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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

HE-19

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

HE-19

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

Better Regional Governance
Act, 2026

1st Session
44th Parliament

Thursday 30 April 2026

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

Loi de 2026 pour une meilleure
gouvernance régionale

1^{re} session
44^e législature

Jeudi 30 avril 2026

Chair: Hon. Laurie Scott
Clerk: Tanzima Khan

Présidente : L'hon. Laurie Scott
Greffière : Tanzima Khan

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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**

Thursday 30 April 2026

Jeudi 30 avril 2026

The committee met at 1002 in committee room 2.

**BETTER REGIONAL GOVERNANCE
ACT, 2026**

**LOI DE 2026 POUR UNE MEILLEURE
GOUVERNANCE RÉGIONALE**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités et la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

The Second Vice-Chair (MPP Tyler Watt): Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order.

We are here for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 100, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

We are joined by Kristi Cairns, legislative counsel in the room to assist with questions members may have.

A copy of the amendments filed with the Clerk has been distributed electronically, and a hard copy has also been provided to you. As always, please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak and, as always, all comments should go through the Chair.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I have a question, Mr. Chair. Would it be your preference that we appoint someone else to sit in your seat so you can exercise your vote?

The Second Vice-Chair (MPP Tyler Watt): It would be, yes.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: All right. So, Mr. Babikian, I think, is going to chair. But for the meantime, I'm going to bring a motion that we ask MPP Anand to sit in chair.

Interjection.

The Second Vice-Chair (MPP Tyler Watt): Okay.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Deepak Anand): All right. Before we start, I see MPP Stevens.

MPP Stevens, go ahead, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'm not sure if this is the time that I bring this forward, but I would like to put it on the record that the official opposition completely opposes Bill 100 and that it seems to the people in Niagara that it's a chaotic government model and it's a top-down political experiment. We want to be on the record that Bill

100 is something that we totally do not support. I'm not sure if this is when I bring it forward, but I know that the people in Niagara feel that you're bulldozing through democracy.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Deepak Anand): MPP Stevens, you will have enough time at a later point in time as well to discuss and debate on that and put your comments.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Oh, okay. Thank you. I do apologize.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Deepak Anand): No, absolutely. Thank you so much.

Good morning, everyone. The standing committee is now going to begin clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 100. Before we begin with considering the specific sections of the bill and accompanying schedules, I will allow members to make comments to the bill as a whole. Afterwards, debate will be limited to specific amendments—so, this is your time—the amendment, section or schedule under consideration.

Committee members, at this time—before we start, MPP Stevens, I'd like to take a second to request the Chair to come to his seat so I can go back.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I do apologize for jumping the gun on this, but I rise with deep concern from the official opposition about Bill 100 and what it means for democracy not only in Niagara but right across the province of Ontario.

As someone who served as a part-time municipal level councillor for over 15 years in the city of St. Catharines, which carries the most weighted votes within the Niagara region, I know local governance works best when decisions are made by residents and their elected officials and their elected representatives.

I take great, deep concern when I hear some of the delegates on Tuesday represent that being an elected official is a job. Well, I don't feel that being an elected official should be taken as a job. We are duly elected by the people of our constituencies, and we should look at it as actually a privilege and an honour to be able to serve our communities.

This bill is rushed, it's heavy-handed and appears written without meaningful consultation. This is a deep concern for all Ontario residents. I did do a poll through my office, and the poll came that 93% of the residents in

Niagara stand behind me in saying that this bill is not democratically done and that it is taking away their voice in Niagara.

The government set municipal election timelines and now it wants to rewrite the rules midstream at its own convenience. It's deeply concerning. Tomorrow is when our local officials, our municipal officials, get to put their name on the ballot. You are taking away from the regional government our representation by population and it's taking democracy away from the Niagara residents. Niagara residents deserve respect from this government. They deserve transparency and democratic accountability, and it should never be a political experiment.

I'm just saying that the official opposition is voicing—totally against the name of this bill and against all of this bill that is before us, Bill 100. Thank you for the time.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further comments? MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: I just want to acknowledge that I appreciate that this bill has come to committee. We don't always see that with bills from this government. I do echo the comments from my colleague, and I will be putting forward a number of amendments to help address the many glaring issues and government overreach in this bill.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further comments? Any further comments? I see none.

Bill 100 is comprised of three sections which enact two schedules. To deal with the bill in an orderly fashion, I suggest we postpone these three sections to dispose of the schedule first. All in agreement? Okay. We have an agreement.

First, there is a Liberal notice to section 1 of schedule 1 to the bill. I will look to the Liberal member for debate. MPP Watt, you have a notice.

MPP Tyler Watt: I do. Thank you, Chair.

The notice for section 1 of schedule 1: The Ontario Liberal Party has some issues with this and we would like to just have it on record that we will not be supporting this.
1010

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay, that's fine. Thank you.

Any other comments, notes? MPP Stevens.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to the third party and the member from the third party.

Schedule 1 of Bill 100 tries to change the Municipal Act, 2001, to state that regional chairs should be elected by council, except the regional chair of Niagara. I would obviously ask the question, what do you have against Niagara and not letting the Niagara residents have their voice? Obviously, it is completely undemocratic and the question remains: Why does there seem to be a target on Niagara and Niagara residents, why do you want to mum them, and what is the end game here? What is the government's agenda? The residents of Niagara are asking this.

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

We move now to schedule 1, section 1. There is no amendment. Are the members ready to vote on schedule 1, section 1? All in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. Carried.

We are moving to the first amendment, and that comes from the Liberal Party. MPP Watt, the floor is yours. Can you table your amendment?

MPP Tyler Watt: This is section 2 of schedule 1? Just confirming.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Yes.

MPP Tyler Watt: Okay. I move that section 2 of schedule 1 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection to section 218.0.1 of the Municipal Act, 2001:

“Requires resolution

“(3) A regulation made under subsection (1) does not apply to an upper-tier municipality unless at least two-thirds of the members of council of the upper-tier municipality pass a resolution that approves the regulation.”

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? MPP Stevens.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Absolutely. It's not often we get to get to committee to be able to say the words of what our residents are saying. So any chance I'm going to get during this—I'm not going to apologize that I'm holding up your time, but I will debate this to its fullest because I have been inundated in my office, as well as my two other colleagues in Niagara, that this is just so undemocratic.

This regulation made under subsection (1) does not apply to an upper—

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Chair, point of order, please.

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

MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: The debate we're having is on the amendment proposed by the Liberal member, so I'm not sure—are you speaking to the amendment, the motion, or are you speaking to the bill? Because if you're speaking to the bill, we've had that opportunity.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Please, let's focus on the amendment issue. MPP Stevens, are you addressing the amendment from the Liberal Party?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Yes, I will. So it's schedule 1, section 2, if I'm correct? Is that correct?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Yes.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: This section creates the illusion of constitution while reserving powers for a minister. We've seen this. If a future review recommends no change, will the government respect that, is the question that is being asked throughout the Niagara region. And Niagara should not be forced into restructuring exercises designed in a Toronto model, and that's what they're feeling within that area. Local representation must be determined by residents, not by political agendas, and I'll leave it at that, Chair. But I do think that I am speaking the voice of—it's not my job; I was duly elected to do this.

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

Any further debate? MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: The reason why this amendment has been put forward is to address the overreach by this government giving more power to the minister. Municipalities and local representation in democracy matters, and

section 2 of schedule 1 would give the minister regulation-making authority to set the number of votes for each member of council of any upper-tier municipality.

I don't understand why this government wants to start meddling and dictating from Queen's Park what is going on in municipalities like Niagara. So the amendment that I have put forward gives local councils the final say by requiring that two thirds be in favour of any such change.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? Seeing none, I'm going to put the question. All in favour of amendment 1, please raise your hand. Thank you. All in opposition, please raise your hand. The amendment is lost.

We have another notice from the Liberal Party. MPP Watt, do you want to speak to the notice?

MPP Tyler Watt: Yes. This is section 2 of schedule 1?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Correct.

MPP Tyler Watt: Perfect.

This section here provides the minister regulation-making authority to set the number of votes for each member of council of an upper-tier municipality, including the periods of time and specific questions or matters for which vote allocations apply.

This is an extreme overreach by the minister and could easily be abused. The minister has stated this would only be used to advance provincial priorities, but there are no safeguards within this legislation. The broad scope could, in theory, allow the minister to change vote allocations whenever they want to obtain a specific outcome on a specific vote before council. Such powers would completely undermine local democracy and make councils puppets of the minister.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Just from a procedural perspective, did the member read in the amendment, the motion? I think we need to get the motion on the floor before we get the substance.

MPP Tyler Watt: That was a notice.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: No?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): It is a notice.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: A notice? Okay.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): This is not an amendment.

MPP Stevens, you want to comment on the notice?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Yes, just quickly. I just want to say that this section of the bill tries to add in policy where the region of Niagara will be forced to do a review on the number of council members they have for the lower-tier municipalities.

I'm just saying this on the record so that people in Niagara and across Ontario understand what's going on here. Starting after the 2034 election and every eight years after that, with the review being mandatory after 2034, our worry would be that what happens in the review occurs and the region of Niagara recommends making no changes, keeping the councillors as they are.

This could be the Conservatives giving the illusion of autonomy and choice, but they're only going to push for what they want, such as a reduction in council. This is,

again, totally undemocratic for not only some of the regions in Ontario but mostly for the Niagara region. I am speaking, and I am going to be as loud and clear as I can at this committee for the residents of Niagara: It's totally undemocratic.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any other remarks on the notice? No?

Shall schedule 1, section 2, carry? All in favour, please raise your hand.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Can you just give us clarification? Are we voting on the notice, or he's just reading the notice in?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): No, no. This has nothing to do with the notice. We are voting on schedule 1, section 2.

Mr. Deepak Anand: To be carried as is?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Yes, yes.

All in favour? Thank you. All in opposition? Schedule 1, section 2, carries.

We move to section 3. We have amendment 2 from the Liberal Party. MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: I move that section 3 of schedule 1 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsections to section 218.1 of the Municipal Act, 2001:

"Municipality may vacate seat of appointed head of council

"(6.1) A municipal council may, by resolution, vacate the office of a head of council that was appointed by the minister under this section with a simple majority vote of the members of council.

"Effect of other provisions in act

"(6.2) Nothing in this act may be used to alter the requirement in subsection (6.1) of needing a simple majority vote of the members of council to vacate the seat of a head of council that was appointed by the minister under this section."

1020

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate on motion 2? MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: Section 3 of this bill enables the minister to appoint heads of council for each upper-tier municipality in Ontario. These are not elected people that are being given extremely strong powers, most likely, at the pleasure of this government. As drafted, the appointed head would not be accountable at all to council members, especially when combined with strong-mayor powers. This amendment returns accountability by empowering council to remove an appointed head of council through a simple majority vote.

Ontarians elect their representatives for regional council, and we should respect that. If the minister insists on appointing the head of council, that head should at least be accountable to Ontarians through their elected members. That is why we have put this amendment forward: to help roll back some of the overreaching and power-grabbing from this government.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay. Thank you.

Any further—yes. MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: The member opposite wasn't present for the hearings on Tuesday, so he may not have heard all the background on this. Of the regional councils in Ontario, only 20% are elected by the populace at large. The remaining 80% are appointed by delegated authority, either by the members of the county council or regional council or by this government. So the characterization of the member opposite is not really accurate; 80% of Ontarians have their regional or county warden appointed by either the elected officials or by this government, so the change is not that dramatic.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? I see none. Are the members ready to vote on amendment 2? All in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. Thank you. All in opposition, please raise your hand. The amendment is lost.

We move to amendment 2.1. MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: I move that section 3 of schedule 1 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection to section 218.1 of the Municipal Act, 2001:

“References to appointed head of council

“(10) If a head of council is appointed by the minister in accordance with this section, the municipality shall refer to the head of council as a ‘super mayor’ in all public communications and for all purposes under this act.”

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The proposed amendment is out of order. As is noted on page 651, section 16.78 of the fourth edition of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, an amendment is accordingly out of order “if it is tendered in a spirit of mockery.”

We move to section 3, schedule 1. There is a notice from the Liberal Party. MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: Section 3 of schedule 1 enables the minister to appoint heads of council for each upper-tier municipality in Ontario. This is an affront to local democracy and an overreach by the minister. Coupled with strong-mayor powers, it would undermine local councilors' ability to represent their constituents and allow the minister to interfere in local matters from Queen's Park, which, unfortunately, we have seen plenty of examples of in the last eight years.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay. Thank you.

Any further comment? Okay, no further comment.

Ms. Laura Smith: I have a question.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I just want a copy of that notice, because I don't seem to have it. I'm sorry; I have the other notice.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay.

Shall schedule 1, section 3, carry? All in favour? Thank you. All in opposition? Section 3 is carried.

We move to section 4. We have another—

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Sorry, what section?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We are going to section 4.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Can we bundle it?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Tanzima Khan): There's a government amendment on this section.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Oh, okay.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): There is a government amendment on section 4. MPP Saunderson, can you move the amendment?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I move that section 4 of schedule 1 to the bill be amended by adding the following section to the Municipal Act, 2001:

“Council composition of certain lower-tier municipalities

“218.2.2(1) For the term of office beginning in 2026, the minister may make regulations prescribing the composition of council of the city of Thorold, the city of Port Colborne and the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, including regulations,

“(a) specifying the number of members of the council of the lower-tier municipality;

“(b) establishing, altering or dissolving wards of the lower-tier municipality;

“(c) specifying whether the members shall be elected by general vote or by wards or by any combination of general vote and wards, except that the head of council shall be elected by general vote;

“(d) specifying that the regular election in 2026 shall be conducted as if the composition and wards set out in the regulation were already in effect;

“(e) providing for modifications to this act, the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 or the regulations made under those acts that, in the opinion of the minister, are necessary or desirable for implementing the purposes of this section;

“(f) prescribing rules to facilitate the transition to the new council composition.

“Retroactivity

“(2) A regulation made under subsection (1) is, if it so provides, effective with reference to a period before it was filed.

“Conflicts

“(3) In the event of a conflict between a regulation under subsection (1) and a provision of this act or another act or regulation, the regulation made under subsection (1) prevails.”

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: This amendment has been at the request of the three municipalities—so the city of Thorold, the city of Port Colborne and the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake—in response to a request from the ministry as to what municipalities in advance of the election would like to change the composition of the council. These three municipalities responded in the affirmative after the initial deadline.

In order to accommodate those municipalities and work collaboratively, which we have undertaken to do with municipalities all across the province, we are bringing this forward so we will allow those municipalities to have the flexibility to reduce their councils at their request.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? MPP Stevenson.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: No—Stevens.

No, I'm just going to ask for a recorded vote on this, please.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): A recorded vote. Any further debate? MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: The appointed chair already tried to do this. The government is trying to force its way through with this amendment.

I would like to see exactly who, from all these regions, approved this. I can't imagine it was a 100% glaring approval because, frankly, there were some concerning things in here: The minister could change ward boundaries and dissolve wards entirely. It's sounding a little like our neighbours down south, and that's deeply concerning. We're meddling in municipality democracy with this.

The minister could also determine whether councillors would be elected by wards or simply by general vote. Once again, this minister is meddling in local governance. I adamantly oppose this amendment.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? Any further debate? I see none.

There is a request for a recorded vote.

Ayes

Anand, Firin, Grewal, Saunderson, Laura Smith.

Nays

Stevens, Watt.

1030

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The amendment is carried.

Shall section 4, as amended, carry?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Recorded vote as well, please.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): All in favour, please raise your hand—

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay. There is a notice from the Liberal Party. MPP Watt, do you want to read the notice?

MPP Tyler Watt: Is this regarding section 4 of schedule 1?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Yes.

MPP Tyler Watt: Okay. Section 4 of this bill reduces the size of the council of the county of Simcoe and the regional municipality of Niagara. We just want it on record: The Ontario Liberals will be voting against this.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Shall schedule 1, section 4, as amended, carry? This is a recorded vote, of course.

Ayes

Anand, Firin, Grewal, Saunderson, Laura Smith.

Nays

Watt.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Schedule 1, section 4, as amended, is carried.

There are no proposed amendments to sections 5 to 7 of schedule 1. Therefore, I propose that we bundle these sections. Is there an agreement? Thank you. Shall sections 5 to 7 of schedule 1 carry? All in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. Carried.

We move now to section 8 of schedule 1. We have a government motion. MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I move that subsection 8(1) of schedule 1 to the bill be struck out and the following substituted:

“(1) Subsection 221(1) of the act is amended by striking out ‘217, 218, 218.1, 218.3 or 220’ and substituting ‘217, 218, 218.1, 218.2, 218.2.1, 218.2.2, 218.3 or 220’.”

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: The reason for this is it's an administrative amendment to reflect the amendment that we made in schedule 1, subsection 4. This is to make it consistent throughout the legislation.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? Seeing none, shall amendment 4 carry? All in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. The motion is carried.

We have another motion from the government side. MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I move that subsection 8(2) of schedule 1 to the bill be struck out and the following substituted:

“(2) Subsection 221(1) of the act, as amended by subsection (1), is amended by striking out ‘217, 218, 218.1, 218.2, 218.2.1, 218.2.2, 218.3 or 220’ and substituting ‘217, 218, 218.1, 218.2, 218.2.1, 218.2.2 or 220’.”

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: The rationale is the same as the last motion: It's to make the administrative change necessary to reflect the change that we amended for schedule 1, subsection 4, previously.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? Seeing none, I am going to put the question. Motion 5: All in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. The motion carries.

Shall schedule 1, section 8, as amended, carry? All in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition? Schedule 1, section 8, as amended, carries.

We move to section 9. There are no proposed amendments to sections 9 and 10 of schedule 1. Therefore, I propose that we bundle the sections. Is there agreement? Agreed. Shall sections 9 and 10 of schedule 1 carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. Sections 9 and 10 carry.

Now, we move to section 11. We have a motion from the Liberal Party. MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: I move that subsection 11(1) of schedule 1 to the bill be amended by striking out “Better

Regional Governance Act, 2026” and substituting “Power Without Accountability Act, 2026”.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): My ruling on this amendment is as follows: The proposed amendment is out of order. As is noted on page 651, section 16.78 of the fourth edition of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, an amendment is accordingly out of order “if it is tendered in a spirit of mockery.”

Shall schedule 1, section 11, carry? All in favour? All in opposition? Schedule 1, section 11, carries.

We have a notice from the Liberal Party for schedule 1 in whole. MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: Sorry, this is regarding schedule 1 as a whole?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Yes.

MPP Tyler Watt: Schedule 1 is an affront to local democracy and complete overreach by the minister. That’s why I’m voting against it.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? Seeing none, shall schedule 1, as amended, carry? All in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. Schedule 1, as amended, carries.

We move to schedule 2, and no amendment to section 1. Any further debate? Seeing none, shall schedule 2, section 1, carry? All in favour? All in opposition? Schedule 2, section 1, carries.

We have a motion moved by the Liberal Party. MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: Just to clarify, is this subsection 2 of schedule 2?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Yes.

MPP Tyler Watt: Yes. Okay.

I move that subsection 2(1) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding “or 218.2.2(1)” after “subsection 218.1(2)” in the portion—

Interjection.

MPP Tyler Watt: Oh, okay. I withdraw what I just said. I went ahead.

1040

The motion is: I move that subsection 2(1) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by striking out “Better Regional Governance Act, 2026” wherever it appears in subsection 10.1(1) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and substituting in each case “Power Without Accountability Act, 2026”.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): My ruling on this motion will be as the previous two motions. The proposed amendment is out of order. As is noted on page 651, section 16.78 of the fourth edition of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, an amendment is accordingly out of order “if it is tendered in a spirit of mockery.”

We have government motion 6 on subsection 2(1). MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I move that subsection 2(1) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding “or 218.2.2(1)” after “subsection 218.1(2)” in the portion of

subsection 10.1(2) before clause (a) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any debate? MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Again, this amendment is necessary in order to reflect the amendment to section 1(4) that we made previously, and specifically to allow council composition in the city of Thorold, the city of Port Colborne and the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake to be amended at the request of those municipalities.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: I just want to say MPP Saunderson read that motion better than I did. I apologize for getting ahead.

Regarding this amendment, subsection 2.1 of schedule 2 provides for automatic withdrawal of nominations submitted for positions that will no longer exist after royal assent. This amendment extends those automatic withdrawals to elections for positions that will no longer exist as a result of government amendment 3. These amendments demonstrate the late nature of the government’s changes and their negative impact on election readiness for 2026.

I would like to remind everyone we’re about to enter a municipal election this fall, and this all coming at the tail end of it is a little reminiscent of 2018 with the Toronto city council—anyway, another overreach to municipalities.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? Seeing none, I’m going to put the question. All in favour of motion 6, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. The motion has carried.

We move to amendment 7 from the government side. MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I move that subsection 2(1) of the schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding the following clause to subsection 10.1(2) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996:

“(c) governing transitional matters that arise under this act as a result of the implementation of section 218.2.2 of the Municipal Act, 2001, including transitional matters in respect of nominations that were filed in the 2026 regular election for any office on the council of a municipality referred to in subsection 218.2.2(1) of the Municipal Act, 2001 on or before the day that subsection comes into force.”

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Again, this is another administrative change necessary as a result of the amendment to subsection 1, schedule 4, earlier. Just to be very clear, this is being done at the request of the individual municipalities. They will be coming to the province with their requests for the composition changes, and those changes will necessitate boundary changes to reflect the changes that the municipalities are requesting.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: Again, I would love to see exactly who is requesting this change, because it's giving more power to the minister. This amendment gives the minister the power to make regulations "governing transitional matters" that might arise through the implementation of governance changes included in this bill. This simply expands the minister's control and demonstrates the extent to which the minister is interfering in local democracies. I have a very hard time believing this is an outright request from municipalities.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? Any further debate? Seeing none, I'm going to put the question. All in favour of motion 7, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. The motion is carried.

We move to motion 8, the government side. MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I move that subsection 2(1) of schedule 2 to the bill be amended by adding "or 218.2.2(1)" after "subsection 218.1(2)" in subsection 10.1(3) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Again, this is a change that is required as a result of the amendment to subsection 1 of schedule 4. Just to follow up the member opposite's points earlier, it was a request—a written request—from the councils of each of those municipalities, just as in the case of the changes to the Simcoe county council from 32 to 16 was made at the request of a letter written by direction of council to the minister. So these changes are in direct response to the written requests of each of those municipalities.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? Any further debate? Seeing none, I'm going to put the question. All in favour of motion 8, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. Motion 8 is carried.

We have motion 9 from the Liberal Party. MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: I'll withdraw it.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Withdrawn.

Shall schedule 2, section 2, as amended, carry? All in favour? All in opposition?

MPP Tyler Watt: Sorry; which one is this?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Schedule 2, section 2, as amended, because there were three amendments for this section.

MPP Tyler Watt: Can we not debate it first, or is that after?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): No, because I already called the vote, so we're in the voting process. So one side already voted. Now, all in opposition, please raise your hand. Schedule 2, section 2, as amended, carries.

We have another motion—motion 10—from the Liberal Party on section 3, schedule 2. MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: I'll withdraw it.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The amendment is withdrawn.

Is there any debate on schedule 2, section 3? Seeing none, I'm going to put the question. Shall schedule 2, section 3, carry? All in favour? All in opposition? Schedule 2, section 3, is carried.

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Schedule 2, as amended, in whole—

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): There's a notice before we move to the vote. MPP Watt.

MPP Tyler Watt: Schedule 2 as a whole demonstrates the negative impact the proposed governance changes will have on local elections in 2026, just a few months away. Tomorrow, they start filing their papers to run.

As elected officials, we have an obligation to protect the integrity of local elections. Schedule 2 fails to do so, and frankly, it undermines democracy.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Shall schedule 2 in whole, as amended, carry? All in favour? Thank you. All in opposition? Schedule 2 in whole, as amended, is carried.

We're now going to return to sections 1 to 3 of the bill. Shall section 1 of the bill carry? Before we vote, any debate on section 1? No? Okay. All in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. Section 1 is carried.

Now we move to section 2 of the bill. Is there any debate on section 2? Seeing none, I'm going to put the question. All in favour of section 2 of the bill, please raise your hand. Thank you. All in opposition, please raise your hand. Section 2 of the bill is carried.

We have amendment 0.1 from the Liberals on section 3. Will the member from the Liberal Party move the amendment?

MPP Tyler Watt: I'll withdraw.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Withdrawn.

Shall section 3 of the bill carry? Before I ask for the vote, is there any debate? Seeing none, all in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. Section 3 of the bill is carried.

Shall the preamble of the bill carry? Any debate? Seeing—

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Debate on the preamble of the bill?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Oh. No, I'll wait.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay.

All in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. The preamble of the bill is carried.

Shall the title of the bill carry? Any debate? MPP Stevens.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: The title of the bill I will debate, because it says, "An Act to amend the Municipal Act ... and the Municipal Elections Act." I have to talk at a broader sense of the bill. Bill 100 treats Niagara like a laboratory for centralized power.

The residents have spoken. They deserve elected leadership. The residents deserve fair boundaries, stable election rules and local decision-making, and those are not in the title of the bill.

I feel that this government has actually caused a chaotic governance model instead of just amending it. It's pure chaos in the Niagara region. As most of you are aware—those on the government side that have come to Niagara—Niagara is a community. It's not a pawn of the government's chessboard. I have to say that, because local democracy should never ever be rewritten for partisan convenience.

I feel that this bill is being so rushed you can't even get the title right—disrespectful and wrong for all of the Niagara residents. I stand with Niagara residents. I oppose this bill in title, in section and every part of this bill. I know the opposition will too, because we're not sure what this government is going to do in the future. We're not sure if they're going to be bulldozing our precious farmlands, our vineyards, our fruit yards—everything.

I just want to say, you cannot bulldoze democracy the same way you bulldoze our farmlands that you're going to be looking at. I think you guys think that you're going to make some money over there. Well, what you're going to do is you're going to really, really destroy one part of Ontario that has the best tourism area ever. You're going to be doing it by knocking down, and you want to build, build, build and cut through and think that you're going to save money by getting rid of part-time councillors. Well, that's not amending the Municipal Act, as it says in the title. What it's saying to me is that you are actually undermining democracy in the Niagara area and right across Ontario, actually.

These people were duly elected. Tomorrow, they're going to be putting their names to move forward. You're taking away a level of government closest to the people. I was there for 15 years. I know what it means to listen to the people. This government has got it all wrong, because you're not listening to the Niagara residents. You obviously aren't. We've seen that you've appointed a chair just a few weeks ago, and what happened there? "Oh." Well, we're going to see more and more and more of this. These are part-time councillors that care for their community and do it for a reason. They're not doing it as a job; they're doing it for their community and the better whole.

Municipal government—if you stop downloading on it, then they would be able to lower their property taxes for the people in Niagara. You wouldn't see double digits. I'm

warning this government—I'm warning them, Mr. Chair, through you—that what we're going to see in Niagara is more than double digits, because we're going to be paying chairs, we're going to be paying superpowers, we're going to be paying super mayors. The mayors aren't going to be able to be doing their job at the regional level. They're not going to be able to go to committee. So what are you going to do? You're going to appoint people that are not elected and don't have the betterment of the Niagara regional residents.

In saying that, I want to say that this is a top-down political experiment that was written on the back of a napkin. It even shows with the title of this bill, Bill 100, an act to amend the Municipal Act, in every wrong way.

I just want to say that the official opposition did not put any amendments forward, and I think we're sending a very strong message to you: We disagree with this whole bill.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further debate? Any further debate? I see none. I'm going to put the question. Shall the title of the bill carry? All in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition? The title of the bill is carried.

Shall Bill 100, as amended, carry? Before we vote, I'm going to ask if there is any further debate. I see none. I'm going to put the question. Shall Bill 100, as amended, carry? All in favour, please raise your hand.

MPP Tyler Watt: Can we get this on record?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Recorded vote.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Just one second, because I already called the vote.

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Unfortunately, you should have asked before I called the vote. Thank you.

Once again: All in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition, please raise your hand. Bill 100, as amended, is carried.

Shall I report the bill, as amended, to the House? Any debate? I see none. I'm going to put the question. All in favour of the bill reported, as amended, to the House? All in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition? I will report the bill to the House.

This brings conclusion to our clause-by-clause consideration. Thank you, everyone, for being here, and that concludes our business of the day. The committee stands adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1101.

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