'm wrong—or anyone else. I think they make an average of \$39,000 a year. But these folks over here, I think there was over—

Mr. Graham McGregor: Point of order, Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Point of order, MPP McGregor?

Mr. Graham McGregor: I just find my colleague—I appreciate his candour; I just don't see how that has to do with the motion that's at hand.

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay, thank you very much. I'm told that's not a point of order, but it's correctly stated that we do have before us, on the screen, a motion about the committee and organizing committee business. I'd like if we could just maybe speak to that topic. Thank you.

Mr. Joel Harden: I absolutely do. And despite my friend's inaccurate use of a point of order—you'll get better—I just want to make sure, Chair, that it's understood at this committee that the point I'm raising—pay attention—is that there's a consistent principle here—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Through the Chair.

Mr. Joel Harden: Through the Chair, absolutely—in lockstep with you, Chair.

There's a consistent principle here: This motion is encouraging secrecy. This motion is encouraging non-disclosure, lack of transparency, and that is precisely what my friends in government are doing right now, as I was saying, Chair, through you, to the whole room, to whoever's watching—certainly, if there are CUPE members out there watching. This is the same message they're sending to 55,000 hard-working folks in our province. So I guess I'm making a plea, vainglorious as it may be—great word, look it up—to try to break with this organizational philosophy of secrecy and non-transparency.

I can tell you, back home, something I was able to work with my friends here in government on: getting an inquiry

into our LRT, which is dealing with the same issue this motion is dealing with, the issue of moving into closed session. That's what my friends here are proposing. They worked with me in the last session of the Legislature, they worked with the people of Ottawa Centre to bring that LRT procurement, germane to this committee, out of the closed session of lobbyists and folks who were finding from the inquiry we were able to win, which was a private closed session, rather like what we're talking about through this motion. At that point, the Conservative government was willing to acknowledge that the people of Ottawa Centre—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I think, maybe, just to clarify, the bill before us that's before committee and the organizing of that bill, of committee business—

Mr. Joel Harden: Yes, no, absolutely.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): So please stay more on topic of what we're discussing today.

Mr. Joel Harden: You can correct me if I'm wrong, the Clerk can correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding of committees of this Legislature, esteemed as they are, is that there are organizational philosophies germane to the decisions we take here. And what I see in the philosophy behind this motion is secrecy, non-transparency, which I think will hinder this committee's ability to get the best possible advice that we need in order to make the right decisions on amendments to this bill, Bill 23. So I'm asking my friends to move out of this seeming bent they have for secrecy, non-transparency, because it doesn't work. It doesn't help us. That's what I understood, if I'm understanding you right, friend from University–Rose-dale. That's what I understand MPP Bell to be saying; that's certainly what I'm saying.

Inasmuch as I fear, Chair, these words are not going to be heeded, because the government has a majority in this committee, on this particular motion that we're debating right now, I just think secrecy, lack of transparency—what's the rationale for it? I've never had one person, one member of this government, explain to me why secrecy and non-transparency is a functional organizational philosophy, as it is for this motion, as it is for, sadly, the education workers who are suffering under this government.

Now, the other point I'll raise, germane to this exact motion and the organization of—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): It better be direct, because I'm going to ask for other debate, so please, MPP Harden.

Mr. Joel Harden: Chair, please forgive me. I am so used to, at this committee—our process is so rushed, rarely do we take a moment to have a breath, step back and have some perspective about why and how we make decisions about closing the session to make sure that the public won't have Hansard to follow our—I'm correct, right, Chair? If we make this decision, the public won't have Hansard to understand why we made the determinations we do about how we have depositions into this hearing.

So for me, I really think it is important that we take a moment to realize that democracy is not an accident; we have to work at it. And the best kind of democracy I'm

accustomed to is one—what's that expression, my friends? “The best disinfectant is sunlight,” right?—in which we are constantly opening up this Legislature to the people who are the actual owners of it, the folks in Ontario, not just the 124 members of provincial Parliament, the esteemed staff help us who make it all work, the technical staff, the people who make the building as beautiful as it is. All those people are great. I'm happy to be among that cohort. But what this motion is going to do, quite frankly, is to continue a pattern I have seen with this government, which is a lack of transparency, of closed session.

1520

When I have raised this point in the past, Chair, I've never had an answer. Isn't that interesting? I've never had an answer on the Hansard from a government member about why they prefer closed session for organizing committee business on hearing depositions.

True story, Chair, again focused on the point here in this motion: I was raised by Presbyterian Conservatives in rural eastern Ontario. My friend from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell also hails from the beautiful town of « Vankleek 'ill », as many of my francophone friends say; I call it Vankleek Hill. I want to believe that those Presbyterian grandparents, who ran that church with a very different organizational philosophy, as Conservative voters, were speaking to the value of transparency and understanding—

Interjection.

Mr. Joel Harden: Pardon me. Were you raising an actual point of order?

Mr. Graham McGregor: I'm not sure.

Mr. Joel Harden: Okay. Well, you should be sure of yourself before you speak.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Oh, okay. I think decorum would be nice here.

Mr. Joel Harden: Oh, I'm absolutely fine to have decorum—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have the floor and I have been generous, and we're talking about what's in front of you, about organizing committee.

Mr. Joel Harden: I am, in fact, talking about—I was making a really important—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): So you are doing your time and then we are going to go to the other side.

Mr. Joel Harden: I really wish the member could have met Erna Davison, the grandmother who helped raise me, a Conservative voter who never in her mind would support a ridiculous proposal like this, to move committees of the people's Legislature into closed session without a rationale.

Do you know what's true? The board of managers that ran my church—the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell probably knows the church: Knox Presbyterian, in Vankleek Hill. She was on the board of managers. She made the minister of our church disclose all his expenses for every trip. She would refuse him an opportunity to move into closed session like this when we would take decisions about his travel.

She would purposefully billet him—Reverend Martin—in any town he went to, because she thought it better for him to stay with a Presbyterian family than use the money

of the church for himself. That was her rationale as a Conservative voter, prudent about the church's finances. Do you think she would have ever condoned the notion of moving into closed session, so the minister could have said, "I actually would like to stay at the Fairmont. I'd like to do whatever I want with the people's money." No, actually, that would have been something she would have taken umbrage with, so I am taking umbrage—

Mr. Graham McGregor: Point of order.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Point of order, MPP McGregor?

Mr. Graham McGregor: Can we direct my colleague to make his comments towards the amendment?

Mr. Joel Harden: I am.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. To the member: I know we've been very generous with your time. MPP Harden, you do have minutes left, for sure, but I would appreciate a more direct version, through the Chair and speaking to the motion that's before us.

Mr. Joel Harden: Absolutely. I'm going to read the motion out just so you, in your work—

Mr. Graham McGregor: Point of order.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Again, a point of order, MPP McGregor?

Mr. Graham McGregor: Sorry. I realized I said "amendment" earlier; I meant "to the motion." I just want to correct the record.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): That's fine. Thank you very much for that correction.

MPP Harden.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you very much, Chair. I read the motion saying, "I move that committee enter closed session for the purpose of organizing committee business." That's what my friend MPP Thanigasalam—fair enough.

What I'm taking issue with, taking umbrage with, is the notion that we have to do this at all. Why do we have to do this? Again, I'm reaching deep into the bleachers of my own mental material here, Chair, to speak to my friends of government. I'm conjuring up one of the people formative to me in my thinking, as I look at this motion that we're debating, who would have literally stood on the table—

Mr. Graham McGregor: Point of order.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Point of order, MPP McGregor?

Mr. Graham McGregor: Sorry, I appreciate my colleague's comments about his grandmother. God bless him. I just fail to see how this has anything to do with the motion that we have in front of us.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much, MPP McGregor. That's not a real point of order, but that's fine. But also—

Mr. Joel Harden: Is it a "three strikes and you're out" policy here, Chair? Does the member have to leave after the third?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): But also, MPP Harden—
Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay. The Chair is speaking.

MPP Harden, again, speak through me to the motion that's before us—

Mr. Joel Harden: Absolutely.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):—in a more concise way.

Mr. Joel Harden: All right. I will just say, on behalf of where I sit, Chair, looking at this, that I would be embarrassed if I was a member of the government putting forward this motion today. I would be embarrassed that I need to go into closed session to do the people's work. I would be embarrassed to claim to represent Conservative voters, purporting to care about the prudent use of the people's resources and needing to be secretive in how we arrange for hearings about bills that attempt to do that. I would be embarrassed about being part of the government that continuously chooses non-transparency and secrecy over doing things out in the public light.

I wanted these comments to be on the record, Chair, because I have raised this exact point in previous debates around the previous organization of deputations for legislation put forward by this government and I have never once—not a single time—had an explanation about why we need to organize in closed session.

It would be fantastic if we had even a tiny fragment of the rationale behind this motion, beyond just, "We have a majority and we're going to do what we want in closed session. The people of Ontario are never going to be able to find out the reason why."

It just doesn't seem to make a lot of sense to me, Chair. I have a lot more I could say—

Laughter.

M. Joel Harden: Bon, on peut parler français, quand même, parce qu'il y a 30 % des personnes qui vivent dans le centre d'Ottawa qui parlent français.

Une voix.

M. Joel Harden: Oui, c'est vrai. Mon ami le député Sarrazin sait tellement bien que la réalité des peuples de l'Ontario—il y a deux langues publiques ici. Donc, s'il y a quelqu'un qui m'interrompt en ce moment, c'est une question de préjudice, je crois, parce que je parle une autre langue. C'est une autre langue pertinente du patrimoine de notre ville d'Ottawa et du patrimoine de notre province.

Donc, en précis, je vais dire que cette motion—franchement, il y a une tendance dans ce gouvernement d'aller avec les projets de loi dans une façon secrète. Je crois que, franchement, quand nous y allons comme ça, il y a partout des problèmes. Est-ce qu'on s'organise dans une façon ouverte à toutes et tous? Est-ce qu'on s'organise dans une façon que le peuple, après les débats ici, peut lire les textes—comment on dit « Hansard » en français? Est-ce qu'il y a un mot pour « Hansard »?

Une voix.

M. Joel Harden: C'est Hansard? Non. Je m'excuse; j'ai questionné mon ami de l'Ontario de l'est.

Voilà, on peut prendre une autre stratégie, comme députés, pour travailler en commun, une stratégie ouverte à toutes et à tous.

Si on a une stratégie comme ça, fermée aux peuples de l'Ontario—qui paient les coûts pour toutes les choses qui

arrivent ici—franchement, c'est triste. C'est dommage. On pourrait y aller avec un processus ouvert, et ouvert à tous.

Merci, madame la Présidente, pour votre patience avec mon français; même chose pour mon ami de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Je peux terminer mon intervention maintenant. J'ai beaucoup d'autres choses à dire, je crois; mais, non, c'est possible pour moi de finir maintenant.

Je vais dire cette question en français, même que je l'ai en anglais : est-ce qu'il y a une raison, pour mes amis en gouvernement, pour y aller comme ça ici, dans une façon secrète? Parce que chaque fois que j'ai posé cette question, il n'y a eu aucune réponse. Donc, s'il y a une raison pour y aller comme ça, je suis heureux de l'écouter.

Madame la Présidente, merci pour votre patience.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further discussion or debate? There are many hands.

MPP Holland.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you, Chair, I appreciate it. I will attempt to keep my comments short and to hand. I promise not to speak about my grandmother or her church.

In preparing for the committee I looked back at the direction in the previous session to learn more about how committees operate. It appears to me that this is quite a normal process, even at the subcommittee level, to go into closed session to talk about committee business. I don't see why it would be any different at this level. Again, it seems like a normal process for the work that we're looking at doing, so I would support this motion.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further discussion? I'll do a rotation. So MPP Bell, MPP McMahon, then I'll go to MPP Thanigasalam. Is that okay?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Chair. It is highly unusual to move organizing committee business into closed session. This government began moving committee business into closed session, but before 2018 it was highly unusual to do so.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP McMahon, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I believe in openness, fairness and transparency, so I will not be supporting this proposal.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Thanigasalam?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I just want to articulate the fact that we are here—members on this side—to build 1.5 million houses in the next decade. That's the message here.

The reason we are here today, passing this motion, is to make sure that we get to the work to do the procedure to have scheduling done. This is not a new procedure; in the last few years, we have done this with organizing bills or subcommittees on behalf of the committee. We have done this with various bills and subcommittees. They have done work in closed session.

We want to stay on the subject and we want to stay relevant to what the motion is. Therefore, I really want to get this motion moving.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Any other further discussion or debate? Okay. If none, I will now put the question.

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Correct. There was, a while ago, a request for a recorded vote.

Ayes

Grewal, Holland, McGregor, Pang, Sabawy, Sarrazin, Thanigasalam.

Nays

Bell, Harden, McMahon.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): The motion has carried. We are now going to enter closed session, so we're just going to take a couple of minutes to prepare.

The committee continued in closed session at 1532.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL POLICY

Chair / Présidente

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock PC)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente

MPP Laura Mae Lindo (Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre ND)

MPP Jill Andrew (Toronto–St. Paul’s ND)

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal (Brampton East / Brampton-Est PC)

Mr. Joel Harden (Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre ND)

Mr. Kevin Holland (Thunder Bay–Atikokan PC)

MPP Laura Mae Lindo (Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre ND)

Mr. Graham McGregor (Brampton North / Brampton-Nord PC)

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon (Beaches–East York L)

Mr. Billy Pang (Markham–Unionville PC)

Mr. Sheref Sabawy (Mississauga–Erin Mills PC)

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock PC)

Ms. Laura Smith (Thornhill PC)

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam (Scarborough–Rouge Park PC)

Substitutions / Membres remplaçants

Ms. Jessica Bell (University–Rosedale ND)

Mr. Jeff Burch (Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre ND)

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell PC)

Clerk / Greffier

Mr. Isaiah Thorning

Staff / Personnel

Mr. Michael Vidoni, research officer,
Research Services