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Wednesday 23 October 2002

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Mercredi 23 octobre 2002

**Standing committee on
estimates**

Office of the Premier

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Cabinet du premier ministre

Chair: Gerard Kennedy
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : Gerard Kennedy
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 23 October 2002

Mercredi 23 octobre 2002

The committee met at 1532 in room 151.

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling): Let's resume the estimates of the Premier's office. We have six more minutes for the third party. Mr Prue.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Mr Chair, you'll have to bear with me. I'm here for MPP Gilles Bisson until he arrives. He has a meeting with the Minister of Natural Resources and is expected momentarily.

I understand the questions that are allowed today have to do with the Premier's office and the decisions the Premier's office has made. In the six minutes, I wonder if you will allow this question. I am very curious as to the reports in the Toronto Star today about a leaked memo which was the topic of much discussion in question period. The Premier is not here, but I assume Mr Dunlop may be able to answer these.

I'm particularly interested in the statements made around the \$200-million loan to the city of Toronto a number of years ago and the fact that the Premier is now stating or is alleged to be stating that the city of Toronto will have to pay back that money with interest. Is in fact—

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): That's the wrong ministry. This is the Premier's office.

Mr Prue: It was a memo from the Premier's office. That's what is being alleged. Is that in fact correct?

Mr Mazzilli: On a point of order, Mr Chair: Certainly Garfield's here representing the Premier's office and these are estimates on the Premier's office. Any questions relating to \$200 million that the department of finance may have—we have the wrong ministry before us to answer those questions. I would ask for your ruling, that the questions be directed to the Premier's office and that we stay on estimates.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): On a point of order, Mr Chairman: Just to follow through on that, I'm looking for some direction from the Chair, because of the line of questioning that was allowed yesterday at this committee meeting. Even some of the comments the member made went well beyond the Premier's office. He talked about the whole scope of government initiatives.

The Vice-Chair: That's not a point of order. Actually I can't judge on yesterday's Chair. I wasn't even in the

Chair yesterday. But the fact is that if the parliamentary assistant wants to comment on that, it's sort of a stretch, I would say, to comment on something outside the ministry.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Mr Chairman, on a point of order: I guess this is to make me understand it, but I understood the purpose of these hearings for estimates was for everyone to have an opportunity to question the estimates before us, how they relate and how they can be explained.

Question period was held just a little while ago upstairs. This committee is not structured, unless I miss my guess, to redo question period but to deal with estimates as they are put before us, how they can be explained and whether the money was properly spent.

Mr Mazzilli: On a point of order, Mr Chair: I just want to touch on what Mr Hardeman said. I thought the purpose of this committee is to look at the estimates of the Premier's office and not outside the scope of the Premier's office.

The Vice-Chair: Let me just say this. Questions can be asked sometimes in very wide forms in estimates. I wouldn't say it is the same guided form as in the House. Many of the questions are being allowed because of the structure of the committee. As I said, if the parliamentary assistant wants to respond, that's fine. I also said that question is a little bit of stretch outside the Premier's office, to be answering about the loan to the city. If he chooses to answer that, I'm fine with that, but again I would say it's a bit of a stretch on that matter, Mr Prue.

Mr Prue: I understand, but I'm simply following through on the instructions I received from MPP Gilles Bisson, who said he was given a great deal of latitude yesterday to ask these questions. I sought instructions from him to substitute for him and he—

The Vice-Chair: Mr Prue, allow the Chair to say that I am not going to rule on what the Chair did yesterday. I am Chair today and that latitude I think went out with the last Chair. The latitude I'll use today is: do you care to answer the question, Mr Dunlop?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Mr Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to respond. Certainly we did go beyond the scope of the estimates. If we have to spend five days talking about those three pages in the estimates book, it's going to be a very boring five hours of time. I can tell you that right now.

I don't have all the answers to all the questions that might come out of the Office of the Premier, which the

Premier may be more familiar with, but I would entertain the question and do the best I can on any of these questions. If I couldn't provide that answer for you today, Mr Prue, or to any other member of the committee, we'll try to do it for the next meeting so that we have as good an answer as possible.

The Vice-Chair: You've got a minute more to answer the question, whoever wants to answer the question.

Mr Dunlop: If I may, part of my response today—and I certainly have responses to questions that were asked yesterday that I told Mr Bisson and Mr Peters I would respond to. We have a number of those responses back today. I thought that's how we would carry on the committee—

The Vice-Chair: There are two ways you can do them. You can either table them—but again the minute is up, so therefore the time you had to respond on that is gone.

Mr Mazzilli: There you go.

Mr Dunlop: We'll get back to you with the answer.

The Vice-Chair: Now let me just say this. We've got 30 minutes on the government side. They can choose to allow you to do that response in your 30 minutes.

Mr Dunlop: Mr Chairman, if I may, I have a response in the 30 minutes and then I believe we're going into 20 minutes of questions and answers from each of the caucuses.

Mr Chairman, members of the committee and ladies and gentlemen who are here today, I'm very pleased to come again before you to continue the dialogue we started yesterday. As I pointed out a couple of minutes ago, I have some answers to the many questions I received yesterday from both Mr Peters and Mr Bisson, and I will get to them a little later.

I thought I'd use some of this time now to talk about the business of the Premier's office, because both Mr Peters and Mr Bisson expressed an interest in the Premier's office, particularly the staff of the Premier's office, and what they do on behalf of the Premier himself.

I confirmed for Mr Peters yesterday that the Premier's office is comprised of 44 staff members. They are included in six departments, which are: the office of the chief of staff, the policy unit, the issues management unit, the communications unit, which includes media relations, tours and public events, and the special projects area, which includes caucus relations. Of course that's what I mentioned earlier that I am part of.

1540

My friend the member for Timmins-James Bay, who's not here right now but will be shortly, made the observation that as an organization the Premier's office appeared to be top-heavy. My response to that observation is that it's been my experience that this is a staff made up of individuals whom I see as tireless workers, unquestionably dedicated and committed to the cause of serving Premier Eves in an effort to make our province an even greater province in which we can live and raise our families.

Whether it's the director of a department or support staff, many of the people are in before 7 o'clock in the morning and don't leave until the small hours in the evening. It's not uncommon to see them at work on weekends as well. This is a high-pressure job and it takes very energetic people to do that job, the people who work in the Premier's office. Quite frankly, this is a group that does not punch a clock at 9 o'clock and leave at 4:30.

As a member of this government since 1999, and as the parliamentary assistant to Premier Eves since April, I can say that I myself can't help but be energized by the commitment and dedication of the members of this team. I'd like to talk a little bit about the roles and responsibilities of each of the departments.

First of all, the office of the chief of staff: this department leads the Premier's office toward implementing the government's overall agenda through long- and short-term strategic planning and coordination. The office provides a one-window service to other members of the government team, treating all members with professionalism and respect.

It's been my experience that in any successful organization you need to have the right team at the top, and I have nothing but respect for the Premier and his chief of staff. I think a lot of you people in the room probably know Mr Steve Pengelly. The Premier and the chief of staff set the tone.

Mr Peters: Is that the same Steve who's referred to in these memos?

Mr Dunlop: No, there are two Steves.

They set the tone. They lead and provide vision and direction for government. I believe they are listening to Ontarians and responding to the priorities of the people. Those priorities of course, as we've said many times, are a quality health care system, excellence in our schools, clean air and fresh water.

Next is the policy unit. I call these people the deep thinkers in the Premier's office. The policy unit works with staff in ministers' offices and in Cabinet Office to develop analyses and provide advice to the Premier on various government policy initiatives.

In helping develop government policy, members of this team seek input from ministers and their staff. They seek input also from MPPs, industry stakeholders and, of course, the public. From clean water initiatives to finding ways to reduce traffic gridlock, the policy team is involved.

This summer, for example, they provided the framework for the Premier's agricultural round table where the Premier and Minister Johns met with 60 leaders in the farm and agri-food community from across the province to discuss a variety of issues and solutions. It's all about listening, consulting and determining the best course for the good people of our province.

The issues management department gets its, as we call it, motor running very early each morning, scanning the daily clips and transcripts and determining what are going to be the issues of the day. The responsibilities of this team are immense.

Staff prepare the Premier or his designate for question period. They need to know what the issues are, what the government is doing about them and how the government should respond to these issues. This involves intensive media monitoring, identifying all current and potential contentious issues, understanding stakeholder and opposition positions, and coordinating issues management strategies, tactics and materials among ministers' offices.

Information moves at such a dizzying pace these days, and with the media sophistication of special interest groups, it's necessary for all public and private sector organizations to devote sufficient resources to the area of issues management.

Much of the work this unit does is in conjunction with the communications department. Communications, including media relations, works with other departments in the Premier's office and Cabinet Office to develop long-term communications planning and actively manages communications activities. This department works with other ministers' offices in coordinating corporate communications, research and media monitoring, and manages all of the Premier's communications activities.

This government is proud of the programs and policies it has implemented. It's this department's responsibility to ensure that this is communicated to all Ontarians effectively.

The media relations unit is responsible for media planning, providing media relations advice to the Premier and other high-level staff, as well as acting as a liaison between the Premier and the media. That's the dictionary definition. In reality, these are the people on the front lines: the eyes and ears and very often the voice of the Premier's office. They are there with a tape recorder in hand as the Premier is swarmed by reporters outside a cabinet meeting. They are the ones taking reporters' calls at 9 pm or in the middle of a sunny Saturday afternoon, and they are the ones who accompany the Premier at many of the events he attends.

While this all might sound glamorous to the average person, I can assure you this is a rigorous assignment. You are sometimes in the centre of a media circus and this involves very long hours, intense pressure and attention to detail.

Next is the tour and public events department. These are very busy people. Former Premier Mike Harris travelled thousands of miles to fulfill his duties as the province's leader and to meet the great people of this province. Premier Eves has already embarked on a busy tour schedule as well. Tour staff plan, schedule and prepare itineraries for the many events that involve the Premier.

You can appreciate that the Premier of Ontario receives hundreds and hundreds of invitations to attend meetings, conferences and even anniversary celebrations. The Premier needs staff to pour through the requests, research them, check schedules and either accept or politely decline the invitations on behalf of the Premier. Once you do accept, that's when the real work actually begins.

Staff need to work out the logistics: where to hold an event, who will attend, travel and accommodation arrangements. Tour staff must also work closely with communications to ensure tour events are consistent with the government's overall plans and strategies, and that the needs of the local media are met as well.

I'm sure all members of this committee can appreciate that the success of a public event or meeting depends largely on the work that is done beforehand.

The last department I'll talk about today is special projects. One of the special projects is near and dear to my heart because I am directly involved, and that would be caucus relations. One of my roles as parliamentary assistant is to act as a liaison between the Premier's office and individual caucus members. This involves improving communications and ensuring members understand and contribute to the long-term agenda of the Premier and cabinet.

These are the roles and responsibilities of the departments within the Premier's office that hopefully provide you a little context in the estimates debate.

Looking back at Premiers' offices of previous administrations, the number 44 is not the smallest number; nor is it the largest. I think it is fair to say it's comparable to those under the Rae and Peterson administrations when you consider the growth of the province and the province's budget.

I might also add the Premier's office budget compares favourably to other provinces as well. Ontario spends less than our neighbour Quebec. It spends just a little more than the Premier's office in British Columbia yet serves a province with three times the population of British Columbia.

I mention this not to malign the records of others, but to reinforce my earlier point, that with the hard work, dedication and commitment to public service demonstrated by this Premier's office, I know Ontario taxpayers are getting very good value for the money they spend.

Let me repeat my words from yesterday noting that the estimated budget of the Premier's office has been reduced by about 5% over last year. This voluntary reduction of expenses reflects the government's commitment to providing Ontario taxpayers with more efficient and more effective government.

1550

I want to switch gears a bit and talk about the results of this hard work, the record of this government and where we are headed. So with the time remaining to me this afternoon, I'd like to speak more about what actions this government has proposed taking, what it is already doing and what it has accomplished with its past efforts. My goal in doing so is to put the work of the Premier's office in context and to make it plain that the small expense it represents in an overall budget of some \$66.5 billion provides great value. The people of Ontario benefit directly from what the Premier's office does in pulling together the many different strands of government initiative and helping to braid it into a coherent whole.

What do I have in mind? I'm thinking of the Premier's promise to take swift, decisive action on issues related to

health care, education and the environment. Clearly, these are priority areas for the government and the actions we are taking that I'll describe a little later will prove it.

Ours is also a government that is deeply committed to promoting growth, creating jobs and increasing prosperity. Statistics Canada data tells the whole story well: 32,000 net new jobs in Ontario in September. What a great way to start a fall season, and it came after a great start to the summer.

In June the government tabled its fourth consecutive balanced budget, and that hasn't been accomplished since 1918. As we think of it, Ontarians were driving cars that needed a crank to start them up when their government last balanced its budget. Now, in the age of the gas-electric hybrid, we've done it again, and we're going to go even further down this road to better management of the province and its resources. Why? Because this is a government that has cut taxes 200 times since 1995. But we haven't dulled our scissors just yet. We've committed ourselves to additional tax cuts as soon as it's prudent to introduce them, and we will follow through with them as well.

Earlier on I mentioned we've adopted a leadership outlook on issues related to health care, education and the environment. Our tax strategy shows how we're putting money where it matters when it comes to protecting the environment. I have two measures in mind. One will provide an alternative fuel retail sales tax rebate to encourage the growth and use of hybrid sport utility vehicles and light trucks. We've also created an exemption for bio-diesel fuel from the 14.3-cents-per-litre fuel tax.

However, this is a government that is also concerned with the citizens of Ontario who may not benefit from such tax cuts because they lack the resources to buy and drive vehicles. I'm thinking here of the almost three quarters of a million—745,000 to be more exact—Ontarians of modest means who will not pay any provincial income tax at all. It's a population that we recently expanded to include another 50,000 low-income wage earners; of course, we did that in the last budget. It says a lot about the good this government has done that while we continue to maintain a balanced budget, we also extend a helping hand to those in our province who are looking to improve their lot in life. We're very glad to help them do that.

We're also glad to provide our most industrious and entrepreneurial citizens with the fiscal environment they need to remain effective in an incredibly competitive world. By 2006, as a result of our progressive efforts, Ontario will have a lower general combined corporate income tax rate than any of the 50 states in the United States of America. Not only that but our general income tax rate will be the lowest in our country.

Have you got more questions for me?

Mr Prue: I won't get a chance for awhile.

Mr Dunlop: These actions we're taking to keep Ontario's finances in good order have not gone unnoticed,

and this is something we're very proud of. Moody's Investors Service, to name but one example, has caught on to the success we're having in keeping our house in order. This year, during the leadership of Premier Eves, Moody's upgraded Ontario's credit rating. It's the third such upgrade for Ontario by a major credit rating service in the last two years. But here's what really makes the Moody's upgrade satisfying: it's their first since 1974. Can you imagine it's taken 28 years to do better than we were before? A long climb, to be sure, but well worth it when you consider what it will mean to managing Ontario's finances.

People would ask what we owe it to: four balanced budgets; a series of tax cuts to encourage growth and competitiveness; prudent, disciplined fiscal policy; and a willingness to keep on moving in the right direction when many around us have said, "Change the course."

We haven't changed course. We're still committed to strong, sound, long-term financial management of the province's resources, but at the same time we're also broadening our horizon, listening to the people, making inroads in improving outcomes in other areas of Ontario's management.

Take education, for example. Since Premier Ernie Eves took office, an additional \$560 million has been earmarked for educational purposes. And it doesn't stop there. Many parents and educators have expressed concerns about the education funding formula. As a former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, I've heard those concerns over and over. Mr Prue and I have been at events together and have heard the concerns. We said we were listening, and we are listening. We said we will do, and we have done. We have appointed Dr Mordecai Rozanski to review the formula and provide us with an independent review of it.

I don't know if any of you gentlemen on the committee have had an opportunity, but I had an opportunity to meet with Dr Rozanski and had a very good meeting with him. He's a person who's very eager to listen to our comments. We of course are eager to get his report back later on this fall and have already expressed our willingness to amend the formula, if called to do so.

We also know there are significant strains on the post-secondary education system in Ontario as it prepares itself to accommodate the double cohort. Those institutions will be receiving an additional multi-year operating funding increase of \$368 million by next year to meet increased enrolment needs. It seems like just yesterday—Monday, October 21, actually—that we confirmed a \$40-million investment in upgrading facilities at colleges and universities.

Our post-secondary students are the future leaders of Ontario. They count. They matter. They are why 23 SuperBuild projects are underway to create spaces for more than 22,000 new students right now. They are why we have increased investment in research to attract and retain the best faculty so that they will get an excellent education and so that some of them will return to teach in our institutions of higher learning. By doing so, they'll

bring along the next generation of leaders right here in our province.

There's more. Just as our tax measures are designed to meet the needs of those who are affluent and those who are not, so too are our education initiatives; as an example, the student opportunity trust fund will give 400,000 students who have the smarts but not the money to get into higher learning the opportunity to do so. Dreams of a post-secondary education shouldn't stop at the door of a college or university because of empty pockets. We're doing what we can to make sure it doesn't for as many students as possible.

We're doing much more on other fronts as well. I'd point out health care. That's a volume unto itself, but I'll sketch it out in two words—"more" and "better": more MRI machines operating more hours; more nurse practitioners to offer more care in more communities—117 more in fact. These will be among the most positive points in the legacy of this government that I have the honour of representing.

So too will our commitment to ensuring Ontarians have the cleanest and safest drinking water in the world. We've committed to implementing all of Justice O'Connor's Walkerton recommendations for improving our water system. Forgive the pun, but it's full steam ahead on that project: rigorous standards, strict enforcement, a sustainable water and sewage system.

The new legislation is being introduced. The new initiatives are underway. It's on track and it's consistent with everything else we're doing to keep this province on track: like ensuring that the most vulnerable members of our society have access to legal representation, like giving agricultural workers the right to associate, like measures to cut red tape and improve government efficiency, like protecting consumers/victims, children and the people who use our roads and highways.

1600

Our goal is to foster the continued development of a prosperous, healthy, well-educated, safe Ontario, a province where people don't just dream about the lives they want, but live the dreams they have. That is our goal. That is the goal of the Premier's office, whose estimated expenses we are here to review. It is a worthy goal and I am proud to be a part of the government that is making it happen. When we continue the process of looking at what this office will spend and what it will deliver, let's keep these ambitions and these achievements in mind.

It's the job of this committee to give these estimated expenses a thorough and meaningful review to ensure that the people of Ontario are getting their money's worth, to apply its powers of scrutiny and oversight but to do so fairly and with good judgment. That is what I, as the designate of the Premier, would ask you to keep in mind as we go through the process: to be fair, focused and aware of the good that this government and this office have done for our province and for our citizens by taking a position of leadership and acting on it.

To close, let me just say that I have represented the riding of Simcoe North since June 3, 1999—and a number of us in this room are newcomers here as well—and have been proud to be part of a government team that has continued to make real improvements in peoples' lives every day.

I entered public life more than 20 years ago in municipal politics and did so because I felt I could make a difference. I never, ever dreamed that I was going to be around for 20 years when I started; I thought I'd only do one term. Now we're walking the halls of this great building, and I think everyone that's ever been elected as an MPP must take a great deal of pride in the fact that you are here representing the people. They've sent you here and it is an honour.

I have the same purpose and feeling and look forward to the future and watching my children. I now have two little granddaughters and I want them to grow and become active members of a province that has great economic development, a great health care system and a clean environment. I want other people's children, all of our citizens of our province, to grow up in that same environment.

With that, I appreciate this opportunity for the response and I look forward to the question and answer period as we go through the rest of this process in the estimates committee.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you, Parliamentary Assistant. I'd hoped that you would have made that long dissertation available to us. I hope we'll have those kinds of notes.

We have about six more minutes to go. Mr Mazzilli, you wanted to comment?

Mr Mazzilli: Sure. Mr Dunlop, I just want to congratulate you on a job well done in delivering an overview of what the Office of the Premier is charged with. It's amazing, when you look at all the policy, that a mere 40 people can do all that work. As you said before, those people certainly show up early in the morning and you wonder if they can ever go home. As for your part, the Premier is very lucky to have you as a parliamentary assistant and the people of Simcoe should be very proud.

I'm just wondering, on the targets of new jobs created—I know we're almost to a million, but is there a more aggressive target being set by the Office of the Premier?

Mr Dunlop: I don't know if there's a limit. I think our goal when we came here was to increase the quality of life for the citizens of this province and to create investment in our province, to create a climate where people would come in from all over the world because we are a society made up of multiculturalism.

Mr Mazzilli: I guess that was my point. It was obviously the tax cuts that created those jobs. It's tax cuts that continue to create those jobs. Are we still going to be going down a path of cutting taxes to encourage economic investment in our province and to create jobs? Is that still part of the ongoing program?

Mr Dunlop: I believe that the Premier and the Minister of Finance have that in mind as they look toward

future economic statements and budgets down the road. I also know that they want to make sure that we have investment in our health care system, investment in our education system and the type of money that's required to keep our environment clean, along with all the other ministries that require assistance.

I was trying to get some briefing notes just yesterday on transportation, because I was up in Sudbury on the weekend and I was noticing how much road construction was on, occurring between Sudbury and Port Severn, which is just on the edge of my riding—phenomenal construction.

I went back to MTO, and since 1995 they've spent \$6.5 billion in road construction in the province of Ontario. That's made up of an assortment of projects right across the province.

By the way, Mr Peters, I don't have the number assigned to the cost of those signs yet, but we are working on them. It was interesting because Mr Peters brought up the question just yesterday about these road signs with Ernie Eves's name on them and how much do they cost?

Mr Mazzilli: They didn't cost \$3 million.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): The stupidest thing we ever did was not put them up for ourselves.

Mr Dunlop: Put our own names on them in our ridings.

The fact is, though, is there are a lot of those construction signs across the province and they do have the—

Mr Mazzilli: The one thing I'm really proud of, certainly, is that Premier Eves and the office put a lot of emphasis on the environment, clean drinking water and infrastructure. I couldn't believe this morning when I read the newspaper that the federal Liberals have done nothing on the environment for 10 years, which shouldn't be a surprise, because they've done nothing on anything else for 10 years. They spend \$90 million annually on cleanup, and \$90 million, when you look at all the military sites—to leave that ongoing and not done is something that's irresponsible.

I just wonder if you could elaborate on what the Premier's intentions are with Justice O'Connor's recommendations.

The Vice-Chair: You only have one minute to elaborate.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to go into this a little bit later on as well, but I just want to say that the intention of the Premier is to implement all of the recommendations in Justice O'Connor's report as quickly as possible. I think we've made that commitment to the municipalities in the province and want to work in partnerships with the municipalities and hopefully the federal government and some of the Canada-Ontario infrastructure programs as we try to implement those recommendations in our great province.

The Vice-Chair: Now, in the rotation we're going 20 minutes. Mr Peters has 20 minutes, the official opposition.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): On a point of order, Mr Chair: Could you turn that blue off? It's bothering my eyes. How long will it take to turn it back on, if and when somebody wants to—

The Vice-Chair: That is not a point of order, but I presume it can be turned off.

Mr Bisson: We could make it orange for you, Burt. That will be much more pleasing to the eyes.

Mr Peters: I hope this isn't cutting into my time, Mr Chairman.

Mr Dunlop: Do you want it turned off? I don't know how to turn it off. Do you just unplug it?

Mr Peters: Mr Dunlop, could you tell me what a blue note is? I was reading this document that doesn't exist but does exist, this confidential advice to the minister. There's a couple of times in it that the minister was provided with a blue note. Could you tell me what a blue note is?

Mr Dunlop: In part of the cabinet submissions it's a briefing note. I can't see there now because Art's in the way, but it's a standard document that's provided to cabinet ministers for briefing purposes.

Mr Peters: This afternoon in the Legislature, in response to a question, the Premier made reference to attendance being taken in the Legislature, that attendance is being taken. Could you please tell me whereabouts in the Premier's office the attendance-taker is located and how much we pay for a person to take attendance, and will you table the attendance that's being taken in the Legislature?

1610

Mr Dunlop: I think the only attendance we take is through the whip's office. I'm not familiar with any—

Mr Peters: The Premier alluded to attendance is being taken in observing our record in the House. So I'm wondering if you can tell me how much we're paying the person to take attendance, and table the attendance records, please?

Mr Mazzilli: I do it all the time.

Interjection: That's individual members.

Mr Peters: No, but he made reference to us, that we're being watched.

Mr Dunlop: If I may, Mr Peters, just to elaborate on that a little bit, we have in fact whip sheets. We take attendance at least three times a day from all of our own members just to see who's in the House, and that's part of the—

Mr Bisson: You guys are mean.

Mr Dunlop: Well, no. We want to know how many of our members are there and we have records for attendance.

Mr Peters: The allusion, though, was that our attendance is being kept. If I get up to leave the Legislature to go to the washroom, my attendance could be missed. I'm concerned about that.

Mr Dunlop: In the past, Mr Peters, we have in fact taken your attendance as well.

Mr Peters: Yes, I thought so, but if you could let me know how much we pay the attendance-taker—

Mr Dunlop: It would be a member in the whip's office.

Mr Peters: Well, the Premier talked about it.

Mr Dunlop: I can elaborate on that later.

Mr Peters: My next question concerns—late last spring I was at a conference in St Catharines and Minister Tsubouchi, Minister of Culture and Chair of the Management Board, made an announcement to the Ontario Association of Archivists about a SuperBuild application that would be approved would help us do a better job at preserving the records of the Ontario Archives. I looked today on the SuperBuild Web site and I have yet to see an announcement, so I am just curious to know when a public announcement will be made so that we ensure that those funds are allocated to preserve the historic records of our province. He publicly stated it, but I have yet to see anything on a SuperBuild Web site.

Mr Dunlop: I know you have a great deal of interest; I believe you had a private member's bill on archives, did you not?

Mr Peters: No, that's Bert's.

Mr Dunlop: Oh, I'm sorry, it was Bert. But I think—

Mr Peters: Mine's on the gravesites of former Premiers.

Mr Dunlop: I remember you speaking on behalf of Mr Johnson's archives private member's bill. I think it was a year and a half ago or so. I'm not familiar with that particular project, an application into SuperBuild, but I would be pleased to find out from Mr Tsubouchi's office where that stands.

Mr Peters: Thank you.

Mr Bisson talked about SuperBuild yesterday as well. On September 10, Minister Tsubouchi and former Minister Jackson sent each of us an update on our SuperBuild applications within our ridings: what was approved, what was not approved, including correspondence that went to various municipalities saying whether their applications were approved or not approved.

I placed a request in the office. I wanted to know province-wide, riding by riding, how many SuperBuild applications had been approved and how many had not been approved, and where etc. I was told that I'm going to have to FOI this information. To me this is public information, and quite honestly, I'm getting sick and tired of being told to request through the freedom of information act information that I believe should be available to the public.

I can table with you a copy of the "Dear Colleague" letter that was sent out with a breakdown of my riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London. My request was, I would like to know detail province-wide, who got what?

Mr Mazzilli: On a point of order, Mr Chair: Once again, there's certainly lots of leeway here but—

Mr Peters: You crossed the line.

The Vice-Chair: What's your point?

Mr Mazzilli: Point of order. There's lots of leeway. It is the Office of the Premier, but we are doing estimates here and for a member to ask for the parliamentary assist-

ant to the Premier to table a list of SuperBuild, which is not this ministry, is totally inappropriate.

The Vice-Chair: That's not a point of order.

Mr Bisson: Just very quickly, I support the questions he has. He is perfectly within his right. The Premier does policy; you can ask anything you want of this committee.

The Vice-Chair: That wasn't a point of order, but proceed, Mr Peters.

Mr Dunlop: For Mr Peters's sake I will try to get the information—

Mr Peters: It was a letter dated September 10 from Tsubouchi and Jackson, and the letters that went to the respective municipalities are also dated September 10.

Mr Dunlop: You're also referring to—we consider SuperBuild all capital projects, but are you referring to just OSTAR—

Mr Peters: I'm particularly interested in sports-culture-tourism partnership initiatives.

Mr Dunlop: We'll see what we can find out for you on that particular issue.

Mr Peters: Thank you very much.

You talked in your presentation about the issues management department and how hard they work, how early they're up and how late they work. Could you tell me what the budget is for how many people who get up early and stay up late to read newspapers and how much we pay somebody in this province to read newspapers to stay on top of issues?

Mr Dunlop: I don't have the exact number on that.

Mr Peters: I'd like to know how many people we pay to get up early to read newspapers to be prepared for question period.

Mr Dunlop: Just give me one moment here.

Mr Peters: Along a similar vein with that question, could you tell me how many people and how much we pay for people to walk around with tape recorders and record the words of the Premier? I would like to know, if those tapes are subject to a records retention bylaw, how long we preserve those records.

Mr Dunlop: The majority of the staff in the Premier's office earn between \$35,000 and \$95,000. I don't know the exact—

Mr Peters: I'd like to know how many specifically get up early and read newspapers. You said it; you described the issues management department.

Mr Mazzilli: That's one of the jobs.

Mr Peters: And he made the comment about reading newspapers and scanning issues.

Mr Dunlop: I didn't have the breakdown going that far. Just give me a moment and I will try to do that for you.

In issues management there would be two people doing that particular job. I don't have their salaries right now, but I can tell you there are two people.

The Acting Chair (Mr Steve Peters): And from the chair—which I shouldn't be doing, but I will—I understand you can't give specific salaries, just the ranges. Mr Curling.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Initially, I should say to the parliamentary assistant, who I know is a hard-working, very respectable and honourable man in this House, that I want to express my disappointment that the Premier is not here. This is the first opportunity—

Mr Mazzilli: On a point of order, Mr Chair: The Premier is represented here, so I think the Premier is here.

Mr Curling: That's not a point of order. I'm expressing my view—

The Acting Chair: He's just making a comment. He's expressing a viewpoint.

Mr Curling: I am saying that this would be the first estimates where we'll have the Premier accounting for his budget, and I'm disappointed. I know you may do an excellent job on this, but I'd like to ask at the time of estimates how the Premier feels about some of these estimates and the expenditures. Some of the questions that were asked before weren't answered. I also want to express my disappointment that at the first estimates for the Premier he's not here.

You know how wide this portfolio is. It covers all the ministers. It seems to me too that this portfolio is directed by the press. I heard you say you spend most of the time monitoring the news and then maybe you will react to the news afterwards. It's unfortunate that the province has to be directed by the press more than some strong leadership within the—

Mr Mazzilli: No, we're—

Mr Curling: Would you give me my opportunity, Mr Mazzilli. Thank you.

This government seems to be reacting to the press more than showing some good leadership, where it's coming from. I would like to have that budget, how much is spent in doing that itself. What is the advertising budget of the Premier's office?

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Mr Dunlop: The Premier's office spends no money in advertising.

Mr Curling: None at all.

Mr Dunlop: No.

Mr Bisson: They've got ministries doing that.

Mr Curling: The ministries do it for him, more or less.

Mr Dunlop: Ministries spend their own money, yes.

Mr Curling: For the Premier.

Mr Dunlop: Yes.

Mr Curling: I see. The Premier's office is also responsible for all of his ministers and responsible for all the documents that come out of cabinet. How many leaks have you had since—I heard the Premier commenting about the leaks coming out of cabinet and all that kind of stuff. How many leaks have you had since the new Harris-Eves government has taken over?

Mr Dunlop: First of all, let me comment on my particular role here, and then I can just go into the leak portion.

As far as I know, particularly with Premier Harris and I believe Premier Rae before him—I don't know of any time when a Premier has actually attended the estimates committee. I may be wrong on that.

Mr Curling: You're different; your government is different.

Mr Dunlop: We like to think we're different.

The Acting Chair: Come on, give him an opportunity to respond.

Mr Dunlop: Certainly Marilyn Mushinski and Mr Clement before him represented Premier Harris at the estimates committee. I understand we're asking a lot of questions about a lot of different issues in this committee, and I certainly don't mind trying to answer those questions to the best of my ability. If I can't, I'm going to get the information for you to the best of our ability as well.

Part of the reason there is a parliamentary assistant in any of the ministries, and particularly this ministry, the Premier's ministry, is that he is the busiest member of cabinet by far, and he's got a dual role as the role of Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. With that, he has a very busy schedule.

We are expected, as parliamentary assistants, to attend meetings like this, events for the Premier, representing him sometimes on a talk show or sometimes at a special meeting, an announcement or a banquet, and we're proud to do that. I am very proud to do that because I've been a strong believer in Premier Eves since—

Mr Curling: In the meantime, I just have a short time and you've got a lot of time. I understand. You're doing an excellent job, a wonderful job.

Mr Dunlop: And you are too.

Mr Curling: But this is the Premier's job. One of the most important things is to defend his estimates—any minister to defend their estimates and tell us what motivates them and why they're spending this. I'm disappointed that I'm not having that opportunity to ask the Premier that.

But let me ask you another question and I hope you can get the answer for me. Is the Premier's office, or the Premier himself, responsible for some of the appointments to agencies, boards and commissions and what have you? Does he play a role in this to get some appointments on boards, commissions and agencies?

Mr Dunlop: I'm just getting help for you on that. You mentioned that before—while we're getting this information for you, I just wanted to point out that I'm not aware of how many leaks there were or how you would even determine a leak in the Premier's office. You had mentioned that—

Mr Curling: Most of them came out before it was really due.

Mr Dunlop: I didn't give you an opportunity to respond to that question earlier that you had asked and I wanted to get that.

Mr Curling: You see, Mr Dunlop, the problem we have here is that these are questions the Premier could answer. If you were the Premier, I know you would have answered in an excellent manner because you would

know what goes on first-hand. Because the Premier is not here to defend his estimates, we find it's uncomfortable, and I'm sorry to put you in that uncomfortable position, but we had hoped that the Premier would be here.

You don't have to give me the answer now about the leaks and all that, but each day I'm in the House, I'm hearing that leaks come out. Some leaks are deliberate, it seems, and some are somehow, "Whoops, that was accidental" and all that kind of thing. But there are too many leaks coming out and I wonder how a government can operate like that. If the Premier is in charge and responsible for his portfolio, that shouldn't be happening.

When you get an opportunity, I'd also like you to tell me how many appointments were by the Premier, from his office, of people who serve on boards, agencies and commissions, to see if he plays a role in that. I'd like to know that.

Interjection.

Mr Curling: There seems to be another Premier over here, though.

Mr Dunlop: I've got some notes on that, Mr Curling.

The Acting Chair: Please continue, Mr Dunlop.

Mr Dunlop: OK. Appointments made by the government are based on our full confidence in the candidate fulfilling the job, with the proper experience, background and criteria necessary to do the job. They have to have the criteria to do the job, first of all.

Mr Curling: So you're saying the Lieutenant Governor gets some folks and appoints them to these boards and agencies, without any sort of help at all from the Premier.

Mr Dunlop: The Lieutenant Governor doesn't do it, no. They're appointed here at this committee.

Mr Curling: I'm sorry, I thought you said "appointed by the government."

Mr Dunlop: Are we talking about provincial appointments on boards?

Mr Curling: Very much so, yes. We're talking about provincial appointments to boards, agencies and commissions.

Mr Dunlop: The final approval comes from the government agencies committee right here.

Mr Curling: But I just want to know if the Premier's office plays a role in it.

Mr Dunlop: Only when it goes through council, when it goes through the cabinet.

Mr Curling: They all go through cabinet after a time.

Mr Dunlop: Yes.

Mr Curling: But initial appointments—

Mr Dunlop: Are you asking whether the Premier appoints the people?

Mr Curling: If he plays any role in any of the appointments to those boards.

Mr Dunlop: Mr Curling, in an average year there are 2,300 appointments made. That's about an average in Ontario. While numbers change each year, this number is certainly comparable with the number of appointees made by other governments, including the Mike Harris government, the Bob Rae government and the Peterson

and Davis governments before him. On the over 600 agencies, boards and commissions that exist in our province, with a current membership of about 4,500 people, the opposition claims to have found 55 people who have served in some way for the Conservative Party. I think that's what you were getting at last week, when some of the provincial candidates who ran for the Conservatives over the years had run. That's why you are bringing this up now?

Mr Curling: I wasn't really getting at that. I just wanted to know what role the Premier's office plays in getting people on boards and commissions.

The Acting Chair: you have one minute left.

Mr Dunlop: What is the committee? The committee does that.

Mr Curling: Within that minute I have, let me just say that I know the Premier's office has a wide array of things that they handle. The fact is that we talk about this diversity in our province, and I'm saying that they can play a very important role here. I'm not seeing some of those boards and commissions reflective of the kind of Ontario we have. I know that the Chairman is going to delay my answer here because he thinks my minute is up. No? Good. But the fact is that if he plays a role, why is it we are not seeing the real Ontario being reflected in the boards, commissions and agencies around the province? If he's not playing a role, I'd like to know.

Last, I'd like you to present your opening statement to us so we could have that.

The Acting Chair: Unfortunately, unless he chooses to answer when it comes to the government's time, your time is up.

Mr Hardeman: On a point of order or privilege, Mr Chairman: We've had quite broad latitude on what we're discussing here, and I wondered how far that latitude goes. We've had considerable discussion about the number of people and what they do for the Premier's office as they do their day-to-day work. I wonder if members of the committee could also provide the committee with information on the Leader of the Opposition so we could have that same comparative to see whether this is an appropriate expenditure of taxpayers' money.

The Acting Chair: Mr Hardeman, we're dealing with the expenditures of the Premier's office right now.

Mr Hardeman: I'm not arguing that.

Mr Curling: On a point of order, Mr Chairman.

Mr Hardeman: This is my point of order, Mr Curling, thank you very much. I'm not arguing about whether, under the estimates process, we have a right to that information, but I think we've been dealing in the last 20 minutes quite extensively with things that have absolutely nothing to do with estimates. The process of appointments is not estimates of expenditures. It was quite clear as to how many people were appointed, but how they are appointed is not necessarily part of the estimates. I'm just wondering if this information is available, because I think it would be quite helpful for comparative purposes on these estimates to know whether the opposition is spending similar types of

money for similar types of purposes. Obviously there are some similarities in the job so I think it would be quite helpful to us, in deciding on these estimates, if we could get that information from the other parties as to how much taxpayers' money they're spending for the same purpose.

The Acting Chair: Thank you. It wasn't a point of order.

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Mr Curling: On a point of order, Mr Chairman: If you had listened to the opening statement of the parliamentary assistant, the wide array of things he talked about, from education to all over, he said we have the Premier sort of quarterbacking all of that. If the honourable member is saying we can't ask questions now on those things he is quarterbacking—if they are presenting a flimsy couple of lines here, with no explanation of it all, I'm going to put words and motions to these figures. There's nothing there, so therefore we have to ask—

The Acting Chair: The parliamentary assistant has done a very good job of dealing with the wide variety of questions that have been asked, and he's been very good about providing answers as well.

Mr Mazzilli: On a point of order, Mr Chair: Certainly we all had the opportunity to pick which ministries we were going to bring to estimates. Obviously, the Premier's office is the smallest ministry to do. I suppose the opposition picked the Premier's office, with three flimsy little pages, because they didn't want to go through a difficult ministry. So that's what you have before you, an office that has estimates of three pages.

The Acting Chair: Thank you for your comments. Let's continue. We'll move now to the third party.

Mr Bisson: Thank you. It's just so nice to be back.

A couple of things. I had asked Garfield yesterday if he could answer some of the specific questions I had. Was that tabled earlier?

Mr Dunlop: No. I was waiting till you got back.

Mr Bisson: OK. And you can answer those? I wonder if you can go through and answer those questions I asked yesterday, if you could start with that.

Mr Dunlop: One of the things I'd like to go over—because certainly it's something that's near and dear to your heart and to every northern member, as well as everybody who's interested in the future development of the north, and that's pretty well every MPP in the province—was your comments on Ontario Northland. I've got a few comments for you. I haven't got the Cochrane information for you but I'm trying to—

Mr Bisson: Can you table that after?

Mr Dunlop: I will be happy to, yes.

With respect to the question you raised yesterday about the ONTC, I'd like to take this opportunity to provide you, Mr Chairman and members of the committee, with a response to that. The thing that I think is the key part here, Mr Bisson, is that our government stands by our commitment to the service improvement plan of Ontario Northland, and that would be job protection,

economic development and service improvement. With any agreement that's being made, those would be the three priorities. The Premier has made this commitment clear, and a promise made is a promise kept as far as our government is concerned. Again, just to clarify, the job protection, economic development and service improvements will all be part of any service improvement plan made between the ONTC and any other—

Mr Bisson: But can you confirm what I had asked yesterday, that rumours are that the Premier's office has basically given an edict that there are to be no job losses from the current levels at the ONTC?

Mr Dunlop: That's what it says and that's what we're saying: job protection is included. That does not mean job reduction.

Mr Bisson: OK. I just wanted it in clear English.

Mr Dunlop: I understand how important those jobs are to the north. We see the different issues that arise from different ministries, and sometimes they're very controversial. I know jobs are always at stake, whether it's a mine or a landfill site or whatever it may be. It's always a concern.

Time and time again, our government has heard that the status quo is unacceptable on Ontario Northland. We believe that the ONTC clients, both passengers and businesses, will expect top-line service, and quite frankly, they deserve that in the north. When we were doing the Premier's task force on rural Ontario, I think you visited some of those meetings. We heard over and over again about the importance of economic development in northern Ontario.

Our government recognizes the special importance of rail services and intends for these to continue and to be improved upon. That is why we have announced that ONTC has entered into exclusive negotiations with CN Rail. The CN submission is the only submission that clearly meets the service improvement plan and the objectives of it and provides the greatest overall value to employees, customers and the people of northeastern Ontario.

I've got a couple of other comments on it. I want to make it clear that no final decisions have been made. We are simply entering into negotiations with CN and it would be inappropriate to discuss the details of the proposal at this time. But again, as the Premier has said, what will be most important in the service improvement plan is that job protection, economic development and improvement of service in the north will be the priorities of any agreement.

Mr Bisson: All right. And then there was another specific question in regard to rail service up to the Hearst area. Have you got anything on that?

Mr Dunlop: I have not got that specific information, but if it meant rail improvement, I think we'd want to build on that. I'm sorry—service improvement; that's what we would want to build on.

Mr Bisson: So nothing specific to Hearst or Timmins, then?

Mr Dunlop: No, I have not got that yet.

Mr Bisson: So as I understand it, basically, while we're hearing the rumours, you are confirming that in the negotiations, the bottom line is there could be no job losses of the current levels that the ONTC have at this date.

Mr Dunlop: That's right.

Mr Bisson: All right. Remember, that's on Hansard.

The other thing I was asking in regard to Super-Build—you were going to get me some information in regard to the federal policy. The feds have basically decided that they wouldn't fund new construction for arenas and other projects. We had asked if there was an attempt on the part of the government to change—if there is another phase, a process to get around that.

Mr Dunlop: As far as I know at this time, and we talked about this yesterday, about exactly where the federal government stood on this particular issue, any of the messaging we heard was not a political message. So as far as we're concerned—

Mr Bisson: From the feds?

Mr Dunlop: From the feds. So as we stand right now, we're planning everything going ahead as though the federal government programs are in place and there would be appropriate money following. We are nominating programs based on that.

Mr Bisson: But you are not nominating projects—there are a number of them that have been denied and not put forward on the basis that the feds are not willing to put up their matched dollars. That's all those arena projects up on the northern part of the reserves, both in Kenora and Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Dunlop: But as far as the overall program, to say on behalf of the federal government that it is cancelled, I can't say that because we haven't had a political decision to say that yet. And I understand, because I think there are going to be a lot of arenas and community centres that will be applied for.

Mr Bisson: Again, I can get a copy of that note that you are reading from?

Mr Dunlop: Yes.

Mr Bisson: There was another item. I don't have my notes from yesterday. There was SuperBuild. There was the CN stuff. I'd asked for some numbers in the Premier's office. I think you answered those yesterday, in fact.

Mr Dunlop: Yes. Framing the scrolls was one.

Mr Bisson: Yes, there we go. Are you going to put the frames back? That's what I wanted to know.

Mr Dunlop: It was cancelled in 1990 as a cost-saving measure, and we haven't had any plans—I think it would take some political will on behalf of all of us to bring something like that back.

I did want to say to you, Mr Bisson, that we are continuing to nominate projects involving First Nations to the federal government for matching funding. As we speak today, we will continue doing that. I want to make clear that yesterday I might have referred to the fact that we'd had some messaging from the federal government that the project was over—I think you alluded to that as

well—but we haven't heard that political decision made yet, so I want to point that out in the Hansard.

Mr Bisson: I'm going to switch to French here. You're probably going to want to grab a translator.

Vous savez que juste la semaine passée il y a eu le Sommet de la francophonie à Beyrouth. Vous êtes au courant de ce sommet ?

Là, vous savez que justement à la fin de semaine passée il y a eu le sommet des chefs d'État des pays francophones du monde qui se sont rencontrés à Beyrouth, ce qui s'appelle le Sommet de la francophonie. Vous êtes au courant de cette rencontre ?

Mr Dunlop: I read about it very briefly.

M. Bisson: J'espère qu'il y a quelqu'un ici au bureau qui peut répondre à la question. C'est possible que vous aurez besoin de le demander au staff. Vous savez que votre premier ministre, M. Eves, a refusé la permission à M. Baird d'assister à ce sommet ? Vous êtes au courant de cette décision ?

Mr Dunlop: I understand that Mr Baird was invited to the summit.

M. Bisson: Il a été invité, mais le premier ministre a refusé que M. Baird voyage à Beyrouth pour représenter la communauté francophone de l'Ontario.

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Mr Dunlop: Mr Bisson, I'm not aware of who was invited and who was refused attendance at that francophone—

M. Bisson: Laissez-moi expliquer. Ce « meeting » à Beyrouth, c'est un meeting où tous les chefs d'État des pays francophones du monde se rassemblent. Ils sont rassemblés pour parler des dossiers qui sont importants pour les pays où la francophonie a un rôle important, comme en Ontario. Mais ce qui est arrivé ici en Ontario spécifiquement, c'est que le premier ministre a refusé d'envoyer un représentant de notre gouvernement, de votre gouvernement, pour aller représenter l'Ontario à ce sommet.

Ma question est très simple : pour quelle raison le premier ministre a-t-il refusé de participer à ce sommet très important pour la francophonie ?

Mr Dunlop: Is that the question, Mr Bisson?

Mr Bisson: Yes.

Mr Dunlop: I'm not aware of the—

Mr Bisson: I'll give you a chance to read your answer there, in fairness.

Mr Dunlop: First of all, I just want to say to you, coming from a part of the province of Ontario that has a very strong francophone community, the Penetanguishene-Lafontaine-Perkinsfield portion of my riding, I'm very interested in francophone affairs as well. We've had a number of events in my riding surrounding that. My understanding is that Jean-Marc Lalonde was sent to the event as a non-partisan.

M. Bisson: Je ne pense pas que vous compreniez la question. Premièrement, M. Lalonde n'est pas un membre du gouvernement. Le gouvernement m'a demandé d'aller assister. Moi, j'ai dit, « Non, je n'y vais pas; je ne suis pas un membre du gouvernement. »

Ce Sommet de la francophonie est un sommet très important des chefs d'État. Ma question est très simple : pour quelle raison M. Eves a-t-il refusé d'envoyer notre ministre M. Baird ou un autre représentant du gouvernement à ce sommet pour parler pour la province de l'Ontario ? C'est sous quel prétexte qu'il a dit non ? C'est ça que je veux savoir.

Mr Dunlop: I do not have the answer to that, I'm going to tell you right up front. I will try to find out that answer for you.

M. Bisson: Y a-t-il quelqu'un ici sur le staff du premier ministre qui sait la réponse ? C'est pour ça que vous amenez le staff ici.

Mr Dunlop: I can ask Mr Tony Dean if he would try to—

Mr Mazzilli: On a point of order, Mr Chair: I respect the question very much, but again, through you, we are doing estimates of the Office of the Premier. The minister of francophone affairs—

The Vice-Chair: Mr Mazzilli, the question is quite appropriate. I think Mr Dunlop is trying to see if there is a staff member who wants to respond. It's quite appropriate.

Mr Dunlop: My understanding as to Mr Lalonde is that it was not a case of any kind of refusal. It was a case of who actually was available to attend it. If I can find any more on that, I will certainly try to. But I understand the importance of the francophone summit; there's no question about that.

M. Bisson: Avez-vous quelqu'un ici qui peut répondre à la question que j'ai demandée ? Y a-t-il quelqu'un sur le staff qui est ici aujourd'hui qui sait la réponse ? Non ? OK.

Je vais être très spécifique avec ma question. Vous allez revenir ici la semaine prochaine, mardi, mercredi. Je veux que cette question ait une réponse. Le Sommet de la francophonie : sur quelle base le premier ministre ontarien a-t-il refusé d'y envoyer un représentant ? Je veux être très clair. C'était au mois d'août que j'ai contacté le bureau de M. Baird, qui voulait aller, comme notre ministre, nous représenter, et franchement, la décision de ne pas aller n'était pas la décision de M. Baird. Je comprends très directement que c'est M. Eves qui a refusé que M. Baird aille lui même. Moi, je veux savoir, c'est sur quelle base que M. Eves a fait cette décision ?

Mr Dunlop: I understand the question clearly. This is a little confusing at first, but I will certainly try to get a response for you on that. I'm not sure what Mr Baird's availability was, but I will certainly try to do that for you.

Mr Bisson: Thank you.

Mr Mazzilli: On a point of order, Mr Chair: I'm certainly trying to be co-operative in the spirit of things, but what we're asking is a hypothetical question: did the Premier refuse—

The Vice-Chair: That is not a point of order.

Mr Mazzilli: It is a point of order.

The Vice-Chair: No, it's not. I heard the question and it's relevant, and the parliamentary assistant agreed to get an answer. Could we proceed?

M. Bisson: Prochaine question, et c'est encore relié au bureau du premier ministre. Vous savez que sous le bureau du premier ministre M. Harris il y a eu une directive quand c'est venu à la politique des services en français : le transfert des responsabilités qu'avait la province pour donner les services en français. Pour expliquer un peu plus clairement, dans le passé, si le gouvernement provincial donnait un service et ce service était donné dans une région désignée sous la Loi 8, la politique était que la province de l'Ontario donnerait ces services en français.

Vous comprenez la Loi 8: si la province donne un service dans une région désignée comme là-bas chez vous, la province doit donner ce service en français.

Il y a eu une directive sous le gouvernement de M. Harris, quand il était premier ministre, qu'on était pour délaissier certains services provinciaux et que ces services allaient devenir la responsabilité des gouvernements municipaux. En faisant que ce soit transféré aux gouvernements municipaux, ça veut dire qu'ils n'ont plus la protection de la Loi 8 quand ça vient à donner ces services en français.

Ma question est très simple : est-ce que, depuis cette décision du bureau du premier ministre, il y a eu une manière de revue ou une manière d'étude pour déterminer jusqu'à quel point les services en français ont été affectés dans les services qui ont été délaissés aux municipalités ?

Mr Dunlop: Mr Bisson, thank you for the question. Again, I don't have an exact answer for that. I will try to have that response for you. I guess the next meeting is Tuesday.

M. Bisson: Si vous êtes capable de vérifier, là, je ne veux que vous demander de vérifier. C'est très simple : y a-t-il eu des études, y a-t-il une manière de revue pour regarder, c'était quoi l'effet quand ça vient aux services qui ont été transférés ? Y a-t-il une revue qui a été faite ? C'est ce que je veux savoir.

Mr Dunlop: Thank you. I'm not aware of any study but I think there are ongoing reviews of all these types of issues and that the ministry of francophone affairs and most ministries look at French as second language in our province as something very important. I know it's important in any of the ministries that I have been involved in. If there has been any kind of review taking place, I'll try to get that answer for you as soon as possible.

M. Bisson: OK. a couple of other questions; I'll come back to some other ones in that line a bit later. A number of staff members who have gone to work in the Premier's office were former lobbyists. Steve Pengelly is one. He worked I think for the linen and uniform service. He worked on the acquisition of the conservation authority lands near Kingston, so he was lobbyist working on behalf of various people out there. What kinds of safeguards have you put in place within the Office of the Premier to make sure that people like Mr Pengelly and others are not put in a conflict position when it comes to issues that have come before the Premier's office that they may have had contact with as lobbyists?

Mr Dunlop: You mean like any kind of integrity level?

Mr Bisson: Yes. There are people who come from various areas to work in the Premier's office who may be in a conflict position because they acted as lobbyists on behalf of various organizations or associations, and fair game; the Premier is allowed to hire people. So they went to work for the Premier. My question is, what kinds of safeguards has the Premier put in place to make sure that those people who were lobbying on behalf of those organizations or private interests are not in a conflict-of-interest position when it comes to dealing with issues that currently may be before the Premier's office that they dealt with in their former lives as lobbyists?

Mr Dunlop: My understanding of those types of concerns is that it is all part of the role of the Integrity Commissioner. He would look at that as well, not just for members but for the staff of the members. The Premier would expect nothing less from a person working as his chief of staff or in any other major position than not to be in a conflict-of-interest position.

Mr Bisson: But certainly there must be some policy that exists within the Premier's office to deal with this. Has the Premier established any kinds of guidelines for his staff? That's what I need to know: yes or no, has he any guidelines?

Mr Dunlop: Yes, and they would follow the Office of the Integrity Commissioner.

Mr Bisson: We understand, but that's not good enough, unfortunately. My question is, if I have been out there in the past lobbying on behalf of whatever, a private entity, and I go work for the Premier's office—fair game—I'm allowed to work there. But certainly to God there has got to be some kind of policy that makes sure that person doesn't end up in a conflict position when it comes to issues that currently may be before the Premier's office. So there must be a policy of some type, or a directive, if you can respond to that.

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Mr Dunlop: I'm going to ask Tony Dean from the cabinet office to respond to this.

Mr Tony Dean: I'm Tony Dean, Deputy Minister and associate secretary of cabinet, in Cabinet Office. As unclassified civil servants, political staff to my knowledge would be covered by the Management Board guidelines on conflict of interest and therefore would be required to declare a conflict whenever a situation arose where they thought their position put them into a difficult situation in relation to former employers or other associations. I can tell you from my personal experience that it is certainly commonplace for people in that position to declare conflicts and to absent themselves from discussions that could involve a former associate.

Mr Bisson: The very last question—do I have a couple of seconds?

The Vice-Chair: Make it very quick.

Mr Bisson: Have there been any cases where people have had to declare conflict?

Mr Dean: I'm certainly aware of situations where people have declared potential conflicts and therefore

have absented themselves from any discussion on files related to situations in which any person could perceive there to be a possible conflict of interest.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much. Mr Wettlaufer, 20 minutes.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Just as a further explanation, briefly, to Gilles Bisson's question: the Premier is very concerned about conflict because in 1996, when we were carrying on the discussion at committee level into automobile insurance, the then finance minister, now Premier, Ernie Eves wouldn't even let me sit on the finance committee looking into automobile insurance until he was sure I had sold my share of my business, even though I had received clarification from the Integrity Commissioner that I no longer had a conflict because I was a licensed intermediary.

Mr Bisson: I understand that.

Mr Wettlaufer: But at any rate I do want to ask a question of the parliamentary assistant. One of the things that has always struck me about measuring effectiveness of one office compared to another is financial management. You alluded, of course, to the fact that some Premiers' offices were spending more than our own Premier's office. I think we need to draw a comparison between the feds and other provinces as well as ours. I'd like to know exactly, precisely how our Premier's office measures up in comparison to others in terms of costs of operations.

Mr Mazzilli: And in terms of the federal government, perhaps.

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes, the federal government and the other provinces.

Mr Dunlop: Is that the question?

Mr Wettlaufer: That's the question, yes.

Mr Dunlop: We looked at this in some of my briefing for these committees, and certainly one of the ideas I had myself was, how do we compare it to other jurisdictions? We quite often do that with our corporate tax rates or our job creation or whatever it may be. I can tell you that in the province of Ontario, with a budget of \$68 billion and a population of just over 12 million people today, we spend about 0.005% of our overall spending of the \$68 billion on the Office of the Premier. We have to keep in mind that there may be different roles that each office plays, so we are not always comparing apples to apples in the operation of any Premier's office right across the country, or the Prime Minister's office. They will be similar but there could be changes—they are not exactly the same. In Quebec, our neighbour to the east, with 7.5 million residents and a \$50-billion budget, they spend approximately \$4.2 million in the Premier's office, or 0.008% of their budget. British Columbia, with a new government out there, with about a third of the population of ours, 4.1 million people, spent 0.01% of their budget of \$26 billion a year, or about \$2.7 million. So they are paying almost the same amount of money we are for the Office of the Premier. The Office of the Prime Minister I think is a fairly good number. I'm pleased with

what I see. They spend about \$7.3 million a year on the Office of the Prime Minister.

Mr Johnson: Oh, terrible.

Mr Dunlop: Yes, but it's a \$168-billion budget.

Mr Mazzilli: But are the jets in there, or are they in another budget?

Mr Dunlop: I don't know where the jets are.

There are about 31.4 million people in our country today, and so they come in just slightly less as a percentage of their gross spending than we as the province of Ontario. So it looks like as you get larger, you should become a little more efficient in the Office of the Premier, and that's what I was trying to say here.

Mr Wettlaufer: So there are economies of scale even in the Premier's office—or the first ministers' offices, I should say—and Ontario measures up quite favourably to the other jurisdictions.

Mr Dunlop: Very favourably, but we want it to be favourably. We don't want to come in as the highest percentage in any of the jurisdictions; we want the job creation to be the highest.

Mr Wettlaufer: No, I don't want you to come in higher than anybody else either.

You got into some discussions on the various departments and the various levels within the departments in the Premier's office. I wonder if you could be a little bit more explicit on the roles and responsibilities of the various departments within the Premier's office.

Mr Dunlop: Like exactly? More than what I've already said?

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes. I thought it was a little general. I was wondering if you could get into a little bit more specifics, or certainly repeat it. Maybe I stepped out when you got into some specifics; I don't know.

Mr Dunlop: I may ask Tony to just help me a little bit with this, because he works near the office all the time.

Mr Dean: Sure. I think it was important that I noted yesterday that there be some context on the nature of central agencies in government these days. That's important because, as all of you elected officials will know, the world—and policy-making and public policy—is becoming increasingly more complex. It's becoming more complex because very few issues are the domain of a single ministry any more. They tend to cross ministries; they tend to cross jurisdictions. Issues tend to be increasingly less local than multi-jurisdictional, and sometimes global.

For that reason, I think one finds, much as one looks at the range of expenses of Premiers' offices across the country, that there has been an increased emphasis in central agencies, in cabinet offices and the Premier's office, on supporting the Premier on intergovernmental affairs and those issues that cross jurisdictions, on ensuring that issues that cross ministry boundaries are connected and that there is coordinated policy, that the world of communications and issues management is well managed and that the Premier is well supported there. So again, as I mentioned yesterday, just as any ministry would, the Premier's office and the Premier have support

in the areas of policy, policy development and briefings for cabinet and cabinet committees so that he's apprised of the business of government, where his agenda is going and what the views of other parties and stakeholders are. He avails himself of communications support, of issues management support and a number of other supports in that office.

But I think it is important to note that the work of government is becoming more complex, is becoming broader in scope, and not just the Premier of Ontario but Premiers in other jurisdictions tend to need additional high-level support as time goes by to support those increasingly complex files.

Mr Mazzilli: I certainly want to get back to the estimates because I think it's important that we stay on the estimates of the Office of the Premier. It's amazing. Premier Eves is obviously running this operation very well. When you look at \$2.3 million in salary and wages for 44 people—mind you, there's a little bit more. The parliamentary assistant makes \$11,000, so he sort of tips the scale and runs away with quite a bit of the money. But if you divide that by 44 staff, with benefits, I believe you're into an area of \$48,000 a year in wages. Would that be the average in the Premier's office, somewhere around \$50,000—but that's with benefits, so it's actually large portion.

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Mr Dunlop: I think if you took an average, yes, it would be that.

Mr Mazzilli: So certainly I think the public can feel safe in knowing that the people who work all day, with benefits included, at an average of \$48,000, which is probably a gross salary of \$40,000—because the rest would be on the benefits portion—is something the public in my constituency could accept.

If you move along in the estimates, transportation and communications: \$112,000. I think it's pretty important for the public to know that the Premier in this province is very frugal; he treats tax money as if it were his own. Office supplies: \$20,000. With a total budget of \$3 million, through you, Mr Dunlop, if you can pass on to the Premier what a good job he's doing on running his office efficiently.

Mr Peters: I'm sure one of the researchers will read the Hansard and pass it on.

Mr Mazzilli: I certainly will pass any questions back to Mr Wettlaufer, who I'm sure will stay on the estimates.

Mr Dunlop: Can I make somewhat of a clarification on something? I didn't want to leave the committee with the thoughts of the transportation portion—you mentioned the \$142,000.

Mr Mazzilli: I said \$112,000.

Mr Dunlop: OK, \$112,000. Many of the Premier's trips or travel are covered by a particular ministry. If he's doing an event for education or for health, that would be covered.

Mr Mazzilli: But we're talking about the estimates of the Office of the Premier.

Mr Dunlop: But that would cover the expenses of the staff people, the 44 people in his office, and some of his expenses as well.

Mr Mazzilli: I understand, but we're talking about the estimates here, so if we could just stay on the estimates, I'd certainly appreciate it. These people who are expected to work for some \$40,000 a year that we're talking about in the Office of the Premier, and the leader of the official opposition has a stable of staff, I'm sure, making roughly the same type of dollars—

Mr Wettlaufer: And more.

Mr Mazzilli: And more. I'm just wondering if we can get back to—I think you said in your initial speech what those 40 people do who work for this \$40,000 average, issues and so on. Can you just go over that portion again as to what these people do?

Mr Dunlop: I'm going to let Tony answer that one.

Mr Mazzilli: Sort of to inform the public in Ontario as to what these 44 people do on a daily basis.

Mr Dean: Certainly. I think we could start with the chief of staff. The office of the chief of staff leads the Premier's office in implementing the government's overall agenda through long- and short-term strategic planning and coordination, and provides a one-window service to other members of the government team.

In terms of the policy area, I touched on this earlier. The policy unit in the Premier's office works with Cabinet Office and ministers' offices. I think that's important, because they are coordinating the work of ministers' offices to develop analysis and provide advice to the Premier on various government policy initiatives through the cabinet and legislative processes.

The policy team in the Premier's office seeks inputs from ministers and their staff, from MPPs and industry stakeholders and the Ontario public. It coordinates its activities with other Premier's office staff to provide communications, roll out advice on government policy initiatives, and propose responses also for issues that are raised in question period. So there's that support for question period.

Turning to issues management, I talked a little bit earlier about the complex world of issues management in an increasingly technological and complex society. This is the unit that provides issues management advice to the Premier and the Premier's office team. It coordinates issues management among ministers' offices, prepares the Premier or his designate for question period, and briefs the Premier and other members on issues and the government's proposed responses. That team provides advice to ministers' offices and their staff on issues identification, management of responses and also contributes to communications planning.

The communications group itself includes media relations. It works with other Premier's office department heads, together with cabinet office communications staff, to develop long-term communications plans and manage communications activities. The unit also manages the Premier's personal communications and coordinates corporate communications research and media monitoring.

That group is also responsible for media planning, including developing and implementing a media strategy for the Premier, and provides advice to the Premier, his staff, ministers and their staff on media relations, as well as acting as a liaison between the Premier and the media and representing the Premier to the media.

Tour and public events is a group that some questions were raised on yesterday. This is a group that plans schedules and prepares itineraries for the Premier's events, again working with communications. It integrates tours and events with the government's overall plan and strategy and essentially attempts to maximize coverage of public messages and coordinates the attendance of other members and guests. As well, of course, there is the function of caucus relations, which the parliamentary assistant spoke to yesterday, so it is a very busy operation.

Mr Mazzilli: Getting back to the estimates, we've got \$2.3 million over 44 staff. I realize there are some other things in there like the parliamentary assistant's salary of \$11,490, which tips the scale, and the Premier's salary of \$63,000 comes out of there. But is it difficult attracting high-energy, quality people, again with benefits included, in that \$40,000 range? Have you had difficulties with that? What kind of staff do you have?

Mr Dunlop: I think the Premier's office has excellent staff, Mr Mazzilli. There doesn't appear to be any problem attracting high-energy people for these positions. So many people would look at the Office of the Premier as something to be very proud of, to have had the opportunity to work with the Premier of the largest province in our country.

Mr Mazzilli: Obviously they're not doing it for the money when you look at the small amount.

Mr Dunlop: But it's important that people realize this is a very special place to work. You're part of a government that's had a great many accomplishments that we're all very proud of. I'm not aware of any problem in attracting high-level people for these jobs. I think that's been the history of all Premier's offices and Office of the Prime Minister over the years in this country of ours.

Mr Mazzilli: With that, I will pass it off to Mr Wettlaufer, who I am sure has some great questions.

Mr Wettlaufer: Mr Dunlop, we had a little bit of discussion yesterday about the Liberal leader's action plan and there has been some discussion about our government's action plan. I would certainly like to have some idea from you what the government's action plan is for this fall session. I know the Liberals are certainly interested in it too.

The Vice-Chair: Two minutes.

Mr Dunlop: Thank you very much for that question.

I know I've just got a minute here. At some point during these hearings I want to get Mr Art Daniels, who is with the Ontario public service, an assistant deputy minister—I do want a chance to show the overheads on the Ontario public service here. At some point, if the government members could allow us some time on that, I would really appreciate it.

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Our action plan is very simple. We continue to take swift, decisive action on issues that matter to Ontarians, and those are mainly health care, education and the environment. They appear to be the three priorities that government faces at all times, all governments, and we will continue to work that way.

Through the Ontario tax reduction program this year we've taken another 50,000 low-income earners off the provincial tax rolls, which means that 745,000 modest-income Ontarians will not pay any provincial income tax. However, those 745,000 people will pay an estimated \$375 million in federal income taxes.

This year under the Premier's leadership Ontario's credit rating was upgraded by Moody's, and I mentioned that earlier. That's something that hasn't happened since 1974 with this particular company, and we're very proud of it. The upgrade highlighted our four balanced budgets and the direction we plan to go in the future.

How much more time do we have here?

The Vice-Chair: Your time is exhausted.

Mr Dunlop: We can get back to this after.

Mr Peters: Something twigged my—one of the questions from the government side. Could you please tell me, Mr Dunlop, how many government jets the province owns, what the annual budget is of our fleet, and when was the last time we purchased jets in the province and how much we spent on jets?

Mr Dunlop: As far as I know right now the Ministry of Natural Resources has two jets, the two King Airs, and they're under the ownership of that particular ministry. Those are the two jets that are used by the Premier on special occasions and some of the cabinet ministers.

Mr Peters: How old are they?

Mr Dunlop: I'd have to get more—

Mr Peters: Could you find out and what the annual budget is to operate the jets?

Mr Dunlop: Yes, I'll get that for you. I don't know. There are two, though, and I know at one time I was on one.

Mr Peters: Well, I'm curious to know when is the last time we bought one, and how much it cost.

Mr Johnson: Maybe they're hand-me-downs from the Prime Minister.

Mr Peters: They might well be, I don't know. I think it's very important—

Mr Dunlop: Mr Peters, I just wanted to let you know that there are a number of other aircraft that are owned by the Ministry of Natural Resources as well.

Mr Peters: I'm curious what the Premier's office would use and the last time we purchased a jet that the Premier's office might use.

Mr Dunlop: Yes, OK.

Mr Peters: I think it is important, as well, that the Premier set the tone for the province as far as his own vehicles that he drives. I don't want to know how many vehicles, because I'm sure there are probably security issues and I respect that, but I would like to be assured, I would like to know if the vehicles that the Premier uses

are made in Ontario. If you don't have the answer for that, you could let me know as well.

Mr Dunlop: I'd have to get that information if it is at all possible. They are provided by the Ontario Provincial Police so I know that they—

Mr Peters: Well, that's good. Then there's a good chance that they're driving great St Thomas assembly plant Crown Vics. I'd just like to be assured that the Premier's fleet of vehicles is Ontario-built.

Mr Dunlop: I can't say that for sure.

Mr Peters: OK, that's fine. Thank you.

Next question: could you please tell me—and I'm assuming it must be in this budget here—what the cost was for the Premier's agricultural round table and any future projected costs of the Premier's agricultural round table?

Mr Dunlop: I'm quite sure that the round table was out of the office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. I don't think it was actually—

Mr Peters: But they called it the Premier's round table, so I'm assuming it came out of the Premier's budget.

Mr Dunlop: But it was an agriculture-related round table so—

Mr Peters: So if you could confirm that for me as well then.

Mr Dunlop: Yes, I'll try to do that.

Mr Peters: The point was made earlier about conflicts of interest and recognizing the importance of conflicts being declared. Does the public have the right to know on an issue that's being discussed at cabinet? What assurances do the public have to know that the Premier or a minister declared a conflict of interest? Is there a roll that's kept of some sort?

Mr Dunlop: My understanding is that the Premier, like all members of our government and all MPPs, has to abide by the laws of the office of the Integrity Commissioner.

Mr Peters: But how do I know that the Premier did or did not declare a conflict of interest? Is that information available to the public?

Mr Dunlop: I'll have to find that answer for you. I don't know that information.

Interjection.

Mr Peters: Yes, it costs me more money. I spend a fortune on FOIs as it is already.

Mr Wettlaufer: That's your problem.

Mr Peters: Well, if you guys would just provide the information—

Mr Dunlop: Can I add to that?

Mr Peters: Yes.

Mr Dunlop: My understanding is that any conflict is recorded in the minutes of cabinet.

Mr Peters: I know the public doesn't have access to the minutes of cabinet, but what assurances does the public have to know that—I don't even want to name a name on any issue. I won't go there with names.

Interjection.

Mr Peters: OK, I will be specific. Minister Hudak has recently married. His new wife is an employee of Hydro

One. How would I know that when any discussions come up at cabinet on Hydro One, Minister Hudak would declare a pecuniary interest? Because his decision could affect his wife's livelihood.

Mr Dunlop: I'll try to get you the exact answer to that question so I'm not having any part of a guesstimate here. I think it is covered through the cabinet documents and the Integrity Commissioner. I think that's important. But if there's a further step, I'll try to provide that for you.

Mr Peters: Thank you.

Mr Dunlop: Can I just add one other thing? I do have some responses for you on some of your questions from yesterday as well.

Mr Peters: I'd like to try to get through, because we've still got another day yet.

I noticed in the government phone book yesterday that there's a line for counsel. I'm assuming that's for legal work. I'm curious to know whether the Premier's office is still making expenditures in dealing with any issues relating to Ipperwash from a legal standpoint, and if you could table for us how much has been spent to date on legal counsel from the Premier's Office relating to the Ipperwash issue.

Mr Dunlop: I think I have a response for you on that.
Interjection.

Mr Peters: It's in the government phone book under the Premier's office.

Mr Dunlop: Over a period of five years, from November 1997 to May 2002, a total of \$990,000 was spent on the legal expenses of the Ipperwash suit.

The Vice-Chair: Say that again.

Mr Dunlop: It's \$990,000. That was paid for out of the Cabinet Office, not out of the Office of the Premier.

Mr Peters: That came out of the Cabinet Office budget?

Mr Dunlop: Yes.

Mr Peters: So even though it was Premier's office work, it came—I guess this comes back to my question yesterday, when under Cabinet Office we saw Premier's communications and Premier's correspondence. Again, we're dealing with the estimates of the Premier's office. I'm trying to get a handle on all those dollars that the Premier's office spends, but we're obviously not getting the full picture because—you've just said it now—expenditures made by the Premier's office are being paid for out of another ministry's budget. We're dealing with the estimates and trying to get a handle on what it costs for the Premier to do his job. It doesn't appear to me that all the figures that are associated with the Premier's office are accurately reflected in this estimates budget. It appears that other costs associated with the Premier's office are buried in other—

Mr Mazzilli: No.

Mr Peters: You just said, though, that the Premier's legal expenditures have come from the Cabinet Office. So this doesn't accurately reflect the true expenditure of the Premier's office.

Mr Dunlop: If I can, first of all, the Premier is entitled to that, and former Premier Harris was. The Cabinet Office is the Premier's ministry. I'm going to ask Mr Dean to elaborate a little more on that, if he would.

Mr Dean: As I mentioned yesterday, just as is the case in all of the ministries across government, the minister's legal fees or expenses would ordinarily be borne by the ministry itself as part of that range of administrative services that are provided by the ministry. So actually there is nothing unusual about a minister's, and in this case the Premier's, legal fees being paid by the ministry with which he or she is associated.

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Mr Peters: But I was just given the answer that the \$990,000 was expended by Cabinet Office. What ministry is cabinet?

Mr Dean: Cabinet Office actually operates as a ministry supporting the Premier, just as any other ministry would support its minister. It's important to think of Cabinet Office as the public service or civil service side of the Cabinet Office-Premier's office relationship. As with any other ministry, Cabinet Office provides a range of services to its minister, who in this case is the Premier. Again, this is consistent with the way those supports are provided right across government. There isn't anything exceptional about that in this case.

Mr Peters: So in order for us as members of the estimates committee—what I believe I'm being told is that we should have called not only the Premier's office, but Cabinet Office as well should have been called for estimates, so we would then have an accurate picture of all expenditures associated with the Premier. If Cabinet Office is backing up the Premier's office in doing work and providing services, we should have had Cabinet Office here as well.

Mr Dunlop: It would be a separate call, but you could do that in the future, yes.

Mr Peters: But to get the full picture of the Premier's office, you need Cabinet Office.

Mr Dunlop: Yes. It's also fair to say that the Premier's office, because of the effect it has on other ministries—for example, I said earlier that a flight for a Ministry of Education or a Ministry of Health function would include some of the cost to the Premier. It's safe to say that it is widely spread.

Mr Peters: Where would I find the budget for the Ontario's Promise office? It's my understanding that office space and support staff are being provided for former Premier Harris as the honorary chair of Ontario's Promise.

Mr Mazzilli: Volunteer chair.

Mr Peters: I realize he's volunteering for the position, but support staff and office space have been allocated for Ontario's Promise. Whose budget would I find that in, and how much is being expended to provide that support for former Premier Harris? My understanding is that a former employee of Mr Harris—Miss Kitty or Kitty—has moved from the Premier's office.

Mr Dunlop: Kitty Knight.

Mr Peters: Kitty Knight moved from the Premier's office to the Ontario's Promise office. Who's paying for her salary as well?

Mr Dunlop: Ontario's Promise: anything associated with that office or that budget is paid for out of the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services, Brenda Elliott's ministry. Of course you know former Premier Harris is the voluntary chairperson of that committee.

I thought I had a bit more information on it here. I actually have quite a bit of information on Ontario's Promise. Personally, I'm quite a strong believer. I don't know if you've been involved in Ontario's Promise functions, but I know that so far that partnership with Ontarians for the betterment of young people in our province has attracted very close to \$40 million in private sector investment to work toward partnering with organizations in all different communities across our province to make life better for children. I consider it really a very successful program. When you can attract that kind of investment, it's important to Ontarians.

I was at a phenomenal event out in Mississauga; this was one of the larger investments. Microsoft had an official opening or kickoff of an event where they supplied, I believe, close to \$4 million in computers for physically handicapped children—children who were born without limbs and this sort of thing—who could use computers, get in with the technology, get on the Internet and have full access to computers that a lot of other children in our province have. That was the largest one I'd be at—I was at the official unveiling of the little red wagon out there—but I was pleased to be part of that.

Mr Peters: But you don't have your wagon on right now.

Mr Dunlop: Yes, I forgot it today, but I will bring one for everybody next Tuesday. Certainly I was pleased to be part of that event, and I just can't think of the partner along with the government that was part of it. It was a club helping handicapped children in the Mississauga region.

Mr Peters: We're going to do a switch. The Chairman has some questions he would like to ask.

Mr Curling: Mr Dunlop, you have been so helpful. Sometimes some of your colleagues would say too helpful, but that's OK.

Mr Dunlop: Pardon me?

Mr Curling: They'd say you're too helpful; your colleagues might think you're too helpful.

Let me understand—maybe one of your staff could explain to me the difference between Cabinet Office and the Premier's office. I don't say it with any trick at all; I want to understand that. If Cabinet Office is a part of the Premier's office and if the Cabinet Office itself—I know the budget is not inclusive of that. I think my colleague Mr Peters is on to a good thing here. I just want to see if I can get some better understanding of that.

Mr Dunlop: Tony is the deputy minister of Cabinet Office. I'm going to ask him to respond to that. I think he

can give you better clarification than I can about exactly what the Cabinet Office does.

Mr Dean: Certainly. Cabinet Office, as I mentioned earlier, operates as the Premier's ministry. It's staffed entirely by classified civil servants, many of whom come directly from ministries and work with us for two or three years at a time before moving back. There are three or four main functions of Cabinet Office. Cabinet Office, of course, is led by the secretary of cabinet, Andromache Karakatsanis, who is also the chief civil servant in Ontario. In the secretary of cabinet role, Andromache is responsible for the machinery of government, for the operation of cabinet and its committees and, as the name implies, is the secretary of the cabinet, attends cabinet meetings and is the holder of cabinet minutes. In her role as the Premier's deputy minister, she would also offer the Premier policy advice.

There is also a policy coordination function in Cabinet Office, which reviews all the cabinet submissions that come forward from various ministries, prepares briefing notes on them and, if you like, puts those cabinet submissions on a track toward various cabinet committees and to cabinet itself, again providing briefings and value added to the decision-making process.

Mr Curling: I do understand that process. I was just trying to understand if the Cabinet Office budget is a part of the Premier's budget.

Mr Dean: It is entirely separate.

Mr Curling: The Cabinet Office budget reports to whom?

Mr Dean: Well, the secretary of cabinet is the head of Cabinet Office, and those budgets are allocated by Management Board as part of the estimates process.

Mr Curling: So it reports to Management Board then?

Mr Dean: It is Management Board that allocates the estimates and financing to various ministries.

Mr Curling: You've lost me again. I know that, but I was just trying to determine, because the Cabinet Office is one of supports of all ministers, where it reports?

Mr Dean: Well, ultimately to the Premier. The Premier appoints the secretary of cabinet and is, if you like, the minister of that organization. So the Premier is as any other minister would be at the ministry level.

Mr Curling: To determine the cost and effectiveness of the Premier's office—it seems to me that all the other ministries are supportive of the Premier's office. If he's flying out to Thunder Bay on education, I presume it is the education budget that picks that up, if that is what you are saying. Therefore the number that is reflected in the Premier's office budget is not really a number that's effective.

The Acting Chair: One minute.

Mr Curling: When my good colleague Mr Mazzilli was talking about getting good value for money, \$48,000 income for all those staff, what is happening is that an enormous number of other ministries are supportive of the Premier's office. Therefore, to say the budget is only three point something million dollars—it's a lot more

than that, because there's a whole lot of support and expenses that are not calculated under the Premier's budget.

While I can appreciate that the Conservative Party over there will brag about value for money, we really don't see the other expenses of the Premier's office that

are being supported under this jurisdiction. Cabinet Office and other ministries support it.

The Acting Chair: I'm afraid your time is up, Mr Curling. The time being 5:30, as agreed previously we're adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1733.

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