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of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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Mercredi  
29 mai 2024

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Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
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### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS**

<b>Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Amendment Act, 2024, Bill 193, Mr. Dowie / Loi de 2024 modifiant la Loi sur les parcs provinciaux et les réserves de conservation, projet de loi 193, M. Dowie</b>	
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 29 May 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 mai 2024

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PRIVATE MEMBERS'  
PUBLIC BUSINESS

PROVINCIAL PARKS  
AND CONSERVATION RESERVES  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2024  
LOI DE 2024 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LES PARCS PROVINCIAUX  
ET LES RÉSERVES DE CONSERVATION

Mr. Dowie moved second reading of the following bill:  
Bill 193, An Act to amend the Provincial Parks and  
Conservation Reserves Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 193, Loi  
modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur les parcs provinciaux et les  
réserves de conservation.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Pursuant to  
standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for his  
presentation.

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** It gives me great pride to speak  
to Bill 193 today, the Provincial Parks and Conservation  
Reserves Amendment Act.

Just in preparing for today, I found a book—I know I'm  
not supposed to use props—on my bookcase called *Pro-  
tected Places: A History of Ontario's Provincial Parks  
System*. It details the entire history of the provincial park  
system in Ontario. Actually, I found a passage related to  
one of my predecessors from 1894, MLA Solomon White,  
representing Essex North, which encompasses my riding  
today. MLA White claimed the province was reaching a  
stage at which it would have too many parks; this was back  
in 1894. So even though he was a Tory, as written in this  
book, I have to respectfully disagree with MLA White.

Really, the purpose of this bill today is to recognize a  
distinct and dedicated classification for urban parks within  
the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act. As  
written, section 8 of the PPCRA names six classifications  
that are currently in place. This comes from the much-  
beloved “blue book” that Gerald Killan, the author of *Pro-  
tected Places*, goes into great detail to speak about and how  
they came about. These are: wilderness class parks, nature  
reserve class parks, cultural heritage class parks, natural  
environment class parks, waterway class parks and recrea-  
tional class parks. So think of the parks that are near you;  
they fall into one of those particular classifications.

Parks are a bit different amongst themselves. Take a  
grocery store: They'll have a discount version, they'll have  
a full-service version, and something in between. Our  
parks don't go based on those lines, but rather what  
features the province wishes to protect.

Last year, our government announced the proposed  
creation of the Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park. Uxbridge  
is proposed to be made up of, to start, six parcels of land  
representing almost 1,300 acres in the township of Ux-  
bridge, all within walking distance of the built environ-  
ment in Uxbridge. I had the distinct pleasure to travel to  
the finance minister's riding and see this property first-  
hand, just about two weeks ago.

The public response to the government's proposal has  
been quite impressive. Between June 19 and September 4  
of last year, a survey was conducted to gauge public  
opinion on urban provincial parks in general, as well as  
creating an urban provincial park in the township of Ux-  
bridge. More than 4,200 submissions were received—  
that's pretty significant; not everything generates this  
amount of response—and three quarters of the respondents  
spoke in favour of the concept as a whole and the Uxbridge  
park.

Really, Uxbridge has the makings of a spectacular  
destination. It has ponds and creeks. It has leftover uses,  
let's call it, from the previous occupants of the land.  
There's a tennis court in the middle of the forest at one  
point. Really, it's a place that's got an identity and a place  
where you can go hiking, you can go bird-watching. And  
you can walk to it if you're a resident of Uxbridge; you  
can get to it very, very quickly. I have no doubt that there  
is strong potential for the Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park  
to become a beloved property, enhancing the quality of life  
for so many residents up in Durham region. There's even  
potential to connect to the Rouge National Urban Park,  
which extends the naturalized corridor even further.

Yet only a few short years ago, the “For sale” sign was  
affixed to these properties, even though they were home to  
families and to retirees as their oasis away from the hustle  
and bustle of life. Ultimately, the families ended up dis-  
posing of them, and really there was a risk to them remain-  
ing in their natural state. And kudos to the people of  
Uxbridge for speaking up, crafting the initial vision for the  
area. And then kudos as well to the then-Minister of the  
Environment, Conservation and Parks, Mr. Piccini, for  
finding a path forward to realize the vision.

Speaker, I go back to prior to my time here in the cham-  
ber, when I was the drain superintendent for the city of  
Windsor. I was responsible for the upkeep and mainten-

ance of the municipal drains all throughout the municipality, and this gave me an incredible insight into the city of Windsor's urban footprint. I became very well acquainted with thorns, bugs, mud, phragmites—you name it, I walked through it—but I also witnessed how vital these idyllic sites could become.

One of my first visits was in the dead of winter, in January, to the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. It was a cold, windy, wintry day. We have a lot of humidity down our way, so when it's cold, you feel it. It's a different kind of cold than the rest of Ontario. We are surrounded by water, and so we feel that wetness of both the cold and the heat down our way.

Ojibway is home to the Titcombe and Reaume drains. As I walked the drain, I actually heard music. This is the dead of winter on a weekday. As I approached the junction of those two municipal drains, there were two people there, neither of whom appeared to know each other. One was painting on a canvas and the other appeared to be meditating. But they co-existed in peace, and this was in a protected nature reserve within the municipal boundaries of the city of Windsor. Truly, I saw this special sense of place that made braving the wind coming off the Detroit River an incredible allure for those two people.

The city of Windsor, in its own right, is protecting a number of properties surrounding the nature reserve as well. Kudos to them. They have been protecting those lands since the 1950s, and the province protected its nature reserve in 1977.

The Ojibway Prairie Complex is home to over 4,000 species, including 160 rare plants, insects, reptiles, birds and mammals. Really, Ojibway is not a faraway place; you can actually walk there from downtown. You can see these lands from Highway 401, leading to the new Gordie Howe International Bridge. Really, the collaboration that exists has caught the eye of the federal government, which is now creating the Ojibway National Urban Park. It's proposed to include the nature reserve, and everyone's collaborating to get there.

Really, the Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park and what we're creating in Windsor, the Ojibway National Urban Park, show that urban and near-urban environments contain biodiversity of provincial significance that is worth protecting, with light recreational opportunities such as birdwatching, hiking, snowshoeing and, as I witnessed, self-reflection. But these sites are truly difficult to classify in the current PPCRA.

We saw that—actually, there's a reference in Protected Places by Mr. Gerald Killan about the establishment of the Bronte Creek Provincial Park, which was effectively a near-urban park. But it was problematic in terms of finding the right classification for it because it does not give the same—I'll call it “model”—of provincial park that you are used to, of a wide landscape in a natural environment. A place like Bronte Creek is right in the middle of the city, too.

So because of this potential to complete the provincial parks system using urban land, protecting biodiversity that already exists, but just may not meet the test that we seem to implicitly put in for what is considered a provincial

park, that's why this bill is creating the urban classification that will set the path to creating and including these sites of provincial significance. They may not always have vistas, landscapes and a traditional protected environment, but they have attributes that are vital to protect and to manage for the people of Ontario.

In the lead-up to this bill, I received a lot of support, actually. I received a letter from the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies of Ontario, and they say this: “We believe that your bill would help provide access to conservation areas for those that live in dense urban settings. Your bill would also help define the objectives of urban provincial parks more clearly, which would be beneficial to the consulting engineering community as we support the growth of our urban centres.”

Dr. Anneke Smit of the University of Windsor, the associate professor and co-lead of the National Urban Park Hub, says, “The research tells us that having more access to parks and biodiversity is good for people as it provides options for healthy living activities, social interaction, and connection to the natural world. With the majority of Ontarians now living in cities, ensuring that access to nature is possible even in urban centres is all the more important. For” this “reason we are pleased to support this private member's bill on provincial urban parks.”

I've even got supportive quotes, too, from Mike Fisher, president of the Friends of Ojibway Prairie; Tom Henderson, chair, public advisory council, Detroit River Canadian Cleanup; and Ian Naisbitt, chair of the Little River Enhancement Group. All are quite excited about the prospect of seeing even more urban spaces realized as protected areas to recognize their biodiversity.

#### 1810

Actually, I'd like to just cite a part of Mr. Fisher's quote: “It is our hope that these new urban parks will help ensure future generations of Ontarians have access to nature-based recreation opportunities that we know provide so many physical and mental health benefits while protecting the ecological integrity of crucial ecosystems. We look forward to visiting Ontario's first proposed urban provincial park in Uxbridge and to the establishment of many urban parks across our great province.”

I see, Speaker, I have about a minute and a half left, so I just want to detail a little bit of what would be an urban-class park. An urban-class park would be within 50 kilometres of municipalities with a population of over 200,000 people. My city of Windsor is definitely over 200,000, and we are getting the national urban park, but there are plenty of centres that don't have a park currently protected which meets those criteria. But also, an urban provincial park would provide opportunities to enjoy the area's natural beauty, strengthen the long-term protection of the area's biodiversity and that can be located adjacent to developed urban areas.

Truly, we have those spaces. I know you probably have a chance in Hamilton to see some wonderful waterfalls. There are plenty of cities all across Ontario that have special spaces that have provincial significance. So by adding an urban classification to the provincial parks

system, we can secure those lands and ensure they are protected for generations to come and make sure that Ontario's biodiversity is protected and thrives through a management plan with the appropriate level of consideration for biology, while meeting the needs of our people for places to meditate, places to go for a walk, clear their heads and enjoy wildlife because it is certainly worth protecting.

With that, I'll wrap it up. Thank you so much, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further debate?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I would like to start by saying I agree with the member that parks are important; urban parks are important. We know that. It's obvious both for physical and mental health, so I appreciate you bringing this bill forward.

This bill—let's be clear—gives the government new powers to establish the class of urban-class parks whose objective, as you have said, is to improve access to compatible, nature-based recreation in or near urban centres. That seems fine as it goes. But with this government, the devil is always in the details, and those are really, I'm sorry to say, not to be found in this bill.

On paper, the concept of a new designation of urban park seems fine, even potentially good. But honestly, let's be real: I have no reason to trust the Ford government. Actually, correction, Speaker: No one has any reason to trust the Ford government when it comes to anything to do with the environment or with natural spaces. Really, I just ask you: Think of the greenbelt sell-off; think of this government exempting a \$15-billion highway that will pave over precious farmland. You're exempting that from an environmental assessment.

This government has broken the law numerous times by disregarding our Environmental Bill of Rights. They're now currently in the process of forcing conservation authorities to conduct an audit to identify surplus lands potentially for sell-off. This government has de-listed species at risk such as the Redside dace, which is a cute little minnow that has the unfortunate fate of being inconveniently located where this government wants to build a highway. So what have they done? They just de-listed it rather than protect this endangered species.

Absolutely, this government has an unquestionably abysmal, dubious record when it comes to our environment. With that in mind, here are five very concerning aspects of this bill.

First, will these parks fulfill the purposes of the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, the PPCRA? Those purposes are protecting ecosystems, protecting provincially significant elements of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage, maintaining biodiversity and providing opportunities for compatible, ecologically sustainable recreation. Urban centres already exist. We have things like parks, obviously; football fields, playgrounds for kids, even golf courses. But under the provincial parks and conservation reserves and the purposes of that, these types of parks should not count as urban parks, but, again, this is not addressed anywhere in the bill.

My second serious misgiving is: I seriously question whether this government has a coherent understanding or actually cares about how urban parks should fit into our national park system. Exhibit A is the Rouge National Urban Park, which is a federal example of an urban park—actually, so is the Ojibway National Urban Park, as well.

I will note—and I'll read from this article—that the federal government was obliged to threaten federal action after Parks Canada warned that the Ford government's proposed removal of the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve could cause “irreversible harm” to the Rouge National Urban Park.

I'm quoting from this article: “Parks Canada has issued a stark rebuke to Ontario's plan to open up sections of protected greenbelt land for housing development, saying the move risks ‘irreversible harm’ and that proper consultation on the proposal has not taken place.”

They go on to say, “Should these lands be removed from the greenbelt and developed as proposed, Parks Canada's analysis suggests that there is a probable risk of irreversible harm to wildlife, natural ecosystems and agricultural landscapes within Rouge National Urban Park ... reducing the viability and functionality of the park's ecosystems and farmland.”

Finally, they say, “It is our opinion that, to date, the province has not met the consultation requirement ... as the province has not ... reached out to discuss these matters with Parks Canada.”

So, again, I seriously question whether this government understands or cares about how new designations, the new powers that you're asking for to designate urban parks, will fit within a national framework—again, a dubious track record from this government.

My third serious concern, and this is a very legitimate concern shared by many people that have looked at this bill and many people that are concerned with biodiversity—many environmentalists, many biologists—who say the concern here is that the powers in this bill could be used to downgrade existing classes of lands that are conserved. So this government should make a commitment right here and put it in this bill that existing conservations and provincial parks will remain as is, that their ecological functions would be reduced if converted to urban parks and that you promise that that will not be the case. So we need to add, clearly, new parks, not downgrade existing spaces with high ecological function, which is what this government tried to do with the Rouge National Urban Park.

So, as we said, we agree urban parks are good for our health and well-being, but they are not sufficient for ecological function. We need to have both conservation areas and urban parks; we can't substitute one for the other. We don't want to downgrade spaces that provide the much-needed biodiversity, species habitat and flood mitigation that exist in already protected areas—and flood mitigation, Speaker, is an important concept. This is a government that's prepared to pave over wetlands, to not take into consideration the role that wetlands play in protecting us from floods and cleaning our waters. They've

shown that they have a disregard for that, so I have a concern right here that this government will use these new powers without consideration to how we are protecting Ontarians from the impacts of flooding, which we will see more and more with the advent of more serious climate change impacts.

So, again, we need both urban parks and conservation areas, not one at the expense of the other, and I would like to hear from the member that that is not going to happen.

My fourth concern is, what lands are we going to be using to create these urban parks? I would like to propose—we have hundreds and hundreds of abandoned gravel mines and abandoned oil and gas wells in the province. These are areas that could be rehabilitated. I will use an example from the riding of Hamilton, which is the rock garden at Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton. I didn't know this until I researched the bill, Speaker. That's the oldest part of the RBG. It was acquired in 1932, and it was the earliest example of how industrial landscapes could be reimagined and repurposed. It was an abandoned gravel pit. It began in late 1929, during the stock market crash, which is when the gravel pit was closed. We used labour to complete this, the help of Depression-era labour. If you ever go there, to the rock garden, it's a spectacular, beautiful place. It's so well visited. It's a gem in the RBG, and it's a perfect example of how we can re-imagine these barren landscapes which are left behind when we have abandoned gravel mines.

**1820**

I will bring your attention also to Mount Nemo, which is not far from Hamilton. It's a UNESCO biosphere reserve. There's a quarry there that wants to continue to mine in that area. I would suggest that we could consider that this would be a perfect area for an urban park.

An advocate who has been working for years on this is Sarah Harmer. She's a Canadian, decorated, award-winning singer-songwriter. They fought, many years ago, to stop this aggregate from digging out the Niagara Escarpment on Mount Nemo:

"The group argued the escarpment, a UNESCO biosphere reserve, was not a good place for another quarry. That application was denied, but now, the company ... is trying again.

"Harmer"—who, again, is an award-winning, Juno-winning musician—"grew up in a farmhouse there." She said, "It is so pristine and incredible ... and yet it's so close to millions of people. So it's at an interesting crossroads." If you ask me, that is the perfect definition of what could be an urban park.

The one thing about quarries that we need to understand is that quarry licences just go on forever. There's absolutely no end. As long as quarries continue to just even take a spoonful out of the ground, they're considered to be active, so they go on forever. The Nelson company had "proposed to mine it for 30 years, then turn the site into a massive 944-acre park, twice the size of Toronto's High Park." They have renderings posted on the company's website showing "a crowded beach, kayakers on a lake and families walking and biking." They say, "It will become a

green space for the city and the region to enjoy," but people like Sarah Harmer say, "It might not happen in the lifetime of myself and yourself."

There's a perfect example of how you could use this bill to look at areas that need to be rehabilitated, that are scars on our landscape. This bill could help in a very real way for people who have to live beside these abandoned quarries that are often close to urban centres and are often in really beautiful natural areas.

Finally, I have to say, it is with extreme disappointment that I can't begin to understand how we could be talking about designating land in this province without talking about free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous nations, on whose traditional territories all parks in Ontario reside. Just yesterday, we had a historic moment when the MPP from Kiiwetinoong, Sol Mamakwa, for the first time was able to speak in his language, Oji-Cree. We were all moved by that moment. Sol said that this was a step toward reconciliation.

So I can't for the life of me understand how this bill does not explicitly acknowledge that we have a duty to consult, that the Indigenous communities have the right to be consulted when it comes to designating lands that are their traditional territories. I would say, with as much respect as I can, you didn't even address that in your debate.

Let me end, Madam Speaker, by saying that despite these serious misgivings, we will support this bill. But be forewarned that we and all Ontarians will be watching you very carefully because we see what you have done in the past, your track record. So these new powers, we hope that you use them wisely and well, as the Speaker advises us every morning.

I would like to end my speech with a quote from that famous English poet, Peter Townshend: "Won't get fooled again."

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further debate?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** It's great to be here in a private member's bill and great to be speaking on behalf of the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and great to see that Windsor elected a Progressive Conservative. We look forward to more seats in that region going Progressive Conservative because we're getting some really great legislation from members in that region from our side of the House here.

I'm honoured to support the member from Windsor–Tecumseh on the importance of Bill 193, Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Amendment Act, 2024. This bill, if passed, seeks to introduce a new urban classification of provincial parks. This initiative aims to bridge the gap between nature and urban living, and this will provide much-needed green spaces for our growing urban populations.

The concept of urban provincial parks is essential. Last year's consultation by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks raised a point about creating the Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park. This consultation highlighted the public's growing interest in integrating natural



spaces within urban environments, a concept known as urban provincial parks. These parks will offer the opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty of our surroundings while strengthening the long-term protection of our biodiversity. This bill seeks to fill the gap, ensuring that our urban populations have easy access to nature, and this is crucial for both physical and mental well-being.

A prime potential candidate for the reclassification to an urban provincial park would be Bronte Creek Provincial Park. Located in my riding of Oakville and partially in Oakville North–Burlington, this park shows how a park can be situated very close to—in fact, right in—an urban area can enhance the quality of life for local residents. Bronte Creek Provincial Park falls under the criteria for an urban provincial park classification: It's within 50 kilometres of a population of over 200,000—in fact, it's right in the heart of that urban area between Oakville and Burlington; it provides opportunities to enjoy the area's natural beauty; it strengthens the long-term protection of the area's biodiversity; and it could be located right adjacent to a developed, urban area.

Bronte Creek Provincial Park would be a perfect example of how such a park would work. The proximity to the urban footprint allows residents to escape from the hustle and bustle of city life, providing a sanctuary for relaxation, recreation and connection with nature. Such parks offer a multitude of benefits, including improving mental health, fostering a sense of community and encouraging outdoor physical activities.

I know I speak on behalf of the residents of Oakville, in my riding, that they thoroughly enjoy and take advantage of Bronte Creek Provincial Park. In fact, recently, at “Bring your MPP to school day”, I visited Abbey Park High School. I was so impressed with the students' enthusiasm for the environment and sustainable living. Speaker, the students in Oakville, I know, and in Windsor–Tecumseh and other parts of the province care deeply about our environment. Local schools use Bronte Creek Provincial Park to teach students about biodiversity. Students also use the space for events like long-distance running and social gatherings. Bronte Creek Provincial Park in Oakville offers my residents and constituents easy access to green spaces, allowing more people to enjoy nature 12 months of the year. Our local park also serves as a community hub where people can gather, socialize and participate in recreational activities. It also provides a venue for cultural events and festivals, and the park plays a crucial role in protecting Ontario's biodiversity.

Urban parks can boost local economies by attracting tourists and visitors, creating jobs for youth related to park maintenance and natural environment.

The creation of urban provincial parks aligns with our children's broader goals of sustainable development and environmental stewardship. By integrating these green spaces into urban planning, we can promote a healthier, more balanced lifestyle for our residents while ensuring protection of our natural habitats.

I hope everyone here in the House will join me in supporting the member from Windsor–Tecumseh with

Bill 193 in adding urban class parks as a new classification to improve access to nature-based recreation in or near urban centres. Creating urban provincial parks will be providing our urban populations with an invaluable gift of accessible green spaces.

I hope we can all support this bill and help us build a future where nature and urban life coexist harmoniously, enhancing the quality of life for all of our residents and continue to make Ontario the best province to live, work and raise a family.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further debate?

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Good evening, everyone. I'm happy to rise this evening to speak to Bill 193, Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Amendment Act, 2024.

Thank you to my favourite member from across the House, the MPP for Windsor–Tecumseh, for creating this bill and for your passion for our green spaces.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I thought I was your favourite member.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Yes, he is my favourite, and—sorry—you're not.

**1830**

Bill 193, if passed, would create an urban provincial park classification, extending official protection for the first time to provincially significant biodiverse areas located within or near large urban areas. As I represent an urban area, I'm excited about how this bill will positively impact my community.

Ontario's park system is a magnificent thing. Covering a swath of land measuring more than 78,000 square kilometres, it encourages biodiversity, natural areas, and also allows families to have fun and affordable vacations exploring Ontario's great outdoors.

Not many people know that Ontario is home to 250,000 lakes, many that are within provincial parks.

I'm curious about how the expansion into natural urban areas will make the park system that much better. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh outlined that if an area is provincially significant, then this bill will help the province participate in protecting them by providing a provincial urban park designation. So I'm curious about how the government will determine which areas are provincially significant, and I'm wondering if this would require people visiting them to pay a day fee, as they would at another provincial park.

For example, in my riding of beautiful Beaches–East York, we have wonderful Woodbine beach. We have three swimmable beaches, actually—I invite you all to come down—and Woodbine park, which is more than a local park. It's kind of deemed like a festival park, so there are many concerts there throughout the summer. This destination is visited from folks across Ontario and is the reason for our namesake—the Beaches. So would that be in the running for a provincial park? I'm not sure.

When I was a city councillor, because I'm a green girl, I was determined to create a “friends of” group for every single one of the 25 parks in my ward at the time, and I

have to say, I got it done, and that is thanks to my residents, who are super green and keen as well. They wanted to animate the public green space, so we had—I'm not going to list them all, but I'd love to.

East Lynn Park is a local park near me. I happened to start a farmers' market there. I may have worn a vegetable costume or two, promoting Ontario farmers. And that is still thriving. Fairmount Park has, I think, one of the oldest outdoor skating rinks in the city, run by the residents. Glen Stewart Ravine—we have many ravines. Friends of Taylor Creek Park, Cassels—all great urban spaces that people in the city who don't have huge backyards and don't need them, because they can be out living and enjoying the green space. They all exist. So I'm wondering how they would be incorporated in your new bill.

I just want to congratulate the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for your bill. Let's keep collaborating on keeping Ontario's environment beautiful and precious and protected.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further debate?

**MPP Zee Hamid:** It is my privilege to speak on this bill today. I represent a riding that has been urbanized very, very rapidly. In the past 25 years, our population went from roughly 30,000 people to over 150,000 today. So this opportunity that this private member's bill provides is more important now than ever to my riding.

My family and I live very close to Bronte Creek Provincial Park, which the member from Oakville mentioned earlier. We've enjoyed that park for over a decade.

I'd like to give a little bit of a background on parks in my riding. My riding is home to eight conservation parks, and they're managed by Conservation Halton, which I had the privilege of being on the board of. These eight parks are Crawford Lake, Mountsberg, Mount Nemo, Kelso, Robert Edmondson, and our newest park—Hilton Falls, and the newest park, Area 8.

Conservation Halton, in 2008, had a vision of merging all the conservation areas and creating a new, 10,000-acre park, which would be the largest urban park anywhere in North America. However, because this classification did not exist, that still remains a dream that this classification would now allow us to realize.

We're fortunate that we don't just have these conservation areas but Bruce Trail runs through my riding, as well as Sixteen Mile Creek. Crawford Lake, I mentioned earlier, alone is home to 2,300 native plant species. The First Nation called the Niagara Escarpment that runs through my riding Giant's Rib, and that's the name we envisioned for this new, giant urban park.

This is why I'm excited that the first opportunity I have to speak on any bill is on this specific private member's bill, because this has a potential of making a generational difference. This bill allows us to, hopefully, realize this dream that we've had since 2018, for six years now, of creating this urban park that we frankly wouldn't have been able to do without this classification that I hope this House passes unanimously.

I would like to thank my colleague for all the hard work he did on this bill. We now have this opportunity to finally

create this urban park, hopefully, in my riding that will be enjoyed for generations, not just by people in my riding but for all the ridings around us as well.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further debate?

**Mr. Steve Pinsonneault:** Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature today and speak on this great bill from my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh.

This bill establishes an urban class of provincial parks which is not recognized in existing legislation. We're lucky in Ontario to have so many beautiful parks for people across the province to enjoy, but it is important for us to recognize that parks within urban areas play an entirely different role than those in rural areas.

My riding is home to Komoka Provincial Park, a vital place for not only Londoners but people of Middlesex county in keeping the community active and healthy. Komoka is truly an oasis close to home. I know my constituency staff and their families love to hike, canoe in the warm weather, and the park is open in the winter for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. No matter the season, the scenery is stunning, a perfect escape for a busy city.

The urban classification will help create new parks close to home just like Komoka, places that are beloved to Ontarians. It brings a natural beauty and will help bolster the protection of the park's biodiversity. Urban natural environments like Komoka Provincial Park make a real difference to the communities of Komoka, Kilworth and London.

We know that urban and rural areas have entirely different landscapes, and parks in these areas are no different. Recreational options offered at Komoka Provincial Park are also naturally different than those offered in parks farther from the urban core, but they are just as invaluable and important to the province. As our provincial urban areas continue to grow, access to green space for families, youth, seniors are critically important, and this bill will help support these green spaces in our urban centres of provincial significance.

Speaker, I am proud to support this legislation and I encourage my colleagues in the House to vote in favour of a better access to green spaces in Ontario's urban municipalities.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further debate? Further debate? Further debate?

Back to the member for a two-minute response.

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** I want to thank the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for her comments, as well as the member for Beaches–East York. Actually, in both their cases, I'm looking forward to visiting the spots you named. I haven't been to the Beaches enough, and for the member for Hamilton–West–Ancaster–Dundas, I've had the privilege of hiking Mount Nemo. It's an incredible place. Knowing that that's in your backyard, I can't wait to go back, because it truly is a beautiful spot.

And to the member from Oakville, the member from Milton and the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, thank you so, so much for your contributions as well.

There's been such support that I just want to share. There's a gentleman named Tom Henderson, who is with the Detroit River Canadian Cleanup. He's been active in this for quite the better part of 20 years, if not more. And Ian Naisbitt is one of my neighbours, actually—Little River Enhancement Group, for 40 years.

So Tom says, "Windsor-Essex has green space that could be encompassed by the bill. Among the most important are seven acres of natural shoreline, Ojibway Shores on the Detroit River, soon to become part of Windsor's Ojibway National Urban Park. As municipalities naturalize, Mr. Dowie's bill could include those lands as protected areas. Biologists agree that naturalization and shoreline rehabilitation lead to cleaner water, improved fish habitat and overall natural beauty."

And Mr. Naisbitt says, "The existing wetlands, woodlands and the drainage pattern of the rivers in the Windsor-Essex region (Ontario for that matter) provide the 'nature-based recreation' areas that could be included in MPP Andrew Dowie's Bill 193 as 'urban class parks.'

"Furthermore, the creation of 'urban class parks' will help to address two significant issues today: climate change and biodiversity.

"Creation of linear or corridor 'urban class park' connections would 'improve access' by the general public to use these unique parks. It is imperative that humans connect with nature and Bill 193 will help to do that."

And that's exactly my goal with the bill.

Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to all who contributed today.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

Mr. Dowie has moved second reading of Bill 193, An Act to amend the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Pursuant to standing order 100(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House unless the member would like to refer the bill to a standing committee.

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** Speaker, I'd like to refer it to the Standing Committee on the Interior.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Mr. Dowie would like the bill referred to the Standing Committee on the—

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** Interior.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Is the majority in favour of this? Agreed. The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on the Interior.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1842.*



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**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong  
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Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
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<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)</b>	Willowdale	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	
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Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
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French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hamid, Zee (PC)	Milton	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
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Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
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Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
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McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
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Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
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Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
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Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
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Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
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<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
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Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
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Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	