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Mardi 5 novembre 2002

**Standing committee on
estimates**

Ministry of
Intergovernmental Affairs

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère des Affaires
intergouvernementales

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 5 November 2002

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*The committee met at 1542 in room 151.*MINISTRY OF
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling): We are here today for consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs. We will commence with vote 1501, item 1, and we welcome the parliamentary assistant. The rules of the game here are that you have a 30-minute presentation, then the official opposition will respond for 30 minutes and the third party will have 30 minutes. You may begin, Mr Gill.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Thank you, Mr Chair and members of the committee. I'm very pleased to be able to do that. I didn't have much notice, but I'm happy to be here.

Let me start by saying again, officially, that it's a pleasure to appear before the standing committee to discuss the estimates of the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The Vice-Chair: We're glad to have you.

Mr Gill: I would like to begin by providing the committee with an overview of the ministry's organization and major activities.

The Vice-Chair: May I ask before you start, do you have copies of the statement? Could that be made available to us soon?

Mr Gill: Thank you for reminding me. We will try and make sure we get those copies after completion, within the next few days if that's OK with you.

The Vice-Chair: I'd much prefer that we have it as early as possible. A few days seems to be quite extensive.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Chair.

I will discuss Ontario's approach to relations with the federal government and the other provinces and territories. Also of importance, I will review several of the positive and constructive steps this government has undertaken in pursuit of its intergovernmental goals.

My remarks will be divided into two sections. First, I will discuss the ministry's budget and its core business. Then I will describe some of our key intergovernmental files in order to give you a better understanding of what we have achieved.

As you know, the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs is a small ministry and it has become even smaller over the last few years. The staff complement in

the fiscal year 2002-03 is 38.5 full-time equivalent positions. This represents a decrease in staff of 41.6% since fiscal year 1995-96. The ministry's budget in 2002-03 is \$4.56 million. I must highlight that this represents a 20.7% decrease since 1995-96. We have been able to achieve these savings by reducing our administrative costs and developing new ways of doing business.

The overall structure of the ministry consists of a policy division and a small main office comprising the minister's office and the deputy minister's office.

How are we doing time-wise? Do I still have a few more minutes?

The Vice-Chair: Keep going. You have lots of time. You have 27 minutes.

Mr Gill: Good. I have a lot to say, Mr Chair, if you will allow me. It's an important ministry and I want to make sure we spend the time together in the committee, because that's what the committee is for, to understand the core business and some of the initiatives the ministry has taken. It is important for me to point out, as I said, that the ministry's budget has decreased from before and is running very efficiently. I'll touch on that as I go along.

The policy division has been organized into a project-oriented team structure that makes best use of existing resources and enables the ministry to provide policy advice across a broad spectrum of intergovernmental activities.

The ministry recognizes the necessity of being both efficient and effective in the delivery of services. The organization is small, flexible and fully accountable. The ministry has taken measures, including strict expenditure control and full program evaluation, to ensure that all non-essential expenditures have been eliminated and that it can cope with unforeseen cost pressures.

I would now like to say a few words about the ministry's core business and principal functions.

Ontario is involved in numerous federal-provincial and interprovincial issues. The Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs provides advice and analysis on the most effective ways of managing these diverse issues.

To support this core business, the ministry divides its work into two related components. The first component can be labelled Ontario in the federation.

The ministry provides advice to the Premier and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs on key intergovernmental issues in order to ensure that Ontario adopts a consistent corporate position across all sectors.

At the same time, I think it's important to note that the ministry works to improve relations with the federal government and with other provinces and territories. It does this in several ways, and I'll try to highlight some of them.

It does this by maintaining contact with key officials in these jurisdictions, by monitoring events and opinions across Canada and advising on the potential implications for Ontario, and by taking a leadership role in attempting to broker consensus positions that will strengthen Ontario's hand in intergovernmental relations.

The ministry also offers advice and assistance, as appropriate, to other Ontario ministries that are involved in negotiations with the federal government or other provinces and territories.

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Mr Chair, I understand my remarks are being translated for the benefit of people who may have French as their first language, so I want to welcome the viewers who might be watching this currently or who might be interested in seeing this later on. We're quite please to be able to offer this.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Are you going to speak French?

Mr Gill: I shall attempt it later on, Mr Chudleigh, even though Punjabi has become the second most spoken language in my riding.

Mr Chudleigh: You can give us a few minutes of that.

Mr Gill: Thank you.

The second component of our core business relates to the annual Premiers' conference and first ministers' meetings. The ministry coordinates Ontario's participation in these meetings, and in doing this it works closely with other Ontario ministries. The aim is to support the Premier. Working with the Premier's Office and Cabinet Office, the ministry coordinates the development of Ontario's policy and communications objectives for these meetings and ensures that strategies to implement these objectives are developed.

MIA, or the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, is also involved in the planning that precedes sectoral intergovernmental meetings. The goal here is to ensure that Ontario's position at these meetings is consistent with Ontario's overall intergovernmental objectives and with any commitments previously made by the Premier.

In concluding this section of my remarks, it might be useful to describe the ministry's vision as set out in our business plan. I'll talk about the vision briefly.

The Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs will ensure that Ontario continues to play a constructive role in strengthening the Canadian federation and preserving national unity, while promoting a secure and prosperous Ontario. I think it's important to highlight that, and I'll continue.

In partnership with other Ontario ministries, the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs will advance the government's priorities by providing advice on intergovernmental issues. The ministry will work with the federal government and other provincial and territorial

governments to improve the way in which both orders of government co-operate to provide efficient and effective programs for Canadians. If I may highlight, I think "co-operate" is very important.

Interjection.

Mr Gill: I'm sorry, Mr Peters?

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): No, it's not a question. I'll wait.

Mr Gill: Thank you. I have a lot more to say. I'm sure there'll be other questions as we go along.

At this point, I would like to speak briefly about intergovernmental relations as a structural feature of Canadian federalism.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Say that again.

Mr Gill: I would like to briefly talk about intergovernmental relations as a structural feature of Canadian federalism.

It is rare in this country to find a field of public policy that does not have some degree of intergovernmental involvement. The division of powers in the Canadian Constitution, combined with the spending power of the federal government, gives an intergovernmental dimension to a vast range of programs and services. In this context, intergovernmental consultations are simply unavoidable.

For the most part, these interactions are cordial and lead to a positive result. At times, however, there can be disagreements and even conflict. Unfortunately, the conflicts draw more attention than the more numerous issues that are resolved amicably. Because the actions of one order of government can have such significance for the affairs of the other, mechanisms must be in place to assist dialogue and co-operation.

The Constitution divides jurisdiction into areas for which the federal government is primarily responsible, such as defence and foreign policy, and those for which provincial governments are primarily responsible, such as social programs and education. There are also areas of shared jurisdiction, such as the environment and agriculture.

I hope I'm not going too fast, because I want everybody to understand the intricacies of how the intergovernmental affairs ministry works.

This being said, the federal government also has an additional lever, the power to spend federal money, and therefore to influence policy, in areas of provincial jurisdiction. It can do this by transferring funds to the provinces for certain specific purposes; for example, the Canada health and social transfer, CHST. It can also do it by providing direct transfers to individuals and organizations, as in the case of the millennium scholarships and social agencies that address homelessness.

Canadian federalism is characterized by both co-operation and competition among governments. Both levels of government frequently agree on what they want to achieve, but they do not always agree on the best route to realize those achievements. It is the role of the MIA and its counterparts at the federal level and within the

other provinces and territories to build the bridges that allow constructive dialogue to occur.

Let me describe some of the more significant inter-governmental issues with which the Ministry of Inter-governmental Affairs is currently involved. I would like to begin with health care. Health care is one of the most important issues on the federal-provincial agenda. This is understandable given the enormous sums of money involved in operating this program.

Survey after survey has confirmed that health care is the number one priority for the majority of Canadians, so it is essential that the federal and provincial governments work together to ensure the delivery of quality services to people, when and where they need them.

The discussions around health care have covered two main areas: health care reform and health care funding. Let's look at each of them.

Ontario is participating in several collaborative projects with the other provinces and territories aimed at enhancing the operation of the health care system.

In January of this year, the Premiers met in Vancouver specifically to discuss health care. During this meeting, they identified a series of initiatives they could jointly undertake to improve the operation of the system and, potentially, to save money. I think that's important as well, to make sure the governments are run efficiently.

The initiatives they agreed upon are as follows.

First, a common drug review process is being established to determine which new drugs should be added to provincial formularies. This ends the needless and costly duplication of effort that occurs when every province establishes its own review process.

Second, provinces are taking steps to streamline their approval processes for generic drugs so that effective but less expensive drugs can be made available more quickly.

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Third, sites of excellence, designed to allow provinces to share specialized medical procedures, are being identified in areas such as pediatric cardiac surgery, gamma knife neurosurgery, and brain repair. The sites offer particular benefits to smaller jurisdictions that could not provide all of these specialized services on a cost-effective basis within their own borders.

At the same meeting, Premiers agreed to establish the Premiers' Council on Canadian Health Awareness. The mandate of this council is to enhance public understanding of the challenges facing health care today. Provinces each agreed to contribute 20 cents per capita for two years to fund this work, and the council was officially launched in September 2002.

By working together in the ways that I have just described, provinces and territories have made significant progress in improving the services available to Canadians at a lower overall cost.

Health care reform is only one aspect of ensuring that the health system is sustainable over the long term. The other aspect is funding, which is also a very important aspect of health care. Cost pressures resulting from such things as a growing and aging population and expensive

new technologies are placing a tremendous burden on our health care system.

Recognizing this, all provinces and territories have committed ever increasing amounts of money to ensure that health care is adequately funded. Increases in health budgets regularly outpace the incremental revenues generated from economic growth.

To illustrate, provincial-territorial health care spending has grown by an average of \$4.25 billion per year over the past five years. Ontario has increased its funding for health care to \$25.8 billion in fiscal 2002-03 from \$19.1 billion in fiscal 1998-99, an average annual increase of 7.8%. Health care spending now accounts for about 47% of total program spending in Ontario.

Unfortunately, these increases are not being matched by the federal government, a fact that greatly concerns all Premiers, regardless of their political affiliation. I think it's important; let me repeat that: unfortunately, these increases are not being matched by the federal government, a fact that greatly concerns all Premiers, regardless of their political affiliation. Let me provide some background, members of the committee.

When medicare was first introduced in 1968, Ottawa paid 50% of the total cost of the services that were then covered. Since that time, the scope of the program has increased, with corresponding cost increases, while the federal government has sought to protect itself from the resultant fiscal pressures.

In 1977, the federal government and the provinces agreed to implement a new transfer program, established programs financing, EPF, the established programs financing arrangements. It included a cash transfer that grew at the rate of GNP and a transfer of tax points from the federal government to the provinces. But in the years following the agreement, Ottawa unilaterally eliminated the GNP escalator and raised taxes, effectively reoccupying the tax room it had given up.

In 1996-97, the federal government replaced the EPF, established programs financing, and the Canada assistance plan, CAP, with the Canada health and social transfer, CHST. In so doing, it merged its health care and post-secondary education transfers with those for other social programs and made massive funding cuts at the same time.

CHST cash transfers now total only 14% of total provincial-territorial spending on health and other social programs, less than what it was in 1994-95, when total cash transfers were equal to 18% of spending in those areas. CHST cash entitlements for Ontario in 2002-03 are only \$415 million more than the province received for 1994-95. Meanwhile, total spending by the province on health, post-secondary education and other social programs has increased by almost \$9.5 billion.

As provincial governments have grappled with this challenge, Ontario has played a leading role in trying to encourage the federal government to become, once again, a full partner in meeting the rising costs of health care. "Full-partner," Mr Chair, as I said earlier, means we expect 50-50.

The provinces and territories have taken several initiatives to support their call for increased federal funding for health care. Let me briefly describe some of them to you. Letters have been written to the Prime Minister and the federal finance minister from the Premier of Ontario and the Ontario Minister of Finance urging the federal government to restore the cuts.

At each annual Premiers' conference since 1998, Premiers have called for the CHST to be restored to at least its 1994-95 level of 18%. Ontario mounted public information campaigns in February 2000 and December 2001 in support of the position taken by the provinces and territories. Since the 2000 annual Premiers' conference, Premiers have also stressed the need for an appropriate escalator to be applied to the CHST that would adjust the level of funding each year to reflect increasing program costs.

At the 2002 annual Premiers' conference, Premiers called on the federal government to join them in a new funding partnership for health care and urged the Prime Minister to call a first ministers' meeting after the release of the Romanow commission report and before the next federal budget.

All these efforts have produced some positive results. At the September 2000 first ministers' meeting, the federal government announced it would increase its contribution to health care funding by \$21 billion over five years. However, even after this increase, the federal contribution through the CHST remains 4% lower in percentage terms than it was before the 1994-95 cuts. More needs to be done.

In the September 2002 speech from the throne, the federal government committed to convening a first ministers' meeting on health care in early 2003. In his response to the speech from the throne on October 1, the Prime Minister said that details of enhanced federal support would be set out in the next budget. As you can see, Ontario, in partnership with the other provinces and territories, has kept up the pressure on the federal government to increase its support for health care.

Let me now turn to another example of intergovernmental activities: the social union framework agreement. At the August 1995 annual Premiers' conference, Premiers agreed to make social policy reform and renewal a shared priority. As a step toward the realization of this goal, they established a ministerial council. This was the seed for the social union framework agreement, or if I can use the abbreviation, SUFA, as it has become known. Soon after, the federal government joined the process.

The social union framework agreement was signed by all first ministers, except Quebec, in February 1999. Its purpose was to make social programs more efficient and effective for Canadians by providing a framework for better co-operation among governments.

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The framework is an administrative agreement that includes several important provisions. First, governments are to be accountable to their constituents for the social programs that they provide. This includes monitoring outcomes and regular reporting on performance. Second,

governments are to ensure that Canadians have mobility within Canada by eliminating unreasonable residency-based policies or practices that constrain access to social programs. Governments are also to ensure that no new barriers to mobility are created in new social policy initiatives. Third, governments committed themselves to cooperate with one another before implementing new major changes in social policy that will significantly affect another government. Finally, the federal government committed to consult with provinces and territories on the use of the federal spending power to fund new or revised social programs in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

In conclusion, Mr Chair—I have a lot to say, but I understand that you are only going to allow me another minute or so—this government is committed to working with the federal government and the other provinces and territories to resolve issues of importance to Ontario and to improve the delivery of programs and services to Canadians. Ontario remains optimistic that continuing discussions between the provinces and Ottawa will produce positive results.

There is every reason for that optimism. The inter-governmental process of negotiation, co-operation and consensus-building can be credited with many successes. We know that federalism works. We also know that it takes a sustained effort to ensure that positive communications exist between the provincial, federal and territorial levels of government. Canadians expect their governments to work together.

Ontario understands that although there are two orders of government in Canada, there is only one taxpayer. There is more to be done.

The Chair: Mr Peters, you have 30 minutes for the official opposition.

Mr Peters: I look forward to receiving a copy of your presentation—the full version, actually, because I understand that you weren't able to complete it. I would certainly encourage you to maybe send a copy of your speech to the Prime Minister as well. I think they'll be very interested to see the proactive role that the province is taking at enhancing and improving federal-provincial co-operation.

On page 4 of the estimates, under the ministry's overview statement, there's a comment at the bottom of the page that, "The Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs anticipates that it will not initiate any program or operational changes in the current fiscal year that will affect the ministry's budget." I'd like to know what has happened in the ministry. When you read your overview statement and then I went to the government 2002 directory, your statement very much mirrors what's in the government phone book, but I'd like to know what's happened here. "In addition, the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs has responsibility for north/south initiatives and developing a strategic approach to advancing Ontario's interests in the United States across a broad range of economic, social and governance issues." That isn't contained in the overview statement and there's no explanation given in this budget. When

you refer to page 16 of the estimates, there's just an asterisk and it says, "Bring-forward of the North/South Initiative \$225,000." So that appears as a reduction of \$225,000.

I was wondering if you could offer me an explanation. I recognize the importance of intergovernmental affairs federally and interprovincially, but I think from Ontario's perspective, those states that border on Ontario, New York, Michigan and Minnesota, I guess, as well—to me, those are intergovernmental affairs. We saw that there was a tourism initiative this past summer between the province and the state of Michigan.

So I'd like to know why this north-south initiative of \$225,000 has been cut out of the operating budget and what the rationale was to not try to enhance relations with the Americans.

Mr Gill: I would ask Deputy Ross Peebles, who is with me today, to perhaps shed some more light on it.

Mr Ross Peebles: Thank you, Mr Gill. You're right. There was a three-year initiative and it had \$225,000 per year for enhanced north-south intelligence gathering to form a better database of what was going on in the US.

Some time ago, I think it would have been probably in the mid-1990s, the responsibility for international relations that had previously been part of the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs was repositioned to be part of what was the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and has subsequently become the Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation.

Given that this initiative was a three-year, time-sensitive thing, we talked to MEOI and decided that it would probably be more sensible to put all the money related to north-south initiatives into that ministry and put the entire responsibility for American-Canadian relations, to the extent that it exists within Ontario, into that ministry. So we took it out of our budget and they've got that responsibility now.

Mr Peters: Mr Gill, could you explain to me—I hear what Mr Peebles has just said about sending it to that ministry. To me, that ministry is charged with responsibility to promote this province and to bring investment into this province. I see the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs encompassing a wider range of issues. They could be some of the border issues that we are facing: tourism, environment, agriculture.

Why would you make a decision to send it to a ministry that in my opinion doesn't fully represent the true scope of what we do as a province? Could you explain to me how Ontarians are going to benefit from it going to that ministry and being removed from this ministry?

Mr Gill: The reason for the transfer, as I understand it, is we felt that it fit that ministry better because it is an economic development engine and we felt that it was best spent in that ministry. I'm sure we might have differing views, if spending the money there is the right way of or not, but we, as a government, felt it was better spent there.

Mr Peters: Let's use an example of the environment. We've heard a lot of discussion about coal-fired gen-

erating stations and I've heard the Premier stand up and say that a certain percentage of pollution that comes into Ontario is American. How is dealing with the environment an economic development issue? To me, the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs should be taking the lead in ensuring that from province to state we're talking about issues. I'll use the example of a coal-fired plant in Michigan. How is that an economic issue and not an environmental issue?

Mr Gill: With the pollution issue, you brought up a very good point. As you said, some of the pollution comes out of the US. I'd like to stress that the majority of the pollution comes out of the US. Even if we were to do as the Premier said, even if we were to shut down all the coal-fired plants, we'll still have the greenhouse gas effect. That's why my own position has been, let's find a made-in-Ontario solution to the Kyoto accord. If you look at intergovernmental affairs, more and more provinces have come on board with the same thinking, saying that we should have a Canadian-made solution.

Just to point out, in coming back to your concern, the Ministry of the Environment is meeting with those provinces all the time. Whether the money is in the Ministry of the Environment or the Ministry of Economic Development or Intergovernmental Affairs, those are basically semantics. The meetings are going on. It is important for us to know and deal with and highlight some of the concerns about pollution to neighbouring states. It's a valid concern, but those meetings, let me assure you, are carried on to address those issues.

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Mr Peters: I'd like to ask some specific questions within the budget. I'll go to pages 12 and 13. There are two lines in particular I'd like some explanation of, and they're both lines that deal with transportation and communications.

On page 12, under administration operating budget, you budgeted \$84,000 and spent \$186,000. Now you've brought that budget back down again, but you spent \$100,000 more than you estimated you were going to. Then, if you follow over to page 13 on ministry administration, main office, you see something very similar, where it was estimated at \$67,500; we spent \$143,616; and then we're back down to \$67,500 again. Could you tell me specifically why in those two areas of transportation and communications we were almost \$200,000 over budget?

Mr Gill: Mr Peters, if we are reading it correctly, let's go back to page 12. You're pointing out \$84,800. That is a 2002-03 estimate and the other figure—

Mr Peters: An estimate of how much you're going to spend.

Mr Gill: Yes. But previously, in 2001-02, we had spent \$186,963. Again, I would like the deputy to perhaps answer it, but those are two different numbers you're looking at. One is an estimate, what you're going to be spending next—

Mr Peters: And one is an interim actual, which looks like you spent over \$100,000 more.

Mr Gill: Yes. One was previous actual, so we're going to find out what the difference is.

Mr Peebles: First of all, we're dealing with fairly small numbers here.

Mr Peters: It's all taxpayers' dollars, though, sir.

Mr Peebles: Yes, absolutely. I'm just explaining what looks like a 100% increase.

Mr Peters: I'm used to municipal days. We went through budgets line by line. In dealing with intergovernmental affairs, I realize it's not one of the larger budgets, but I'm concerned about every dollar we're spending.

Mr Peebles: The difference between the actuals and the estimate is that when we put the estimate together, we were expecting there would be one APC, or Premiers' meeting, as there normally is every year, but in the last fiscal year there were two. There was the normal annual Premiers' meeting that happened in Victoria and then the Premiers decided to meet again on health care in January. Of course that was a second fairly significant event that involved the Premier, the minister and so on. Essentially our expenses doubled for that reason.

Mr Peters: Could you tell me then what the cost was? If we've gone from one Premiers' meeting to two, I'm assuming that \$84,800 can't be allocated to the cost of a Premiers' meeting. How much do you budget for one Premiers' meeting a year and how much additional did we spend to have two Premiers' meetings?

Mr Peebles: The average for a Premiers' meeting is about \$36,000 annually. If we have two, that bumps it up.

There was another unexpected event that happened last year, the twinning of Ontario with a province in South Africa. There was an event that happened in South Africa when the previous minister went over to sign the twinning agreement. That was also an unexpected airfare that's part of the actual expenditures.

Mr Peters: Does that explanation you have just provided me relate to page 13, transportation and communications as well, where it goes from \$67,500 to \$143,616?

Mr Peebles: The main office is the minister's expenditure. That would be the minister and the minister's executive assistant going to South Africa and to Victoria or Vancouver, one or the other. There were two trips that year instead of the normally expected one. We had budgeted for one and we had not budgeted for South Africa at all.

Mr Peters: Again, are you saying it costs, on average, about \$36,000 to send either the Premier or a minister to one of these meetings?

Mr Peebles: That's the total cost of a Premiers' meeting. It involves the staff who go out: the Premier, his staff and security, and the minister. Last year we had a separate minister, so there was an expenditure for that minister as well.

Mr Gill: If I can highlight, it's important to note that more trips or more money spent should not be taken in a negative light. I hope that's not what we're trying to say. It does mean more activity, perhaps more intergovernmental-type activities. You might say it should be budgeted properly. I fully understand what you're trying

to say, but just because more was spent does not mean it's been wasted. It just means there's more activity going on. There are more types of agreements being signed, twinning and whatever else is happening. I want to make sure we understand it's not wasted money, but it's being utilized—

Interjections.

Mr Peters: I'm hearing the heckling on the other side. I'm not questioning that. I'm questioning why \$84,000 is budgeted and we spend \$186,000. That's what I'm questioning.

Mr Gill: Sure. As the deputy said, it is the higher rate of activity or more trips that had to be taken at that time.

Mr Peters: OK. We're going to ask permission to change—

Interjections.

The Acting Chair (Mr Steve Peters): Mr Curling.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Thank you very much, Mr Chairman, for recognizing me.

Mr Gill, thank you for stepping in at a time when the other individual, Mr Dunlop, is not here, but I have to do a little rant all the time over this. I'm always very disturbed when a minister is not here to defend his estimates. I think how we spend taxpayers' money is the most important thing in this Legislature, and the minister, who is paid well, with good staff, should be here to defend his estimates. That minister is not here and I'd like you to take this back to the minister and say that I was completely disturbed at the fact that he's not here to defend his estimates.

Mr Gill: I'm sure you understand that, as parliamentary assistants, it is our duty, if the minister's busy, to come in and, with pleasure—

Mr Curling: Mr Gill, we're all busy. If you're saying the Premier's busier than I am or busier than you are, that's why he's paid more. That's why he's given the chauffeur and that's why he's given the staff. However, having said that, I know you'll do quite an able and good job. You're quite a capable individual.

Mr Gill: Thank you.

Mr Curling: However, my questions will not be solely directed to you as much as that you can deflect them to the very able civil servants you've got there.

What's the status of the labour market agreement? If it is not signed, why is it not signed? Could you give me just a two-minute update, not consume my whole time?

Mr Gill: As you said, you will ask and I will request the deputy perhaps to shed some more light on that.

Mr Peebles: You have put your finger on one of the unhappier issues in federal-provincial relations, as they relate to Ontario at least.

As you know, every jurisdiction in Canada has a labour market agreement, including Nunavut, which didn't exist as a territory when the federal government entered into the first of these. When the offer to sign agreements with the provinces was first made in 1999—I think it was around 1999—there were a couple of issues that were bones of contention between Ontario and the federal government. One was a bone of contention; the

other one was an issue that had to be worked through, and that had to do with the staff that would have migrated from the federal public service into the Ontario public service. There were some issues that had to be ironed out around that. That made it difficult for Ontario, at that point, to accept the offer as it was put to the ministry. The other issue had to do with the share of the funding that would come to Ontario. The government felt that it was less than appropriate for the amount of initiatives that were going on in Ontario.

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So those two issues sort of played out over a couple of years. Finally the one issue was resolved, the matter of the staff migrating to the public service, and an accommodation was arranged.

The other matter, I think, was not obviously resolved, but finally, recognizing that we had gone about as far as we could go with arguing about it, the minister, Mrs Cunningham, wrote to her federal counterpart, the minister of HRDC, and accepted without any further conditions the offer that had been initially put to us.

At that point the federal government said they couldn't enter into a new arrangement now because they were waiting for the release of the skills and innovation papers that were being worked on by, respectively, Industry Canada and Human Resources Development Canada. So, "Wait until these reports are released and then we'll see where they go."

The reports were subsequently released, I think it was August or September of last year—is that right? I think it was around August or September. Strangely enough, the particular report on skills development praised these agreements with the provinces as being the ideal way of maximizing the use of scarce resources and so on, and held them up as being a very positive development in federal-provincial relations.

Mr Curling: So it was signed and you received the money.

Mr Peebles: Oh, no. We don't have anything. But this report that the feds were waiting on played up the fact that these agreements existed. It didn't mention they don't exist with Ontario but mentioned the fact that they existed, which prompted my minister at the time, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, and I think the Premier as well, to write to their federal counterparts and say, "We're still waiting. Where's our agreement? We're prepared to sign it whenever it's available to us." At that point, the feds indicated that they wouldn't sign an agreement and we still don't have one.

Mr Curling: In other words, there is a breakdown between this ministry and the federal government, and the people suffer in the meantime. So the effectiveness of this ministry is not being seen here one way or the other. It broke down. I know you gave an explanation.

Let me move on to something else—

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): On a point of order. I think, Mr Chair, if I may—

The Acting Chair: I'll listen to your point of order, but I believe he was just making a comment.

Mr Gill: Which I think is inappropriate, Mr Chair.

Mr Curling: When you get your time, you can talk in that time. Let me continue, because we have a very short time here, especially when this government normally puts time allocation on everything.

Mr Gill: That was an inappropriate comment, Mr Curling.

Mr Curling: This is my moment now. You can comment when your time comes around, Mr Gill.

This interrelationship with the provinces, with certifications: some trades, like a doctor who got certification in New Brunswick, I understand, cannot practice in Ontario. There are some provinces that cannot have inter-changing professions practised in Ontario. How many provinces do we have with that and how many certifications—engineers or doctors and so on—are not allowed to practice in Ontario? Do we have any statistics on this?

Mr Gill: As you know, each province has their licensing bodies—

Mr Curling: I know that.

Mr Gill:—and I would like the deputy perhaps to shed light as to how many have agreements among themselves.

Mr Peebles: In terms of having that number at my fingertips, I'm sorry, I don't have it. You're interested in medical doctors, particularly?

Mr Curling: Yes, I'm interested in all trades and professions. We have one Canada and we have an Intergovernmental Affairs minister who should be working on all of those issues. Is a Canadian in New Brunswick a different Canadian in Ontario? Is an engineer in New Brunswick a different engineer here? The Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs should be settling most of that, and I'm not seeing any action there.

We hope we can get some statistics on which certifications are not allowed in Ontario, and why not. As a matter of fact, I'm not even interested in the why not right now. I just want to know whether you have numbers that you could provide me with. Who are these people, and from which provinces do we not allow certified people to operate here?

Let me proceed. We quickly want to talk about the associations—

Mr Gill: Can I—

The Acting Chair: Yes, give him a chance to answer you.

Mr Curling: No, I don't want him to have a chance to answer yet, because I have 30 minutes—

The Acting Chair: No, Mr Curling, give him an opportunity to answer the question, and then we'll come back to your question.

Mr Curling: Could I then appeal to you, Mr Chair, that I will give him all the chance to answer when he gets his other time around afterward. He can reserve that.

Mr Mazzilli: No, no, no.

Mr Curling: It's my time.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, if I can be helpful, Chair: this is the first round and normally each party has an opportunity, up to 30 minutes, to make statements,

comments or questions. If he wants to do a statement, it's within his right.

The Acting Chair: Thank you. That's a very good point.

Mr Gill: On a point of order, Chair: even if it's an inaccurate statement he's making?

The Acting Chair: It's statements right now, and then—

Interjection.

The Acting Chair: I apologize, Mr Curling. Please continue. You have five minutes remaining.

Mr Curling: I can't understand how I can make an inaccurate statement when I'm asking a question and for some statistics to be given to me.

Interjection.

Mr Curling: Mr Gill, I was on a nice roll, but you're trying to distract me.

I want to know, what is this ministry doing? Maybe you can answer this one, Ram. What is this ministry doing to make us one as Canadians? Because that's what intergovernmental affairs is all about. When the Premier goes to the first ministers' conference, is that on the agenda, to find out if we have two kinds of Canadians, where some are first class and some are second class? Some of these things are happening right now. What is the government doing, especially in racial profiling, that some Canadians can't travel across the States because they are from certain Commonwealth countries? What is the Ontario government, Intergovernmental Affairs, doing to protect those citizens of Ontario, therefore not only in profession but also in status as Canadians? What are they doing, since you want to answer that question so much, Mr Gill?

Mr Gill: Mr Curling, if I may, you talked about labour mobility and you talked about the trades moving back and forth. Let me assure you, as you already know—you were in the Chair earlier on as I was making my statement, and I'm sure you were listening intently—but let me try and repeat that—

Mr Curling: Just be a minute or so.

Mr Gill: Let me try and repeat that, if I may answer you, Mr Curling.

We have moved ahead with having more and more agreements and much more accessibility, compared to when your government was in power and when the NDP government was in power. We have moved ahead. Some of the issues you brought up are federal issues in terms of immigration and visas required to cross the border, be it Commonwealth members or not, so I would certainly encourage you to perhaps talk to Mr Coderre—

Mr Curling: All right. Let me tell you whom you can speak to: the medical association, the engineering association, which have been given the power by the Ontario government. You see? When are you going to talk to them? Since you want me to speak to my cousins in Ottawa, I'll speak to them. But in the meantime—not in the meantime; immediately—are you prepared to speak to those associations that are the gatekeepers, that sometimes restrict individuals to operate or perform their

skills here? Is the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs prepared to do that right away? If there are individuals within those associations who are restricting individuals or Canadians or Ontarians from performing to their ability, are you prepared to do that now?

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Mr Gill: Each and every ministry is moving ahead. As you might have heard from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, we are opening up doors in terms of more IMGs—international medical graduates—so we are giving more and more access to Ontarians to the accreditation that they should have. We're moving ahead much more than any other government previously has done.

Mr Curling: Are you prepared to open doors for the other provinces, doctors who were trained in other provinces who are not able to perform their duties in Ontario?

Mr Gill: Exactly; we are already moving ahead to make sure that those areas of responsibility, if you want to call it that, between the provinces are being looked at. We are working toward that and those bodies that accredit them are being encouraged to have a more and more open-door policy.

The Acting Chair: One minute, Mr Curling.

Mr Curling: Why would you encourage them when they have a mandate? We identified the problem. We keep on encouraging them, but what is happening is the individuals with skills—we talk about shortages of doctors and what have you, yet the government sits there and blames it on their associations and says, "Well, we mandate them and you have to encourage them." You can legislate them; you can change the legislation. I do hope that intergovernmental affairs will be a much more effective ministry. That's why I so much wanted the minister here, because I know you're trying to do your best with this. They give you a basket to carry water, and there's nothing there when you come here. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: We'll continue on. That's pretty well it for the time. Mr Bisson?

Mr Bisson: I'll just warn members, I'm going to be switching to French a little bit later, so make sure you have your translators. The first part is going to be in English and the second part is going to be in French. I just wanted to make sure you had it so you're not fumbling for it later.

Mr Mazzilli: What channel is it?

Mr Bisson: I don't know. You'll find out what channel it is when we get started.

The first part of my question is fairly straight-up. As parliamentary assistant to intergovernmental affairs, do you have any understanding of the immigration policies in the province of Ontario? Do you know what the arrangements are between the federal and provincial governments?

Mr Gill: I will—

Mr Bisson: No, I'm asking you. I'm not asking anybody else; I'm asking you.

Mr Gill: No, I'm not at the present time aware of the immigration policies. I thought immigration per se was a federal matter, Mr Bisson.

Mr Bisson: OK. Are you aware that the provinces—for example, the province of Quebec has negotiated and signed an agreement with the federal government, thereby giving it a certain ability to have immigration policies determined vis-à-vis the needs of the province of Quebec. Most other provinces have done that. Are you aware of which provinces have signed that agreement and which have not?

Mr Gill: I do understand that Quebec has a separate agreement with the federal government. Our policy in Ontario has been to welcome the Ontarians. As you know, in my own riding, in Peel, we have hundreds of thousands of—

Mr Bisson: No, that's not my question. You and I agree on that. Ontario is—

Mr Gill: We welcome them in our ridings.

Mr Bisson: You and I agree on that point. My question is, the federal government has signed agreements with various provinces on the responsibility for immigration. Are you aware of which provinces have not signed such an agreement?

Mr Gill: I believe only Quebec has signed it, and that was in 1991. They call it the Canada-Quebec Accord on immigration, but I'm not aware of any other province.

Mr Bisson: To your associate minister—Mr Peters, is it?

Mr Gill: Mr Peebles, yes.

Mr Bisson: Mr Peebles, could you answer that question for him? Which of the provinces have not signed?

Mr Peebles: The only agreement that is any way like Quebec's—that's unique to Quebec. There are several other provinces that have signed agreements that are very much more limited in scope. No other province has anything like the ability to screen immigrants outside a country in the way that Quebec has.

Mr Bisson: Now, back to Mr Gill. As the parliamentary assistant, are you aware that the provinces, by way of the Constitution, have the ability to have a greater say in immigration policy?

Mr Gill: I would say that is correct.

Mr Bisson: Are you aware that Ontario is actually the only jurisdiction that has not negotiated any agreement with the federal government, and do you agree with that position?

Mr Gill: No, like I said, the only one I know that has signed an agreement since 1991 that I know of is Quebec.

Mr Bisson: Most other provinces have signed one form of agreement or another. My point is that Ontario, being the province that accepts the most new Canadians—and rightfully so; we're a prosperous province and nobody argues the point that we shouldn't allow immigration to happen. But how do you feel, as a member of the government, that Ontario has not tried to negotiate any kind of agreement with the federal government vis-à-vis immigration policy?

Mr Gill: Being a first-generation immigrant myself, I always felt that the federal government had the responsibility of approving immigration, generally speaking. I know they have missions across the world, and it is their job. Having said that, as you and I agree, Ontario is welcoming immigrants. We don't have a say in who comes to Ontario. We will welcome each and every one. I don't know whether we, at the present time, should be deciding only who can come to Ontario or who shouldn't come to Ontario. I think we should welcome everybody with open arms.

Mr Bisson: To me it's not a question of who we should welcome. I think all people should be welcome to Ontario, and I think you and I agree on that. That's not my question. My question is that most other provinces have, at one time or another, negotiated some form of agreement with the federal government vis-à-vis immigration, from everything having to do with dollars for training when it comes to ESL to dollars for various immigration welcoming policies with regard to being able to access funds to provide the various services that immigrants need when they're new Canadians. My question to you is, how do you feel, as a member of the government, being probably one of the only provinces—even though we welcome more new Canadians than anybody else—that has not signed any form of agreement with the federal government vis-à-vis immigration?

Mr Gill: Again, I think we both agree. One of the reasons most immigrants come to Ontario is, as you know, the booming economy. Every immigrant—

Mr Bisson: No, no, that's not my question.

Mr Gill: —no matter how, they're coming in—

Mr Bisson: Mr Gill, excuse me.

Mr Gill: If I may. I have the floor.

Mr Bisson: No, Mr Gill, this is my time and I'm asking you a specific question. We can all agree on your spin about the greatest economy in the world and probably the universe, and I'll give you credit for that. My question is, and let me come specifically to where I'm going: there are a number of policies that the federal government has been quiet on that are really troubling to me as an Ontarian. I wonder why we as a province and specifically why your government isn't speaking out more forcefully against them; for example, the issue of racial profiling at borders. How do you feel, as a member of the government, about the position your government has taken with regard to racial profiling as Canadians cross the border into the United States?

Mr Mazzilli: That's a federal issue.

Mr Bisson: It's not a federal issue.

Mr Gill: As an individual, certainly we have objected to any kind of racial profiling. As long as one is a Canadian citizen or a Canadian immigrant, I think it's unfair for anybody to even worry about where they were born. I think they should have free access, just like anybody else.

Mr Bisson: So you agree that racial profiling is a bad policy?

Mr Gill: Racial profiling of any kind is not a good policy.

Mr Bisson: And if your government was to take a position in favour of racial profiling, would you say that's a positive or a negative thing?

Mr Gill: It's a hypothetical question, Mr Bisson.

Mr Bisson: It's not hypothetical. My question is, if your government took a position in favour of racial profiling as a policy, would you say that's a positive or a negative thing?

Mr Gill: I refuse to answer that. I think it's a hypothetical question, and—

Mr Bisson: Let me be more specific. It's not hypothetical. You appointed Lewis Mackenzie with regard to what happened after 9/11, and we all know that Mr Lewis Mackenzie has been quite vocal in favour of racial profiling. I'm asking you, as the parliamentary assistant to intergovernmental affairs, what steps has your government taken and what steps has your office specifically taken to be able to rein in Mr Lewis Mackenzie and his very hurtful comments to new Canadians and Canadians of various nationalities that may be here who are targeted?

Mr Gill: This issue is, as you know, a security issue. Mr Bob Runciman is the minister who looks after that. I know the Premier himself has been very clear that we don't approve of any kind of racial profiling.

Mr Bisson: So what do you mean, "It's a security issue"? Racial profiling is a policy to make us more secure, is that what you're saying?

Mr Gill: No, I'm not saying that. I'm saying that the security of this province falls under Minister Bob Runciman, and we can certainly direct your inquiry to him, if you wish.

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Mr Bisson: No, intergovernmental affairs deals with all these issues, and I'm directing it to you as parliamentary assistant. You get paid the bucks to sit in that seat and answer the questions, and that's what I'm asking you to do. So my question is, how do you feel, as a member of the government, having somebody like Lewis Mackenzie making comments that racial profiling is a positive thing? Do you agree or disagree with that comment?

Mr Gill: I've stated, Mr Bisson, the Premier has been very clear that we don't approve of any racial profiling.

Mr Bisson: My question is: do you agree or disagree with the comments of Lewis Mackenzie?

Mr Gill: I'm not aware of those comments, to be honest with you.

Mr Bisson: Let me refresh your memory, and I'll bring the clippings in too if you want. Mr Lewis Mackenzie was appointed by your government in regard to the events of 9/11, tragic as they are. Basically, one of the first things he said was that Ontario should adopt the policy of racial profiling when it comes to identifying "potential terrorists."

How do you feel about that? Do you think those are good comments?

Mr Gill: Mr Bisson, the comments that he might have made or not made—we are the government who will be forming policy based on what we feel is correct, and I've said very clearly the Premier has come out forcefully saying he does not believe in any kind of racial profiling. So the third party making any comments, we just don't need to be discussing that here, I don't think.

Mr Bisson: Oh, OK. Then look at what happened last week. In a scrum in answers to questions by the media, the minister responsible for safety, Mr Bob Runciman, thought that racial profiling was a good policy for security. Does that mean there's a change in policy on the part of your government, in favour?

Mr Gill: I'm sorry. Can you repeat that, Mr Bisson?

Mr Bisson: In the scrums of last week, and it's on, basically, a transcript of those scrums, Mr Runciman was asked a question with regard to racial profiling to which he responded he was in favour and saw this as a good security measure in order to identify potential terrorists. Does this mark a change in policy on the part of the government of Ontario vis-à-vis racial profiling?

Mr Gill: I think we're repeating ourselves. I've been very clear that the Premier has said he does not believe in racial profiling. He's been quite forceful. In fact, in some of the question periods in the last couple of days those are the concerns that have come forward.

Mr Bisson: Let me be very blunt and direct. I, as an Ontarian, am quite upset. If you see me somewhat upset today—this is one of the first opportunities we've had to discuss this. Members of your government and appointees of your government have been purporting that a good policy for the issue of making sure we make our borders secure and stop "terrorists from crossing the border" is to adopt a policy of racial profiling. I, as a Canadian and as an Ontarian, find that quite upsetting, and I just want to assure myself through this process that your government in fact is rebuking that position. So my question to you is a very simple one: do you basically take the position that racial profiling is something that should not be tolerated as a policy of the province of Ontario?

Mr Gill: I personally believe that. As well, the Premier has said very clearly that racial profiling is not something that we desire. We are not in agreement with that.

Mr Bisson: OK. A little while ago you said that your view is that the federal government should take responsibility for the issue of immigration. Am I correct?

Mr Gill: Yes.

Mr Bisson: I pointed out earlier that Ontario is one of the few jurisdictions that doesn't have some signed agreement with the federal government when it comes to immigration, because under the Constitution of Canada it is one of the areas where the province can request a transfer of those responsibilities to provincial jurisdiction, to an extent.

If your government takes a position that in fact we shouldn't concern ourselves with immigration policy, how do we square off the issue of the Americans now in regard to their new visa policies when it comes to

Ontarians or Canadians going into the United States? How do you purport to deal with the issue of visas?

Mr Gill: I know that issue came up yesterday in terms of the news as well. I think the federal minister, Mr Coderre, is certainly looking into it. I know there is some discussion, as I understand it, that perhaps they're going to, as they've moved away from the Canadian citizens with Canadian passports—worrying about where you were born. I think, similarly, there is some discussion the federal government is having—I'm not privy to the information but I just understand that's the issue. But again it's a federal issue.

Mr Bisson: But let me back up, because there are instances where Ontarians, or Canadian citizens, or landed immigrants, have gone over to the United States and have been basically picked out of the line as they cross into the United States and have been subject to what is a policy of racial profiling by the United States. I take it you would agree with me that's something we should not be tolerating.

Mr Gill: Exactly. I agree with you.

Mr Bisson: So my question to you is, if we as a province take a position through your government that we should not request from the federal government any kind of authority when it comes to immigration, how does your government plan to deal with trying to protect Ontario's citizens that are subject to racial profiling policies of the United States? How do we deal with that if we don't go after—

Mr Gill: I still, Mr Bisson, maintain that it is a federal responsibility. The Ontarians that are maybe suffering because of that, I think it is fair for us to strongly stand up to the federal government and say, "It's not the right thing." They have to go back to the US or whichever country where these types of hindrances are being put forward. Through the direct means which the federal government has with other countries, they should protest and say that this is not fair.

Mr Bisson: But if that protest results in nothing, what's the next step?

Mr Gill: Again, Mr Bisson, I know it is a federal issue and we must work with the government in that sense to say this is not fair for the Canadians—

Mr Bisson: Here's my difficulty. We started at the beginning of this process of this session, both of us agreeing that Ontario, and rightfully so, receives more new Canadians than any other place in Canada. We are proud of that. That's our multicultural background in Ontario and something that we, quite frankly, as Ontarians, are quite proud of. But I have great difficulty as a person in this province with a federal government that is, quite frankly, not quick off the mark in ending the discrimination that we see to our citizens crossing into the United States. So I have a bit of a problem with your answer saying, "We'll just protest, and hopefully the feds will sort of go away and do the right thing." Don't you think it would be a more positive thing for the province of Ontario to explore the issue of the province taking

over some of the responsibilities vis-à-vis immigration so we can deal with some of these issues?

Mr Gill: Again, protecting the borders is, I maintain, as is defence, a federal responsibility. I think it will be very difficult for us to say, "We are going to be protecting the Ontario border and these are the means and methods we are going to be using." I think we are going to have to have that separation of responsibilities. I think it is the federal government's and we must work with them to make sure if Ontarians are being harassed in any way—but it is their responsibility.

Mr Bisson: Let me probe you the other way. Are you aware of how much money we receive as a province from the federal government for new immigrants into the province?

Mr Gill: I don't know the exact amount of dollars, but I do know that it's not enough. I also know that the regions themselves—and they have been complaining to me as well, the Peel region and all—when the immigrants come in, we welcome them, but at the same time there are some of the social service type issues. They are not being funded by the federal government. So I tend to agree with you perhaps we need more money to address those social service issues.

Mr Bisson: That's why I said, "Let me come at it from the other way." Because Ontario has not signed an agreement with the federal government on immigration policy, we find ourselves, as the province that receives the most new immigrants in Canada—we are among the provinces getting the least amount of money from the federal government in order to be able to help new Canadians find their place within Ontario, learn English, be able to take the type of training they need in order to become full, functioning members of our society. Do you think it's right for us to be put in that position?

Mr Gill: Mr Bisson, I do have the number that I didn't have before. Deputy Peebles has given me that number. It is \$108.2 million in 2002-03 in terms of the settlement services.

Mr Bisson: How much is that? Excuse me. I was trying to find out how much time I have left.

Mr Gill: It's \$108.2 million. Coming back to "Is it enough?" I don't think it's enough. I know the regions are certainly complaining that they are not getting enough—

Mr Bisson: You'd have a lot of first-hand knowledge of this from the riding that you represent. Do you feel that there is enough money being spent for new Canadians on ESL programs, English-as-a-second-language programs?

Mr Gill: I'm not able to answer that because I'm not so close to the issue in terms of whether it is being funded adequately or not. I do know that in my own riding, as I said, there are ESL courses. I haven't heard any complaints on that.

Mr Bisson: I find that surprising, because my riding has far fewer new Canadians than yours and I get those complaints. We have a fair amount of immigration from Chile and other countries that have come in. The com-

plaint that I get from new Canadians coming into my riding is that they are not able to access dollars for English-as-a-second-language programs to the extent that they feel necessary to help not only the worker who is getting the job as they come into Canada, but the wife and some of the grown children who are still of school age.

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I come back to the point I was trying to make at the beginning, which is that Ontario has not signed an agreement with the federal government. The consequences of that are that we get the short end of the stick when it comes to federal dollars that could be used to assist new Canadians establish themselves in the province. If we are the recipients of the largest number of new Canadians, we should have a big interest in sitting down with the federal government and negotiating whatever agreement we want with them when it comes to responsibility for new Canadians. Has there been any move by the Premier's office or by the parliamentary assistant's office in order to deal with this particular issue?

Mr Gill: You're right, Mr Bisson. In fact we agree. There's a request for increased federal spending on immigration, including some of the issues you mentioned, be they ESL, social services issues or settlement services. So you're right: we are asking the federal government to have more money allocated; it could be to legal aid or social assistance for refugee claimants. Those things need more funding, and we are asking them to perhaps provide that.

Mr Bisson: Do you support the position of assimilation when it comes to new Canadians? There are two different approaches to new Canadians coming to Canada. What is the position of the provincial government? Is it a position of assimilation or integration?

Mr Gill: Integration.

Mr Bisson: OK, just to be clear.

En français—have I got 10 minutes?

The Vice-Chair: Yes.

M. Bisson: J'ai une couple de questions. Êtes-vous au courant, Monsieur l'Assistant parlementaire, du sommet qui a eu lieu juste dernièrement à Beyrouth, le Sommet de la francophonie ?

Mr Gill: Yes, there was a summit. I watched it on television as well.

M. Bisson: La question que j'ai est très simple. Pour s'assurer que vous compreniez ce que c'est que le Sommet de la francophonie, la francophonie mondiale se rencontre chaque couple d'années quelque part à travers le monde avec les chefs d'État des différents pays francophones du monde : de la France, du Canada, de l'Ontario, de la Belgique etc. C'est un peu comme la rencontre du Commonwealth. La francophonie est un peu le parallèle de la rencontre des pays du Commonwealth de la Grande-Bretagne. Pour quelle raison votre gouvernement a-t-il refusé d'envoyer un représentant de votre gouvernement à cette assemblée à Beyrouth il y a une semaine et demie ?

Mr Gill: Unfortunately, as I understand it, when the summit was taking place it was difficult for the minister to travel to the francophone summit. I understand he did send a representative. I believe it was one of the Liberal members who was a representative, if I am correct. He couldn't do it, but at least there were people as observers taking part in it, as I understand.

M. Bisson: Je comprends ce que vous dites, mais premièrement, la personne qui est censée représenter l'Ontario à ce sommet est le chef d'État. En d'autres mots, pour le Canada c'était M. Chrétien, pour le Nouveau-Brunswick c'était M. Lord, pour la France c'était le président de la France etc. Pour quelle raison le premier ministre lui-même n'a-t-il pas vu comme important d'assister à cette réunion-là ?

Mr Gill: I think it's a good question. We felt, because the minister was busy—

M. Bisson: Le premier ministre. J'ai dit, pour quelle raison le premier ministre a-t-il refusé de représenter l'Ontario lui-même, personnellement ?

Mr Gill: We felt that it was not a partisan issue, so we requested that one of the members from the Liberal Party, Jean-Marc Lalonde, go there and show the concerns that Ontario might have.

M. Bisson: Vous manquez le point. Ce n'est pas une question de partisanerie. C'est un sommet des chefs d'État. En d'autres mots, c'est le premier ministre du Canada et les premiers ministres des provinces ou le ministre désigné qui assistent à ces conférences. Ma question est, pour quelle raison le premier ministre de l'Ontario a-t-il refusé lui-même d'assister au sommet de Beyrouth ?

Mr Gill: I think it is inaccurate to say the Premier refused. The Premier at that time, as I understand, might have been busy, so we wanted to make sure that Ontario was represented. Once again I'd like to point out that Jean-Marc Lalonde from the Liberal Party went.

M. Bisson: Êtes-vous au courant, parce que cela n'a pas été un membre du gouvernement qui a assisté à ce sommet, que M. Lalonde n'avait pas le droit de parler à ce sommet ou de faire aucune représentation parce qu'il n'a pas été membre du gouvernement ?

Mr Gill: I think, Mr Bisson, whether it's the government or the opposition member, they are quite sensitive to and aware of the francophone issues. I'm sure he was able to bring those concerns forward.

M. Bisson: Non. Vous manquez le point. On va essayer d'expliquer une autre fois. Cette rencontre à Beyrouth est une rencontre des chefs d'État, et la seule manière d'être capable de faire une présentation ou de parler de la part de ta province—c'est le chef d'État lui-même ou son désigné.

Ce qui est arrivé est que votre premier ministre, pour une raison ou une autre, n'a pas voulu assister ou n'en a pas été capable—je ne sais pas lequel—et d'habitude ça a été M. Baird, le ministre responsable des Affaires francophones. Mais il lui a été refusé d'assister par le premier ministre.

Moi, tout ce que je vous demande est pour quelle raison votre gouvernement n'a pas envoyé un représentant du gouvernement à ce sommet. Comme membre de l'opposition on n'a pas de statut à ce sommet. En d'autres mots, on ne peut pas assister comme parlementaire d'un autre pays du monde parce que ce sont les chefs d'État eux-mêmes qui sont responsables de ce sommet. Puis ma question est très simple : pourquoi votre gouvernement n'a-t-il pas envoyé quelqu'un du bord du gouvernement pour représenter l'Ontario?

Mr Gill: You may or may not be aware that New Brunswick and Quebec are members of the francophone summit, whereas Ontario's status is only as an observer. I'm glad that we had somebody as an observer, but those other two provinces are members of that summit. So that's why they had to be there as governments.

M. Bisson: Cela m'emmène directement à ma prochaine question. Vous avez poigné exactement où je m'en vais avec la question : c'est pour quelle raison que la province de l'Ontario n'a pas fait de demande et pris l'occasion d'assister à Beyrouth pour être capable de faire la demande de devenir plein membre de la francophonie? Pourquoi est-ce qu'on refuse d'être plein membre pour seulement être observateur? Est-ce que la population franco-ontarienne ou est-ce que les dossiers franco-ontariens n'ont pas d'importance au gouvernement?

Mr Gill: I think you make a good point. A cost-benefit analysis of Ontario's becoming a participating member of the Francophonie would need to be undertaken and more information obtained from the Department of Foreign Affairs regarding the process before any decision could be taken at this time. But you make a good point.

M. Bisson: Mais il faut reconnaître, quand ça vient à l'échange de nos produits économiques, ou à l'échange culturel, qui est un produit dans certaines grandes occasions, que cela a des bénéfices pour faire des liens avec d'autres pays francophones. Je ne comprends pas, comme Ontarien, pas seulement Franco-Ontarien, pour quelle raison la province de l'Ontario ne voudrait pas assister à quelque chose qui amène un certain statut envers la province de l'Ontario et ouvre les liens avec d'autres pays francophones pour être capables de faire de l'échange soit économique ou culturel. Je n'accepte pas votre réponse.

Mr Gill: I should point out that Mr Pouliot, I understand, from the NDP also attended as an observer. But let me put my little partisan hat on. When you were the government, Mr Bisson, I don't believe you became members of the Francophonie summit either. So I'm not saying it's right or wrong, but I think it's fair to look at that, saying, "Well, was it less important at that time?"

M. Bisson: C'était le début du Sommet de la francophonie, et comme c'était le premier, on était observateurs. C'est à ce point-là qu'on était pour devenir membre de ce sommet. Je vous demande simplement pour quelle raison on ne veut pas assister comme plein membre. Vous êtes le gouvernement aujourd'hui. Je vous demande la question très simplement.

Mr Gill: As I mentioned earlier, we will look at the cost-benefit analysis and, if it's so desired, then perhaps we will look at that.

M. Bisson: Avez-vous eu l'occasion de représenter le premier ministre à une réunion, de sa part, comme assistant parlementaire?

Mr Gill: Can you repeat that, Mr Bisson?

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M. Bisson: J'ai demandé : avez-vous eu, comme assistant parlementaire, l'occasion de représenter le premier ministre à aucun sommet ou rencontre intergouvernemental pour la province de l'Ontario?

Mr Gill: I have not had the opportunity yet, but I'm certainly looking forward to any and every opportunity that I will be getting.

M. Bisson: Quel projet avez-vous pris comme assistant parlementaire de la part du premier ministre? Vous a-t-il donné la responsabilité de prendre un projet?

Mr Gill: As you know, a parliamentary assistant is there to do each and every assignment the Premier may send our way. I'm there, able and willing.

M. Bisson: Ma question est très simple. L'écouteur, s'ils vous plaît. Avez-vous eu une directive du premier ministre de prendre la responsabilité d'un dossier depuis que vous êtes l'assistant parlementaire?

Mr Gill: Being a parliamentary assistant, as you know, including this evening when there is a late show in the House and the Premier is busy, I'm going to be taking over the responsibility of answering a question that a member of the Liberal Party asked. So any and every duty that the Premier assigns, I'm there, ready and willing to do that.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Bisson.

You have 30 minutes to respond, Mr Gill. You can either share that with your party on this side or not.

Mr Gill: Mr Chair, I do want to thank the members who took part, including yourself, in responding to the remarks I made. If I can, I'll sum up some of my responses.

As I said, I appreciate the comments from the members of this committee. I hope my response will address many of the points that have been made this afternoon.

I think it would be helpful to discuss briefly Ontario's role in the Canadian federation and how Ontarians contribute to strengthening the federation. I think it would also be useful to say something about the mechanisms that are in place to facilitate discussions among governments in Canada.

Ontario's role in Canada is defined by two facts. First, Ontario is the largest province in Canada, with more than 12 million culturally diverse people, encompassing a broad range of talents and skills. Second, Ontario is the greatest contributor to Canada's economy, accounting for 42% of Canada's gross domestic product. Without doubt, Ontario is Canada's dominant financial, communications and manufacturing centre. If I may be specific, that's the reason a lot of immigrants are attracted to Ontario, and we welcome them with open arms.

Ontarians have always felt a strong attachment to the Canadian federation. Ontario has always played the key

role of nation builder. In the 19th century, the National Policy shaped Ontario's economy and destiny. It created a powerful east-west economic backbone built on high tariffs, a national railway and settlement of the west. For over a hundred years, Ontario and other parts of the country prospered. An east-west union represented the principal approach to economic development in Canada.

But the economic reality confronting Canada and Ontario has changed. Ontario's outlook, economically, culturally and politically, has grown steadily more north-south. This has accelerated since the adoption of the Canada-US free trade agreement in 1989 and the North American free trade agreement in 1994. The major markets for Ontario's goods and services now lie south of the border. More than 90% of all our international exports are delivered to our neighbours in the United States.

Ontario has worked hard over the past several years to overcome the setbacks of the early 1990s. Our government has contributed by cutting taxes and creating jobs, well over 900,000 jobs during the past seven years. We're hopefully going to be surpassing the millionth job mark soon.

Ontario's current prosperity is reflected in the fact that, as the Minister of Finance noted in the 2002 budget, real take-home pay has risen 18.5% since we began cutting taxes. Our success has been shared with Canadians in other provinces and territories. This is evident when we compare what Ontarians pay in federal taxes to what the federal government spends in this province.

Each year Ontarians contribute about \$22 billion more in taxes and non-tax revenue to the federal government than they receive in federal program spending, combined with the amount required to service our share of the national debt. I think I must make sure we understand and that the members of the committee note that. Let me repeat that. Each year Ontario contributes \$22 billion more in taxes and non-tax revenues to the federal government than it receives in federal program spending, combined with the amount required to service our share of the national debt. In other words, on average, each Ontarian makes a net contribution to the federation of more than \$1,800 annually. This is a significant contribution, but Ontarians recognize that part of our role, as one of Canada's most affluent provinces, involves making a contribution to other regions of the country that are smaller and less prosperous.

The government of Ontario understands this obligation and is a supporter of the principle of equalization as it is outlined in section 36, subsection 2, of the Constitution Act, 1982. This subsection describes the purpose of equalization payments as ensuring "that provincial governments have sufficient revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation."

This year, only Ontario and Alberta are not receiving equalization payments from the federal government. In other words, the residents of these two provinces are supporting their fellow citizens in the remainder of the provinces and territories, and we're happy to do so. As I

said, we agree with equalization. We do not, however, understand why Ontario does not receive its fair share of other federal transfers. This strikes us as being most unfair.

To illustrate, in 2002-03, Ontario will receive only \$566 per capita in cash from the CHST, while the other provinces and territories receive an average of \$642 per capita. Ontario is similarly short-changed in just about all federal transfer programs.

The equitable treatment of all Canadians, regardless of the province in which they live, is an enduring issue for Ontario in intergovernmental relations. Indeed, this issue touches on one of the most important and difficult structural features of our Canadian system of government: financing the federation. The task in this regard has always been striking the right balance.

As I suggested in my opening remarks to the committee, the constitutional division of responsibilities between our federal and provincial governments in Canada raises both special challenges and unique opportunities when combined with the federal government's spending power. By working together, Canada's federal and provincial governments have been able to build a network of important public services, like health care, that are highly valued by Canadians. Often this has involved provinces agreeing to expand or modify programs that are under provincial jurisdiction in return for a federal financial contribution to those programs.

At other times, however, by acting unilaterally, the federal government has put Canada's provincial governments under stress. One of the most important examples of this kind is the unilateral cuts the federal government made to its contribution to health care and other social programs in the 1995 federal budget.

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Fortunately, there are several intergovernmental forums where our federal, provincial and territorial governments can work together, listen to one another and try to develop solutions to the problems that we face. I would like to talk about some of these forums and the important role they play in Canadian intergovernmental relations and in strengthening the federation.

Intergovernmental meetings are forums for working through key issues and are part of the glue that helps to keep the federation together. Over the years, it has been found useful to hold regular meetings among governments to deal with a variety of issues. As you know, first ministers' meetings are called periodically by the Prime Minister, and Premiers' conferences are held on a regular, annual basis. There are also meetings of ministers and officials in each of the policy sectors. These meetings are, first and foremost, practical, problem-solving mechanisms that contribute to building a political consensus across Canada. Their value should not be underestimated.

The Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs plays a lead role in supporting first ministers' meetings and the annual Premiers' conferences. MIA also helps to support a number of key sectoral meetings. These meetings of finance ministers, health ministers or energy ministers, to

name just a few, lay much of the groundwork for first ministers' meetings and the annual Premiers' conferences.

A first ministers' meeting, or FMM as I shall refer to it, is often seen as a centre point of intergovernmental relations in Canada. Ideally, it provides an opportunity for the Prime Minister and the Premiers to resolve fundamental differences and set a policy direction for the country.

Much the same approach is pursued at the annual Premiers' conference, or APC. Premiers use these occasions to discuss issues that are inter-provincial in nature or reflect the current state of federal-provincial relations. Some observers portray the APC as an annual event that pits the provinces against the federal government. The Premiers, however, consider the APC an opportunity to address issues of mutual concern, even though these concerns may centre on the federal-provincial interface.

Aside from the participants, an FMM and the APC may appear similar. They certainly often share similar objectives. However, there are several significant differences which distinguish the meetings from each other. As I mentioned earlier, the APC is a regular, annual event. The FMM is not; it is called at the discretion of the Prime Minister. The last APC took place in August, 2002, and the next one is scheduled for July, 2003. On the other hand, the last FMM was held in September, 2000, and the next one is anticipated to take place almost two and a half years later, in January or February, 2003.

The APC is usually spread over two or three days and addresses several issues that are considered priorities by all or a majority of the provinces. At the 2002 APC, agenda items included health care reform and funding; the fiscal imbalance; trade; energy; and issues surrounding future federal-provincial-territorial consultation. By contrast, an FMM is often restricted to one day and a single agenda item. The focus of the September 2000 FMM was health care funding. It is anticipated that a discussion about health care funding will also dominate the FMM anticipated for early next year, even though several Premiers have requested that the Prime Minister add the Kyoto Protocol and climate change to the agenda.

Because of its regular schedule and structure, the APC has become somewhat of an institution. It is planned well in advance, often assigns and receives reports from other provincial councils and committees, and is chaired by the Premier of the host province, who also serves as the head of the Premiers' Council until the next APC. By contrast, an FMM is usually called on short notice and lacks a regular structure and operating procedures.

Now let me provide some background and context. It will be remembered that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, one of the priority issues was constitutional reform. This was often the focus of FMMs and APCs during that period. Since then, there has been a significant change in the nature and focus of these meetings. There have been far fewer FMMs during the last decade, and their purpose has changed. By default, the APC has become the key institution for setting intergovernmental priorities.

At their annual conferences Premiers have focused on taking practical steps to address intergovernmental issues. The APC has provided a forum for Premiers to develop consensus positions which are then difficult for Ottawa to ignore.

A good example is health care. Starting with the 1998 APC, Premiers and territorial leaders emphasized that the federal government must restore the funding for health care and other social programs that it cut in the 1994-1995 fiscal year. Premiers also agreed that funding, once restored, must be stable and adequate. They repeated their call at the 1999 APC. Additional important work was conducted at the sectoral level by ministers and officials.

This intergovernmental process culminated in the 2000 FMM at which the federal government agreed to commit almost \$23 billion more to the provinces for health care and other social programs. Provincial and territorial leaders considered this a good first step in addressing the funding cuts that the federal government made in 1995. At the same time, they made it clear that this was by no means a final resolution of the problem and they reiterated their position at subsequent meetings.

Under this continued pressure, the federal government set up the Romanow commission to consider the future of health care, and the Prime Minister has agreed to hold another FMM early in 2003, after the commission has reported. He has indicated that the federal government will provide additional funding for health care at that time. It remains to be seen if the promised new funding will be sufficient to ensure the sustainability of the health care system.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, I want to reiterate that Ontario is committed to working with the federal government and the other provinces and territories to resolve issues of importance to the people of Ontario, to improve the delivery of programs and services to Canadians, and to strengthen the Canadian federation. Thank you for allowing me the time.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I just have one comment that I would like to make, if possible.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Have we got time? If I can just put one thing on the record, with your indulgence; I won't ask any questions. Intergovernmental relationships involve both parties sitting down to wait, and I'm disappointed in the call on all the Premiers of this country. Here's what the Prime Minister said. He told reporters that Premiers can talk and have all the meetings they want, but Canada is voting on ratification. That's absolutely rude. That's his position: ignore the people and the elected representative from each province. And this is supposed to be intergovernmental relations? Someone has to be listening there. I'm just so upset with that.

Mr Gill: More needs to be done.

Mr Chudleigh: Are we doing questions?

The Vice-Chair: You can do anything you want now. You can have comments—

Mr Chudleigh: Mr Gill, are you taking questions now?

Mr Gill: I will certainly try to entertain them.

Mr Chudleigh: Since you were talking about inter-provincial meetings and the meetings of the first ministers, I was interested in whether or not you think that these meetings have value, and perhaps Mr Peebles would comment on this as well. If my history is right, I think the first meeting took place in 1949 with the ministers of agriculture. The synthesis of that meeting was when Reg Harris, who was the Deputy Minister of Agriculture for the province of New Brunswick, travelled across the country in 1947 looking at agricultural practices. After the war there had been some innovations. He travelled through each province and ended up coming back from the west, stopping at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto and meeting the then Minister of Agriculture for Ontario at that time.

Mr Peters: That happened to be your grandfather.

Mr Chudleigh: It might have been. He related at great length what he had seen as he went across this country and saw the different agricultural practices from one sea to the other. It was such an interesting story that they convened the first ministers of agriculture meeting the next year, in 1948 I think, at the time of the Royal Winter Fair. All the ministers, who would travel train in those days, came in and that was the first cross-Canada ministers' conference. It then spread to other ministries and eventually the Premiers.

I'd be interested if Mr Peebles has any information on whether that's an accurate story and could perhaps make some comment as to the value of the Premiers' conferences and ministers' conferences throughout Canada.

1730

Mr Peters: Make sure we put the Minister of Agriculture and the former Premier's name on the record, though, Mr Chudleigh.

Mr Chudleigh: That was Tom Kennedy, I think, the minister.

Mr Gill: Mr Chudleigh, you make a very important point. These meetings go back to even before I was born. Actually, you're going to back to 1947. I'm glad these things were happening even then.

I was certainly very happy to attend a meeting in Winnipeg on behalf of the Minister of Labour, who could not be there for the Ministers of Labour conference. I believe it was February 3, 2000. February in Winnipeg—I can quite understand why the minister wasn't there. But I was very happy to represent the province of Ontario, which is the biggest province in terms of activity in the labour component, if you want to call it that.

But I agree with you that it is very important to have dialogue. As I said in my closing remarks, the Premiers' conference and the inequality that we highlighted in health care funding brought forward a small amount of extra funding. I believe it was \$24 billion. More needs to be done. I quite agree that we must continue this kind of dialogue.

The national accounts committee, if you want to call it that, met in Newfoundland, and Mr O'Toole was also there with us. I believe in that kind of dialogue.

Mr Chudleigh: Mr Peebles, how long have these ministers' conferences been going on, since 1948? Is that about the time they started?

Mr Peebles: Yes, it would be quite possible that sectoral ministers' meetings happened post-war. The first meeting of Premiers was 1959, and they've happened every year on a regular basis since that time.

Mr Chudleigh: That would be Les Frost who started that?

Mr Peebles: Yes. I guess he would have been Premier.

Mr Chudleigh: Reg Harris, the former Deputy Minister of Agriculture in New Brunswick, does hang in the agricultural hall of fame at the Royal Winter Fair. His portrait is there.

The Vice-Chair: Mr Mazzilli.

Mr Mazzilli: The history of how these meetings got started is very important, but when I look at my constituents, they look at results from these meetings. I know in our area, health care—Mr Peters hears about this all the time. Our hospital administrators or boards, the doctors, the patients, everyone has figured out that the province of Ontario is funding health care to the extent it can. Almost 50% of all program spending goes there.

Ontarians want to be part of a strong federation called Canada, but they're also very frustrated. I know you took a lot of questions as to cross-border issues. There are very few areas that the federal government is responsible for—immigration, protecting our borders, the army—and they don't seem to do a decent job at any of those. They certainly don't do a decent job of funding the proper social programs.

Again, I know people in our riding are getting frustrated. They do a good job of applying the GST on everything arbitrarily, whether there are any arguments for or against it. When you look at hydro bills, the previous debt—can you imagine all of a sudden arbitrarily saying, "We're going to pick people's pockets. It doesn't matter how hard the situation is. It doesn't matter what the expense is. We're going to add the GST, and we don't care what anybody says?"

I guess that's the frustration when you look at intergovernmental affairs. It must be a hellish nightmare, I'll call it, for the people who work in that department when you look at the treatment of Ontario. You've laid out what this federation called Canada takes from the people of Ontario. People certainly don't mind paying that, but they also want the services delivered, not only from the provincial government but also from the federal government they pay taxes to.

I find the federal government plays politics extremely well. Mr Peters was at a meeting on affordable housing in the riding, and I was at a meeting with the school board. The federal politicians wasted no time lambasting the province for their share. Do they ever tell the truth? When you look at Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp, the 2% more you pay on your mortgage is supposed to be

a way of guaranteeing mortgages. The federal government soaks \$400 million or \$500 million a year out of people. When you look at \$400 million or \$500 million, when a third of the population is in Ontario, \$200 million comes out of Ontario. That's the federal share. They come back to Ontario and say, "We put \$50 million on the table. Where's your money?" So not only do we pay taxes, we support the employment insurance fund, which again is Ontario workers. We support the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp, which is supposed to be a self-sufficient way of insuring mortgages and it's become way beyond that.

I guess my question to you, sir, or the deputy: how do you do it every day, wake up and go to work? How do you put up with these people?

Mr Gill: Mr Mazzilli, you make a tremendous point. There is a great imbalance in what the federal government takes in and what they spend in Ontario. You certainly hit the nail on the head with the EI taxation. A lot of small businesses are quite concerned that the government is taking in much more than they need to and then they come back to us as taxpayers and say, "Here's the surplus." They should realize the surplus should be spent on health care and other issues.

In terms of intergovernmental affairs, we stress upon the federal government to pony up; if not 50%, then at least let's go back to 18% and then slowly keep chipping away at it. It has to be done.

Health care, as we know, is very important. That's why the Prime Minister, in trying to maybe delay the transfers, said, "You know what? Let's have another study." I'm glad it's about concluded now. Hopefully the report will come out soon. Mr Roy Romanow went across the country. Now the Prime Minister is saying, "After the report comes out, after we perhaps have a first ministers' meeting, then maybe some money will come through." But you know what? We've got to keep working. You are so right, and I thank you for bringing those issues forward.

Mr O'Toole: I've been somewhat disappointed—and at the risk of embarrassing Mr Miller, I know he probably feels the same sense of nationhood when his father served as Premier of this great province. I know he participated to try and make the nation of Canada stronger. It's like a family to the extent that there are even in my own family—it's unusual, but there were nine brothers and sisters. Some have done well. I haven't done so well, but some have. At the end of the day, they share—

Mr Gill: Because you got into politics.

Mr O'Toole: —the responsibility of being complete as a family and staying united as a family, and I think Canada—not to say we didn't have delinquent brothers and sisters. If I may say—I wouldn't say Quebec was delinquent, but different; let's put it that way, and rightly so. But we're still a member of the family, which is the right thing.

Ontario is a central part, without making this continually an economic argument. In this province we often try to make the point that, as Ontario goes, so does the

country go. I put to you this: as Toronto goes, so does Ontario go. So at the risk of the odd time criticizing Toronto—

The Vice-Chair: You've got two minutes, Mr O'Toole.

Mr O'Toole: Two minutes should pretty well give me enough time.

I just really feel, though, that these things need to be put on the record. This side of the House, as far as I'm concerned, has a great history of nationhood. I'm pleased to be led by not just Raminder Gill but our Premier, who's on the right track of trying to have a more reasoned dialogue with the federal government, however unreasonable they tend to be, from what Mr Mazzilli has said. I think a lot of what he said is very true and needs to be put on the record.

I'm going to go back and conclude my remarks by making sure I get this on the record. I know I was intervened earlier.

What I'm quoting is a Globe and Mail article from this morning, November 5, with respect to the Kyoto talks. All the first ministers, all of them without exception, believe it's an important national policy issue for a lot of different reasons, regionally and economically. The leader of this country, the father of this family, says with such indignity—I can't believe it, this indifference, and part of that is our fault because the right side of the agenda can't get it together. "Mr Chrétien told a Newfoundland audience last night that the Canadian plan to cut greenhouse gases under Kyoto targets 'will be adjusted, if necessary, as we learn and work together over the years ahead.'" False promise and platitudes—that's my insertion.

Another quote: "He told reporters the Premiers 'can have all the meetings they want,' but Canada is voting on ratification before the end of 2002." That's an ultimatum. That's an insult. That's dictatorial. That's arrogant. That's rude. Is that enough adjectives? Anyway, I just think it's indifferent to the very tone, the conciliatory tone, that we've been talking about today. It just makes me ill. I put it back to the civil service, who do work hard to try to build professional relationships, whether it's on finance or health or trading relationships.

The Vice-Chair: Well, you won't have time for any response. Your time is up.

Mr O'Toole: Well, Raminder gave an excellent speech. I want a copy of it, and that's the only response I need.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much. We are going to have a bell very soon. It's now the official opposition. It goes in rotation of 20 minutes thereafter, but in about five minutes from now the bell is going to ring.

Mr Peters: I'm flexible if the committee wants to adjourn. Then we can start with a complete round tomorrow. That's fine with me.

Interjection: Sure.

The Vice-Chair: I hear a consensus about adjournment until tomorrow at 3:30. We stand adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1742.

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