



No. 67B

N° 67B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 23 June 2004

Mercredi 23 juin 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 juin 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 14, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 86, An Act to amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act, the Legislative Assembly Act and the Representation Act, 1996 to provide for provincial general elections at intervals of approximately four years, to govern the timing of writs, close of nominations and polling day, to make modifications relating to the electoral readjustment process, and to make technical amendments / *Projet de loi 86, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections, la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative et la Loi de 1996 sur la représentation électorale en vue de prévoir la tenue des élections générales provinciales à intervalles d'environ quatre ans, de régir le calendrier relatif à l'émission des décrets, à la clôture du dépôt des déclarations de candidature et au jour du scrutin, et d'apporter des modifications au processus de révision électorale ainsi que des modifications de forme.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Further debate on this bill. I understand the New Democrats are next in rotation.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I will be pleased to speak to the bill, albeit for only 20 minutes. My apologies to folks. It wasn't my idea to be abbreviated so severely, but I'm going to do my best. I'm going to do my best, Mr Duncan, in 20 minutes.

I think one of the first observations to make is that we've got section 1 and section 2. I indicate once again that section 2 of this bill is not contentious. I suppose some might call it housekeeping. Were section 2 to be severed from the bill, I suspect it could be passed on second and third reading without any significant or further amount of debate. It would accommodate all three political parties and their riding associations, which have to adapt to the new riding boundaries, so as to provide consistency with the federal riding boundaries, and now the addition of—what—one, two, three new federal boundaries. So I'm interested in seeing whether the gov-

ernment is going to take up the offer to sever section 2 and have it passed in short order.

The problem is—and there may well be some anxiety—that I don't think anybody in good faith wants to see section 1, which is the part of the bill that, oh, the author of the bill, when he introduced it, spoke to as constituting the real electoral reform. It is the part of the bill that warrants significant debate and, quite frankly, committee hearings, and about which there is some disagreement. So I leave that with you, hoping that the government House leader has heeded the offer put to him.

Section 1 of the bill has got to go to committee. Section 1 of the bill is the one—you see, part of my concern is that somehow the government here thinks and talks as if it has somehow recreated the wheel about creating a four-year term. In fact, when I was reading some stuff just the other day, we had four-year terms back in the 1800s. There was reconsideration of four-year terms, and there were five-year terms. Five-year terms are the terms we have been living with for a good chunk of time now; for, as I understand it, well over a century. You see, we already have fixed terms of five years. This government wants to replace them with fixed terms of four years.

Now I appreciate that the fixed terms of five years don't necessarily indicate or mean that an election date is going to be on the same date every five years, or four years, or dare I say it, the Liberals in 1990, every three and a half years. There was a price to be paid, wasn't there, for calling an election too early, just as there are prices to be paid for calling an election a little bit too late, I remember in 1995, as well, and in 1999, it seems to me, where there might have been some delay on the part of a Premier in going to the polls.

1850

I'm concerned, as is my caucus. You heard Marilyn Churley speak to this bill. The fact that, this is it? This is this government's electoral reform? This is their government's renewal of democracy? This is it? Surely you don't address this stuff piecemeal. Surely the Liberal government has more input, more access to creative minds. I'm not talking about within the caucus. I'm talking about people for hire. I'm talking about people who can be consulted. I'm talking about people who can be retained. I'm talking about people who are constitutional experts.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): Go on junkets?

Mr Kormos: Ms Mossop suggests we send her on a junket to consult with these people. I suppose she's going to have to wait her turn like the rest of her caucus. She's a member of the Quebec-Ontario Parliamentary Association, the sole purpose of which is to organize junkets. Regrettably she didn't get herself elected vice-president, which is the key. That's what unlocks the door. That's the Yale, as in Yale lock, the junket.

You don't need to do junkets. You've got expertise right here in the province of Ontario. You've got academic expertise, authors and historians. You've got people who want to talk about this who are prepared to come right here to Queen's Park. They'll sit at your doorstep, knocking on your door, talking about your pathetic electoral reform, which adopts an Americanized version of fixed election dates, and somehow fails to understand the incredible quality of the British parliamentary system, our parliamentary system, which permits a government to relinquish its mandate, or provides that a government can have its mandate seized from it.

See, that doesn't happen in a fixed election date, four-year term. I took a close look at section 1, in particular 9(1), which is the amended part of the Election Act. I think it's one that begs the question, because it says: "Nothing in this section affects the powers of the Lieutenant Governor, including the power to dissolve the Legislature, by proclamation in Her Majesty's name, when the Lieutenant Governor sees fit."

I've already had everything from soup to nuts in terms of what that means. There are some who have interpreted that as meaning nothing has really changed in terms of a government's ability to relinquish its mandate, a government's ability to lose its mandate by virtue of the loss of a vote of non-confidence, although of course there's some serious concern about what constitutes a vote of non-confidence. One would think that in the context of this purported electoral reform there might have been a definition of non-confidence. Increasingly, governments have taken non-confidence to mean exactly whatever the government wants it to mean at that particular point in time.

I recall, and Mr Sterling will recall because he's a little older than I am, a federal incident wherein the federal Liberal government lost a true vote of non-confidence. They didn't have members in the House, perhaps a night similar to this night for the government here. To rectify that, rather than of course going to the Governor General and asking the Governor General to drop the writ, the government the next day simply called in its members, presented a motion of confidence, and cleaned up the vote of non-confidence that had occurred.

There's concern on the part of a whole lot of people that in the context of the overall bill, with fixed election dates, that the power of the Lieutenant Governor, purportedly retained in what will become section 9(1) of the Election Act, is circumscribed by the requirement that there be four-year fixed terms, and that those four-year terms expire so that an election can be held on a given date, the same date, every four years.

Now that's a serious abandonment of one of the significant qualities of the parliamentary system. In the American presidential system, of course, there are four-year fixed terms, but don't forget you have elections in the United States, Congressional and Senate elections, every two years. A President who doesn't have the support of the two Houses can, in two year's time, go to the electorate and appeal for that support by calling upon voters of the United States to elect senators or congress-people of the political ilk that's necessary to give that President, that executive, the power to adequately govern.

Similarly, the voters can take away from a president, can take away from the executive, the mandate that might have been provided them with the election of a Senate or a Congress that supported that president in the course of those two-year elections, mid-presidential term. Similarly, a President, of course, can use his or her veto power, but at the risk of the wrath of the public. Similarly, a President can survive if the positions held by the President, although not supported by Congress and Senate, are sufficiently popular to warrant maintenance of popular support for that President.

One of the remarkable things, of course, and the distinction in the American system and the Canadian system, is that in the Canadian system, the government consists—the executive, the cabinet, consists of elected members, whereas in the United States, the government, the executive office, but for the President, doesn't consist of elected members. It is people who are chosen, who are acquired, who are brought on board and accountable only to the President, not accountable to the people in terms of holding elected office and being at risk of being defeated in a subsequent election.

So I appreciate that the concept, the proposal, the proposition around fixed election dates has, oh, some instant approval out there. Somehow people see it as something of a panacea, especially when there has been a critique of the manner in which governments supposedly manipulate election dates to their advantage.

Well, I watched a government try to manipulate the election date to its advantage in 1990. Remember that one, Speaker? It didn't work. I watched a government try to manipulate the election date in 1995 by holding on, holding on, holding on, thinking that somehow things would get better by waiting just one more month. It didn't work. I watched a government in 1999 try to manipulate an election date by holding on, holding on, holding on, hoping that the bad taste surrounding a budget that was presented outside of the Parliament would somehow lose its spin out there, that somehow people would fatigue of the—

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): In 2003.

Mr Kormos: In 2003. Did I say 1999?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): You said 1999, yes.

Mr Kormos: Well, the record will be corrected appropriately. As a matter of fact, the wonderful person

from Hansard, who works so hard and who is a true servant of this House, is correcting it right now, and I want to express my gratitude to her. I hope she's getting at least overtime pay for being here after 6 o'clock in the evening, but from the cynical look on her face, I'm concerned that that indeed isn't the case, that she's going to be offered something like time off "in lieu of." I apologize to her in advance for having to work into the night.

Mind you, of course, it's consistent with the theme of this government. Remember the bill last night, 13-hour workdays and 60-hour-plus workweeks? That's what this government's response is in terms of addressing the repeal of the 60-hour—the government did repeal the 60-hour workweek and it introduced the 91-hour workweek. Seven days times 13 hours a day: That's 91 hours. Well, it did. This government is going to repeal the 60-hour workweek and replace it with a 70- or 75-hour workweek. That's the net impact of its legislation. The Tories were kinder to working folks than the Liberals.

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): We heard all that last night, Peter.

Mr Kormos: Well, the Tories were. I mean, it's remarkable. What a standard to have yourself tested against. What a standard. I remember when the Liberals were over here and they railed against the Tories for trying to force legislation through the chamber with time allocation. What happens? We've got a Liberal government that in such short order after getting elected exploits the standing orders that permit it to move time allocation motions. Why, at one point there was even a program motion that had the collaboration of the Conservatives in an effort to accelerate legislation through the House. The Conservatives got drawn into the process of curtailing debate.

I'm kind of interested and looking forward to seeing the Conservative participation in the debate this evening. I'm looking forward to hearing Conservative members of the opposition stand up and explain whether they're for or against Bill 86. I'm looking forward because we've got—heck, it's only 7 o'clock now. I've got six minutes and change. We've got a couple of hours. There will be time for lots of Conservatives to speak to the bill. There will be time for lots of Liberals to speak to the bill. There will be time for New Democrats. Rosario Marchese will be speaking to the bill; Howard Hampton will be speaking to the bill. There will be time to hear from all three parties in this Legislature, to hear their position on Bill 86.

1900

If you want to talk about manipulating election dates, I'd like to hear from government members as to why we haven't seen the democratic reform that was promised during the course of the election. I know the answer. I mean, look, all sorts of promises were made by the Liberals. Jeez, they promised not to increase taxes; Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals promised not to increase taxes. Well, that promise was broken so fast it made your head spin. That promise was broken in the proverbial New York minute. The Liberals promised to

uphold and maintain public health care. Well, gosh, Liberals responded to that promise by privatizing chiropractic care, by privatizing physiotherapy, by privatizing optometrists and the health care they provide.

I am not even sure, even if this bill passes—and I say to you, this bill requires extensive and thorough public hearings. As a matter of fact, quite frankly, once we—and I hope we can deal with section 2 of the bill separate and apart, as a severed portion of the bill which will address the housekeeping needs of riding associations for all political parties, quite frankly, not just the three parties in the Legislature, but for all political parties. I'm not sure that the remnant of the bill, section 1, should survive at all. I would far sooner see it appear in a broad-based proposal, a legislative proposal around electoral reform. I would far sooner see the prospect of tinkering with election dates made concurrent with proportional representation here in the province of Ontario. I would far sooner see the Liberals keep their promise to implement real democratic renewal and electoral reform by ensuring Ontarians that every voter's vote is going to count in the next provincial election.

I, quite frankly, am looking forward to Jack Layton and the NDP holding the balance of power in Ottawa, and hoping that Jack Layton and the however many—50, 60—New Democrats who are sent to Ottawa by voters across Ontario, voters like the folks down in Hamilton Centre who are voting for David Christopherson, voters like the ones who are voting for Tony DePaulo down there, the ones who are voting for Chris Charlton, like voters who are voting for Peggy Nash over in High Park here in Toronto, like voters who are voting for Olivia Chow in Trinity-Spadina, like voters voting for Jack Layton in Toronto-Danforth, like voters voting for Sid Ryan and electing him and sending him to Ottawa—a strong, powerful voice for working women and men, for Canadian families, for seniors, for students. Sid Ryan: What a presence he is going to have in Ottawa; what a voice he is going to be. What a voice he's going to be for working women and men and their parents and their kids up there on Parliament Hill. In fact, all the Lakeshore ridings, I'm told—Peter Tabuns is kicking electoral butt down in Michael Prue's riding, and that specifically is Beaches-East York. And then up in Ottawa, you've got Ed Broadbent. Have you seen Ed's rap video? Because if you go to—

The Acting Speaker: How does this relate to the bill we are discussing?

Mr Kormos: If we're going to talk about electoral reform, we've got to talk about elections, don't we, Speaker? And if we're going to talk about elections, we've got to talk about the real personalities who are running in those elections. If we are going to talk about electoral reform, we've got to talk—

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I really think the member opposite should stop daydreaming and stick to the main theme of this bill. These are daydreams, wishful thinking on the part of the

NDP, and I think he really should stick to the subject matter.

Mr Hampton: On the same point, Mr Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre has already referred to the American political system and the attempt here by the government to import some American political style into Canada, yet the government members take offence when we refer to the Canadian political system and Parliament Hill. If we can talk about the American political system, it seems to me we should be able to talk about the Canadian—

The Acting Speaker: I would once again ask the member for Niagara Centre to continue to speak to the bill, Bill 86.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. If you haven't seen Ed Broadbent rap, go to www.ndp.ca and you watch the Ed Broadbent rap. Ed Broadbent has this incredible rap—

Mr Hampton: Ed's back.

Mr Kormos: Ed's back. Not only is Ed rapping up that riding, but Ed is going to wrap up that election. Ed raps his way into the hearts of every person who has ever listened to good rap. To think that a man of his age, somebody over 50, could pull that off, I think is just fascinating.

As I say, I'm looking forward to Jack Layton and the New Democrats in Ottawa influencing the next government and calling upon them to implement proportional representation.

I put to this government that if they're going to talk about electoral reform, if they're going to talk about democratic renewal, then it's time for them to put their money where their mouths are. It's time for them to perhaps keep one promise and bring forward legislation that talks meaningfully about things like proportional representation. That's what Ontarians want to hear about. That's what they want to hear and see day to day here in their Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have been listening very carefully to the wonderful rendition from the member for Niagara Centre with respect to political reform. Indeed, there was some rendering with respect to the bill that has been introduced in the House as part of the platform of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals during the last election. Here we are with the full intent of carrying through with that promise. We are debating Bill 86, which deals indeed with reform for perhaps the first time in many years.

The core of the reform is establishing a date and time, letting the people of Ontario know when the next election date is going to be. The bill contains more than that. It contains other amendments with respect to election reform, financial reform, but the main core of Bill 86 deals with letting the people of Ontario know when they will be facing the next election. In this case, it will be October 4, 2007. There is some flexibility in the bill for eventualities as well, but at least the reorganization, the re-adjustments will all be included so there is no more

hanky-panky being played by the leaders of the various political parties when it's most convenient for them to call the election. The people of Ontario can be prepared. They can prepare themselves and say, "Well, three years from now, four years from now, we're going to be going to the polls and we're going to re-elect the government," and it's going to be a Liberal government four years from now, because we will be doing exactly what's important and what's important to the people of Ontario. It's what we have been saying all along. This is one of those promises that will be kept by the Liberal government.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Bill 86 is essentially just a promise to hold an election on October 4, 2007. There's no legal penalty if the Premier doesn't do it. The Premier clearly has powers to hold the election either before or after that time.

This bill is simple. It puts forward that concept. It puts forward the concept of keeping constituency associations that now exist in place until December 31, 2006. This bill does not need committee hearings; it needs to be voted on. Let's get on with other business which is more important to this House.

1910

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm glad to participate in making comments on the remarks from the member for Niagara Centre in regard to this particular bill. I just want to say, because it's the first chance I've had to say anything on this bill on this particular issue, that there are a couple of things in this bill that I think we need to put into context. I don't personally not support the idea of fixed-date elections; I think that's a good idea. But I am not convinced that we have figured it out right, by way of this bill, about which particular time of the year an election should be held in.

If the goal is to increase voter participation in order to make sure that you have more and more people who come out to vote each time, is having an election the first Thursday in October the smartest time to do it? You're going to have a Jewish holiday in September in the middle of a writ, which quite frankly is problematic for the Jewish community. You're going to have the issue of how you are going to deal with students who are in college and university, who are away from home. Are we going to allow them to vote on campus within their own ridings? Are we going to allow them to vote, as they do now, by way of proxy in their own communities?

In my view, we need to send that particular part of the bill to committee so that we can hear people who have pretty good ideas on this particular issue so that we get it right, because we're going to be setting in legislation, if this bill is agreed to, to set in motion an election every four years in October, which is going to impact, every third election, on municipal elections that are going to happen in November.

The point is, I'm not opposed to the concept, but we need to get that bill to committee in order to have people come in and present and talk about: when the best time is to have fixed elections; how you deal with the issue of a government losing confidence in the House when you

have a fixed election date; and how you deal with election finance as it impacts on the election date, so that we get it right. That's the point I would like to make, and I look forward to this bill going to committee.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): For those folks in Peterborough who might be watching this evening, I'll encourage them to get out and vote for Mr Adams on June 28, who has been our member since 1993—a great member since 1993.

Interjection: Should be re-elected.

Mr Leal: Should be re-elected. But I'll get back to Bill 86. When I look at Bill 86, I think it's an important step to starting democratic renewal in the province of Ontario, and I think it's something that when you chat—for example, the people in the barber shop on Monaghan Road in Peterborough, Ontario, are interested in seeing our system, to look at it in a new light and bring some new innovations to the democratic process of the province of Ontario. I happen to think the fixed-date election is the first step to move down that road. As a person who spent some 18 years in municipal politics, I got very used to a fixed-date election every three years in November, and it always worked out extremely well. Everybody knew when the election was coming, the candidates knew when to start to prepare, and I see it no different as part of this process.

I'm particularly pleased that our colleague the member from Sarnia, who is the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, Ms Di Cocco, is very knowledgeable in this area and has explored a lot of areas of different Parliaments around the world to look at other ways that we can fundamentally reform our institutions here and our process of government and how elections are held.

We must remind everybody that we are in the 21st century and it's time to look at some new approaches. I know in our campaign platform we certainly talked about citizen juries as another step to fully implement and to engage the population in the democratic process.

Just today, I had the opportunity of being in St Peter's high school in Peterborough, and young people are interested in discovering—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Niagara Centre has two minutes to reply.

Mr Kormos: I regret that I had but 20 minutes to speak to this bill. It's a good thing other New Democrats are here to carry on the debate throughout the night. Once again, I'm looking forward to hearing what the Conservatives have to say about it; looking forward to hearing what Liberal backbenchers have to say about it in the course of the 20-minute slots allotted them.

I just want to make an observation: People are pretty cranky here in the House tonight. People are a little touchy. Some of them are even downright whiny. I don't mean "winey," even though that may be the case with a few who had supper either in or out of the assembly building, but "whiny." These people—you'd think they'd been here for four years. They've only been here for nine months. Nine months, 9% in the polls: I guess there's

some consistency. So in nine more months, does that mean they'll be at 0%? I don't know.

My impression is that the parliamentary calendar suggests that we're going to leave here after tomorrow night. Look, New Democrats are eager to sit here next week if we have to, the week after, the week after that. If this government wants to keep having question periods, by God, it can keep having sessional days, and we'll be eager to debate this bill, Bill 86. We'll be eager to debate things like, oh, the family medical leave bill, or we'll debate the bring-your-own-wine bill. We'll debate any bill the government—you see, the government controls its agenda. Opposition members don't get to call legislation. It's the government, the House leader and the whip who decide what legislation is going to be called and what legislation is going to be debated. So let the government bring it on. We'll debate it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased to rise tonight and speak in favour of Bill 86, the democratic renewal bill. This is one of many steps in our democratic renewal platform. This bill, if passed, will fix the election date in an attempt to give voters some sense, some stability in the election system and to encourage more people to vote.

As the member previous had mentioned, this is not our whole democratic renewal program; this is just one part of our democratic renewal program. We in fact have already begun with a previous bill, which is to get rid of the shameful waste of government money on partisan advertising. We have previously tabled a bill which will be removing the right of government to spend money on partisan advertising. As we go along, the minister responsible for democratic renewal will be tabling a number of other bills as part of the democratic renewal process.

But let's talk about this particular bill, which has to do with fixed election dates. If this bill is passed, the provincial election will be held on the first Thursday in October every fourth year, which means, for those voters out there who are listening, that if they have a multi-year calendar, they can go and mark on it right now that the next election will be held on Thursday, October 4, 2007. The significance of this is that politicians, the Premier, will no longer be able to play games with the election date. As we've seen over a number of years, Premiers do in fact play games with the public and with the political process in trying to choose an election date to their best advantage. We're fixing this election date so that the election will be at the convenience of the public, not at the convenience of the Premier, whoever that Premier might happen to be.

Now, it does a few other things as well. Under the current legislation, the campaign can be anywhere from 28 to 56 days in length—again, totally at the call of the Premier. So if the Premier thinks it would be good to have a short campaign, it's the Premier's call; if the Premier thinks it would be good to have a long campaign, currently it's the Premier's call. We're going to change that. The campaign will be fixed at 28 days—four weeks.

We all know right now what the length of the next campaign will be.

One of the members who spoke previously raised a concern that it is possible that an election date in early October could conflict with religious holidays. That has already been taken care of within the language of the bill. We have anticipated that, depending on how the calendar falls, this could be a problem. So we have given the Lieutenant Governor the ability within the bill to move that election day within a week, one way or the other, to accommodate any potential conflict with religious holidays. So, indeed, we have already taken care of that problem.

1920

Another concern which I have heard from constituents, which I think is a legitimate concern, is: What happens if you have a minority government situation and the government falls? Does that mean that minority governments would be locked in for four years? The answer to that is no; absolutely not.

We have considered that eventuality within the bill. So, contrary to the information that the previous speaker from Niagara Centre may have confused voters with, I would like voters to know that if there is a minority government and that minority government loses the confidence of the House, two things could happen.

First of all, the Lieutenant Governor may ask another party to form the government, or the Lieutenant Governor may choose to call an election. That is no change from the current situation. So the whole tradition around minority governments and loss of confidence remains totally unchanged.

What will change is if there is an election outside this schedule because a minority government has fallen, and we've taken care of that. The next election date will be four years after that unscheduled, if I can put it that way, election. So that eventuality has been taken care of.

What about student voters? One of the previous speakers also raised the issue of student voters. I happen to live in a university town. We did have a campaign during September. I would venture to guess that as the campaign took off on campus, as we held an all-candidates meeting on campus, more student voters engaged with the process; more students were enumerated, signed up and did vote in my riding. So that's a non-issue. We've all—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Will the member for Guelph-Wellington please take your seat. I'd like to ask the members for Peterborough and Simcoe North and the Minister of Economic Development, if they want to have a conversation, to take it into one of the lobbies.

Mrs Sandals: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It would be very nice to hear myself think.

What about this business about fixed election dates being an American concept? If you go and read the Ontario Municipal Elections Act, you would find that municipal elections—that is, for municipal councils and school board elections—are already held every third year, on the second Monday of November. Having come

from many school board elections, I knew, when I was elected on the second Monday in November, that three years from then I would be doing it all over again. I have to tell you that that was—

Interjection: Not next time.

Mrs Sandals: Not next time—but every time I did actually run for school board, I was elected, OK? It happened every three years. It worked quite well.

There has been a bit of fearmongering around this, that somehow this creates a permanent election campaign. What tends to happen is in the spring, around May or June, preceding the election campaign, people start to talk about whether they'll run again. They would file their papers in September. There would be a two- or three-month period during which people geared up to campaign, but this was no more than a six-month process in terms of disrupting the life of the body.

I'd like to compare that to what happened to me, personally, in this last election. Remember, the date of the last election was October 2, 2003. But we did have a change of Premier in there. In the previous government, the leader decided that perhaps he was a little bit on unsafe territory and he resigned. The governing party had to elect a new leader, a new Premier. My riding association happened to decide that perhaps the Premier, exercising his authority under the old scheme, might decide to hold a snap election right after the leadership convention. So they decided to have an early nomination meeting.

What happened to me was that in December of 2001, I had to make the decision about whether or not to go for the nomination, put together a nomination team. I announced I was going for the nomination in January 2002. I won the nomination in May 2002. I spent the summer of 2002 putting together a campaign team. I started knocking on doors in the fall of 2002. I would like to thank Mr Eves for that, because having spent a year knocking on doors put me in very good shape when the campaign came along. In fact, my election campaign was 22 months long, which is quite silly. It worked; I have no complaints; but this really is not a good way in which to run an election campaign—trying to outguess the Premier.

What we will do is introduce some stability into this whole process. Everybody will know that elections, henceforth, are on a four-year cycle. We can get rid of the nonsense. The public knows; Elections Ontario, which has to orchestrate this whole thing, will know; and we can get on with the business of concentrating on the government of the province rather than playing politics.

I would now like to share of the rest of my time with the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to stand tonight and give my support to Bill 86, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. As my friends before me have said, this legislation, if passed, is about something that may seem simple. It's about setting an election date for the first Thursday every four years, starting October 4, 2007, which will be four years and a day from October 2, 2003, when this government was elected and when I was pleased to become a member of

the Legislature, representing my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Although that may seem like something very simple, I thought I would pick up where my colleague left off, talking about her own personal circumstances and how this piece of legislation will help people, both the voters and perhaps those who may be willing to enter the democratic process and put their name forward.

If I can contrast the two experiences that I had when I ran in 1999—unsuccessfully, albeit—and in 2003, successfully—

Interjection: Training.

Ms Broten: It was good training. The one thing I can contrast about the election in 1999 was that it was more certain. There was less uncertainty with respect to the election day, and it pretty much went off like clockwork. We expected an election call for a June election. I left work on a Thursday. We had an election call exactly the day that we thought. I was able to assemble my team, rent space and, in fact, we were able to put this team together and run an election campaign for that 28-day period. As a result of knowing when the election call would be, we did not rent space for an extended period of time, we were able to book our advertising and all of those things that you put forward. Most importantly, as someone who was packing up and leaving a litigation practice, I was able to plan. I was able to work with my clients, let them know that I would be leaving on a certain day. If all went well, I wouldn't be coming back. As it turned out, I did go back to the practice, and it was very good that I was able to advise them of the process as it went along.

On the other hand, 2003 was a very different election campaign. I had been nominated as the candidate since, I think, December 2001, so the election campaign was very long indeed. I recall, in the months leading up to the election, trying to get my files in order, trying to determine what files I would transfer to someone else and how I would wrap up my law practice to get ready to run in the election. The comment that I heard from my clients, more often than not, was, "When is this election coming? What do you mean you don't know when this election will be?"

I do have many clients who are located in the US, and for them it was a very strange concept. I remember having some very long discussions with them about how our Premier could play political games with the choosing of an election date. It was very surprising to them. They said, "You mean the person who sits in government can go out there and do all sorts of polling and see where they are in the polls, and they have every right to keep everyone on pins and needles, not undertaking any business of the government but rather, on an extended pre-writ campaign, using government money to the disadvantage of other parties, wasting taxpayers' dollars with all sorts of advertising?" We certainly saw a huge flurry of advertising in the months leading up to the election. As for my clients who were distant from the process, what they simply said to me was that running an

election in that way and having it be such a political decision as to when an election will be called really keeps good people out of politics. In so many ways the sacrifices one might have to make to be in that circumstance—think if you're a parent and you're wondering, "Do I make child care arrangements for what will be a very extensive month or not?" I see my colleague across the aisle. I'm sure that what you were going to do was a very difficult decision. Some of my friends in years past actually quit their employment leading up to an election that didn't happen right away—and talk about the financial circumstances and the financial sacrifices that someone is asked to make.

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Through those many months of uncertainty, not uncertainty, was I leaving my law practice, was I not leaving it, was I coming back and looking for more work from my firm, I have to say, the fact that they were incredibly patient and supporting was a key factor in that process rolling out smoothly. But it took clients and a law firm that were very accommodating, because I was gone again and back again. I remember distinctly the day it became clear that we would not be having an election early in the spring, when we expected we would be. We had a campaign office up and running. We probably had about 25 people working in that campaign office because we expected the writ to drop within days. Then we got a phone call that said, "You know, the word on the street is that this election is not coming." I remember the disappointment in the volunteers who were working in the campaign, who said, "What do you mean? We're going to have more game-playing, more cynicism and politics happening as to when this election should be."

I want to point out that it's not only those individuals who are involved in a campaign, clearly trying to see a change of government, who were disappointed. It was also the voters. I remember, in those very days after the election was not coming, like a lot of my colleagues here in the Legislature, that we kept on working. Your team was in place. You kept knocking on doors and you had people saying, "What are you doing here? They're not calling the election. We can't believe it. Why has this happened? We want to see an election. How is it that a government and a Premier can make this decision? And the decision is his alone, to do what he chooses."

That was something, as we look at many ways to make sure we increase voter participation and bring back democratic renewal in this province: dealing with the issue of hampering voter cynicism. What happened in 2003, with the delay of the election, was severely increased voter cynicism. They wanted to have their say. They were ready to go to the polls and cast their ballot for whomever they were going to cast that ballot. They felt that their voice, their ability to have a say in the political process, was being tampered with, that they were being cheated and it was being lessened.

I think that this piece of legislation is significant in those few aspects. One, it's an important step in terms of our strengthening Ontario's democracy and engaging the

people of this province more in the democratic process. We absolutely must do that. We've seen the rate of turnout, of voter participation, decreasing, and particularly decreasing among young voters. That's something everyone in this Legislature, on all sides of the House, should be extremely concerned about. If our leaders of tomorrow don't turn out to vote today, we have some serious concerns about whether we're responding to their needs.

This is also part of our goal, to combine with other pieces of legislation that we're bringing forward. The ban on wasting taxpayers' dollars on partisan advertising goes hand in hand with this legislation as a significant plank in our move forward to increase democratic renewal in this province to give all of our members, whatever their responsibility in government, an opportunity to sit on the cabinet committees and have a voice. That again increases our participation.

We've heard a lot, over the last number of days, about the fact that backbenchers haven't been speaking out. I want to say that I have found those comments offensive. I know that everyone in this Legislature, everyone who is part of this government is making an impact for their communities, first and foremost; acting for their constituents; serving on the cabinet committees; has roles assisting various ministers and otherwise; and that every member of this government is having a huge impact on moving forward our plan for change in this province.

I would suggest that the comments made otherwise, as to the fact that backbenchers and other members of our government are not willing to participate, are based on much misinformation and are really made in a way to try to discredit the people who are working hard each and every day, as part of this government, to ensure that when we go back to the polls on October 4, 2007, we've delivered to the people of Ontario what they voted for on October 2, 2003, and that we will see a strong Liberal majority returned to government so that we can continue transforming this province into a place that we will all be very proud to be part of.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Guelph-Wellington and the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I did listen with some intent.

If I look at the bill and the new section 9—it's important to put it on the record here. I will read it for the viewer, who may be interested in understanding the subtleties of this bill. We're talking about a fixed-term election process, really. Section 9 says, "The next general election will be held on Thursday, October 4, 2007 (unless a general election has been held sooner because the Lieutenant Governor has dissolved the Legislature)."

So the leader could easily go to the Lieutenant Governor and dissolve it. There's no fixed term here. There's no absolute commitment. That's what's missing here. It's a hole in the legislation. If you want to listen to our critic on this file, Norm Sterling from Lanark-Carleton—with a great deal of experience here—he has concerns about that particular section.

If I go down to section 3, I really think that this needs to be paid attention to: "The Legislative Assembly Act, which sets out the current rule that the Legislature shall continue for five years unless sooner dissolved by the Lieutenant Governor, is repealed."

So we do have a fixed term, Mr Speaker. You would know, as a great traditionalist, that, in fact, it is a five-year term today. It's the old Westminster tradition. Governments have played—there's no question, as has been said by the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, and it has been an issue over some time. But this is the Americanization of our British tradition. That's really what it is: It's Americanization.

There's more to be said on this particular thing, and I'll be speaking to the bill.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Well, I'll be speaking next, hopefully.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have to be honest with you. I don't think that having a fixed election date is going to change voter participation at all in provincial elections. I don't think it's going to do one thing to encourage people to go out and vote, because I don't think people vote depending on what day of the week it is, what month it is. You see, I think people aren't voting, and we see that from the statistics, for a number of reasons. The reasons they're not voting are not going to be changed by a fixed election.

Let me give you some of those reasons. They don't vote because they don't think their vote matters. In a first-past-the-post system like we have in the province of Ontario, that is very true. If we were to move to a form of proportional representation, where people clearly could see that their vote mattered, I think that would make an enormous difference in the number of people, particularly young people, who wanted to go out and cast their ballot.

Secondly, if we talk about how we're going to encourage young people to vote, we should be looking at Internet voting and how we can appeal to those young people, in particular, who use that technology and could be very engaged in the political process as a result. The bill doesn't talk about that at all.

People don't vote because, if they haven't been enumerated and they're not on the permanent voters list, they go to the polling station and find out they have to stand in line for an hour in order to register. They say, "Forget it," and they leave, and they don't exercise their vote. So we should be moving back to enumeration, and there's nothing in the bill that puts that in place.

People don't vote because they think big money buys or influences elections. Until you ban corporate and union donations and move to a system where you finance directly from individuals, people aren't going to feel that they are engaged in the political process. They aren't going to feel like their vote matters, and they aren't going to be engaged.

These are some of the things that would really renew democracy in the province. None of these things are in the bill, and I regret that.

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Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I want to affirm the comments of my colleagues from Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Guelph-Wellington. Certainly the member for Nickel Belt has talked about what the bill doesn't do, but I think what we're talking about is what the bill does do.

It's interesting because when a bill is introduced that does too many things, there's a complaint about it not being focused, but when a bill has a very specific purpose and it's intended to do one thing and do it well, then there's a complaint about that.

I just want to affirm my experience of this past election, which was much like that of the members for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Guelph-Wellington, in that I was campaigning from my 49th birthday in 2002, when I was nominated in May, until October 2. I was sure we would have had an election before I was 50, but we didn't.

This bill corrects an imbalance. It allows citizens to know when an election is going to be called, it will save tax dollars and it provides predictability. This makes sense to people. The games that are played by Premiers in trying to manipulate the process really are inside baseball. Citizens really don't care about that kind of game. They want us to talk about the issues up until the time the election happens and then they want to vote on the issues.

In the days of constant media, when you read every single day about whether the election is going to be called, whether it's not going to be called, whether it's going to be called, that's not of interest to people. They want to know what we stand for. That's what we should be talking about. If they know when the election is coming, then they can get ready for that.

I think it is a very good step in the right direction. It can allow us to focus on other things, and I am completely in support.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question and comment. If not, one of the government members has the opportunity to reply.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. No one stood up when I asked for one last question and comment. One of the government members has the opportunity to reply.

Mrs Sandals: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Durham, Nickel Belt and Don Valley West for their responses.

I have just a few comments here. People keep talking about the fact that we have a five-year fixed term already. We do not have a five-year fixed term. We have a variable term, which maxes out at five years. In fact, in the last several election cycles, elections have been called voluntarily at anywhere from three years to four years, four and a half years to the absolute drop-dead date at five years. So elections have been extremely variable and unpredictable.

We've heard here about addressing the issues of proportional representation and alternate voting methods, and we will be looking at that. But the difference is that

we were very specific in our election campaign, saying we will introduce a four-year, fixed-term election. We're doing that. That's why this bill is here.

Also in our campaign, we said we would have a consultation with the public on issues like proportional representation. We will also do that, and the results of that consultation will come back to the House in the future.

Just quickly, I would like to mention one other aspect, which is what variable election dates cost the public. Elections Ontario this year, in anticipation of a four-year term, opened up all the offices in 103 ridings, staffed them, rented space, rented equipment, for about four or five months. Mr Eves didn't call the election. They closed down and then they had to start up again later—a waste of money.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr O'Toole: In the very few minutes I've been allocated, I just want to cover a couple of things here on a very different piece. In fact, it's got the House stalled, actually, as far as I understand it. I'm not sure the government really wants this. They could easily move this bill. They have the power, they have the majority, and they could ram it through; there's no question about that. I think it's important to have a small bit of debate on it. Clearly our member from Lanark-Carleton is the critic and is very knowledgeable of the issues and the substance within the bill.

In one of the responses I made earlier—for those viewers who have just tuned in, it's important to point out that in the new section 9, it says: "unless a general election has been held sooner because the Lieutenant Governor has dissolved the Legislature." Well, that means the leader of the government could go to the Lieutenant Governor and just say, "We don't have the confidence of the House," which, quite honestly, they should have done during the budget. In my view, there was human outrage. The leader of the government, Mr McGuinty, plummeted in support to 9%. So clearly the people of Ontario, through direct communication with members of all parties, made it clear that they were very disappointed.

The member from Nickel Belt spoke to some extent about the voter apathy issue. The voter apathy issue could be traced simply to not telling the truth during the election. I think a precipitous slide may have started—I don't want to impute any motives here—with Trudeau, and then maybe it carried on with John Turner. It may have carried on even—I think the election that changed my mind, where I became active, was when I heard Jean Chrétien and Sheila Copps. I think of them now, walking around, waving the Canadian flag thing, the branding, and—

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): What about Mulroney?

Mr O'Toole: I'll get to that, too.

What they promised in that election was the beginning of the demise, the onset of public apathy. They had three key promises, as my memory serves me well. One of the promises by Chrétien was to cancel the free trade agree-

ment. The next major promise was to cancel the GST. There were others.

But another one affected me personally. It's why I became engaged. They promised, on the helicopter issue, the Sea King helicopters. At that time, my son—Mr Speaker, I've told you this story personally—was at the Royal Military College in Kingston, studying to be a pilot—in fact, a helicopter air crew person—and he was actually in England. He was on the Cormorant, the new EH101, a helicopter that had been ordered. You know what happened? During the election, they made a big deal out of that.

It's hard to phrase these words in parliamentary form, so I'll try to be careful. What desensitized me to the sincerity of elected people—prior to that, I think all parties really meant the best and responded to the realities, once elected. They responded to the realities that beset them once they got in to look at the books, inside the big documents and the various expenditures etc.

The minister from Ottawa West-Nepean, who is the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, made a comment—

Interjection: He's a good guy.

Mr O'Toole: He's a good member. As a matter of fact, he'd be much more comfortable on that side of the House, with us as government. I understand that. But here's the point: He made the point, "What about Mulroney?" Here's the difference, here's the subtlety in a simple couple of lines, if I could have your attention: The difference between Mulroney and Chrétien is Mulroney told the truth.

What happened is this—

Mr Marchese: I have a different way of putting it: The Liberals kept every promise the Tories ever made. That's a better line.

Mr O'Toole: I have to say, the member from Trinity-Spadina has just corrected me: The Liberals kept every promise that the Tories made.

Mr Marchese: Ever made.

Mr O'Toole: Now, here's the difference. The difference is simply this: How did they balance the budget? All of a sudden, how did Chrétien, and Martin as finance minister, and all this stuff come to pass?

Mr Marchese: Tell us about it.

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Mr O'Toole: Well, the small litany and the short-list litany would be this: The revenue from the GST was about \$28 billion of new revenue. Once the Liberal government, the Chrétien government, got in power, they saw that the revenue was going to be—"Holy smokes, holy gee, in a couple of years we can balance the budget." So their finance officials—I think Don Drummond was Paul Martin's assistant Deputy Minister of Finance—told him, "Look, you can't cancel the GST." He knew it all along. So they didn't cancel the GST. That's how the federal Liberal government has survived since the Mulroney government. Had it not been so—

Mr Marchese: But Sheila Copps didn't survive.

Mr O'Toole: Well, Sheila Copps is another story. She was all over the map, on all issues, at all times. Good riddance to Sheila Copps.

Mr Marchese: Sayonara.

Mr O'Toole: Well, bonjour, with her gold-plated pension at around 50 years of age.

Mr Marchese: No, she's got to be 55.

Mr O'Toole: The point is, next they looked at free trade and then they looked at the economic reality of the Canadian economy, which we know has benefited most sectors. I came from the auto sector and there's no question. Even Bob White and his predecessor, Buzz Hargrove, know it's the right thing. General Motors, where I worked for over 30 years, could build all the cars they sell in Canada in about three months. All of the production, seven days a week, 24 hours a day, goes to our friends in the United States.

I would say to you that the issues here, the two principal promises by the broken-promise Liberals, federal or provincial, are what the public cynicism is about. I've given you a couple of what I'd call navigational aids to help you through this: that you cannot trust them. I don't know how to say it more clearly. They would say anything to get elected. I'm talking anything to get elected, and do anything when they get in office.

We've seen it in Ontario. I can't believe Dalton McGuinty. I can't believe it. He cancelled about 13 houses on the Oak Ridges moraine. I can't believe the cynicism about this bill is because—

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The situation at General Motors and the member's personal opinions about the federal election notwithstanding, pursuant to standing order 22(b), I respectfully request that he address the matter under discussion.

The Acting Speaker: I think he is speaking to the bill. The member for Durham, you may continue.

Mr O'Toole: You don't want to hear the truth. There's another example, that the Liberal government doesn't want to hear the truth. It's an appetite. It's like they're anaphylactic. You know how some people are allergic to nuts? Well, they're allergic to something, and I think it verges on nuts.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Well, they don't deal with the truth very carefully.

In all respect, I think I've summed up the three salient points as to why public apathy, as has been mentioned by the member from Nickel Belt, is pervasive today. We must be held accountable.

I remember the member from Lanark-Carleton spoke passionately to our caucus of how important this legislation is. I would say that the other part that is concerning me is about destroying the traditions of the Canadian parliamentary system. I'm not opposed to change by any stretch. A few members have mentioned electronic voting and other things, and all the rest of it.

In section 3—you've got to pay attention to this one because it is the slippery slope. I've heard a few people

go, “Uh-oh,” because they know in their heart of hearts that this is the Americanization of our proud Westminster-British parliamentary system tradition. Fixed-term elections are what Bill Clinton stood for.

Interjection: Yay.

Mr O’Toole: Some of the Liberals are cheering about Bill Clinton; can you imagine it?

I think section 3 repeals the Legislative Assembly Act. It’s just the beginning of further apathy in the Canadian parliamentary system. I said to you earlier that today—Mr Speaker, you would know—there are fixed terms. It’s five years.

I could get into the minutiae, having served since 1982 in elected office—

Mr Sterling: It’s too long.

Mr O’Toole: Some would say, “That’s too long.” I have been growing with the knowledge and experience I’ve gained from others, but it does speak to my age. It’s not too long, because Mr Sterling has been here 26—

Mr Sterling: It’s 27.

Mr O’Toole:—going on 27 years. He’s still learning and still contributing to the constituents of Lanark-Carleton. He’s loyal in the House. He’s here every day. The whip will attest to that.

To get back on track here, the point has been made that voter apathy today—we see it federally. Paul Martin had a budget a few months ago. He had no money for health care. Surprise. Now, all of a sudden, there’s an election; a few months later he has all this money. I don’t know whether it’s the gun registry money; I don’t know whether it’s the Adscam money; I don’t know what money it is, but what it is is 10 years of Liberal obfuscation. How else can you say it, Mr Speaker? It’s 10 years of what I’d call Enron accounting. It’s 10 years of—no one knows, because they own the books. In my view, there has to be a day of reckoning, and June 28 is the day of reckoning.

What you need to do is hold Stephen Harper accountable to his election document—every single page. Just tick it off. Make sure that he delivers. It’ll be difficult for him to form an alliance with any of the other groups, because Jack Layton is a good member—

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The honourable member is talking about the federal election. Last time I looked, we’re the provincial government. I’d like to hear what he has to say about the current topic.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Durham, how does this relate to Bill 86?

Mr O’Toole: The member for Hamilton West does call me back from Canadian history. As we look at accountability and transparency, the two key words today—blah, blah, blah. It’s a lot of bunk. Just simply tell the truth during the election, not 231 promises.

All I want, in the remaining years of life I have and the time to serve the people, is truth and justice in politics. It’s difficult to bring to bear in this debate, but you know, there’s another point here. I’m the father of five very intelligent children, and I’ve come to know—

Hon Mr Watson: Where did that come from, John?

Mr O’Toole: Well, my wife’s a teacher, Mr Watson. Parents are the primary educators. Would you give me that?

Hon Mr Watson: She voted Liberal.

Mr O’Toole: The teachers at my wife’s school, St Elizabeth school in Bowmanville, the intelligent teachers, were told today by a member from OECTA to vote NDP.

Ms Wynne: She can’t make up her own mind?

Mr O’Toole: The member from Don Valley West, a former trustee, knows full well that the teachers were told to vote Liberal. And I say to them, Don Valley West, that the teachers are intelligent people. They don’t need to be told. I agree, because I have a daughter, a very intelligent daughter, a high school teacher in science and history. I have five children. I would say to you that no one in this province needs to be told. In fact, I would say that Stephen Harper said one thing I fully agree with. What he said was, “You don’t have to be a Liberal to be a Canadian. What you have to do is take some time to think about the issues and vote for change.”

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I would say to you, on this Bill 86, in my view—I’ve mentioned that it’s the Americanization of our traditional parliamentary system in Canada, and it’s a slippery slope. In fact, if I think of the volunteers in my riding and in all of your ridings, there are a couple of sections here that are very troublesome. Section 2 says:

“Assets and liabilities

“(7) Every old constituency association that is dissolved shall transfer its assets and liabilities to one or more new registered constituency associations....”

You will find out that the small amount of money that the volunteers have contributed to your association will be redistributed.

There is another section here—the same group; that’s a huge problem, let me tell you, because these volunteers work very hard for us: “The Chief Election Officer may allow an old constituency association to combine any reports and statements required to be filed....” They’re all volunteers.

The expectations here from Minister Michael Bryant, under the role of minister responsible for democratic renewal—it’s a very shallow, very elementary attempt, in my view. There are more substantive issues that he could deal with, and I believe that we could find some harmony in this House.

The NDP member from Niagara Centre, in his passion on this issue, has much to say. But there are a couple of points here that, just in conclusion—the very limited time that I’ve been asked to commit to this—was the youth vote. Members here tonight who speak—and the Hansard records do become part of the official debates of the province—need to stand and relate to youth. As I said, I have five children, ranging in age from 26 to about 32. These people are like many other young people from families across the province and across Canada: They’re tired of all the false promises, and they’re tired—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: That's so very subtle.

Mr O'Toole: —of the issue.

I complete my remarks by saying that I'm always available to serve the constituents of the riding of Durham. This issue here needs further debate.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: I just want to know what the member from Durham was about to say before he got that note. He didn't get a chance to finish off his remarks. John, I have never known you not to complete all of the time allotted to you. I don't understand. I am confused by it.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: I see. Well, there's some confusion there. All right.

I just want to congratulate the member from Durham for taking, what, approximately 18 minutes of his full 20 minutes to deliver his thoughts, ideas, objections to the bill, questions about the bill. Presumably, he wants this to go to committee, because I suspect there are a whole lot of other people who might have as many questions about this bill, if not more, than the ones he raised. He only had 20 minutes to speak.

I was so delighted today to listen to the members from Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Guelph-Wellington take their allotted time. They shared their time, but that was good.

Mrs Sandals: They work together. They're a team.

Mr Marchese: It was wonderful. They shared their time.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Sorry? You want to speak too? That's OK. You have two minutes to speak.

There are so many members who want to speak tonight. I'm really delighted to see the fact that all of you want to stand up and do your 20 minutes to defend this bill. I think it's wonderful.

I'll be up next to speak, for those of you who are watching this parliamentary channel. In the event that you are interested to know what I have to say, in approximately five, six, seven minutes I am on, so please tune in.

In the meantime, I'm looking forward to what the member from Durham would have said had he had the other two minutes to speak. John, I was delighted with your remarks. I hope you'll tell us the secret to that two minutes of the time you didn't use.

Interjection: Durham.

Mr Marchese: The member from Durham, yeah.

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):

At the outset of his comments, the member from Durham stated that we could have rammed this bill through. As a government, we believe that thorough debate is very important. We wouldn't want to deprive the member from Durham of his right to thorough debate and his right to speak as he sees fit. Ironically, I get the sense that the member is somehow opposed to this bill. I know that a colleague of his from Lanark-Carleton proposed a similar type of legislation several weeks ago and also wants to set a permanent, fixed date for elections.

We have a tradition of fixed dates for municipal elections. I don't consider this bill to be the Americanization

of the election process. As I stated, we already do this municipally.

The member from Guelph-Wellington stated very eloquently that a lot of time was consumed by all of us in preparing for the election. I campaigned, from the time I was nominated until the election date, for 11 months. In that time, we sowed and harvested a crop, grandchildren were conceived and born, and all kinds of things happened in my life that I would have liked to have been more available for but was not able to be there because we were campaigning.

Interjection.

Mrs Sandals: That's our point; it was a very long campaign.

Mrs Van Bommel: It was long and drawn-out. People's lives can change while we're waiting for elections.

I see this as a way of setting a date that we can plan around, that our families can plan around, that our volunteers can deal with, and I think it's very appropriate. I don't think it's anything less than parliamentary to have an election date that is set.

Hon Mr Watson: I'm delighted to speak on this particular bill. It lives up to another commitment by the McGuinty government in bringing in fixed election dates.

One of the things that I think all of us realized in the last election, even the previous government, was that it was a bit of a game of Russian roulette when the election would actually take place. That drives up costs for the taxpayer in terms of Elections Ontario offices opening and then having to close. It costs taxpayers money because money donated to a political party receives a tax credit. As someone who served three terms in municipal government, the predictability of fixed election dates was much healthier for the democratic process. Community groups, community associations could actually organize all-candidates meetings, knowing full well when the actual election was going to take place.

We are also committed, as a result of the budget by Minister Sorbara, to bring in legislation that will provide the auditor the ability to provide, 90 days before the fixed election, the actual real financial figures of the province of Ontario, so no political party can play games, make up numbers with respect to deficits or debts, and every political party will be able to base their political platform on a substantive set of numbers that are all the same.

This gives predictability and credibility to the process. It's something that I believe a number of members of the public will appreciate. It will certainly be healthier for the political process. You'll be able to attract good-quality candidates because they will know upfront exactly when the nomination process opens, when it closes and when the election date takes place.

I very much look forward to the opposition's support. I know my friend the member from Lanark-Carleton will support this because, he too brought forward a private member's bill similar to this one.

Mr Kormos: I'm pleased to see the debate on this bill proceeding, albeit at a somewhat slow and steady pace. I'm pleased to see members of the Conservative op-

position participating in the debate around Bill 86. I'm pleased to see the interest shown by folks out there in their homes, as they're watching this on the legislative channel, in this debate around Bill 86, recognizing of course that people are focused not so much on this concept of fixed election dates as they are on the fact that Liberals promised anything they could or anything they had to get elected and then, once elected, broke those promises in a New York minute. It was Mach 1 speed with which Liberals broke those promises.

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The focus of people watching this debate is not so much on fixed election days as it is on the fact that it's the Liberal government here at Queen's Park that privatized health care; it's the Liberal government that privatized chiropractic; it's the Liberal government—Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals—that privatized optometry services; it's Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals that have privatized physiotherapy services—you see, American style. What they want to do is create an American style, and they have succeeded. With respect to optometrists, chiropractors and physiotherapists, they've created an American-style health care system. If you've got the cash, why, you can get the service. If you've got the money, you can get the treatment.

Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals—broken promises and privatization of health care—have done not just a disservice to our parents but indeed our grandparents, who struggled so hard for so long to build a public health care system here in the province of Ontario.

People are focused on the next election all right, but it's not with a view to it being on a fixed date as much as it is with a view to turfing these Liberals out of Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Durham has two minutes to reply.

Mr O'Toole: I'll be brief. I'd just like to thank the members for responding to the comments I made, and to know that the note I was given was an attempt to find harmony here tonight on this bill. In that spirit, I'll withdraw any further comments I have on Bill 86.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hampton: I, of course, am pleased to be able to participate in this debate because I, for one, believe that there is clearly a democratic deficit in Ontario. I think it's clear to everyone who looks at the percentage turnouts in Ontario elections that the number of people who vote in Ontario elections has been declining. In some respects, that decline, in most recent years, has been precipitous. I think that is a problem that we need to address.

Second, I think there are real problems in terms of the financing of electoral campaigns. Ontario election campaigns, I would say, in about the last 10 years, have turned into an exercise of, "Who has the most money and therefore can purchase the most advertising?" They are not campaigns of, "Who has the best ideas, the most interesting ideas or the ideas which most thoroughly challenge the citizens of the province?" No, our election campaigns have turned into exercises of, "Who has the

most money with which to buy the most advertising?" I think that is a problem.

Third, I'll pay some tribute here to former member Sean Conway, who has said that another element of the democratic deficit is the degree to which decision-making in government—in fact, control over the whole agenda—is centred in the Premier's office. That, I believe, is also a problem. When the Premier's office decides from day to day what the issues will be, what will be introduced in terms of legislation, what the debating order will be and even which of the government backbenchers can utter a peep, then I think that is clearly a problem for democracy.

Finally, there are other issues. It seems to me that we have some parts of Ontario which are growing very rapidly in population and other parts of Ontario which are not growing rapidly in terms of population. We have to find some way of balancing that equation in terms of appropriate democratic representation.

Suffice it to say that none of those issues, I think, are really being addressed by this bill. In fact, each of the four areas that I've suggested here probably deserves immediate attention and detailed attention, but none of them receives any attention from this bill. So there's clearly a problem, yet the bill, which the government trumpets, does absolutely nothing to address any of those.

I just want to deal for a minute with what is actually in the bill. The government wants people to believe that this bill sets, according to some constitutional rule, fixed dates for elections. I want to disabuse people of that notion right away. Despite the fact that that's the government spin, that is not the reality.

It says right in the bill that nothing in this bill affects the capacity of the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call an election. What that means is that the Premier, on any given day, could go to the Lieutenant Governor and say, "I want you to dissolve the Legislature. I want you to issue a writ of election," and it would happen. If the constitutional apparatus that we have in place now—and the constitutional powers and the constitutional conventions that we have in place—are not rearranged or are not removed or are not restricted by this bill, what is this bill?

In my view, what this bill really is is simply a promise by the government. It doesn't change the constitutional convention of the province. It doesn't take away the powers of the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature. So if it doesn't do those things, all it really is is sort of a high-brow promise.

I guess, after breaking so many of their election promises, this government believes that they really do have to dress up their promises now. They have to give them the dressing, the appearance, of quasi-law or quasi-legal apparatus, because no one believes an ordinary promise made by this government any longer. That's really what this bill is. It doesn't change our constitutional conventions; it doesn't change our constitutional processes in this province. It really says that Dalton McGuinty, the Premier, promises that the next election will

be sometime in the first 10 days of October of 2007. But even while the bill says that, the Premier could go to the Lieutenant Governor at any time. He could go to the Lieutenant Governor in July of 2007, or May of 2007, or March or February of 2007, or November of 2006, or September of 2006, and say to the Lieutenant Governor, "I want the House dissolved and I want an election now," and, by our constitutional conventions, it would happen.

If that's in the bill, I'm left to wonder: Why did the government present it? Why are we debating it? If it doesn't change the constitution, if it doesn't change the constitutional processes or the constitutional conventions of the province of Ontario in terms of electoral dates and electoral processes, why do it?

I come back to the obvious answer: The government presented this bill because it knew that if it didn't do something it was going to be left open to the accusation that, "Ah, you promised this in the election campaign and once again you haven't delivered." But even in delivering it, they haven't delivered anything other than a simple promise that has been dressed up with some superfluous legal language, all of which means nothing. So that's where we are.

I would prefer, in my time, to actually talk about what the real problems are that need to be addressed. It is becoming of increasing concern for Ontario citizens that we now regularly see situations where 38% of the vote can elect 72% of the members, or 42% of the vote can elect 76% of the members. Increasingly, people of our province are saying that this doesn't make sense. This does not make sense. A party or an organization which gets 40% of the vote or 42% of the vote should not then have 76% or 78% of the members of the Legislature. How can a party which doesn't have majority status, in terms of the citizens who vote, have a huge majority in the Legislature? It seems completely out of balance. It seems completely out of anyone's sense of proportion or anyone's sense of fair play, fair result. But that regularly happens.

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Now, what I thought the government should introduce, what I hoped the government would introduce, would be legislation with respect to proportional representation. That is in fact what is happening in the majority of parliamentary democracies everywhere in the world now, even the mother of all Parliaments in Great Britain. The new Parliament of Scotland is elected on the basis of proportional representation. Wales: proportional representation. The British members of the European Parliament: elected on the basis of proportional representation. If you go to Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, most of Europe now operates on the basis of proportional representation. New Zealand operates on the basis of proportional representation. So what we see happening, in virtually all of the other parliamentary democracies, whether they be British parliamentary democracies or European parliamentary democracies, is a move toward proportional representation.

Experience shows that when you move to a proportional representation system, the outcome of the election, in terms of who gets X level of representation, very closely corresponds to the percentage of the vote. So if a party gets 15% of the vote, they more or less get 15% of the seats in the Legislature. If a party gets 40% of the vote, they more or less get 40% of the seats in the Legislature. So that, I think, accords more closely with people's sense of fairness, with people's sense of proportion, balance and an outcome which reflects the intention of the people who actually vote.

So I would have hoped that with all of the press releases, with all of the spin from the government, that's actually what we would have seen. Or I was hoping that we would have seen meaningful legislation to deal with the issue of electoral financing, the financing of political parties between elections and the financing of political parties during election campaigns.

Now, recently we've seen the federal Liberal Party adopt real restrictions on political financing. Basically, what is now federal law is a rule which says that corporations and unions can contribute a very restricted amount to political parties, and once that limit is reached, it is a hard-and-fast cap and there is no way that limit can be exceeded. Otherwise, all political financial contributions must come from individuals, and even there, that is restricted. So I was hoping that we would see something like that presented by the government, because it is a real political problem.

In fact, it is the law now in Manitoba that corporations and unions can contribute no money to political parties, that all of the contributions must come from individual citizens. The result of that is that you see much less television advertising in a Manitoba election and you see much more in the way of actual public debate. You actually see a lot of all-candidates meetings. You actually see those all-candidates meetings being broadcast provincially on television or being broadcast provincially in terms of major radio networks. The emphasis is upon citizen participation, citizen activism, rather than who has the most money. But as I search this bill, as presented by the government, do I see anything which addresses that fundamental issue? No. It's as if the government wants to pretend that that problem, that challenge doesn't even exist.

I think if we're really serious about political reform, about addressing the democratic deficit, that has to be on the agenda. That has to be addressed and dealt with, and it has to be addressed and dealt with now.

Third, the whole issue of Prime-Ministerial or Premierish dominance of the government—and we've seen these accusations with respect to the federal government recently, the fact that Jean Chrétien's office dominated everything, and now the argument that Paul Martin's office even decides who can run and who can't run. These have actually become germane issues in the federal election campaign.

But I understand the government wishes to adjourn the debate, Speaker, so at this time I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Hampton has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to call the orders for second and third reading of the Pr bills concurrently, and for second and third readings to be moved on the sponsor member's behalf. I believe we have unanimous consent for that.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

MALTON SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH ACT, 2004

Mr Qaadri moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr2, An Act respecting the Malton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Qaadri moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr2, An Act respecting the Malton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ASSOCIATION OF REGISTERED GRAPHIC DESIGNERS OF ONTARIO ACT, 2004

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Peterson, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Peterson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACT, 2004

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Arnott, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr5, An Acting respecting Conrad Grebel University College.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Arnott, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr5, An Acting respecting Conrad Grebel University College.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as it in the motion.

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REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACT, 2004

Mr Caplan, on behalf of Mr McMeekin, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr6, An Act respecting Redeemer University College.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Caplan, on behalf of Mr McMeekin, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr6, An Act respecting Redeemer University College.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to revert to introduction of bills for the purpose of introducing one bill, and to proceed with second and third reading without debate or amendment.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the government House leader's request? Agreed.

ELECTION FINANCES AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES ÉLECTIONS

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Bryant, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ELECTION FINANCES AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES ÉLECTIONS

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Bryant, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ELECTION FINANCES
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES ÉLECTIONS

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Bryant, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

SANDY'S LAW
(LIQUOR LICENCE AMENDMENT), 2004

LOI SANDY DE 2004
(MODIFICATION DE LA LOI
SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL)

Mr Parsons moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act by requiring signage cautioning pregnant women that the consumption of alcohol while pregnant is the cause of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder / Projet de loi 43, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool en exigeant que soient placées des affiches avertissant les femmes enceintes que la consommation d'alcool pendant la grossesse occasionne l'ensemble des troubles causés par l'alcoolisation fœtale.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to allow the official opposition up to 10 minutes to speak on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is there consent to allow for this? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a further point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to defer the vote on this until tomorrow in deferred votes.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to defer the vote? Agreed.

Is there debate? The member for Simcoe North.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this evening to speak to this bill. It has been a very confusing evening, and I want to thank the member for bringing this bill forward. I know it has a lot of sentimental importance to you, as it does to a lot of people in this House.

I can tell you right upfront that our caucus has had some difficulty with this particular bill. We would have liked to have had maybe a little bit more time to debate this particular piece of legislation, but we understand the importance to all of the people here in the House, to all of our caucus members and to all the members of the Legislature.

It's important that we say upfront—and I'm trying to say this in a very passionate manner to you. We understand how important it has been to you. That's not to say we haven't had members in our caucus and other mem-

bers of this House who are very concerned about this legislation as well and who have had difficulties in their lives with pieces of legislation. So we wanted to point out that it's important that the people of Ontario realize that this is something that is an internal type of issue within our caucuses, with all members of the Legislature, as we talk about the death of a son of a member of our Legislature. These are very difficult words to say at a time like this. I know Mr Runciman couldn't be here tonight. He would have liked to have said a few words about it, but he had a loss of someone in his family, and that has happened for different members. I know Mr Chudleigh is not here, but I think we all feel for what happened to Mr Chudleigh's daughter this past spring. It was a difficult time. It happened, I believe, just a couple of weeks after the loss of our colleague Dominic Agostino.

So we've had tough times in the Legislature as we've tried to deal not only with the ordinary debate that we discuss on a day-to-day basis, the budgets and all the pieces of legislation the different ministries bring forth. But these types of bills—this is a private member's bill—are important to individual caucus members, individual MPPs, here in this provincial Legislature, because they do come forward with a strong concern.

I have to say upfront, we've seen some of the literature put forward by the Early Years centres. It's very important that that type of literature be put forward. I have two Early Years centres in the riding of Simcoe North—an office in Orillia and an office in Midland—and they will be promoting this problem, which Mr Parsons has brought forward in the House, through all their different resources as they deal with fetal alcohol syndrome.

In the short time we have to say a few words here tonight, we understand the significance of this to you, Mr Parsons, as an MPP. We applaud you for bringing it forward. We just want you to know that we share your sorrow and your concerns, because we have members in the House who would probably like to bring a piece of legislation forward at some point in the future to deal with some of the issues they feel are very important to their families and their lives.

With that, I'm pleased to comment on behalf of our caucus. I know I haven't really said an awful lot here tonight. It's just that we did want to make it clear that our caucus—I personally, support the bill. Other members have some concerns because they think the bill maybe goes too far into the lives of some business owners etc as they try to work with their businesses. On the other hand, if it's going to save a life, perhaps it's very well worthwhile, and, in the end, maybe that's what's important.

I congratulate the people who put forward the pieces of literature on behalf of the Early Years. I believe it comes through Minister Bountrogianni's ministry. When I look at young couples who are perhaps looking at having families in the future, I think it's important they understand the significance of the problems with alcohol and pregnancies.

I don't really have a lot more to say on this, except that we did want to make a few comments on behalf of our caucus to point out we don't really have unanimous support in our caucus, but we understand the significance to the member opposite and to the citizens of the province of Ontario as we move forward with this type of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: I am told I must seek clarification of the House that consent was given that a recorded vote is deemed to have been requested and deferred. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Parsons has moved third reading of Bill 43, and this vote will be deferred until tomorrow at the appropriate time when we do deferred votes.

Hon Mr Duncan: I seek unanimous consent to call the orders for second and third readings of Bill 33 and to allow the member to make those motions.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to call the order for second and third readings of that bill? Agreed.

IRISH HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE JOUR
DU PATRIMOINE IRLANDAIS

Mr O'Toole moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act proclaiming Irish Heritage Day /
Projet de loi 33, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine
irlandais.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

IRISH HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE JOUR
DU PATRIMOINE IRLANDAIS

Mr O'Toole moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act proclaiming Irish Heritage Day /
Projet de loi 33, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine
irlandais.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe I have unanimous consent for Mr Levac, the member for Brant, to call the order for third reading of Bill 40, standing in the name of Mr Wilkinson.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to allow the member for Brant—agreed? Agreed.

EMERGENCY SERVICE PROVIDER'S
INSURANCE PROTECTION ACT
(INSURANCE AMENDMENT), 2004
LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES FOURNISSEURS DE SERVICES
D'URGENCE (MODIFICATION DE LA LOI
SUR LES ASSURANCES)

Mr Levac, on behalf of Mr Wilkinson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Insurance Act to protect emergency service providers from rate increases to their personal contracts of automobile insurance /
Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances visant à protéger les fournisseurs de services d'urgence contre l'augmentation des taux dans leurs contrats d'assurance-automobile personnels.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay." The nays have disappeared.

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 am.

The House adjourned at 2042.

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