



ISSN 1180-4327

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 18 November 2009

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 18 novembre 2009

**Standing Committee on
Public Accounts**

Committee business

**Comité permanent des
comptes publics**

Travaux du comité

Chair: Norman W. Sterling
Clerk: Katch Koch

Président : Norman W. Sterling
Greffier : Katch Koch

Hansard on the Internet

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

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

Index inquiries

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

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

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

Renseignements sur l'index

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

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Wednesday 18 November 2009

Mercredi 18 novembre 2009

The committee met at 1230 in committee room 1, following a closed session.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): I call this meeting to order.

I've received a motion from Ms. Gélinas.

Mr. Ted Arnott: You should do the subcommittee report first.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): No. Go ahead.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The motion goes as follows: that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts report to the House our recommendation that the assembly issue a Speaker's warrant pursuant to subsection 35(2) of the Legislative Assembly Act, for the purpose of calling Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan Hudson as witnesses before the committee to give evidence with respect to the Auditor General's Special Report on Ontario's Electronic Health Records Initiative.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Would you like to speak to the motion?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely. I would say that it's certainly not a motion that is done very often. Section 35 of the Legislative Assembly Act gives the Speaker the power to compel the appearance of people, documents or items deemed necessary to facilitate the business of the House in both the chamber and in committees.

The sixth edition of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms points out that, "Witnesses must answer all questions directed to them even over their objection that an answer would incriminate them." That's on page 239. Given the gravity of such an action, there is no doubt that Speaker's warrants should not be issued lightly.

In a ruling issued on November 19, 1992, Speaker David Warner outlined the requirements for the issuance of a warrant, pointing out that, "The Speaker cannot issue a warrant at the request of a single member or the assembly or even at the direct request of a committee. The Speaker may only exercise the discretion to issue a warrant upon the passage of a motion in the House." However, in the same ruling, Speaker Warner also referred to a December 19, 1991, order of the House that authorized a subcommittee of the Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly to request a Speaker's warrant without having to seek additional authorization of the

House in an investigation concerning, among other parties, the Ministry of Health.

We as members of the assembly have the ability to empower the committee to get the answers Ontarians are seeking, but it is up to us to take the necessary steps to do so. This motion provides an opportunity to get answers to a situation that gives public servants and politicians yet another black eye when it comes to public confidence. This motion is just one step in the long journey we must take to restore that trust.

There is no doubt that the eHealth issue has raised questions about accountability, transparency and the responsible use of taxpayers' dollars. Although we've had the opportunity to question selected ministry and eHealth representatives, we've had trouble gaining some of the answers to specific questions. This is simply because those who have appeared before the committee dealt with many of the eHealth challenges after the fact and were not privy to the sourcing of contracts and the signing of agreements that are at the heart of the matter.

On both sides of the House there have been calls for responsibility, accountability and transparency to address the circumstances surrounding eHealth Ontario. I'll quote a few. On November 1, just a couple of weeks ago, in an article in the Toronto Star, our Premier is quoted as saying, "I think it's really important for us to just be honest about them, whether we're talking about eHealth, whether we're talking about the deficit, whether we're talking about the HST." On June 17, the Premier was quoted in the Globe and Mail as saying, "Most of the time, we get it right.... Sometimes we don't, and when we don't, it's important to acknowledge that and fix it."

We're not talking about a small amount of money; we're talking about expenditures that total \$1 billion of public money. This number alone, \$1 billion, is hard to get our heads around. It is just so big that it is hard to gain perspective. But let's look at a couple of ways to look at the scope of the figure in question. If we look at one billion seconds ago, we were in 1959; I wasn't even born. If we look at one billion hours ago, humankind was living in the Stone Age. If we stack thousand-dollar bills flat on top of each other to make \$1 billion, these bills would stretch 1.1 kilometres into the sky, one kilometre past the point where space flight officially begins.

Clearly we need answers, and the best way to do that is to hear from both sides involved in the matter. Nobody disagrees with the Premier as quoted in the media, but there are serious questions about both his and his govern-

ment's commitment to getting the answers he has publicly talked about. Despite the Premier's charge that the opposition is using eHealth as an issue to play partisan politics, it is the government that has used their majority to block nearly every opposition effort to bring two key parties before the committee, a move that just doesn't make any sense if the goal is to get to the heart of what went wrong. We need to talk to the people who were there. We need to talk to the people who signed those sole-source deals, who made those decisions.

1240

If the Premier agrees that honesty is important, as he said in the *Star*, and that it's important to fix the things we get wrong, as he said in the *Globe*, it becomes even more difficult to understand the government's ongoing effort to deny access to the two people who have the most intimate knowledge of what went wrong at eHealth. Common sense says that the best way to get an answer about an issue is to ask those who were directly involved in the matter. Yet, surprisingly, Dr. Hudson and Ms. Kramer still have not appeared before our committee.

Again, it is important to stress that this motion is not brought forward lightly. It is tabled as a last, best hope that the McGuinty government will do the right thing and help us get the answer to what went wrong at eHealth and help ensure that we get the best information available to address the shortcomings and get the province on track toward creating the electronic health records that everybody agrees we really need.

The warrant would also clarify questions about the committee's authority to call witnesses and what type of witnesses can be required to come forward. In House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Marleau and Montpetit indicate that committees of the assembly have the power to call forward private individuals, representatives of groups or public officials to give evidence. It is important to note that these powers are not limited to bringing forward public officials or government staff, but gives the power of section 35(2) broad scope as to who can be called to appear in order to fulfill the needs of the assembly or, in this case, of this committee.

Another reason to have the Speaker's warrant on hand is to make sure that valuable time is not wasted in an effort to get to the bottom of eHealth matters. Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice, Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, and Marleau and Montpetit's House of Commons Procedure and Practices all confirm that witnesses summoned in this fashion are compelled by law to appear and cannot decline such a request. While it is possible that Ms. Kramer and/or Dr. Hudson would appear without the issuance of a warrant, having one on hand ensures that the committee has the right tools on hand to get the answer it seeks in the event that voluntary compliance is not available.

Given the government's characterization of Ms. Kramer, I'm not sure she'd need much coaxing to give her side of the story; she may actually look forward to this opportunity. However, that said, it is important that the committee be given the tools to ensure that its busi-

ness can be carried out in an efficient manner, and the warrant is a sure way to achieve that end.

I sincerely hope that the government will answer the call for transparency, accountability and best practices, and use the tools available to us as members of this committee and members of this Assembly to ensure that we do right by those who have sent us here to represent them. I encourage you to support this motion and help get to the bottom of the eHealth matter in a manner that is in the best interests of our constituents and moves us toward the objective of building an electronic health records system that adequately meets the needs of the people of Ontario.

Dr. Hudson is responsible for some of the systemic changes to our health care system that we can all be proud of. To leave this cloud over his head is an insult to his career. Through the witnesses we've heard so far, we have shrouded this man's name and all his life's work. The eHealth scandal is what he will be remembered for, when he has helped in so many ways to move forward the agenda of building a better health care system for all of Ontario. We owe it to this man to clear his name, to have an opportunity to be heard so that we hear both sides of the story; otherwise, he will go down as the one responsible for what happened at eHealth. This is a shame on all of us. He and Ms. Kramer deserve to give us their side of the story, their story of what happened, to clear their names. This is what I'm asking you to do by bringing this motion forward.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Discussion?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Let me say at the outset that the official opposition supports the motion being brought forward by Ms. Gélinas. I would say also that we have considered it and don't take it very lightly. We understand that a Speaker's warrant is only issued in very unusual circumstances. However, I would submit that we are faced with very unusual circumstances in this case.

The Auditor General has reported that hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money were spent, with no discernible results. That's a serious issue. It's something that we should all be concerned about as members of this Legislature.

We have heard of other allegations, of favouritism, of contracts being untendered with certain parties getting favouritism and getting in some cases—there was a situation where one contract, a tender, was received and then the same day another tender was submitted. These are very, very, serious allegations.

At the same token, we've heard from a number of members of the Ministry of Health and from eHealth. We have questioned several members, and we still haven't been able to get satisfactory answers as to what went on and why things happened the way they did. In fact, we heard from the Deputy Minister of Health that he didn't know anything about the untendered contracts and only heard about it through the press. That's pretty startling to hear from a senior member of the ministry. I think it is something where we do have to bring this forward and ask and get answers to these very hard questions.

Some of the questions that we have asked have produced some contradictory answers as well. All of the questions we've asked have pointed to the fact that nobody there seems to know what's going on, but there are two people who do: Dr. Hudson and Ms. Kramer. They were the ones who apparently made some decisions that led to some of the present circumstances that we find ourselves in.

We really need to get to the bottom of it, and we have asked, as the official opposition, for a separate inquiry on this issue so that we can find out what did happen. We have been rebuffed to date, despite repeated requests, and so really, this committee is the only way that we can ask the questions that need to be asked and get some answers.

We've heard from the government that, "It's okay; don't worry; we've fixed that. We did wrong, but we're not going to do that anymore." With the greatest respect, until we know what actually happened, we can't ever have that assurance that it's not going to happen again, because we simply don't know what happened.

So Ms. Kramer and Dr. Hudson are the only ones who are going to be able to answer these questions for us. I think we need to know and get the system back on track—to find out what happened, to fix it and to get the system back on track for developing a system of electronic health records in Ontario. That, after all, is the real question here.

The thing that we should all be concerned about is how public money was spent and what we got for all the money that was spent over the course of time. We need to know this because obviously, electronic health records are important in terms of saving, over time, hundreds of millions of dollars by not needing repeated tests for people. But, more importantly, they're necessary for the delivery of excellent-quality health care in the province of Ontario. I would submit that if we don't ask these questions and find out what really happened by asking Ms. Kramer and Dr. Hudson to come here, we're going to be, all of us, doing a disservice to the people of Ontario.

The government has also spoken repeatedly about being open and transparent. I would submit that if it is true and serious about wanting to be open and transparent, the only way that they can do so in this particular instance is by calling Ms. Kramer and Dr. Hudson to give evidence before this committee.

1250

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Ms. Sandals?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Please call the question, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Well, we've only had about 10 minutes of debate. Are there any other members who would like to speak to the motion? Mr. Arnott.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Did you recognize Ms. Sandals?

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Yes. She had said "Call the question." I presume you don't have any—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Sorry.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Do you want to—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: No. I was thinking that each of the opposition parties had had an opportunity to speak, and I was asking you to call the question.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Okay.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Well, I'm certainly willing to speak.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): I'm ruling that I'm going to allow more time for debate on this. Did you have any response?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I must say that I'm surprised at this rather provocative move on the part of the government to call the question before they've even expressed an opinion on the motion. Normally, you would expect some explanation from the government members as to how they were going to vote on a motion like this. I'm rather surprised that this step was taken.

But I must say that I do support the motion that has been brought forward by the New Democrats. I certainly feel very strongly that this committee's work is not done in terms of our examination of the auditor's report on Ontario's electronic health records initiative. There are many questions that are, as of yet, unanswered.

I would suggest, if the government is going to shut down this motion and shut down the subcommittee motions that are also before the committee in terms of our consideration this afternoon, that the government has made a decision to try to bury the truth.

The fact is that without the participation of Dr. Hudson and Sarah Kramer, this committee will not get to the truth. Our caucus has put forward and tabled motions to this committee which we have not yet moved, but several weeks ago, you'll recall, Mr. Chair, we brought forward a significant number of motions, which included a request that Dr. Hudson and Ms. Kramer be invited.

I find it hard to understand why the government won't even consider extending invitations to these people, because clearly it is beyond dispute that they would add a significant amount of information to the discussion in helping us get to the bottom of the issue.

Ms. Gélinas's motion is more specific and suggests that we will need a Speaker's warrant. The only thing I would say with respect to that is we haven't even taken the first step of inviting these witnesses, even though the subcommittee had made that request. Of course, the government voted down that motion a few weeks ago.

In summary, I certainly want to again express my support for this motion. I will be voting for it. I would suggest that we need to have a recorded vote on this, and I would urge the government members to reconsider what appears to be their opinion on this matter.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't want to take a whole bunch of time, but I just want, for the record, to make a couple of points. I think Madame Gélinas laid out fairly clearly the importance in doing so.

You have two individuals who have been referred to on this committee by way of answers to questions where certain things were said, and they have not had an opportunity to respond to those comments. As well, the committee has not had an opportunity to question those two particular individuals who were involved in the entire eHealth issue. I think it's fairly clear that they have a substantial role to play in being able to bring to light

what exactly happened at eHealth, when it happened, who made decisions and how all this came about.

As Madame Gélinas said, the issuance of a Speaker's warrant is not something that is done often. I've seen it a couple of times. I know that Mr. Sterling and Mr. Ramsay, who has been here—and Mr. Crozier has probably seen it a few times as well.

What's interesting to note is that Speaker's warrants, although not used very often, have often been supported by the government. I was a member of a government where I know two Speaker's warrants were issued on two separate issues, and in those particular cases, we, as the majority on the committee, actually supported it because we felt at the time that it was important for the committee to be satisfied that in fact all those who had to be heard would be heard.

Therefore, I say to the government, you can take the position of not supporting this motion. If you do so, I think you do so at your own peril. I think the public, at the end of the day, understands that there are many questions that have yet to be answered on this particular file. The reluctance of the government to have those questions asked and the answers given I think speaks volumes to where this government is at on this particular issue. Like Mr. Arnott, I would be extremely interested to know what the government's position on this is rather than just trying to call the question.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Any further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I would concur as well. The Speaker's warrant is quite extensive. I think it's very important to have these individuals come before the committee just to give the opportunity. As was stated earlier, the Premier said that sometimes we get it right, sometimes we don't, but it's important to fix it. The difficulty there is that if we don't know exactly how it's broken or where it fell off the tracks, it's hard to come forward to try to get it right back on the tracks.

To make sure that opportunities like this don't occur in the future and that we've got it correctly straightened out this time, I think it is important that we have these individuals present before us so we do have the opportunity to question them directly.

I know there were other lines of questioning I was hoping to continue on with today as a result of some of the questions that were asked and the answers that were given during the last session, and I certainly look forward to those opportunities again. As I stated to the deputy minister and the deputants who were here, unless we get those individuals here and we can question them directly, we have to go indirectly through the people who are here, constantly put them on the spot and kind of find out information as best we can through third-hand sources. I feel it's very important that we have the opportunity to have them come before the committee.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Any further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I just wanted to add that I cannot understand. I mean, we have all sat here. We want this behind us. We want to turn the page. I cannot under-

stand that you don't want to hear from the people who were there. What kind of arguments can you use that would say, "No, we don't need to hear from the people who presently lay accused of everything that went wrong at eHealth"? How can you stand there after all the work that we've done, after everything that we've heard?

We now have Hansards that will be read for whoever wants to go back on this. You will have all of the blame for what went wrong laid on the heads of two individuals and then you will have the MPPs on that committee saying, "We don't want to hear from those people." How can you not want to hear what they have to say? They are the ones who were there. They are the ones who stand accused of everything that went wrong. And for one of them, for Dr. Hudson, he is a leader in health care in Ontario. He has done so much to bring the health care system forward. You will leave him hanging out there as the one who will bear the cross of everything that went wrong at eHealth, and he does not deserve this. We have to hear from those people.

When I did my line of questioning—and it's there for everybody to see—I did not go witch-hunting or anything like this; I asked each and every one of them, "What went wrong? How can we learn from this? How could we make sure it doesn't happen again?" That's all I want to ask those two witnesses. Let them tell us what went wrong.

The government has come forward and said, "There's no more sole-sourcing. We've done some changes." There's more to the story than this, and those people can get us the full story. They are the ones who were there, who deserve to be heard. If you're serious that you take the work of this committee seriously, how can you not want to hear from those two people?

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Ms. Sandals?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Anyone else?

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Anyone else?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Please call the question.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Okay.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Recorded vote.

Ayes

Arnott, Gélinas, Ouellette.

Nays

Crozier, McNeely, Ramsay, Sandals, Zimmer.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): I declare the motion lost. Next, we will turn to the report of the subcommittee.

1300

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Before we do that, I was concerned that we would move forward with a Speaker's warrant on the issue, if that would be necessary.

The reason I'm speaking now is that we've done some research to find out. When it was brought forth, Mr. Arnott had mentioned that the invitation to these in-

dividuals before the committee was within parliamentary tradition.

We've done quite a bit of research to find out through the clerk's office that, "There is no rule or tradition that only individuals currently employed by the relevant ministries or agencies are required to come before the committee. Committees can, and have in the past, have former employees of ministries and agencies appear before them." It goes on to list all the individuals etc.

As such, Mr. Chair, I'm asking if this committee could move forward with a formal recommendation on behalf of the committee, as to going to the formal request of a Speaker's warrant to have the individuals, to actually have the committee Chair write and invite these individuals to come before the committee. I would ask for some discussion on that opportunity to come forward.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): I guess it wasn't included in the particular motion of the subcommittee; is that correct?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): That would have to be put in the form of a motion, Mr. Ouellette, and then it would have to be a committee decision, so you might want to deal with that.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): But let's deal with the report of the subcommittee. Do I have a mover of it?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I move adoption of the subcommittee report.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Which one are we referring to? There are two.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The first one on my pile.

I move that the subcommittee report be adopted.

The subcommittee on committee business met on Monday, November 9, to consider the method of proceeding on the review of the 2009 Special Report of the Auditor General on Ontario's Electronic Health Records Initiative, and recommends the following:

(1) That the committee meet for the purpose of holding public hearings on Wednesday, November 18, 2009 in Toronto;

(2) That the following persons be invited to appear before the committee: Ron Sapsford, Deputy Minister of Health and Long-Term Care—and, I add, still the Deputy Minister—and Rita Burak, interim chair of the board of directors of eHealth Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Okay. Discussion?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Some of the arguments are the same as we put forward with respect to Madame Gélinas's motion. Specifically, we have had opportunities to raise questions with both Deputy Minister Sapsford and Ms. Burak, who is the interim chair of the board, but we still have many more questions that we would hope to ask. We would have hoped to have had the opportunity to ask those questions today.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I think it is worthy of mention that we have split the meeting in two to make it more palatable for the members of the Liberal party to approve and support the request. I hope they'll be true to their word.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Further debate? There being no further debate—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Recorded vote.

Ayes

Arnott, Gélinas, Ouellette.

Nays

Crozier, McNeely, Ramsay, Sandals, Zimmer.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): I declare the motion lost. There is another subcommittee report. Mr. Arnott?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I move that the subcommittee report be adopted.

Your subcommittee on committee business met on Monday, November 9, to consider the method of proceeding on the review of the 2009 Special Report of the Auditor General on Ontario's Electronic Health Records Initiative, and recommends the following:

(1) That the committee meet for the purpose of holding public hearings on Wednesday, November 18, 2009, in Toronto;

(2) That the following persons be invited to appear before the committee: Michael Guerriere, Karli Farrow, Jamison Steeve, Sacha Bhatia and Gail Paech.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Discussion?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Again, it is the position of our caucus and the members of the Progressive Conservative Party that these discussions need to continue at this committee if the government is unwilling to hold a public inquiry. The names of the five people who are included in this motion have come up during the course of previous meetings of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with respect to this issue.

It is our contention that these people need to be invited to come forward to tell us what they know about how hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money has been wasted; why the auditor was obstructed in his efforts to begin his audit; why sole-source contracts were let, demonstrating, in many cases, favouritism and possibly political favouritism; why contracts were parsed down in terms of their value to circumvent established rules; and to get to the bottom of why hundreds of millions of dollars were wasted and why we still don't have an electronic health record of which we can be proud.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Further discussion?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It would have been a whole lot easier to have Ms. Kramer and Dr. Hudson answer our questions so that we would know exactly what went on. They were there. They were the ones who were in charge and could explain how come we didn't get value for

money, as was described in the auditor's report. We're not allowed to ask the people who know, so we have to go through second-hand. A lot of the witnesses who have come forward have brought partial answers, but their partial answers also included other people who were either present when some of the talks were going on or were taking part in e-mail exchanges between themselves and Dr. Hudson and Mrs. Kramer.

Given that we cannot talk to Mrs. Kramer and Dr. Hudson, then we need to talk to a broader and broader number of people who were witness to what we're trying to find out, and those names came up through the exchange we've had with the witnesses who have appeared already.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Further debate? Okay, I'll call the question.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Recorded vote.

Ayes

Arnott, Gélinas, Ouellette.

Nays

Crozier, McNeely, Ramsay, Sandals, Zimmer.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): I declare the motion lost.

I have received a motion, and I'm just going to ask the clerk whether it's in order. Okay.

Would you read the motion, Mr. Ouellette, and then I'll give committee members an opportunity to wait for a copy, if they find that necessary.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, seeing that there is no official rule or tradition that only individuals currently employed by the relevant ministries or agencies and that the committees in the past have invited such individuals, that the committee Chair officially invite Sarah Kramer, Dr. Alan Hudson and Gail Paech to present before this committee.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Discussion?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I just feel that it's necessary to have these individuals before the committee to ensure that they are given an opportunity to present, as I said, their side of the issue. As has been mentioned by France, Dr. Hudson has a long and strong history of contributing to Ontario and the health care sector and we want to ensure the individual is given that opportunity to come before committee to express his perspective on how this has taken place, as well as the other individuals I have mentioned. This is an opportunity to come forward and clear their names, to make sure that they're given the opportunity to discuss this issue before committee, as well as give the committee the opportunity to question them on how they actually saw it and how we can make it better.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Further discussion?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I remember that it was Ms. Sandals who brought that argument forward, that by in-

viting Ms. Kramer or Dr. Hudson we were not following parliamentary procedures. Now that we have researched it more and realized that it is not part of parliamentary procedure to limit ourselves to people who are currently employed, I think this argument doesn't stand anymore. It just takes away the barrier she had used at the time for not inviting those people.

Sarah Kramer and Dr. Hudson are the prime individuals who know what happened. They are the ones who can help us clear the air, turn the page and move forward in a positive way. To not allow them to do this is to hold everybody back. It will be really hard to turn the page, move on and get on with the work that we all know is needed if we don't let those people come forward and tell us exactly what went wrong.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Mr. Arnott.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to commend my colleague Mr. Ouellette and associate myself with his comments. When our party suggested that some witnesses be brought forward to this committee who were previously in certain capacities and no longer are in those capacities, who were actually doing the job when all of this stuff was taking place at the eHealth agency and the Ministry of Health, the people who are actually well-placed to tell us exactly what happened, we were told by the government members that it was parliamentary tradition that we only invite those who currently hold those offices. It was the first time I'd ever heard of such a parliamentary tradition and I disputed it at the time, but at the same time I was pleased that the research had been done. Mr. Ouellette has brought this forward to demonstrate that in fact, there is no such parliamentary tradition. Therefore, the government has no argument against this motion.

So far this afternoon, they have not made any statement to express why they're voting against our motions. I would challenge them and hope that they will make a statement on this one at least. We're getting to the point where it appears that the government is trying to shut this down and, as I said earlier, bury the truth on this whole issue, and that is regrettable. But I would encourage all members to support this motion because I think it demonstrates our continuing commitment to try to get all the facts on this issue. I commend Mr. Ouellette for bringing it forward.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Further debate? Seeing no further debate, I call the question.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Recorded vote, again.

Ayes

Arnott, Gélinas, Ouellette.

Nays

Crozier, McNeely, Ramsay, Sandals, Zimmer.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): I declare the motion lost.

There are no further motions. We can go into our in-camera reporting session.

The committee continued in closed session at 1310.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 18 November 2009

Committee business	P-465
Subcommittee reports	P-469

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Chair / Président

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Carleton–Mississippi Mills PC)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

Mr. Ted Arnott (Wellington–Halton Hills PC)

Mr. Ted Arnott (Wellington–Halton Hills PC)

M^{me} France Gélinas (Nickel Belt ND)

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans L)

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa PC)

Mr. David Ramsay (Timiskaming–Cochrane L)

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph L)

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Carleton–Mississippi Mills PC)

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex L)

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale L)

Substitutions / Membres remplaçants

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex L)

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina ND)

Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James ND)

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Oshawa PC)

Clerk / Greffier

Mr. Katch Koch

Staff / Personnel

Ms. Margaret Drent,

Ms. Lorraine Luski,

Ms. Susan Viets,

research officers,

Legislative Research Service