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PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

BRUCE TRAIL

Mr. Lorne Coe: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should explore measures to reduce municipal red tape that supports the Bruce Trail Conservancy in its land conservation efforts.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the motion, but I'd like to also, in the course of that, acknowledge Michael McDonald, the chief executive officer of the Bruce Trail Conservancy, who is up in the gallery, and his staff, for their hard work and dedication in bringing us to this important moment in the Ontario Legislature.

I'd be remiss if I didn't also acknowledge the assistance of staff in the government House leader's office in constructing the private motion that's in front of us here this evening. My thanks goes directly to Alexis. Thank you very much.

Speaker, the Bruce Trail Conservancy is a highly regarded, donor-funded charitable organization that has connected people with nature and recreational opportunities through Canada's iconic 900-kilometre Bruce Trail for more than 60 years. Known as Canada and Ontario's longest walking footpath, the Bruce Trail is a national treasure that stretches all the way from Niagara to Tobermory, connecting people to some of the most beautiful places in our great province. Some of Ontario's remarkable natural landmarks and treasures you can spot while hiking on the Bruce Trail include Lion's Head lookout on Georgian Bay, Mono Cliffs Provincial Park, Ball's Falls in the Niagara region and the many magnificent waterfalls along the part of the trail that runs through Hamilton—in close proximity to where my brother Barry lives in Ancaster, and he can be a frequent walker on the trail.

In addition to caring for a trail that sees approximately two million visits each year, the Bruce Trail Conservancy, or BTC for short, is one of Ontario's leading conservation organizations and was named one of the top 100 charities in Canada for 2025 by Charity Intelligence.

Now, in addition to connecting communities to nature, the BTC protects land, restores ecosystems and safeguards habitats across the province. As a non-profit, the BTC has one overarching goal: to create a permanently protected natural corridor along the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO world biosphere, one of Ontario's most treasured and ecologically significant landscapes, through the purchase of land along the 900-kilometre trail.

At the heart of this work, Speaker, the mission is clear: BTC works to permanently protect this natural corridor, which works to ensure the trail's optimum route can remain free to use and publicly accessible to everyone, as it should be. In the last year alone, the BTC protected 22 new natural areas along the trail's conservation corridor, and for me, that's real progress towards protecting this special place permanently.

Speaker, as the Bruce Trail runs through 15 provincial ridings, I know that many of my colleagues in this House tonight—and I'm grateful that they're here—have actively supported the BTC's conservation work. I applaud their goal of purchasing land in order to protect the trail forever. I want to thank these MPPs for their ongoing support not only here, tonight, in our House, but for a number of years they've been active participants and calling for what we're speaking about tonight—

Interjections.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you—a national natural asset, Speaker, that holds cultural significance for many across generations, including my granddaughters.

To help continue this very important work, the BTC is seeking an exemption under the Planning Act from the conservation severance process.

You will know, Speaker, that I served as a municipal councillor and a regional councillor for the better part of 11 years. I was the chair for the planning and development committee in both capacities, so I understand planning. But this exemption that we're talking about would give the BTC the same powers they already have under the Niagara Escarpment Plan and would work to significantly reduce the amount of red tape they are subjected to while purchasing land.

In order to protect the trail in full permanency, the BTC has identified that 400 parcels of land out of 630 along the Bruce Trail would require a conservation severance in the future. The motion I've introduced, therefore, sets a very simple precedent for our government, which is to explore measures that would support the Bruce Trail Conservancy's conservation efforts and would look to help BTC by removing the red tape they face when undertaking the

conservation land severance process, as outlined in the provincial Planning Act.

Protecting land often means navigating complex transactions and, yes, lengthy planning processes that I've seen and witnessed in my earlier career. For the BTC, a conservation severance takes approximately 285 days, or 10 months, to complete on average. Just hang on that for a moment: 285 days, or 10 months, to complete on average.

This is a long time for a landowner who wants to support conservation but needs to sell sooner. These delays can mean the BTC misses an opportunity to purchase land along the trail, and that's simply not right. As a result, this red tape alone is what may be slowing down efforts to protect the trail in full and keep the optimum route intact permanently. In addition, if a new owner comes in that does not allow public access, it could leave a gap in the trail, threatening the optimum route and, yes, breaking up the road-free path as well.

The time frame of approximately 285 days, or roughly 10 months, results in approximately 50 to 100 hours of municipal staff members' time, excluding committee of adjustment meetings and council meetings. Stay with that for a moment.

Municipalities recognize, as they should, that conservation severances involve no risk, as they do not create new building lots or require municipal servicing for water or sewer maintenance, and they do not increase school board or traffic burdens. That's the fact. For this reason, municipalities are strongly supportive of this exemption for BTC.

As an example, Speaker, I have an extract from a letter from the mayor of Burlington, and she had this to say—and it's Mayor Marianne Ward, just recently re-elected:

"The Bruce Trail is an iconic recreational asset and a powerful economic driver for our local communities. To complete this 900-kilometre conservation corridor, the BTC needs to secure 630 additional properties, of which approximately 400 will require land severances.

"Currently, our municipal planning staff must process these conservation severances through the standard consent application process. Because the BTC is not acquiring these lands for the development but instead strictly for environmental protection and trail continuity, these applications have no negative impact and have in the past never been refused. Moreover, subjecting a conservation charity to the same administrative hurdles as a private developer creates significant inefficiencies for our municipality." I couldn't agree more.

1810

More specifically, Speaker, smaller municipalities with limited resources also acknowledge this being a change that would free up a significant amount of municipal staff time which could then be focused on more pressing local priorities, as it should.

As I mentioned earlier, this would not be new for the BTC. It already has a conservation severance exemption under the Niagara Escarpment Plan, and extending that exemption under the Planning Act would build on an approach already in place and would lead to the harmonization of these two policies. The NEP was a landmark in forward-thinking planning and was the first large-scale environmental land use plan in Canada. It recognized that the Niagara Escarpment is a unique landscape that deserved special care.

I'm running out of time, so I'm going to abbreviate a little bit of what I have in front of me. The Niagara Escarpment Plan also gave the Bruce Trail Conservancy a unique role, as it outlined that the organization could determine the trail's optimum route and establish its permanency. Furthermore, southern Ontario is one of Canada's most biologically rich and diverse regions. It's also home to 10 million people.

At a time when people are increasingly disconnected from nature, the Bruce Trail offers a way back: a free, public footpath where people can fall in love with nature and want to protect it, as I and many of my colleagues in this House do going forward.

Ontario is fully committed to creating more parks and strengthening trails for Ontarians and visitors, and this motion, Speaker, builds on those efforts. I would encourage all my colleagues here this evening to support this motion going forward. Thank you all for your attention.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you to my colleagues opposite for allowing me the opportunity to go first.

Well done, MPP from Whitby. I want to begin by acknowledging the MPP from Whitby. He is a great colleague. He's become a very good friend since I got elected in 2022. He helped me learn the ropes here, and I very much appreciate it. He's a leader in his own community, served honourably as a regional councillor and now as an MPP since 2016, I believe. Thank you, Lorne Coe.

Thank you for your advocacy on this topic. We all know and agree that the Bruce Trail is a national treasure for Ontario, visited by millions of people every year, both residents and visitors alike, from many, many countries across the globe.

For perspective, the Bruce Trail spans over 900 kilometres from Niagara to the Bruce Peninsula. The Bruce Trail has great importance for protecting green space and supporting local tourism.

As a young fellow growing up in Streetsville, Ontario—Peel county—we lived very close to Milton. My mother would take us, and I learned how to ski, at the Milton ski hill, Kelso park. I remember my mother explaining the Niagara Peninsula and the Bruce Trail to me as a kid. I remember learning about it in school and finding it quite fascinating. The map I have here, as I look down, it truly is an amazing piece of geography, and we're protecting it and preserving it, which is great. So I thank my mother for her teachings to me as a young boy, especially as we slid down the Milton ski hill.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy, which manages and supports the Bruce Trail, has been a great partner, and we commend their dedication and efforts to protect the trail and expand it for enjoyment for generations. We are hearing from passionate leaders who are sharing their message, and I look forward to working with the MPP for

Whitby, who has listened to and learned from the Bruce Trail Conservancy. I look forward to hearing his experiences, as we talk often, and discussing all the practical ideas that make so much sense. Our government always looks for innovative ways to cut red tape, and these are actions we have set out in my ministry through various measures and legislation.

An example I'd like to point out is cutting the time and cost it takes to build homes, in part by eliminating burdensome red tape. Whether it's for housing, infrastructure or improving our public spaces like the Bruce Trail, we must continue to alleviate our province of red tape and bureaucracy to protect our province, protect our economy and protect beautiful public spaces.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is not immune—as the MPP has highlighted in his talk, his speech—to the challenges they face. He is absolutely correct; long municipal processes have a cost. They take away resources and they cause delays, leading to lost opportunities and financial burden.

Through my ministry, we can look at ideas and solutions that can cut red tape and strengthen the Bruce Trail for all Ontarians and all visitors who come to this great province. I have always said, if you have good, commonsense ideas, bring them forward. We are in a time where we need innovative ideas, facing the challenges we have today.

Before I hand it over to the next speaker, I want to again thank the MPP for Whitby for bringing this motion to the Legislature, as we all know the importance of cutting red tape, protecting parks and trails, and building Ontario's local tourism so residents and visitors alike can enjoy these spaces for generations.

I would just end by saying it is an amazing, amazing trail with an amazing history, and I remember following it immensely as a kid, driving up through Tobermory. It is a national treasure, it's a provincial treasure, as is the MPP for Whitby.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, it really is a pleasure to rise in the House and speak to this motion today.

I want to thank the member from Whitby for bringing this forward. I remember when the Bruce Trail Conservancy was here at the Legislature a few months ago. It truly was a love fest. All parties present were talking about how do we make this better, how do we improve things, how do we help the Bruce Trail Conservancy? And so, I thank the member for concretely bringing something forward.

I want to thank Bruce Trail Conservancy for all the work that you do. It's an extraordinary asset for the people of Ontario to have this trail and to have an organization that safeguards it and looks to expand it. And this resolution is something that will help expand it. Well, you know, there are a lot of strange things that happen in politics, but I have great hope that it will expand it and deal with unnecessary severance issues that Bruce Trail Conservancy has been trying to get cleared up, as I gather, for well more than a decade.

I'm sure that the member has done his due diligence. I understand that municipalities along the trail think that this is an excellent idea. I've talked to a number of environmental organizations, nature organizations. They were very pleased that it was coming forward—also very pleased that it seemed to have very broad support within this chamber.

I'll just say that you, member, actually set out the assets, the reality, in a very comprehensive way, so I'm not going to repeat all of that.

I'll just say that in this province, people benefit tremendously from having this access to nature. This is a high-pressure society. People are dealing with all kinds of difficulties around cost, and the opportunity to get into a nature setting where you get to walk along what can be, at points, a challenging trail and others, a really comfortable amble, and just put all those concerns out of your head, is a wonderful thing.

Also, given the cost of living, it's really cheap. Having some shoes and the ability to get to the trail, that's the cost, and that, frankly, is a fabulous deal. So the ability of this chamber to change the rules so that it will be easier in the future to actually expand the protected areas around the trail, make sure the trail itself is in good shape for decades to come—totally a bonus.

I have to say, I have done different parts of the trail around the Forks of the Credit, up in Tobermory. I've scrambled over boulders and, in years earlier, when I was slimmer, I slipped under some boulders. Time passes, what can I say? It's a good argument for dieting—that ability to get under some of those boulders.

My sister, who's a geocacher, is regularly on the trail. I think she has done the whole thing from top to bottom. And the last time you were here, you gave out guides to the trail. Sorry, for those who are doing Hansard: The Bruce Trail Conservancy, when they were here, gave out guides to the trail. I gave a copy to my sister, who has been very happily wandering around using it.

1820

I'd just like to say, Speaker, that, beyond saying that I like good things and this is a good thing, there isn't a lot more that I have to cover.

Member, thank you so much, and I look forward to the vote passing this and getting on with actually putting things in place so that the obstacles to improving the trail are removed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

M^me^ Lucille Collard: Thank you very much to the member for Whitby for bringing this motion forward.

As you have already heard, we in the House can all agree that the Bruce Trail is an amazing strength of this province. Ontario's natural beauty is an envy of the world, and I am blessed every day to have the opportunity to represent not only the people of Ontario but also the natural beauty found within that inspires so many people to live here.

With over 1,300 kilometres of trails and side trails stretching from Tobermory to Niagara, the Bruce Trail

allows Ontarians of all ages to explore some of the incredible vistas that this province has to offer.

We can and should as elected officials be doing everything we can to ensure that Ontario's natural environment thrives, because when our natural world thrives, we thrive too. It is no doubt an asset of this province that has important value worth protecting, and I think it's that value that pushed the member from Whitby to put this motion forward, because he recognizes the importance of protecting it.

But I can't help but notice how this motion stands in stark contrast to so many other actions that this government has taken with regard to our natural environment here in Ontario. Bill after bill introduced by this government over the last eight years has systematically stripped away protection after protection for the natural world that we depend on for our very survival.

The province has sidelined conservation authorities in the planning process, leading to less sustainable developments and the destruction of wetlands that we rely on for flood prevention.

They weakened protections for endangered species and created special economic zones that can just be exempt from any environmental oversight at all.

They eliminated the independent environment commissioner and have repeatedly ignored the rights of Ontarians under the Environmental Bill of Rights and their comments through the Environmental Registry.

They've undermined environmental assessments by exempting project after project, including Highway 413.

And most notoriously, they tried to sell off the greenbelt to their friends.

It is not municipal red tape that is putting the Bruce Trail at risk; it is the government opposite's own actions day by day. Roughly half of the Bruce Trail is found in the greenbelt alone.

I also find it interesting that the motions put forward by government members often discuss issues that the government is already working on or have already implemented. This past summer, the government changed the regulation under the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act to explicitly exempt the Bruce Trail Conservancy from requiring a development permit from the Niagara Escarpment Commission for many of the activities associated with creating and maintaining the Bruce Trail. That change contributes to exactly what this motion is calling for by helping to speed up permitting processes. Clearly, this issue is already on the government's radar, and they are already taking action.

The motion before us also talks explicitly about reducing red tape, which this government loves to talk about. Just a few weeks ago, the Minister of Red Tape Reduction introduced an enormous omnibus bill with 23 schedules. This included a schedule amending the Planning Act, which is the same act that the Bruce Trail Conservancy is advocating for the government to amend. Bruce Trail Conservancy has been advocating for an exemption to the municipal severance process in the Planning Act that would allow landowners to more quickly sever portions of their properties in support of conservation efforts. As I mentioned earlier, similar exemptions already exist under the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, so it only makes sense to extend them to the Planning Act as well.

The government could have put that change into their omnibus legislation earlier this month, but instead we have motion 99 before us, a vague motion that doesn't provide any specific solutions at all, something that has become all too typical for the current government.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy isn't even the only organization facing these barriers. Organizations like the Kawartha Land Trust, the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, the Muskoka Conservancy, the Huronia Land Conservancy, the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy are all subject to the same rules under the Planning Act but are ignored by this very motion.

This motion could have suggested a specific change to the Planning Act that would have supported all of these organizations and helped to better protect our natural spaces, but it doesn't. The Bruce Trail Conservancy's mission is "preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever." As elected officials, I think we have a similar mission. Our job is to preserve Ontario for everyone, forever. A big part of that responsibility is to ensure that the natural world that all Ontarians rely on can flourish, so that we can flourish too.

This motion takes one very small step forward, so I'll support it. But I encourage everyone in this House, particularly those who hold the levers of power, to think seriously about the impact that the laws and policies they support are having on the very same natural environment that this motion is aimed at protecting.

You can't have it both ways. You can't protect the Niagara Escarpment and the Bruce Trail while destroying everything around it, because at the end of the day, it won't survive either. We need concrete action protecting Ontario's beauty, and the reality is that under the current Premier, red tape cutting just means removing needed environmental protections and putting more of the protected nature of Ontario at risk.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

MPP Paul Vickers: I am pleased to rise here today to speak in support of this motion and to speak about how important the Bruce Trail is to so many in my riding.

Madam Speaker, I have personally spent many Sunday afternoons hiking the Bruce Trail. It has provided countless opportunities to spend time with family and friends, get outdoors and enjoy some of the most beautiful scenery that our province has to offer.

I know I'm not alone in that experience. So many of my constituents in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound share those same memories. Whether it's taking in the incredible views through the Beaver Valley, exploring the trails up and down the Bruce Peninsula, visiting the impressive waterfalls all along the trail or enjoying one of the many beautiful lookouts over the Niagara Escarpment, the Bruce Trail offers something truly special.

For those of us who call Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound home, the Bruce Trail is part of what makes our region so special—a special place to live. It brings visitors into our communities, supports local businesses and gives families, residents and visitors alike an opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty that surrounds us. I am very proud of the fact that more than 30% of the Bruce Trail runs through Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. That means the decisions we make to protect this trail have a very direct impact on the communities in my riding and the generations who will call our region home in the future.

Madam Speaker, we are fortunate to have so many beautiful locations and access routes along the trail that are open to the public, but we cannot take that access for granted. Much of the trail crosses privately owned land, where access depends on the permission of individual landowners. When that permission is withdrawn, hikers can find themselves redirected onto roads, losing much of the experience that makes the Bruce Trail special. The Bruce Trail Conservancy is working to prevent that from happening by securing permanent protection for these important sections of the trail. Their work ensures that the landscape we enjoy today will still be there for our children and our grandchildren.

That is why it's important that we make this process as straightforward as possible. When a severance is required to transfer land to the conservancy, as my colleague said, the process can take up to 10 months and require between 50 and 100 hours of municipal staff time. These delays create uncertainty for willing landowners and the conservancy, and risk months of work being lost if circumstances change or a landowner changes their mind. That is time and effort that could be better spent protecting more of our natural heritage.

1830

Madam Speaker, the people of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound understand the value of expanded access and the protection of the Bruce Trail. We see that value with our families out hiking on weekends, the visitors who travel to our communities to experience the Niagara Escarpment, and the local businesses that benefit from the tourism it brings.

I want to once again thank my colleague from Whitby for bringing this motion forward and for his recognition of the importance of the trail to countless Ontarians. We have a duty to protect the natural assets that make our region and our province so special. I am proud to support this motion and the efforts to ensure the Bruce Trail remains accessible and protected for generations.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Those in the House will know that I speak with enormous pride when I speak about Hamilton. We have incredible green space in Hamilton. We have a beautiful waterfront. We have waterfalls. We have great parks. We are situated on the Niagara Escarpment. And we have the Bruce Trail Conservancy home in Dundas, Ontario, in my riding, so that is a huge source of pride for me—that I can say that your headquarters are located in my riding.

As many of my colleagues have said, your work is so critical and so important. And anything that we can do in this House to support your work is our responsibility—to make sure that that your work continues.

I also want to acknowledge that while you have been doing this work for 60 years—I want to share with the House what a fantastic organization the Bruce Trail Conservancy is, because they also take the time to acknowledge the land on which the trail is located. I just want to read from their very own website: "The Bruce Trail Conservancy wishes to acknowledge and honour the lands of the Niagara Escarpment as the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples. In both spirit and partnership, we recognize and thank the Anishinaabek, Huron-Wendat ... Neutral Nation, Haudenosaunee, Métis, and all who provided stewardship of these lands over millennia." You are acknowledging that you are coming after a long line of people who understand and honour and respect these very, very important lands. So thank you for that work.

There's a portion of the trail, the Iroquoia Heights portion, that goes through Hamilton, and I was lucky enough, at one point, to live just on the edge of it. There was many a time that people would wander off that trail and end up in this urban setting, and I finally got to get a map so that I could redirect people who got off the map—because between the Niagara Escarpment and the Bruce Trail, it's a little bit tricky in Hamilton. So I was able to acquire one of your beautiful trail maps. You don't even need to want to hike the Bruce Trail to look at this map. It's a beautiful depiction of parts of Ontario that we should all know. It's beautifully laid out. And it should give us all a source of great pride—to know that this is part of our province, and that there's an organization as wonderful as the Bruce Trail Conservancy making sure that it continues on for millennia.

I would also like to make sure that everyone acknowledges that on the Bruce Trail, while it runs 900 kilometres, there are sections, or clubs, I suppose, that are all volunteer-run—I could be wrong, but I think there are nine volunteer clubs that maintain and manage their section of the Bruce Trail. So this is truly a labour of love. It is truly committed Ontarians who volunteer their time and their hearts and their energy to make sure that they are part of the stewardship of these incredible, incredible lands. I think the member from Whitby said that this is a beloved treasure, and that is absolutely true.

I would like to say that it was very easy for me to write a glowing letter in support of this motion and of their ask. It really is simply the least we can do to support them in their work.

I would like to end by saying that while I have not hiked the trail end to end, it is a goal of many people, that they would like to do that. I imagine, when I have some time from this place, this is something that I would like to do—to hike the trail from end to end.

This gives me an opportunity to acknowledge good friends of mine: Cindy Brown and her husband, Jim Lamontagne. Jim

was not well when he decided that it was his ambition to hike the trail from end to end. With the support of Cindy and his friends—people who would meet him at one segment and drive his car and make sure that he was able to achieve this life ambition—they were able to accomplish that. So kudos to Jim and Cindy for persevering. Sadly, Jim is no longer with us. We miss Jim dearly. His friends miss him dearly. And we are so proud of Cindy as she continues to live a full life that embraces nature in our province.

I would just like to thank the Bruce Trail for providing this gem, this opportunity for people like Jim and Cindy to explore and to achieve a life ambition that meant so very much to them. Each time that I hear of the Bruce Trail or I see the markers that run through the city of Hamilton, I'm reminded of my good friend Jim, and I want to thank you for that. I want to thank you for the work that you do.

I also want to thank the member from Whitby. This is an incredibly important motion. It's a good motion; it feels good to all of us. We do a lot in this House that doesn't feel good, and we have a hard time accomplishing anything together. This is something that is easy for all of us to support.

I thank you for your work.

And I thank the member for bringing this motion forward this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'm pleased to rise in support of this motion, and I want to thank the member for Whitby for bringing this forward.

Earlier this year, when I met with the Bruce Trail Conservancy, I was inspired by the work that they do to connect people to nature and recreational opportunities. Sharing stories of people meeting their spouses along the trail, or groups of friends who would travel through it and make it an outing, or members of my family who will go—and they've set a goal to one day be able to hike the entire Bruce Trail as well.

So I think this is absolutely, like the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas said, a feel-good story, and again, I commend the member from Whitby for bringing this forward.

It makes sense, when we're looking at how to acquire land for conservation and how we reduce that red tape so that when those severances take place, they can be done quickly—and here's what that means for a landowner. Say you want to keep your family home and donate the woods behind it. Well, to transfer those woods and keep your home, you've got to divide the property, so you've got to sever the property in order to do that. This process, we know, can take about 10 months on average. So let's say you're settling an estate or need to sell, for some reason, a lot sooner; you may have to decide a lot quicker. A family could be ready to donate the land, and the conservancy can be ready to take it on, but that opportunity still could slip away and make it more difficult. There's a cost as well to the municipality, in terms of staff time spent on processing applications.

Based on last review—and that number might be a little bit lower now, but I understand that there are still about 631 properties to buy and about 400 or so that need severances. A lot of great progress has taken place, and I think that is fantastic, but more needs to be done. So I would actually encourage the government, thinking forward, to go to the next step as well and transfer key provincially owned lands. There are about 74 land parcels that have been identified that fall under this example and would bring about another 25 kilometres of the Bruce Trail under permanent protection.

The other really neat thing about the Bruce Trail is tourism and tourism within Ontario, so expanding the ability to through-hike for the trail—that would be fantastic. And I know that they're doing work around that—things like creating overnight rest areas. Wouldn't it be great to be able to go into one of the towns or settlements along the way and be able to stay overnight and visit the bakery in the morning and do some other stuff as well? I think that would be a very wonderful piece. I know work is undergoing, and I think that work needs to be continued and supported by the province.

1840

You know, it's hard to believe: If you wanted to walk throughout it, we're talking about one month. That's a lot of hiking. That's a long time. And if you do it straight, that's a lot of places that you can stop through along the way.

I'll just close with this: People see the work that the conservancy does. Every time that they walk the Bruce Trail, they get to enjoy it because there are volunteers that care for it and landowners have stepped forward over the years to help protect it. Isn't that a wonderful thing? Community—people in our province coming together not just to protect our natural environment but to celebrate it and encourage other folks in our province to take advantage of it. I think that's something that's really special, and when someone is ready to do that for the next generation through a severance, absolutely, Ontario should make it easier for them to follow through.

Once again, I'd like to thank the member for Whitby for bringing this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: It's an honour to rise in favour of this motion. I want to thank the member from Whitby for bringing forward this fantastic motion.

The Bruce Trail runs through my riding in Halton Hills. It goes through Speyside, where I grew up. I grew up walking on some of the side trails in and around my home. It goes through the Limehouse Conservation Area with the famous caves and the limestone kilns that are there and, of course, through the Silver Creek Conservation Area, where Scotsdale farm is located, an Ontario Heritage Trust location. I want to give a shout-out to Richard Chadwick, a constituent of mine who does so much work maintaining Scotsdale farm, working with the Ontario Heritage Trust, and the portion of the Bruce Trail that runs through that property.

The Bruce Trail is a very critical natural asset in my riding and my community. For more than 60 years, the Bruce Trail Conservancy has connected people to nature along Canada's longest footpath, 900 kilometres from Niagara to Tobermory. It welcomes more than a million visitors every year.

The portion of the Bruce Trail in my riding is maintained by the Toronto Bruce Trail Club, which is the name of the section. Through you, Speaker, I'm going to have to ask Michael why it's called the Toronto section, as it's primarily in Halton Hills, quite a distance from Toronto. But I was at the club's AGM this summer. It was held at the Gellert Community Centre in Georgetown. I was able to address the volunteers and supporters of the club at that AGM and share some of the things our government has been doing to support conservation in the province—money to tackle invasive species like phragmites, and also the expansion of the Charleston Lake Provincial Park by over 2,000 acres over in the eastern part of the province. It was great to meet with all of those folks at the AGM and share different ideas on how we can enjoy nature and different ways to promote nature in the province of Ontario.

Only 72% of the Bruce Trail is permanently protected land today. To secure its optimum route, the conservancy has identified 400 parcels that will require a conservation severance. I want to give a big shout-out to a tremendous community volunteer in my community, Peter Pritchard. He's involved in so many different organizations, like the Dominion Seed House garden in Georgetown, but he spends most of the time—he's retired, but he spends a lot of his time maintaining the trail along the Toronto portion.

Another thing that he does is dealing with these severances and acquiring different properties and dealing with different landowners to find sites. He was telling me just the other day about a portion of the trail that goes from a trail, then goes onto a public road for a stretch, and then back onto the trail. We want to eliminate the need for hikers and folks that are enjoying the trail to have to do that. That's a lot of work that Peter does, and he is going to be very excited if we can move this forward to eliminate some of the red tape and delays when it comes to getting these severances.

As was mentioned earlier, a severance can take up to 285 days—that's 10 months; far too long. So this is a common-sense change that we can bring forward. It's a smart, practical thing that the government can do for conservation in the province that will allow folks to get out and enjoy our beautiful nature here in this part of Ontario.

I'm very happy to support this motion and, again, I want to thank the fantastic member from Whitby for bringing this forward and supporting conservation and nature in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? Further debate? Further debate?

I will return to the member for Whitby, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you so much to all the speakers who spoke in support of the motion. Tonight is your night. Those who haven't been able to be with us tonight—the other representatives of 15 ridings where Bruce Trail goes through—this is your night as well.

Our government has taken significant steps to protect Ontario's natural heritage by expanding protected areas and creating new parks. Through initiatives such as the Ontario Greenlands Conservation Partnership, more than 637,000 acres of land have been protected—an area approximately four times the size of Toronto.

The motion that we've discussed and debated tonight complements the government's efforts to support local tourism and promote access to Ontario's world-class parks, trails and natural landscapes. For example, in July of 2026, we invested as a government $10 million to strengthen trail connections, including the Bruce Trail, through a conservation and land protection agreement.

What we've done tonight, together, is ensure that a national and natural asset that holds cultural significance will continue to be that way for generations to come.

Thank you all for your support.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Coe has moved private members' notice of motion number 99. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, November 23, 2026, at 10:15 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1848.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt
Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Donna Skelly
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day
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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong
Temporary Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes par intérim: Jeffrey Haskins

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Allsopp, Tyler (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Beattie, Jeff (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du troisième parti
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Président Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Cerjanec, Rob (LIB)	Ajax	
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Ciriello, Monica (PC)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire du troisième parti
Cooper, Hon. / L'hon. Michelle (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associée délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	Oakville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises et de l'Approvisionnement
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Darouze, George (PC)	Carleton	
Denault, Billy (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence
Fairclough, Lee (LIB)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Leader, Third Party / Chef du troisième parti
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gilmour, Alexa (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)	Milton	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Lahey, Susan (PC)	York—Simcoe	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
McKenney, Catherine (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité
Racinsky, Joseph (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	
Rae, Hon. / L'hon. Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Hon. / L'hon. Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaban, Fatima (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smyth, Stephanie (LIB)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Artificial Intelligence Adoption / Ministre associé de l'Adoption de l'intelligence artificielle
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Tsao, Jonathan (LIB)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	