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Assembly
of Ontario



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de l'Ontario

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(Hansard)**

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**Journal
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(Hansard)**

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**Standing Committee
on the Interior**

Committee business

1st Session
43rd Parliament
Monday 4 March 2024

**Comité permanent
des affaires intérieures**

Travaux du comité

1^{re} session
43^e législature
Lundi 4 mars 2024

Chair: Aris Babikian
Clerk: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Président : Aris Babikian
Greffière : Thushitha Kobikrishna

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON THE INTERIOR**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT
DES AFFAIRES INTÉRIEURES**

Monday 4 March 2024

Lundi 4 mars 2024

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Good morning, members and colleagues. I would like to call this meeting of the Standing Committee on the Interior to order.

As always, please wait to be recognized by myself before speaking. All questions and comments will need to go through the Chair.

On the agenda is committee business. Are there any motions?

MPP Smith, Peterborough.

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

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any discussion? MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I know that the government will use their majority to move into closed session, but I cannot for the life of me understand why we have to go into closed session to discuss just organizing our committee schedule. I can only imagine that it's because this bill supporting Enbridge against the consumers is something that's controversial, so right from the very get-go, they're going to go into closed session.

Mr. Dave Smith: Point of order.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Point of order: Go ahead, MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: The member was imputing motive simply by saying, "I can only imagine" and continuing on that way.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Shaw, please take it under consideration that, during our discussion and deliberation, we don't impute motive.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate that. Imputing motive would be to say that I know what this government is up to. I don't think anybody in the province of Ontario knows what this government is up to.

So my question remains: Why would this government go into closed session simply to organize our meeting schedule—which is what I assume it's going to be?

I'm concerned, frankly, that if we're going into closed session simply to schedule committee meetings—although I have not seen the motion yet; they're going to move this motion in closed session.

I can only imagine that this is a predictor of how this government will not want to hear from the public when it comes to this decision to overrule the Ontario Energy

Board, which is an independent body that said that they think it is not fair to the consumer that Enbridge's costs to build infrastructure should be borne by ratepayers and by average Ontarians. So if this is a government that is going to move a motion in closed session simply about organizing our business, I'm hoping that this doesn't carry through. When the people of the province of Ontario want to come to this committee to share how they feel about this decision that they know was not made in favour of consumers but was made in favour of Enbridge, a huge corporation with a \$19-million CEO, I'm certainly hoping—and I would ask that the government members make sure that these committees remain accessible to people; that they can ask the question why, within 15 hours of the Ontario Energy Board making a ruling, this government would already be ready to overturn that ruling.

I would also like to put on the record, Chair, that the Ontario Energy Board went through a year's process to come to this determination. They had a ruling that was 140 pages. They had something like—Peter, help me out. I think they had at least 35 expert testimonies and witnesses to this. So this was not a decision made lightly—

Mr. Dave Smith: Point of order.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Point of order: MPP Smith, go ahead.

Mr. Dave Smith: We're discussing the motion to enter closed session. I would ask that the member keep their remarks to the motion itself.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Shaw, if we can focus for now on the issue of going into closed session—because I believe that you will have an opportunity down the road, when the motion is tabled, to discuss this issue further and raise your points at that time. For now, let's focus on the closed session aspect of the hearing.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, thank you, Chair, but that is precisely the point—I will have an opportunity to speak to this, but it will be in closed session, so these deliberations will not be accessible to the public. And I would like to remind the members on the government side, who will use their majority to overrule this and to move into closed session, that they're conducting the people's business and this should be held in public.

I also would like to say that we're moving into closed session to reorganize our business so that we can discuss the Enbridge bill and the very fact that the government has, in the past, not allowed people to come to committee to debate this.

My comments in closed session will be, how is it, in the realm of reasonable government, that a decision that took an energy board over a year and 150 pages of testimony—how is it that this government can overturn that ruling within 15 hours, pass this bill within two days of deliberation, and move into closed session; and that people of the province of Ontario will have any confidence—because they have lost that confidence—that this government is acting on behalf of the people and the consumers and the ratepayers, and not on behalf of their insider, corporate friends and huge donors and people who are able to wield excessive power over this Premier?

Chair, I want to say that it is unnecessary, in my opinion, unneeded, and a little disturbing that we're going to move into closed session simply to talk about organizing our schedule to hear hearings on this energy bill.

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

I'm going to put the question. All in favour of going—
Mr. Peter Tabuns: Recorded.

Ayes

Bresee, Pang, Riddell, Dave Smith, David Smith.

Nays

Schreiner, Shaw.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The motion is carried. Now we're going to go into closed session, so the committee will have a small recess until we convene.

The committee recessed at 0907 and later continued in closed session.

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