



ISSN 1181-6465

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Third Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Troisième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 30 October 2002

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mercredi 30 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
Greffier : Trevor Day

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
3330 Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley St W
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
3330 Édifice Whitney ; 99, rue Wellesley ouest
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400 ; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 30 October 2002

Mercredi 30 octobre 2002

The committee met at 1536 in room 151.

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Chair: I would like to move a motion that we—there is an hour and 58 minutes left on the estimates for the Premier. We would be agreeable that we do one hour total, 20 minutes per caucus. We would deem that the Office of the Premier estimates are terminated today and that we commence the estimates on intergovernmental affairs on Tuesday.

The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy): OK. If there is consent on that, then I guess we would deem that the time that has been allocated would have been used up by the various committees. Is that a consensus, then? Can I have that as a motion?

Mr Bisson: The motion is that the Office of the Premier estimates be completed after a one-hour—

The Chair: Subsequent one hour, 20 minutes per caucus.

Mr Bisson: Yes, and if people don't take it, so be it; and that we start the office of the—

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): That time dies with the caucus.

Mr Bisson: I didn't hear you.

Mr Chudleigh: If we don't take our 20 minutes, it dies with our caucus.

The Chair: There are caucus members dying in here today, Mr Chudleigh?

Mr Chudleigh: www.dead.

The Chair: OK. I think we have the gist of the motion. Just to finish off, Mr Bisson, you were saying then that it ordinarily would have been a half-hour for the subsequent Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Mr Bisson: We'd like to start it on Tuesday.

The Chair: We'd like to start on Tuesday. This has been conducting discussion with the government representatives and so forth?

Mr Bisson: Yes.

The Chair: OK, then I'll ask for all those in favour of that motion. Any opposed? Carried.

All right, we'll commence with 20 minutes, I guess, with the official opposition under this arrangement. Mr Curling.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Thank you so much, Mr Chairman. I don't have many

questions but just some explanation. Mr Dunlop, let me sing your praise a little bit. You have conducted yourself very well during the absence of the Premier, which as I tell you, I had hoped that the Premier would be here because this question that I am going to ask you—maybe you can give me some insight into this one.

I understand there was a convention of the party recently. There was a statement saying that embarrassment was done to the Premier when he decided to praise the former Premier, Mike Harris, and he wasn't there. I understand, too, that comments were made that staff of the Cabinet Office will roll: some firing may happen. I didn't know that the party was associated with the Cabinet Office. Can you clarify that? Is it a fact that that could be done if there's an embarrassment by the Premier? In here it says that it must be informed for issues. Could that be done, that people from the Cabinet Office could be fired in a situation like that?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm not aware of—is that the end of the question?

Mr Curling: Yes. That's the end of the question.

Mr Dunlop: Thank you very much for your kind words, Mr Curling. I appreciate them very much. Any embarrassment done to the Premier at our recent conference—I think it was held at the Metro Convention Centre. I don't know really what you're referring to. I have no idea if anyone, in fact, has lost their job as result of any embarrassment, and I don't expect that they would. At this time, something that has happened at a conference wouldn't normally project over to the Cabinet Office itself.

Mr Curling: Well, I'm very happy to hear that, because I know that members of that wonderful executive body have a way of expressing the fact that they are displeased with the staff: they'll fire them. I hope that the Premier, seeing how the staff of the Premier's office have conducted themselves here in the last couple of hours that we have in estimates—I wouldn't like to lose any of them because we want to use quite a few of them when we are the government. I hope that the Premier doesn't go about firing them under these conditions and that you can assure me that no firing will take place under these kind of conditions.

Mr Dunlop: Certainly it has been a pleasure for me to work through the estimates committee with the members of Cabinet Office as well. They are very knowledgeable on all issues that have come forth. We've done our very

best to provide as much information, to be as humanly open as possible, to all members of the estimates committee. We certainly appreciate your kind words about the employees of the Cabinet Office as well.

Mr Curling: Mr Dunlop, the assistant deputy minister made an excellent PowerPoint presentation with the IT equipment. We were all very impressed with that. I don't know about other members; other members seem to be unaware of this. Is this one of the guarded secrets of the government, that they have these facilities but they're not being used? Where are these things being used now?

Mr Dunlop: Thank you very much for that question, Mr Curling; I appreciate it. Certainly, Mr Art Daniels, the assistant deputy minister, when he briefed me prior to these estimates meetings—I too was very, very impressed. I didn't realize and I didn't understand the valuable contribution that our public service makes to the citizens of Ontario.

In fact, when we saw that we won the top award in all of the Commonwealth nations—I think it's now three years in a row that we've come up with outstanding awards in each of those categories—I know that it has impressed me very much. I think what we've looked at more than anything else is the efficiency that we found in the Ontario public service.

If you have any further questions that you would like to have answered or supplied to you today, Mr Art Daniels is here and I know he would be pleased to answer any questions to any of the members of the estimates committee.

Mr Curling: I would very much appreciate if Mr Daniels would come forward.

Mr Dunlop: He can sit right here beside me. We don't have his equipment here today, but—

Mr Curling: Let him sit beside the other deputy there.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): On a point of order, Mr Chair: I'd just ask that all the questions go to the parliamentary assistant, and he—

The Chair: No, no. In fact, Mr Mazzilli, the questions come to me as Chair. That's not a point of order, unless you'd like to finish it.

Mr Mazzilli: It is the Premier's estimates, and the parliamentary assistant—

The Chair: Mr Mazzilli, I will Chair this meeting and all questions and responses will be directed through the Chair. I thank you for bringing it to my attention but it is not a point of order. Mr Curling, please?

Mr Curling: I hope his time is extracted from my time. Don't you interrupt again.

Mr Daniels, as we said, it was quite an impressive presentation. Not only that, if these resources are available, I want to ask: are these resources that you have, are they available to members now, or where are they available if they're not available to members' constituency offices?

Mr Art Daniels: Everything that I spoke about yesterday is available to everybody. It's our public service. It represents what we do. Those services are available to everybody, absolutely. Just to give you an idea, I make

about 150 presentations a year all over Ontario, and I meet with delegations from other countries to let people know about the changes in the Ontario public service. Yesterday, before I arrived here, I was out at the Ministry of Transportation with a couple hundred of their employees to encourage them to keep up the good work and to keep doing quality service.

A few days earlier I was in London, celebrating public service excellence in that town, and St Catharines. It's my job to make sure—and everything I talked about yesterday is totally for everybody.

Mr Curling: There's no doubt that you have been very, very busy, Mr Daniels, but we have 103 members in constituency offices across the province, which I know, regardless of party stripe, questions are asked in all of the things that we do as a government, so to speak. But no member seems to be aware of this one. Maybe you want to correct that part of it.

The other part is, will it be available for members if they want a kiosk to be established in a constituency office? Can one request that and have it done?

Mr Dunlop: Thank you for the question. I'll also ask Mr Daniels to respond to that. I know that we are prepared today to table Mr Daniels's presentation that he made to the committee yesterday. I was aware of much of the background; not all the detail of it of course, but certainly things like the government information centres that we have across the province.

I have one, as I said yesterday, in the city of Barrie just adjacent to my riding. I know many members use those government information centres and send their constituency staff to them as well. I think it's imperative that all elected members of this assembly take advantage of these services that are provided by the government. I certainly think that your constituency staff would find a lot of links between not only services provided by the Ontario government but services provided by the federal government and, in most cases, the municipality in which the government services centres are actually located. I do want you to know that I was fully aware but with some additional information you provided for me yesterday.

Mr Daniels, if you could add to that.

Mr Daniels: Yes, I would be very pleased to share it, and in fact what Mr Dunlop said about working with our government information centres and the GICs and the constituency offices would be a wonderful thing. They would be very open to sharing that information back and forth. Again, as Mr Dunlop said, we are opening more and more of these, in co-operation with the three levels of government. So it truly is a one-stop shop.

The city of Sarnia, for instance, has all three governments co-located together so that the information is federal, provincial and municipal. So this is a good model of sharing between the three levels of government, and it would be really good source of information for your constituency staff, absolutely. If any of you wanted me to set up a session to talk to constituency staff about products and services, we'd be really happy to do that as well.

Mr Curling: I hear all of that, but I'm not hearing the fact that a kiosk could be established inside a constituency office for those who want it. I get many calls, requests, from my constituency office because they may be looking through the books and what have you. But could a kiosk be established inside a constituency office upon request?

Mr Daniels: There are no plans right now. They tend to be located in shopping centres, where people shop. They'll be at bus stops and air terminals, places where people congregate in large numbers. Let me just add, though, that for a constituency office, there are a lot of these products that are available on-line. If you have Internet access, a lot of these products like the Lost Wallet, the ones I was showing, the bereavement website, the Moving website, you could just—and I think we heard an example of it yesterday from Mr O'Toole—take your own terminal, your own PC, or have another terminal that is public access and on it would be all the on-line services. It's quite rich, the on-line service in Ontario.

By 2003 we hope to have the whole public service totally electronic. So it would be a really rich resource. Rather than a whole, big kiosk, just the ability for somebody who didn't have access to the Internet at home—or to work with your staff—can start a business; of if they've lost their driver's licence or if somebody died. It would be a very rich resource just to understand what's on the Internet, and that's where we could help you.

The gateway we've built is a simple gateway. On the very front page you could push Lost Wallet, Moving, death in the family. It's all very, very easy for people and I think there'd be a richness there in every constituency office, without a kiosk, just using the Internet.

Mr Curling: I hear all that you are saying and maybe I'm asking the wrong person the question. Let me ask Mr Dunlop, then, if he could take it upon himself to tell the Premier that this excellent service, notwithstanding the fact that we still have computers in the office, if a kiosk could be established in all the constituency offices for those who would require them.

I understand the fact that we have computers. Sometimes we have to wait to go through Queen's Park. They're always down and what have you. Could you take it upon yourself, sir, to see that one of those kiosks could be established in the office, for those members who want it?

1550

In the last estimates meeting we had here some members said they didn't want that; they wanted the personal touch. I would respect that, but I would see that it would be very, very helpful in my constituency. Could you do that, Mr Dunlop?

Mr Dunlop: I can certainly bring up any suggestion; there's no question about that. But I know that before the government would look at it we'd have to make a very, very strong business case. We have to—

Mr Curling: The business case is already made. The business case is that there's a need; that's why they

established this, and it can be put into kiosks in shopping malls. I am saying to you—

Mr Dunlop: However, if I may, the fact of the matter is shopping malls or an airport or a bus terminal may see 500 times as many more people in a day as what your constituency office would see. So a lot of the kiosks are located as a result of a good business plan being put in place, because these kiosks are in fact very, very expensive to install. I will definitely take back the suggestion. I just wouldn't make the commitment that it would happen, because of the huge expense involved with it.

Mr Curling: Mr Dunlop, I can't believe what I'm hearing from you. This wonderful presentation, this excellent stuff, and you're going to hide it and tell me, "No, no, no. If they want it, they should go down to Scarborough Town Centre where it's located." Here's this wonderful thing we spent all this money on and said, "Yes, we want to serve the people with it," and you say "Well, make a business case for it."

Mr Dunlop: And of course that makes so much sense coming from a government that is so fiscally accountable. Obviously you heard yesterday, as I indicated, that there were 61 of these kiosks in existence today and we are planning on another 300 by the end of the year 2003. All of these kiosks are being installed as a result of a good business plan. All I'm simply saying is that for a kiosk to be located in 103 constituency offices, a business case would have to be put in place, based on the number of people that visit the constituency office—

Mr Curling: Thousands of mine are asking about the hydro stuff and all that, but the simple fact is that—how much time do I have, Mr Chairman?

The Chair: You're looking at about five minutes, Mr Curling.

Mr Curling: Mr Dunlop, my business case has already been made. My business case was made when I was elected. My business case was made when they made a constituency office out of it. My business case was made with the fact that we have to serve the constituency. My business case was already made.

If I have to come back to the government again to remake that business case—I'm saying, why am I fighting this bureaucracy of the Premier's office and the place that has it to make another business case? I'm begging to serve the people, and you're saying to me, "Well, make another business case for me before I really do it." I am shocked, and I don't think you really mean that.

What I'll do is I'll put one part of my business case. I'm going to invite you to my constituency office, any day, if that's the case you want to make. I can walk you around my constituency office, but I'll show you off as the person who is resisting giving us the services that we need, and I don't want to do that. All you've got to do is send the kiosk over, because I think it would be a wonderful service to the people. It's their money anyhow. You tell me that 300 more are coming; 103 of those

should be put aside for the constituency offices to serve the people.

Mr Dunlop: Very simply, Mr Curling, if I may respond to you, it's taken a strong business plan and five years of good planning and business sense by Mr Daniels's group to get to where we are today. To establish 103 kiosks on an overnight plan, without any kind of a business plan, in our case, we would think that that would be a poor use of Ontario taxpayers' resources. In many cases the government business offices may be right down the street.

For example, my colleague in Barry, Mr Tascona: the government information services office is less than a block away from his constituency office. I'm not so sure that someone like Mr Tascona would really require a kiosk installed in his office.

Mr Curling: I really can't believe that—

The Chair: You have three minutes.

Mr Curling: In my two minutes I'm going to rant a bit. I'm going to say to you that I feel I am making a case. I feel I have an MBA student in front of me who is going to prove to me that I have to set out a plan before I get it. My hands are almost on this innovation, this great work that Art Daniels has done, and you're saying to me, "It's in a glass case. You won't touch it." You're saying to me that we spend lots of money on lots of study, but you say, "Give me another case study, give me another staff before I can get to it."

The people say, "I need information," and you say, "Go down the road," and they say, "But I'm here." You're saying we can make that business case so we can get that. I'm saying, reconsider that, because the people of Ontario, many of them—things are more complex now, as you said. There are more offices; they change their names.

Even your directory was not up to date; this was more up to date. Can you imagine? We went to the directory to find some of the stuff and you said, "You should be doing this great innovation in governance here, because we are up to date." They say, "No, it's down the road at the Scarborough Town Centre," which may be about four miles away from me.

I am saying to you, sir, make the case for us. I could then say, "We got something out of the estimates. They're spending all that money. The Premier wasn't here for the excellent presentation, but we got something out of the estimates."

Mr Dunlop: I just want to reiterate that at some point the Legislative Assembly, through the three different caucuses, may in fact look at a business plan for a kiosk in each constituency office. I think that's excellent information that you've provided and we'll look at that at some time in the future.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Curling, and thank you, Minister. I now turn to the third party and Mr Bisson.

Mr Bisson: First of all it's not minister, it's Mr Parliamentary Assistant, but I understood what you were getting at.

The Chair: In keeping with some of the positive accolades, we're happy to give Mr Dunlop a promotion in the context of his fine work here today.

Mr Bisson: I heard the suggestion—just to get off a little bit—by Mr Curling, and I think the suggestion was made by Mr O'Toole, to put those kiosks in constituency offices. I can understand the appeal of that to a certain extent, but it would certainly create and generate a heck of a lot more work for a constituency office. If we do that, I would argue, we need to go to the Board of Internal Economy and get the funds necessary to make sure we have adequate space and the staffing to do it.

I don't disagree, it may be a good idea, but you all know how busy your staff is. The staff of the constituency offices are probably among the busiest workers who work for the government. To load them down with yet another thing without a little bit of relief, I would argue, is a little bit unfair to them. But I understand what you're trying to get at. It's not a bad idea. I just wanted to comment on that.

Yesterday when we had gone through page 7, I believe it was—I had just raised the issue—it seemed that the accounting for the increase in salary for the Premier was all being accounted for in one year. I was wondering why we were doing that. The total amounts are the same. It doesn't change how much he gets and, as I said at the beginning of these estimates, I don't think the Premier is paid enough, but that's for another debate. Why did we account for it only in one budget year?

Mr Dunlop: I've got a statement for you. The annual 3% increase for all members was approved in August 2001.

Mr Bisson: Ah, so that explains it. So the estimates were drawn up before the actual—

Mr Dunlop: Absolutely. Therefore the 2002-03 estimates reflect the 2001-02 increase of 3% and the 2002-03 increase of 3%, for a total of 6%.

Mr Bisson: I understand now the logic of why it was done but does that mean to say—how did you manage to give him the increase last year? You had to take it from the existing budget, right? If you had not accounted for the 3% increase in the estimates of 2001, that means it was not put into the estimates of 2001. Therefore the Premier, rightfully so, got his 3% increase, I don't begrudge that, but you had to get it from somewhere. Where did you get it from?

Mr Tony Dean: It actually would have been paid from the allocation for that year and, as the blue book indicates, at the end of the year it actually came in below the estimates for that year.

1600

Mr Bisson: Therefore, when we look at this year, it takes into account—because he got 3% last year, that's put into the base for this year, and then the other 3% on top of that, so overall it works out to what it should be.

Mr Dean: Yes.

Mr Bisson: OK, that's an explanation. I accept that.

The other thing is, we had talked about travel. In fairness to the staff of the Office of the Premier, my

argument is not that people shouldn't travel with the Premier. I'm not even saying you guys spend too much. When I looked at the estimates, you were listing \$112,000, I believe, for total travel for the staff of the Premier and some of the Premier's travel, because as you explained yesterday, some of the Premier's travel is offset to other ministries. I'm just making the point—I know how much it costs me to travel, just as one individual member. I have a hard time believing that staff travel and some of the Premier's travel, as you said, only amounts to \$112,000. So my first question is, where do you get the rest of the money to do the traveling?

Mr Dunlop: We tried to make it as clear as possible that very few people in the Office of the Premier have traveling expenses. We've come up with as much information as we could overnight for you. I want to let you know that seven months into the year, effective yesterday, the Premier's office has only spent 30% of its allocation, of that \$112,000, which is equal to \$40,500 for this year. In a lot of cases there's only one person traveling ahead, on the advance. There's not an army of people or anything like that; there are one or two people maximum.

Mr Bisson: I'm not raising this to be argumentative, but having been in government, I understand how it works. You've got an advance person who goes out for the Premier. Typically, the Premier would travel a fair amount in one year, I would imagine, so that person has to get around. Either they've got to rent a car and pay mileage or they've got to take airplanes. It seems to me just the travel for that one person would be more than the \$40,000 you talk about now.

Then when the Premier does travel, he has to bring people with him, and rightfully so. You can't let the Premier go off on events on his own. God knows what trouble politicians would get into if we went alone without our staff sometimes, let alone Premiers of Ontario. So you have to be accounting for it in another way. Either you throw everybody on the government plane, and in the MNR budget, all of the travel for the Premier showed up on the MNR plane—is it still the Ministry of Transportation that has the government cars? It is still MTO, I would imagine, that runs the government cars. Then it would mean that all the rest of the travel he does outside of the aircraft would then be offset to the Ministry of Transportation. That's the only way I think it can be done.

Mr Mazzilli: Teleconferencing.

Mr Bisson: Oh, yeah, teleconferencing, right. Good try, Frank.

My point is this: I don't begrudge that the Premier has to travel. I accept that. I think the Premier should be traveling a lot and I accept that it's going to cost money. My point is that if we're off-booking some of the expense of his travels by way of MTO and MNR, because those are government assets that we're using for him to travel, why isn't there some sort of an accounting process so we can know that, so we can see that when we

look at the estimates? We'll let the parliamentary assistant get the briefing.

Mr Dunlop: I'm sorry for the delay there. I just want to make clear that quite often the Premier is traveling with his security, and that vehicle is supplied by the Ontario Province Police

Mr Bisson: So the Sol Gen's office picks that up.

Mr Dunlop: Yes.

Mr Bisson: That's my point.

Mr Dunlop: That's historically how Premiers have done a lot of their traveling in the province, and he may have a staff person with him at that time.

I'm going back to my original comments that there's not a lot of traveling expense in the Office of the Premier.

Mr Bisson: Well, there is travelling expense. The argument you're making, and I understand it, is that much of the cost is picked up by Sol Gen when he gets into the car that's supplied to him by the OPP, much is offset by MNR when he takes the government plane and much is offset by MTO when he takes the government car to go wherever. All I'm saying is that it would seem to me that we want to make that as transparent as possible. We, as members—and all the other 102 members, plus me—every year a report comes out and says, "Bisson did \$55,000 to travel to his riding and he spent X amount of dollars of travel in his constituency," and I accept that. That's where I'm going here. I accept, as a public official, that people have the right to know how I'm expending the money I'm given to do my job. It seems to me that we should be doing the same thing when it comes to making clear that we understand how much money is being spent for travel by the office of the Premier and overall through his travel himself. This will be the question, and you can give me a yes or a no: are there any plans on the part of the Office of the Premier to set up an accounting system that's more transparent when it comes to the off-book travel that he does, off to OPP and others? Are there any plans to do that?

Mr Dunlop: It's my understanding that there are no plans and nothing is being reviewed at this time.

Mr Bisson: OK. You answered the question that I wanted, so I'll just move on to the next one.

The other thing I noticed—and we had asked about this at the very beginning of estimates on the first day of the Premier, and that is, was I correct in understanding that there are no contractual services within the office of the Premier, that all of the staff that have been working for Ernie since the time he's become the leader are actually payroll, they're not on contract?

Mr Dunlop: That's my understanding, yes.

Mr Bisson: That is. At this point, that includes all temporary—all forms of contract; I don't have to go through them all. Nobody is on contract and nobody has been on contract at the Office of the Premier since his election as the leader of the party?

Mr Dunlop: That's my understanding, yes.

Mr Bisson: OK. I just want to make sure we're clear. The other thing is—and this is going to be my last

question; I don't need the full 20 minutes—we had raised the issue of conflict of interest. There are a number of people that work in the Premier's office who had interests outside of here when they came to the Premier's office, and that's fair. If I'm the Premier of Ontario and I'm elected, I'll bring people around me and some of those people will have worked in different areas and different industries across the province. What kind of mechanisms do you have in the Premier's office to make sure that those people are removed from any of the decision-making or advice that they give to the Premier so that it doesn't appear that there's a conflict of interest? For example, somebody who may be working in the energy sector prior to coming to the Premier's office is not in the loop when it comes to making decisions or advising the Premier on crucial policy decisions around employers they may have worked for.

Mr Dunlop: If I may, I'm going to ask deputy minister Dean to answer that question.

Mr Dean: Yes, I think it's fair to say that most people coming to government, either on the civil service side or the political side, have some sort of professional past. There is always the potential for conflicts to arise, so there are actually procedures and requirements that would require those who may even be perceived to be in a conflict of interest to declare that conflict to different persons, depending whether that person is on the political side or the civil service side, and, having declared that conflict, to absent themselves from any meetings or decision-making in relation to institutions with whom they may be perceived to have been associated. That actually is a requirement and responsibility that is taken exceptionally seriously and is pursued with some vigour. Yes, there are potential issues. People are aware of those issues and they conduct themselves according to the rules and requirements that are in place.

Mr Bisson: So what you're saying is that there is a process that's established at the Premier's office. I don't want to get into the details, but if somebody feels that they may be in a conflict position with a former employer, there is a process to absent them from that decision-making process.

Mr Dean: That's correct.

Mr Bisson: I agree with Mr O'Toole that should have been in Mr MacAulay's office. It would have been a good idea.

My next question is have there been instances since Ernie has taken over when that actually in fact has happened, where people have had to declare conflict?

Mr Dean: Right now I can't recall any particular instances, but I do know that, from time to time, I have certainly observed political staff declaring that they could be in a potential conflict and absenting themselves very early in discussions and having no further part. Yes, so if you're asking do people follow through on those expectations and requirements, in my experience they do and they take it very seriously.

Mr Bisson: Let me ask you this question: are you satisfied that in fact people are taking that seriously and

that people are not putting themselves in a conflict position, in your position as a senior civil servant?

1610

Mr Dean: Yes, I am confident that people are aware of their responsibilities and that they exercise them. I cannot say, of course, that in every possible situation that actually occurs, but to my knowledge people take those responsibilities seriously and they're fairly scrupulous, both on the civil service and political side, and potential conflicts are declared and people conduct themselves appropriately. So I'm fairly confident that this is something that people understand broadly and act appropriately in a broad range of circumstances.

Mr Bisson: Last question on that venue, that list, that sort of tack: is there any mechanism for registering when there is a potential conflict, that it's actually noted in some way, so that you are able to cover yourself off should there be, for example, an allocation that somebody was in a conflict position and all of a sudden it becomes a public issue? Is there some sort of log or something that indicates that, in fact, this person has removed themselves from a potential conflict position, in order to cover them off should something happen?

Mr Dean: I can say that at the cabinet level those declarations of potential conflict are minuted and the persons declaring conflicts receive a copy of that minute. It would be prudent in the normal course, depending on the circumstances, for individuals on staff to perhaps put a memo on file or to keep a record of the fact that they had identified a potential conflict and declared it. Yes, so depending on the circumstances there are both formal and informal methods of recording those situations.

Mr Bisson: The closing comment I want to make is that I want to thank Mr Garfield Dunlop for having attended with us. I think you have conducted yourself fairly well. I look forward to seeing, I guess it's Mr Gill who'll be next up. I look forward to the same co-operation that we received from you in questions. With that, I will cede my time. That's it. No more questions.

Mr Dunlop: Mr Chairman, if I may through to Mr Bisson, I'll be doing the estimates for intergovernmental affairs as well.

Mr Bisson: I'm just curious. Why is that? I thought Gill was intergovernmental?

Mr Dunlop: He's doing other projects for the Premier. I'm doing the estimates.

Mr Bisson: Isn't that a bit of a slap type of thing to him?

Mr Dunlop: I don't know. I think everybody has different projects.

Mr Bisson: I'm disappointed. I would have liked to have seen Mr Gill. I'm just a bit surprised that he's not doing it.

The Chair: Merci, Monsieur Bisson.

Mr Bisson: Merci. Just to put the committee on notice, when we come back to intergovernmental affairs, I have a series of questions in French that I want to ask, so can we have translation ready here too, please?

The Chair: Yes, we will make those arrangements. We now come to the government caucus and Mr O'Toole.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Yes, I'm finding this very instructive—not just the presentation we had yesterday but the openness, and I do want to compliment the Premier's parliamentary assistant.

The Chair: Was there a question?

Mr O'Toole: There is a question, but I just want to get on. Mr Daniels, I'm very interested in your initiatives and I'm looking at issues that I know for me are customer service issues, and that's how I see my office, as an access to government. Such things as OSAP applications. There's a 1-800 number that's a total time waster for most students trying to find out if they qualified or not.

I guess my question is, are there any mechanisms today under the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities where, with the double cohort and their acceptance—there's a clearinghouse for all that today; it's probably under the ministry—we could actually have that information available on-line so we could help to ease the bottleneck or congestion around both the acceptance, which is all done through Sault Ste Marie or some place like that—Sudbury I think it is—and/or the OSAP acceptance? This would be very helpful for us because we then have to call the 1-800-blah number and sit and wait.

There are other issues too. I can think of nothing but this technology should be invasive—things like the Family Responsibility Office. I'm elected, I take an oath, I should be able to see the file, the record. If the person's not comfortable or competent doing it, that is not an excuse for not doing it. I can only say that, for instance, the phone book should not be printed, it should be on-line. Other suggestions: for instance, the current budget and public accounts records are printed, they're on a file somewhere. I want access.

I put to you that for us to do our job more effectively, I should not have to call someone on anything that I can think of that I do provide a service for. I'm not blaming, and this may just be the tone of my voice, but Mr Daniels, I've watched you push the edge of the envelope of customer service, and I commend you for that. But I think as a government, if you want to go e-government, I want to be the pilot for that activity. I worked in systems for 30 years. We're 30 years behind business, actually. I just wonder, is any of that doable?

Mr Daniels: The Internet access, like OSAP, is the best way for students to deal with—

Mr O'Toole: Exactly. On-line.

Mr Daniels: On-line, not the use of the telephone. In fact the telephone is discouraged because all our research indicates that using on-line access and the ability to get to an on-line access because—I want to just go back to the other question. At every one of our GICs is free on-line access to the government. So in other words, if you don't have it at home, you can come down to a government information centre or you can come to a library, and of course at universities it would be available for kids. Both my students use the on-line services.

I agree with what you are saying. We've got to keep ahead. Just an example: the budget that you mentioned can be distributed electronically.

Mr Chudleigh: We have one more question from Mr Mazzilli.

Mr Mazzilli: I certainly thank Mr Dunlop. You've done a great job. The Premier's office has done a great job. Summarizing, it's been a busy fall session, a busy and active government. Can you just highlight some of the priorities that the Premier has for the rest of the fall session? And if you could wrap up on that note.

Mr Dunlop: Well, I think—

Mr Bisson: You've done a great job. Thank you.

Mr Dunlop: I can sense that there's—

Mr Bisson: I was being helpful. Come on.

Mr Dunlop: I think it's fair to say that the government will take swift, decisive action on issues that matter most to Ontarians, most notably health care, education and the environment. Those will be our priorities as we go towards the end of this fall session, and again, I do appreciate your comments.

Mr Mazzilli: That's good. Mr Chair, we'll waive the remainder of our time.

The Chair: OK. I thank the members for their contribution at this examination of the estimates of the Office of the Premier. Now comes the time in the proceedings when we look at the vote, and there is a single vote. The vote is in the amount of \$1,977,900. This is the vote less the statutory appropriations.

Shall vote 2401 carry? The vote carried.

Shall the estimates of the Office of the Premier carry? The vote is carried.

Shall I report the estimates of the Office of the Premier to the House? We have consensus.

Again, thank you all for your contribution today.

The committee adjourned at 1618.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 30 October 2002

Office of the Premier	E-285
Mr Garfield Dunlop, parliamentary assistant to the Premier	
Mr Art Daniels, OPS Restructuring Secretariat, assistant deputy minister, quality service	
Mr Tony Dean, Deputy Minister and associate secretary of cabinet, policy	

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Chair / Président

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park L)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River L)

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James ND)

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton PC)

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River L)

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park L)

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe PC)

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka PC)

Mr John O'Toole (Durham PC)

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London L)

Substitutions / Membres remplaçants

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North / -Nord PC)

Clerk / Greffier

Mr Trevor Day

Staff / Personnel

Ms Anne Marzalik,
Research and Information Services