



ISSN 1181-6465

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 11 May 2010

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 11 mai 2010

**Standing Committee on
Estimates**

Ministry of Government Services

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère des Services
gouvernementaux

Chair: Garfield Dunlop
Clerk pro tem: William Short

Président : Garfield Dunlop
Greffier par intérim: William Short

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
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 11 May 2010

Mardi 11 mai 2010

The committee met at 0901 in room 151.

MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Good morning, everyone. I welcome everyone here this morning. Minister Takhar, we appreciate you being here this morning. To the staff of the ministry as well, thank you all for being here this morning.

We're here to discuss the estimates of the Ministry of Government Services. We will go through this morning until approximately 10:20, when we'll adjourn, and then we'll come back this afternoon after routine proceedings. I want to let you know that we have a total of seven and a half hours of time allocated for the Ministry of Government Services.

Minister, you'll have 30 minutes for your opening remarks. Then we'll go to the official opposition for your opening remarks, Mr. O'Toole, and you can use some of that time to question the minister, if you want. Then we'll go to the third party for 30 minutes, and then back to the minister for a 30-minute response. If you don't want to use that 30 minutes, then I'm going to immediately go, in 20-minute rotation, to the opposition. Then we'll move from the opposition to the third party to government until we're done the seven and a half hours.

Minister, the floor is yours.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Good morning, everyone. I would like to thank the committee for providing this opportunity to talk about the great work the Ministry of Government Services is doing on behalf of all Ontario residents.

With me today, on my right, is MGS Deputy Minister Ron McKerlie, and on my left is ServiceOntario Deputy Minister Bob Stark. I've got great help, so they'll be ready to answer your questions. They also have some of their senior staff members here.

I am here to discuss our estimates, but I really see this as a great opportunity to talk about all the great developments and initiatives that have been undertaken at MGS and ServiceOntario over the past few years. I will start with a more general overview of MGS activities and then focus on specific areas such as I&IT, human resources, accountability, procurement, diversity, the green office and, of course, ServiceOntario.

MGS was created on June 29, 2005, incorporating the former Management Board Secretariat, the Ministry of

Consumer and Business Services, and the Centre for Leadership and Human Resource Management. The consumer file has since been re-established as its own ministry.

In the past five years, MGS has undergone significant growth and transformation. Many enterprise-wide functions have been transferred from other ministries into MGS for services in human resources, I&IT services, Ontario Shared Services and ServiceOntario.

MGS functions as both a public-facing line ministry—through ServiceOntario—and an enterprise organization responsible for supporting our 66,000-plus workforce and supporting 27 ministries as they implement key government priorities.

We issue birth and marriage certificates, staff 81 ServiceOntario locations, manage 265 driver and vehicle licence-issuing offices, 130 health card outreach locations, 70 self-service kiosks, 54 land registry offices and eight telephone contact centres.

In addition, MGS carefully preserves Ontario's rich history through the Archives of Ontario.

MGS is responsible for building the best public service in the world in order to deliver on the government's commitment to being a responsive and innovative leader in public and customer service. Whether in Toronto, Ottawa, Windsor, Kingston, Thunder Bay or any other city or community in this great province, the work of MGS impacts the lives of all Ontarians.

Estimates for 2010-11: As the estimates book indicates, the operating budget for the Ministry of Government Services for the fiscal year 2010-11 is \$1.47 billion, an increase of approximately \$91 million in operating expenses over the last fiscal year. The increase is largely due to an increase of \$52 million in spending for information and technology infrastructure support to establish and maintain a modern IT infrastructure and government services to the public.

The increase in operating expenses is related to the following: a \$37-million increase related to the enterprise-based key technology systems; a \$7.8-million increase to fund the next generation government mobile communications project; and a \$7.2-million increase related to the transition project and maintenance for the Guelph data centre—\$2.9 million for transition and \$4.3 million for ongoing operations. The remaining \$39-million increase reflects employee pension and benefit costs of \$37 million that result from funding require-

ments to offset investment losses in 2009-10, and a net \$2 million for the government's ongoing commitment to delivering top-quality public services to Ontarians in a fiscally responsible manner.

The ministry's estimates reflect its focus on transforming and improving government services; delivering on results and fiscal priorities; providing Ontarians with reliable, easy access to improved cost-effective government services; and making the OPS an employer of first choice.

Let me just start with a little bit about financial restraint. Ontarians value and appreciate the contribution of those who deliver their public services. They also expect those who are paid by tax dollars to do their part to help sustain public services. In the 2010 budget, the government announced that it will introduce legislation that would: extend the existing freeze of the salaries of members of provincial Parliament from one to three years, freeze the compensation structures for non-bargaining political and Legislative Assembly staff for two years, and freeze compensation structures in the OPS and broader public sector for two years for all non-bargaining employees.

Over two years, these measures will help redirect up to \$750 million towards schools, hospitals and other public services. Going forward, the government's fiscal plan provides no funding for incremental compensation increases for future collective agreements. As you know, the responsibility for negotiating collective agreements lays with this ministry.

Hiring restraint: As announced in the 2009 budget, the size of the Ontario public service is being reduced by 5%, or 3,400 full-time employees over a three-year period through attrition and other measures. After one year, we are well on our way to meeting the goal. The quality of service delivered to the public is not, and will not, be compromised.

Ontario has the lowest number of provincial public servants per capita, compared to any other Canadian province. Ontario also has the lowest expenditure per capita on general government services. Total current expenditures per capita were \$7,339 in 2008-09, lower than any other province.

On December 2, 2008, the government placed a cap on the size of the Ontario public service at 68,645 employees. In the first year of this three-year plan, the OPS is on track to meet the 5% reduction, with one third of the target met to date.

I and IT: Our corporate I and IT branch continues to modernize key government IT applications. Our major application portfolio strategy, normally called MAPS, is providing these applications, ensuring the continued delivery of critical public services. The major application portfolio strategy, or MAPS, has addressed 32 at-risk systems as of March of this year.

0910

We have now completed the construction of the new data centre in Guelph to meet the government's information technology requirements. The new data centre is a

critical component in the information technology infrastructure required to support essential services to Ontarians. The Ministry of Government Services is leading an extensive multi-year project involving all ministries and information technology clusters to transition just over 400 ministry mission and business-critical applications to the new Guelph data centre. The new data centre is the IT backbone in support of programs delivered by all ministries and will ensure long-term stability and service excellence.

The province also continues to invest in broadband infrastructure so that more Ontario citizens, particularly those who live and work in remote areas, can access online government services.

Accountability: In the past year the government, through MGS, has taken several steps to strengthen accountability, transparency and oversight of expenses.

On April 1, 2010, a new travel, meal and hospitality expenses directive, which provides stronger and simpler expense rules, came into effect. The travel, meal and hospitality expenses directive applies to all ministries and their employees, all classified agencies and their employees and appointees, all consultants and contractors to ministries or to classified agencies, and all organizations prescribed by regulation under the Public Sector Expenses Review Act. Online training on the government's new expense rules is now mandatory for all staff who will be submitting or approving claims.

Under the newly implemented Public Sector Expenses Review Act, appointees, senior executives and the top five claimants at 22 of Ontario's largest agencies are required to publicly disclose information on expenses. They are now being required to abide by the same rules as ministers, political staff and senior government managers.

In addition, a website to provide the public with regular updates on the expense claims of senior officials is now up and running.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act: As you likely know, MGS is also responsible for the province's freedom of information and privacy legislation. The Information and Privacy Commissioner tabled her annual report for 2008 in the Legislature on May 13, 2009. Overall, the commissioner's annual report was very positive in tone. The commissioner's message begins by stating that "there were significant advances in both access and privacy in 2008."

Consulting: Consulting expenditures have decreased from \$656 million in 2001-02 to \$304 million in 2009-10, a reduction of \$350-plus million. Since 2003, 1,415 positions have been approved for conversion to replace work previously done by consultants, resulting in an ongoing annual savings of approximately \$58 million.

In addition, the government has taken steps to ensure that all ministries and agencies use open, competitive and transparent processes to acquire consulting services. These changes apply to agencies such as the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation,

Infrastructure Ontario and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

Employer of first choice: As one of Ontario's largest employers within Canada's most populous and culturally diverse province, the OPS strives to be an employer of first choice. We are creating and maintaining a culture of learning and promoting new and diverse ideas and approaches. Our employees make a real difference in the lives of Ontarians every day—from protecting the environment, supporting new businesses, and improving our public education system. Ontario's public servants are dedicated to providing modern public services, and have a commitment to excellence that is unparalleled. I am very proud of our hard-working public service.

We know there is always room for improvement, but it is gratifying to see that the hard work being undertaken in the Ministry of Government Services to date is being recognized. The OPS has been chosen as one of Canada's Top 100 employers for the second year in a row, one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers for the third year in a row, and recently was acknowledged as one of Canada's greenest employers. I'm very proud that the OPS has received these awards. It means we are moving in the right direction.

HROntario: HROntario was created in July 2008 to provide a more strategic approach to human resource management, and to consolidate HR functions across the OPS into a more integrated, enterprise service delivery organization. HROntario provides HR services and support to 66,000-plus public servants. HROntario is providing the enterprise policies, strategies, programs and services that enable the OPS to be an employer of first choice and to deliver quality public services. It is providing corporate management policies to ensure an accountable and professional public service. It is promoting OPS transformation and service excellence.

We are attracting youth and new professionals through outreach activities and a number of employment programs. In 2009-10, we offered a total of 6,000 employment opportunities for youth and new professionals.

Research shows that the most successful organizations are those with highly engaged employees—employees with a high level of job satisfaction and commitment to the organization and its goals. OPS employee engagement scores have increased from 65.97% in 2007 to 72.47% in 2009.

OPS average wage increases are lower than the overall public sector. Other cost-saving measures were attained through bargaining. For example, HRO has implemented the attendance support management program, in the Ministry of Correctional Services and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, that is reducing sick-time usage and its associated costs.

HROntario has implemented a number of initiatives to improve oversight, accountability, transparency and to reaffirm the government's commitment to protect taxpayer dollars. For example, HROntario developed the Public Sector Expenses Review Act, which enables the Integrity Commissioner to review the expenses of execu-

tives at 22 of the government's largest agencies; launched the public disclosure of expenses website; revised the travel, meal and hospitality expenses directive, and revised the agency establishment and accountability directive.

HROntario also promotes OPS transformation and service excellence. It led and supported the implementation of the OPS service directive that requires all ministries to develop, publish and improve service standards and place a greater focus on timely, accessible, client-focused service delivery.

Diversity: The government has undertaken a number of diversity initiatives, which helps ensure the OPS is a truly diverse and inclusive organization. It created a diversity office within MGS, with responsibility for developing and implementing a number of government-wide diversity initiatives. Noelle Richardson was appointed Ontario's very first Chief Diversity Officer and is the executive lead for enterprise-wide diversity initiatives. The OPS diversity office serves as a centre of excellence to assist in the transformation of the OPS toward appreciating diversity and becoming more inclusive. The aim is to ensure that the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility are embedded into everything we do as an organization.

Green office: For the first time, the OPS has been recognized as one of Canada's greenest employers for 2010. The Canada's Greenest Employers Award is part of the Canada's Top 100 Employers competition conducted by Mediacorp Canada. Mediacorp cited several reasons for selecting the OPS for the award, including the green office's leading important initiatives including a telecommuting pilot, enterprise video conferencing, e-waste disposal and a new power management pilot, just to name a few.

The government has set a target of reducing its carbon footprint from direct operations by 19% over the next four years and will increase this target to 27% by 2020. We are also reducing printing by 50% by 2012 through the elimination of two thirds of personal printers, mandatory double-sided printing and greater use of electronic approvals. This results in less electricity—approximately 4.5 million kilowatt hours saved every year—fewer toner cartridges and less waste. The Ontario government is also adjusting desktop power management settings on all OPS computers, resulting in a reduction of 19 million kilowatt hours per year, or enough energy to power approximately 1,700 houses for a year.

0920

I would now like to turn my attention to Service-Ontario, which is emerging as the integrated gateway to government services across the province. The ministry's service modernization initiative will make Service-Ontario better by closing critical gaps in service coverage and access across the province. Changes occurring under the plan will vastly improve our service delivery network, especially in rural and remote areas, and Ontarians will get extended hours of service and more online service guarantees.

Just last month I had the honour of opening a brand new ServiceOntario centre on the Canadian Forces base in Petawawa. This new centre provides improved access to government services for both military and non-military families, allowing them to renew their health cards, driver's licences and vehicle registrations, in addition to other services. The announcement of that location is just one part of ServiceOntario's plan to integrate most health card and driver and vehicle services so that more Ontarians will be able to make one trip for these essential services. By the end of this year, nearly 95% of all Ontarians will be within 10 kilometres of an integrated ServiceOntario centre. We are making it easier for Ontarians to get the service they need, when they need it and how they need it.

Service revolution: I would like to provide a little history behind ServiceOntario's great success story. In the early 2000s, a combination of higher demand, tighter security needs and various organizational issues made for long lines and wait times for even the most basic services. Much of this followed 9/11, which provided a wake-up call for more secure passports. This meant tougher standards and processes for documents used to get a passport, including birth certificates.

Since a birth certificate is a foundation document used to get most other forms of identification, this sudden increase in demand and security exacerbated an already overburdened system. The resulting pressure created a standard 20-week-long backlog on birth certificates.

In June 2006 the government approved the ServiceOntario modernization initiative, providing a mandate to establish ServiceOntario as the government's customer service retail arm. It meant providing services in ways that were faster and better than ever before. It recognized that citizens have higher service expectations of their government.

It took hard work and some out-of-the-box thinking. It took a service revolution and previously unheard-of government money-back guarantees. This meant offering the first-ever service guarantee for birth certificates, processed and delivered from desktop to doorstep within 15 business days or your money back. The service guarantee was important because it gave customers unprecedented certainty and a way to hold government accountable for its service. Since its launch in 2005, the service guarantee has been extended to marriage and death certificates as well. Today approximately 80% of all birth certificate applications are received online, and the guarantee is met more than 99.5% of the time.

By introducing more modern systems, online services and the precedent-setting series of service guarantees, ServiceOntario has set a new standard for government service.

Driver licence and vehicle registration services, health cards and business services—these and more are now coming under the ServiceOntario umbrella. ServiceOntario is creating a one-stop shopping experience that will be available at ServiceOntario centres conveniently located across the province by the end of this year. With

the reconfigured ServiceOntario network, most Ontarians will be living within 10 kilometres of a government service centre.

Customers can now renew their vehicle registration sticker online and have it delivered within five business days.

Access to routine health card services will improve from 27 locations to almost 300 locations. In rural communities access to routine health card services will expand from two to 163 ServiceOntario centres. In northern communities access to routine health card services will expand from six to 67 ServiceOntario centres.

Let me just talk a little bit about the newborn registration service. The recently introduced newborn registration service allow new parents to go online, register a birth, apply for a birth certificate from the province and apply for a social insurance number from the federal government, all at the same time. So the three steps actually have been reduced to one step, and we are working with our partners in other levels of government to make things even easier for Ontarians.

The new BizPaL venture allows entrepreneurs and business owners to go online and get a list of the municipal, provincial and federal licences and registrations required to start a business, all through one simple interface. On top of this, we're making it easier for businesses to transact with the government of Ontario. We are issuing master business licences within our two-day guarantee, 100% of the time.

ServiceOntario is playing a key role in delivering faster, smarter and streamlined government-to-business services through the Open for Business initiative. This initiative includes a new business information line covering more than 12 existing numbers. The initiative includes the adoption of single business ID numbers by eight programs within the Ministries of Revenue, Labour and the Environment. As well, it involves the creation of one-window online access and a government-wide contact centre for business. Ontario is indeed open for business and ServiceOntario is the front door.

Land registration offices: Ontario's land registration system has been undergoing transformation from a paper record and manual operation to an automated record and electronic operation for a number of years through a joint initiative between the ministry and Teranet. This transformation has resulted in the conversion of properties from the Registry Act to the Land Titles Act, which provides a government guarantee of ownership to property.

As of March 31 of this year, 52 of the 54 land registry offices have been automated, and it is anticipated that the automation will be completed within the next year.

Some 12.7 million Ontario residents use ServiceOntario for a variety of services, including birth and marriage certificates, health cards, driver's licences, licence plate renewals, fishing and hunting licences and numerous other provincial services. In 2008-09, ServiceOntario facilitated about 44 million interactions on behalf of the government of Ontario. Today, ServiceOntario is recognized as a world leader in the modernization of

service delivery, and we are sharing this knowledge with governments across the world, including the United Arab Emirates, Ireland and India.

Improvements will continue to come, all with the same goal in mind: making it easier for the people of Ontario.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the committee members for this opportunity to talk about the work being done at the Ministry of Government Services on behalf of all Ontarians.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Thank you very much, Minister, and thank you for providing a copy of the speech upfront, both for Hansard and for the translation as well.

Is there anything else you want to add to that before going to the official opposition?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: All I want to say is that the MGS is sort of the corporate services function for the government of Ontario. This is where we develop policies and procedures which the other ministries or agencies follow. All of our services are dedicated so that we can provide the best service possible to Ontarians.

This is like a centralized function where most of the centralized functions take place. This ministry is pretty big in size. It looks after all the information systems and, from the policy point of view, all the HR and procurement functions. It also provides all the services that Ontarians need under one roof.

I just want to say it's sort of like a centralized function in the government; we develop policies and procedures that the other ministries follow.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay. We'll now go to official opposition. Mr. O'Toole, you can begin. You have 30 minutes to speak, or you can begin to ask questions as well at some point.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for your presentation.

I want to say from the outset that I'm reasonably familiar, but certainly not as familiar as you are, with this. It's a very complex ministry. I want to thank your staff for the large presentation of notes and information. That has been helpful to the extreme, perhaps. What I mean by that is I appreciate your presentation. Anything I say is certainly meant in my role as a critic, and it's to point out the things that I find less successful than the glowing remarks you've made.

0930

I do know there's a lot of good work going on. I recall that some time ago, perhaps when we were in government, which seems like a distant memory—I remember working with—when I was in, I guess it was called consumer business services back then—and spending some time with a fellow named Art Daniels, who was assistant deputy minister, I think, or sort of that role. He put a presentation on, as my orientation, I guess—and I had a bit of background in IT in my day—and it was just pretty much what you're talking about today, about ServiceOntario, kind of the one window. In fact, he was kind enough to put a presentation on, and I thought, having

spent some time on the public library board at one time and having been a programmer many, many years ago, that it was inspirational. I thought the libraries were the right place to look. In fact, they had a policy at one time that was called One Place to Look. There's a lot of duplication in government publications, and if you want to find it now it's all online anyway.

The work goes on under ServiceOntario by many other names. I can tell you that Art Daniels—and your staff there probably would know that they were, and I imagine they still are, inspirational people to work with. But when it comes to finding this One Place to Look, sometimes you have to pay for it. And this is under one of your roles as the FOI privacy office. We've submitted, as you know, because of the many scandals under Premier McGuinty's role—I'm sure you had very little role, if any, in it, but there have been scandals. EHealth: Certainly the auditor commented on that. It was sort of the revelation, if you will, to us as the opposition that there must be more to this. So we started looking, and the auditor obviously looked and the OLG came up, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. There are lots of exceptional circumstances there, and then after that, the WSIB and others. And we found out this whole idea that there wasn't much tendering going on for some of the services and/or products that were being acquired by the government. In fact, we were only standing in some sort of awe that the expenditures were outpacing revenue. Revenue was going in one direction and expenditures were going in the other. There seemed to be, in a general sense, without being personally critical, no accountability and a certain tone of arrogance taking over.

In your own case, you were questioned, and we'll leave that as it is. It's on the record. We've tried to put questions forward under FOI. We were told that for the Ministry of Government Services to respond to some of our requests, it was \$9,000. This is all taxpayers' money. You wanted \$9,000. If some of the questions or inquiries were spurious or reckless or unnecessary, we could have been told that. But if they were quite straightforward questions emanating from something from the press or something that we've observed, that's unacceptable.

Five ministries have fee estimates of over \$3,000. It cost less money for the eHealth or OLG requests some time ago. So the more requests we have, the more expensive they get. And that's anything but accessibility. And that's the opposition, the loyal opposition, trying to do its job. Yes, often, the headlines are problematic or negative, and that's not something I go along with too much. But I think the interesting thing here is, why should we be spending government money when in fact that information, at some point, belongs to the people of Ontario?

In fact, just last week, you will recall—and I'm looking at Hansard; I was looking while you were reading—we had a truth-in-government private member's bill replicating basically what's available in other provinces. Three or four other provinces have this disclosure request which says that a threshold of, say, \$10,000 expenditures should all be posted.

We've listened to the litany again. In fact, I have your remarks in Hansard here. You said, "The Ontario government has already made the legislation and policy changes to increase" the transparency of expense disclosures and procurements and to expand freedom-of-information access across government. It goes on to say—but we checked this morning; there's not one thing on there. There's a headline. I'll show them to you; I've got all that here. There's a website. Sure enough, you've got some qualified IT people getting the website up, but there's nothing on it. There it is; I just looked this morning. You talk a good story, but the truth is in the delivery, and it's not there.

It goes deeper, which sort of spoils the whole positive mood we started with here. I have a different job here: I'm trying to find out stuff that you won't tell me. So I'm asking you and your staff today, on the record, to table those documents that have been committed to and promised. I don't want all the verbiage with them. I want them on paper so that we can follow up in question period and put your feet to the fire, so to speak.

It goes on to say here in the—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Sorry, did you get an actual request in? Are you going to resubmit it as a question?

Mr. John O'Toole: No—well, we'll sort that out logistically. What I want is all of those requests responded to that have already been submitted, and I want them free, on behalf of the people of Ontario. If you're refusing to do that—if that's the answer—then that becomes the issue, part two.

I would say that, more importantly, since you're headed by Bill 201, Public Sector Expenses Review Act, 2009, you should be intimately familiar with what I'm trying to get at: that it be available and not limited by cost, as you said in the introduction of that bill. I've got evidence here that it's \$9,000—we've been told—and I think that's a violation of our integrity itself.

Lately in my riding, I've been hearing from people who have, I guess, lost their contracts. It's hard to protect their innocence, because they had the integrity to leave Blue Pebble, which was one of the consulting firms in the eHealth issue. Now we hear that they initially worked for Cancer Care Ontario—the same, very qualified academic in health care, IT-specialized, but a health care provider who has taught at the university level as well, I should say. That person tells me that some of that stuff is still going on.

The cost of the MGS audit and report for the Ontario internal audit division is \$5,700. These types of audits reveal the serious problem at Cancer Care Ontario and Blue Pebble. Why isn't there a disclosure on this? This is a precedent for these audits.

I would like these audits to be tabled in committee before the seven and a half hours have elapsed. That's my second request: I'd like those audits of MGS, the Ontario internal audit division, which cost \$5,700.

The most problematic thing for the opposition is to get to the truth or the substance. The Premier, in question

period, seems to be bob and weave like a bobble on the end of a fishing line. It's unbelievable, how well he gets away with it. It's unbelievable.

This is like a barrier, Minister. This is an artificial barrier, where you've trained these—and I hate to—this is meant for the minister. He's the one who is in charge. By any other term, these are taxes. If I have to be charged \$9,000, guess who's paying? The taxpayer. So it's a tax. Everything you do there is raising taxes.

I'm going to spend a little less time on that. I think I've made my point there.

There's your Internet thing.

The hospitality, travel, all that stuff, for 22 of Ontario's largest agencies: That's another one. In fact, there are about 250 agencies. What's special about these 22? I saw the announcement by the Premier. At that time, it was 21, and the one you've added is Metrolinx. Again, I've checked and there's nothing on there with respect to their disclosures. It's problematic—we'll put it that way.

I want to make sure I don't use all the time on just the rattle here.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): You have 20 minutes left.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh, yeah. Well, I've got enough time—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Mr. Miller, you'll have 20 after that.

Mr. John O'Toole: —to get down to it here.

I'm just going to ask you to put on the record whether or not you're prepared to respond to some of the requests we make, without the barrier of these charges for the FOI. How do you come to these numbers? While I look for my other notes—I'm asking you.

0940

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I thought you were still talking.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I'm still looking.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: First, you need to know that in each ministry there is a person responsible for FOI, and FOI requests are coordinated by MGS. The minister or the minister's office has actually no involvement in the FOI requests. I would like the deputy minister to confirm this and tell you a little bit more about it, how the charges are determined.

The last time the fees for FOI were determined was in 1996, and they haven't changed. So the rates were determined in 1996 under the PCs—right? Those rates have not changed. But I will ask our deputy minister, Ron McKerlie, and maybe his staff to talk about what the process is and how the charges are determined.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Thank you, Minister. Good morning, everyone, and thank you for the opportunity to answer the question.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): What's your name?

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Sorry. My name is Ron McKerlie and I'm the Deputy Minister of Government Services. I'm also secretary of the Management Board of Cabinet and associate secretary of cabinet.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): I just really want to get it for Hansard.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Great. Thank you for the opportunity.

As the minister has said, the fee structure for FOI requests was last updated in 1996 by the government of the day, and since that time the fees have not changed.

Like other FOI legislation across Canada, FIPPA operates on a user-pay principle. Nominal application fees of \$5 and processing fees for the record search, photocopying and preparing the records for release are required to be paid when requesting government records. Fees under FIPPA only capture some of the costs associated with processing the requests. They are not full-cost recovery, particularly given the fact that the fees have not increased for, now, a number of years.

Given the extensive work sometimes required for public servants to complete a request, it's not unreasonable for taxpayers to expect requesters to share some of the financial burden that's incurred by the cost of looking up information.

Further, in the past, the Information and Privacy Commissioner has supported the user-pay principle and observed that some reduction of requests and appeals may result from the elimination of questionable use of the act.

Requesters can seek to have fees waived if payment will cause financial hardship or if the dissemination of the record will benefit public health or safety.

Canadian jurisdictions have varying FOI requests and processing fees. Ontario's current fees are not out of line with those of other jurisdictions.

FIPPA also provides for fee waivers in certain circumstances, such as financial hardship or when the disclosure of records will benefit public health and safety, and each institution under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act is responsible for the administration of the act in their organization.

Mr. John O'Toole: Very good. I appreciate that. The record's very important. Here's a specific question as well—I want to clarify through the Chair: These don't have to be written. As long as they're recorded here or—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): You can do it either way. You can ask the question and we'll ask the ministry staff to clarify—

Mr. John O'Toole: This is sort of the next phase, and it's tied to the same thing: Will MGS table for the committee a complete list of all procurement contracts by the ministry before the 7.5 hours of time that you're here expires? Or explain why not. These are all the contracts that have been extended. This is the forum to be asking for it because they are buried in the estimates, the future ones, and as far as I'm concerned, the past ones are just as important.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): I think, Mr. O'Toole, we should make sure—we have had times when the ministry before us could not provide those answers in that particular time.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's fine as well.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): It may be a few days later.

Mr. John O'Toole: I have another one. There is precedence for the audits I talked about before, and those are the ones I'm trying to get to, the contracts. Hopefully they'll be included—the ones I mentioned earlier, Cancer Care Ontario with Blue Pebble, those contracts as well.

Now, on the LHIN issue, we're looking for the contract extensions. Recent revelations have revealed that the Ontario LHINs are not immune to controversy. I have a little article on that. The LHIN contract extensions do not have to be tendered. Therefore, will the minister table a list of consulting businesses that are receiving untendered contract extensions? I put this in the context of the Premier's June edict that everything would be posted and extended.

I'm moving on to the accountability for expenses, and back to what I said before I asked for the FOI description. The travel, meal and hospitality expense directive was announced on April 1, and it requires that 22 of Ontario's largest agencies disclose expense information. This number makes up a small portion of the agencies, boards and commissions that use public funding. I think there are 250 such agencies. In September—the Public Sector Expenses Review Act, 2009—the Premier committed to publicly disclose the expenses of senior management of the OPS. Another question: Will the minister table a list of who will be included in this definition of senior management? It's a very vague term. In fact, there's more on that when you look at the budget commitment of the hiring freeze. So is it a minister, deputy minister or assistant deputy minister? Was there any criteria that determined which agencies would be included in the 22, out of the 250? Does the minister have any evidence to justify that the other hundreds of agencies, boards and commissions are using expense accounts and tax dollars in a responsible manner?

This is the only time I personally can get these on the record, and I'll be referring to them if I don't get questions in the House. Will the minister post the contracts of the agencies, boards and commissions online? There's none of this stuff, the FOI stuff. What's the problem with posting it? You gave me such a glowing report on the IT sector, ServiceOntario, one stop for everything from birth registration to property transfers. We're asking here: Will the legitimate contracts for business be posted? It's no different than Lisa MacLeod's bill that we debated last Thursday. In your comments, you acted like this stuff was all available. Why is the minister publishing expense information for only 22 agencies, only after June? Why not for the entire fiscal year? In other words, you're not giving us a full annualized picture of the expenditures. So, will the minister table the expense information from the 22 agencies for the entire fiscal year of 2009-10? There is precedence for this request in light of numerous violations made public. Will the minister adopt the accountability reforms proposed by Tim Hudak? As I said, we mentioned that before, truth in government. Will the minister table the expenses of the Deputy Minister of

Government Services, the Deputy Minister and CEO of ServiceOntario—the two gentlemen with you there—the chair of the Licence Appeal Tribunal and the chair of the Advertising Review Board?

You know, when I look at the overall thing, there's \$1 million a day being spent on consultants.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, we like to round it off to \$1 million a day. It's probably higher than that and growing. I suspect that the real—

Mr. Bill Mauro: A 50% reduction.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's what he said in his presentation, but, I hate to say, maybe it's being reported differently.

Now, another one that I think is quite important here—I'm moving on to a different area—is ServiceOntario and the private issuers network transfer. All members of whatever stripe, I'm sure, had difficulties during that period when that announcement was made. I may even get to asking a question here in the open forum. What was the cost of the transition? I think it was \$6 million. At least, that's the number we're given, or at least that we've been able to find out. Did each private issuers network sign and receive the same contract in regard to the closure of the office? In fact, it's my understanding they were non-disclosure. I think it was your deputy sitting on your side there—Bob Stark was the name I heard most of the time—who actually went around Ontario and delivered the bad news. Now remember, I have a different job than the minister. My job is the opposite to his, really. I don't feel that comfortable, sometimes, suggesting that—this is under the direction of the minister, and if it's screwed up, it's his fault, not yours.

0950

What was the cost of the IT upgrades for the private issuers network in ServiceOntario? It's very hard to isolate these because some of the offices, I gather—this is a short question—there are still private ones operating. Is the long run that they end up all being ServiceOntario? Is that the goal? You said in your presentation that everybody's going to be within 10 minutes of one of these. Why aren't they online? Why don't they go to the library and log on. Even if they haven't got any money for an IT connection, go to the library. Why isn't each member's office accessible to the public? We could have a little terminal there and let them do their thing. We're already hooked up, and you're paying for it. So those are a couple of questions there. When I look at the ServiceOntario office, it's great. What are the hours of operation?

The private issuers network: You can't get in on Saturday morning, or you line up for most of the day. Open for business means seven days a week, 24/7. If you haven't got 24/7, you have to have some other alternative, where they can log in and do the stuff. People standing in line is 1950s-style service—unacceptable. I think there have been improvements; this isn't a generalization here. Is that the goal? You're doing it with birth certificates, and you could be issuing birth certificates to

people. Are they all being registered? How about the people who aren't IT literate? Are they registering them?

Whatever. Go ahead. You've got a couple of minutes.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Okay, let me just—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): You're going to have 30 minutes to respond at the end to some of these questions that have been raised.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: If I can get the questions, then it will be easy.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): If you can answer now, fine, but you will also have 30 minutes to wrap up at the end, after—

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I think, Mr. Chair, it will be helpful—I know the member has asked a lot of questions. Some of those are very good and interesting questions. If you can give us a list of those questions and the requests that are being made so that we know whether it is feasible to provide the information to the member or not in the time frame he's asking—or even afterwards.

But let me just say, I think the main purpose—I will start from the back. The main purpose of what we call ServiceOntario is to modernize and streamline the integration of our service network. Two thirds of them are private and one third of them are government offices. We have no intention of changing them at this point in time. The idea is to provide more services under one group, whether it's a private issuers network or a government network.

Let me tell you what it is going to do. It's not either/or—that everybody has to go to the ServiceOntario networks. We're going to provide information online, and we're committed to doing that. We are also going to provide information through kiosks, so there will be options available to people. If they want to go online, they can do some of the services online. If they want to go to the kiosk, they can do it at the kiosk. Or they can actually physically go into these offices. But the idea is to really provide more services under one roof so that people can get all services.

For example, right now, health cards are being provided in 27 OHIP offices. Once we fully integrate it, they will be provided in 300 offices. In rural communities, health cards are now being provided in two locations. When we fully integrate it, they will be provided in 163 locations. In northern communities, health card services are now being provided in six locations, and when fully integrated, they will be in 67 ServiceOntario centres. In the southeast, the health card services will go from four to 60 locations. There is a lot more work that needs to be done, but that's the direction in which we are moving. People can go to one place—which they can identify through ServiceOntario—where they can get the service and do that.

You have asked another question to which I am quite comfortable giving you the answer at this point. You said, "You have a website, and you were going to post the expenses of 22 agencies and other expenses on the website." Those expenses are effective from April 1, incurred from April 1. This means that if anybody spends

any money on expenses from April 1, when those expenses are approved and actually have gone through the Integrity Commissioner, and the Integrity Commissioner is satisfied and they come back, they will be posted. It's going to take a little bit of time, but all those expenses of 22 agencies, senior management, five major claimants, ministers' offices and political staff will be on the website.

Mr. John O'Toole: I just want to start with a small nail in a piece of wood as opposed to a whole bunch of things. When can I expect to see the first update? That's one idea of the transparency—if you're going to say it, and you say it in the House: "We've done this, and we've done that." In fact, you're going to; you haven't actually done it. When can I expect—a date—a deliverable? It's now May. It'll soon be June. It'll soon be summer and the people will have all gone to sleep again; they don't pay any attention to this stuff, and you'll have missed another year of accountability. When can I expect something? On April 1, there are already people who have been to Europe.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me answer this question. I think it's a good question, so I have no problem providing the answer. My understanding is that most of the expenses approved by the Integrity Commissioner will be up on the system by the end of May.

Let me also say that I met with your leader from the opposition and had this conversation with him too. I also requested from him the expenses of the Leader of the Opposition, as the ministers should also be posted. I'm not sure that is done, either, so I think there is a little bit of work—

Mr. John O'Toole: I think you had agreement in the House that day.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Work needs to be done, I think, on all sides, but we are all committed to doing it. I think the public needs these answers, and this information should be readily available. I will ask my deputy minister here. If there's any more information, he can shed light on it.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Thank you very much—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): There are just two minutes left in these 30 minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll slip one more in here. On this whole private issuers network thing, if you could disclose here—you consolidated 34 centres, it's my understanding, under the ServiceOntario definition. Who got the contract to provide the technology and the connectivity? Was it tendered? That's the question: Who got the contract, and was it tendered?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Okay, let me ask—

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Which question am I answering?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: You answer the first question; then I'll ask the other deputy to answer the second question.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Just for clarity on the question around the expenses that would be posted under the Public Sector Expenses Review Act, 2009: The process is that as people incur expenses after April 1, once they

submit an expense claim and that claim is approved, it would then go for review, as appropriate, to the Integrity Commissioner, and subsequently for payment. Once that happens, it goes to a bit of a manual process right now to actually post that information on the website.

It's hard to say what the first date would be in terms of when you would see the first expenses, but by the end of May would be a reasonable expectation that there would be expenses up, and quarterly thereafter. You will see expenses up there every quarter, and you'll be able to look at all the expenses that had been incurred, processed, paid, reviewed and posted.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): You've just got about 30 seconds left here. Is there any quick comment that you'd like to make?

Mr. John O'Toole: No, just the other part of the question that's left. I guess I'll just wait for it. That's the IT, hardware, software and infrastructure service to combine those new ServiceOntario offices. Is there a price, an average per office, or is there a template you're using?

Mr. Bob Stark: I think, first of all, it's important to get a little bit of history here. ServiceOntario: We've followed the pioneering thoughts of others earlier on and have brought together, as the minister mentioned, a number of different services from various ministries into ServiceOntario. What we've ended up with as a result of that is unique individual delivery channels for driver and vehicle licensing, for health cards and so on.

When we look at it on an integrated basis, we have more capacity in those offices than we need to deliver the business. We have been through a process of consolidation. As you mentioned, we've closed a number of offices, about 59 that are privately run and about 11 that are government-run, to try to get the capacity better aligned with what our customer needs are.

In the process, we've ended up with about two thirds of our network being run by private individuals. They are all on a consistent standard contract, so there's no variability in terms of compensation between any of those privately run offices. Each of the offices that were closed had a template contract that was part of the termination that they agreed to. The individual termination amounts are individual by location, depending upon history of that location and so on.

1000

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay, that's good. Thank you very much, and perhaps we can get those questions in a little more of a formatted form for the minister. There were a lot of questions in there.

Mr. John O'Toole: We'll isolate the questions.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Now to the third party. Mr. Miller, you have the next 20 minutes.

Mr. Paul Miller: Good morning, gentlemen, and good morning, Minister. There's nothing like being grilled on the hot seat, eh?

My first line of questioning will be in reference to your procurement policy. First of all, can you outline in

some detail the basic principles behind government procurement policy?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Chair, just give me a minute and I'll get to that.

Let me just start with this: The basic purpose of the procurement policy is to get the best value for dollars for Ontario residents. That's the basic principle. But we also want to make sure that we are transparent and accountable on that front, and that it also provides the best value for the services that we require. I'm going to ask the deputy minister to talk a little bit more about how we go about making sure that we can get the best value and that our process is open, fair and competitive.

We do business with about 50,000 suppliers every year, and approximately 90% of those suppliers actually are the small and medium-sized businesses.

Mr. Paul Miller: In your response, could you also include what kind of tendering process you use in reference to—the same as a municipality would do, and the lowest bidder, the quality of work. Do you examine the end result? Is there a comparative analysis done with the end result with the initial tender? Do they live up to your expectations?

Mr. Ron McKerlie: I will be inviting Marian Macdonald, who is the assistant deputy minister of supply chain management—Marian and her team would be the ones who would have day-to-day responsibility for procurement. I'll let her answer some of the more detailed questions.

Just as a start, though, to build on what the minister said, the government of Ontario would, and does, continually update its procurement policy framework to achieve better economy effectiveness, efficiency and ethical behaviour in procurement.

In the past year, updates requiring environmental certification for commodities like paper and greater accountability in the acquisition of consulting services, for example, have been introduced. The Ontario government's procurement policies support doing business with small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario. The minister spoke to the fact that we currently have about 50,000 suppliers we do business with, and about 95% of those are located in Ontario.

There are two sides to procurement. In terms of education and support, it's both helping the vendor community understand how to do business with Ontario as well as ensuring that the people who do procurement within government or within our agencies, boards and commissions would have the education required to ensure that they can properly follow practices and guidelines.

We've done a number of things on both sides. A ministers' industry forum was held in Sudbury in December of last year and in Ottawa last month where vendors discussed their procurement issues and experiences with the Minister of Government Services. In 2009, the Ontario government participated in 38 different vendor outreach and education events right across Ontario. The government of Ontario has also hosted three Supply

Ontario events that showcased procurement initiatives and provided vendors and the public with an important opportunity to meet each other and learn about what it takes to do business with the government of Ontario. We had over 1,400 vendors who participated in the Supply Ontario events in Toronto, Sudbury and Ottawa, and arrangements are under way to hold a fourth one in London later this year.

We are using a technology to talk to vendors who might not be able to attend one of our sessions, so in April we had 400 vendors online in what we call a webinar all about the vendor-of-record process, to help them understand that process and what it takes to become a vendor of record. More webinars are planned for the future.

I would turn it over to Marian to answer your specific questions regarding the vendor-of-record process.

Ms. Marian Macdonald: Thank you, Deputy. My name is Marian Macdonald, assistant deputy minister of supply chain management. Your question was specifically around our procurement processes. Our procurement processes are governed by a number of obligations imposed by Canadian commercial law and our trade agreement obligations but also government policies and legislation and procurement best practices.

Specifically, you asked about how we would award a contract—is it to the lowest-priced vendor? Our procurement policies require that we award a competitive contract to the highest-ranked vendor after considering a number of factors. Price could be one such factor, and is one such factor, but also the experience of the vendor, their qualifications to perform the work, their past experience in comparable-sized contracts for the provisions of goods and services, their ability to meet the requirements that we set forward in the procurement documents. These are all rated criteria and they are ranked on a scale that we outline in the procurement documents, and at the end of that process one vendor will generally emerge as the highest-ranked vendor in terms of the total number of points that have been allocated to them against all of those criteria.

The procurement directive doesn't require that any one criterion be weighted in a certain manner in the process, but it requires that the ministries allow the maximal justifiable weighting. So if we are taking delivery of standard goods, we would tend to rely predominantly on price as being the factor that is weighted the most, but if a ministry like the Ministry of Transportation is hiring engineers to do complex road construction or work, we would rely probably more on the experience of the vendors that we're looking for. Again, as long as it's a maximal justifiable weighting score, it's in compliance with our procurement policy.

Mr. Paul Miller: All right. I understand that you would want quality for your dollar and I understand that you would want all the different levels of criteria met by the potential vendor. However, if there's no competition out there that gets the ability to prove their ability, and a new company or anyone else comes forward that feels

they can do it cheaper and as well, doesn't it create a bit of a monopoly if you continue to go back to the same proven vendor? Does that not create a problem for new businesses or people who might be able to do it as well or better, but haven't had the opportunity? It's similar to a new doctor, an apprentice who's finished his apprenticeship who may have creative ideas or new ways to do things. Does the ministry look at those too as part of your criteria for getting a tender?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me start this and I think then maybe the officials can pick it up.

Actually, we have been very proactive on this front. The deputy minister talked about having vendor forums. We go out and then invite vendors to come in. We say, "These are the kinds of services we are looking for. These are the kinds of goods we are looking for. What kind of ideas or suggestions do you have to fulfill those voids?" We have gone out and done vendor fairs. Not only that, but we have encouraged people to come up with ideas that can reduce costs. If you have a new vendor who has never done business with us, we say we will even do some experiments and give you some tests to provide a reference point for you to sell to the other businesses as well. Provided those goods are suitable from the specification point of view, the quality point of view, if you have never done business with us, we will do demonstration projects.

We are looking for ideas all the time and we are going out to the vendors and saying, "Give us some of those ideas."

1010

Mr. Paul Miller: So what you're saying to me is that, in your venues, you actually teach them what's required to do business with Ontario—

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: That's right.

Mr. Paul Miller: —and you're not limiting it to and you're not creating monopolies for, I don't know, a road company doing roads or bridges or whatever is being done. So you are open for new ideas, fresh ideas, technology that may challenge the old way of doing things; you don't rule them out in your process. Is that what you're telling me?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Yes. Not only that, but we are also looking for new technologies. When somebody comes with a new technology that has not been tested before, then we give it to the Ministry of Research and Innovation so they can check that it will actually do the job that they say it will do.

The idea behind that is that if a new technology comes in and they don't have any customers yet and we can be a customer, it becomes a reference point for them, not only to sell to the government but also to sell to others as well.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, my experience on municipal council was that a lot of companies would feel that there was favouritism or that they would go back to the proven person whom they had the least number of complaints about, whether it was patching holes in a street or doing work at the waterworks or wherever they were. My concern would be that you would be open to new vendors

who have technology that might not be familiar to Ontario but that has worked in other parts of the world, and that you would be open to examining it through the other ministry of technology. Would that be a fair question?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Yes. I think there are two issues on that front. One issue is that we are saying, "If there's a new technology, we will give it to the Ministry of Research and Innovation so they can look at it." But we are also working with the other ministries to say, "These are some of the ideas that came to our attention. Can you see if there's an application for you in those ministries?"

But I also want to say to you on this as well that we are doing vendor debriefing. If the vendor is not successful, then we want to tell them why they're not successful so that the next time, when they bid on the same job, they at least know what some of the deficiencies were and how they can correct them.

Mr. Paul Miller: All right. Would you be willing to share with me the information on, for example, whatever procurement or tenders you've put out to see if there's any repetition to the same companies when there are other companies in Ontario that have the ability to do the same work and have a proven record, whether it be—not necessarily in Ontario; it could be a different province, but they've done the work. I want to know if you have any records on if there has been a continuous—because we do get occasional complaints about favouritism and people continually getting renewed contracts on government situations. I'd be interested to know if there has been, over a 10-year period or something, the same company awarded the same work every summer or whatever. That would be interesting to know.

Moving on, I see on a government website that, "As of early 2009, OntarioBuys had helped establish or expand nine shared service organizations for Ontario's health care and education sectors. Over 40 leading practice projects had received funding—supporting BPS supply chain and back-office transformation throughout Ontario."

First of all—would you like me to repeat it? Is it okay? You caught it? Do you want me to repeat that?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Yes, repeat it.

Mr. Paul Miller: A government website says, "As of early 2009, OntarioBuys had helped establish or expand nine shared service organizations for Ontario's health care and education sectors. Over 40 leading practice projects had received funding—supporting BPS supply chain and back-office transformation throughout Ontario."

Number one, what role does OntarioBuys play in government procurement practices? Please, if you could, describe in detail the nine shared service organizations that are referred to in this excerpt.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: OntarioBuys, I think, is under the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: That's correct.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: But maybe the deputy minister can shed some light for you on why it's there and who looks after it.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: The Ministry of Finance set up OntarioBuys to try to provide a financial incentive primarily to different buying groups in the broader public sector, so outside of the Ontario public service, to co-operate together, to pool their buying to try to get better aggregate deals by volume buying. We don't have a lot of details in the Ministry of Government Services, but the Minister of Finance, who I believe is coming to estimates next, after Revenue and after us, will have the opportunity, I'm sure, to answer that question more fully.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm not sure I'm happy with that response. Ontario Buys is part of your overall picture. It's involved in other ministries, I agree, but your role and your part in it probably are a significant piece of that puzzle, for the amount of procurement that goes out for the province. I hoped that you would have had some answers on the nine shared service groups. It appears you're going to do further research and get back to me on that. Is that fair?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: We can only answer the questions that relate to MGS. If this responsibility is not under MGS, we will not be able to provide those answers to you.

Mr. Paul Miller: With all due respect, I think this does relate to it.

Okay, question two: I'd like to hear more about how this plays out on the ground, and how exactly this plays out on the health and education sectors as well, through your procurement policy.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Earlier I mentioned the leading practice projects that received funding supporting BPS supply chain and back-office transformation through Ontario. Then I asked about the nine shared services situation. Now I'm asking about how it overlaps onto the health and education sectors through procurement.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: The shared services that fall under the MGS are the backroom operations of the government. That's what we are responsible for. What you are indicating is the shared services for the broader public sector. That really doesn't fall under us; it falls under the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Paul Miller: With due respect, Minister, I'm trying to find out what role your ministry plays in the overall picture, but you're saying that it's someone else's responsibility.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: What I'm telling you is that what our ministry does is develop overall policies for procurement that relate to the government of Ontario. That's what we do.

Mr. Paul Miller: Aren't you part of the government of Ontario?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Yes, we're part of the government of Ontario. These are the policies we develop. Then we give them to the other ministries to follow, and they follow the directives. Some of the procurement by the other ministries is done on their own.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: If I could, maybe I can talk about our role in support of others, other than the Ontario

public service directly, if that's helpful in answering your question.

We have a significant role in a couple of areas. One, MGS is responsible, through the Management Board of Cabinet, for the procurement directive, so developing the directive that would apply, for example, to many of our agencies, boards and commissions through a memorandum of understanding. We would work with the ministries and, through them, with the agencies to ensure they understand that they are captured by the Management Board of Cabinet procurement directive. That would be the first thing. Hospitals or schools, for example, wouldn't be directly captured by that. They're not considered agencies. But it does go out more broadly because it would capture agencies like the LCBO, for example, OLG and others. That's the first thing.

The second thing is, we provide education and support, either directly through the ministries or to the ministry staff who do procurements. We have supported them, for example, over the last year on 1,200 different procurements that they would have done. We provide support and help and training in terms of what an open, transparent procurement looks like. Occasionally, we get asked to provide that sort of support and help outside of the ministries—into agencies, for example. I can't think of a situation in which we would have been invited out to a school board or a hospital to provide that kind of education and help. Those entities are responsible for their own procurement, so they would have their own procurement processes and officers. To the best of my knowledge, we wouldn't get directly involved in the procurement that they would do.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): You've just got a minute or so, Paul.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm a little confused by that reply. If you're giving training or showing them how to do procurement, and you have a memorandum of agreement with these other agencies that you kind of give them guidelines to follow, you wouldn't do any follow-up to see if they are doing the guidelines properly, or if they're getting themselves into trouble because they haven't followed your advice? Do you have quarterly or yearly meetings with these other nine shared service organizations that I mentioned earlier? I would think that there would be some follow-up to see that your advice was working. To me, it's like, "This is what you do. See you later. You're on your own." I'm not quite sure that's kosher.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: The advice we would give, if I can pick up on your question, would be to the agencies and boards that are captured by the memorandum of understanding and that are to follow our procurement directives. You talked about education and health care. Those sectors, if you're talking about schools and hospitals, are outside of the Management Board of Cabinet procurement directive. They have their own. We don't provide support directly to them. We provide support to the ministries and, through the ministries, to

some of their agencies that are covered by the memorandums of understanding.

Mr. Paul Miller: Why is—are we done?

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): I think we'll recess there for the time being, and we'll come back here right around 3:45 or after routine proceedings.

Thank you very much, everyone. We'll see you a little later on here, at 3:45.

The committee recessed from 1021 to 1548.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): We'll call the meeting back to order. Minister and staff from the Ministry of Government Services, thank you very much for being here again this afternoon.

I'd like to begin by allowing Mr. Miller from the third party the remaining 10 minutes of his leadoff.

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Chair, could you make me aware of when I have a minute to go because I have to run upstairs to say something in the House. If you could give me a minute's warning so I'll know.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay. You can start right now.

Mr. Paul Miller: My next line of questioning to the ministry would be: As the minister is responsible for freedom of information and privacy, I'd like to ask you a few questions stemming from the 2009 annual report today by the privacy commissioner.

According to the commissioner, "The infrastructure supporting the smart grid will be capable of informing consumers of their hourly and real-time energy use, and in the future, at the individual appliance level ... In a future smart grid scenario that does not build in privacy," sensitive "details of hydro customers' lives could be easily discerned by data automatically fed by the appliances and other devices to the companies providing electric power...." Minister, what steps are you planning to take to ensure that Ontario residents' privacy is maintained in the era of the smart grid?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: First of all, I really want to say thanks to the privacy commissioner for the report. Let me just add that I think this matter that the member is asking about relates to both the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure and the municipalities that will be implementing smart meters. This is not an area that falls under the responsibility of the MGS.

As I indicated in the morning, every ministry has their own freedom-of-information officer. Our responsibility in the MGS is to coordinate some of the activities. Actually, the minister's office or the minister doesn't really get involved in these kinds of issues.

Mr. Paul Miller: With all due respect, once again, Minister, I do believe that it is partially the involvement of the Ministry of Government Services, because I think that government services would take in any other provisions under any other guidelines of any other ministry that can overlap. Ministries regularly overlap and sometimes swing their responsibilities to one another if they're not happy with the question. I personally think, in my humble opinion, that it is part of your mandate, but we will go on to the next question anyway.

Among the other recommendations in her annual report, the commissioner is asking the government to broaden the scope of the province's freedom-of-information legislation to include hospitals and CASs. Minister, once again, what plans does the ministry have to include hospitals and CASs in freedom of information?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Once again, I think this report was released today. We will give due consideration to all the recommendations that the privacy commissioner has made. In due time, the government will take into consideration each and every recommendation and see how we can further act on some of the recommendations that have been made.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay. I guess that's kind of an answer; I'm not sure.

Today, the commissioner also called for amendments to the Personal Health Information Protection Act to protect personal health records that are abandoned by health professionals. According to the commissioner, "abandoned health records ... pose significant risks to the privacy of patients and the delivery of effective health care."

"In recent years, my office has investigated numerous instances of personal health information records that have been abandoned by persons or organizations in the health care field." The reason I say that, Minister, is because, as you so nicely put it earlier today, you're in charge of birth certificates, you're in charge of all these other certifications throughout our province. I'm quite sure that personal records handled by institutions would fall under your auspice.

"PHIPA has proven ineffective in situations where the custodian is unwilling or unable to meet his or her obligations upon the cessation of their practice, or simply cannot be found." Minister, typically, personal health records are abandoned "when a health care professional ceases to practice, either because of retirement, moving out of the province, or because he or she has been deemed unfit to practice by their regulatory body."

The commissioner cites solutions to this problem that have been developed in other jurisdictions, including Alberta and California. What plans do you have to deal with this problem? Trust me, I've had more than one resident come in, Minister, and their doctor has either deceased or moved, and they can't get their medical records. They've lost their entire record system. It obviously has a negative impact on the treatments they may receive. Sometimes the patients, due to age, have forgotten what the doctors had recommended over the years and cannot divulge that to the attending physician because they may have Alzheimer's or there could be other situations where they had no access. There have been some wrong diagnostic things done, wrong medications given to patients, where it has caused, in some cases, fatalities. What is your ministry doing to stop these situations from reoccurring?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Again, I actually really want to thank the member for his interest in protecting personal health information. I want to show him that our

government is absolutely committed to protecting personal health information, although this issue falls under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Again, it's not under my ministry, but I will refer to my DM, if he has any other additional information from the information technology point of view that he can share with you.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Perhaps, not specifically to the last question, but I know that in terms of hospitals and the recommendation from the Information and Privacy Commissioner, it is a complex area. We understand that any consideration of extending PHIPA coverage to administrative records in hospitals would require an in-depth consultation with affected stakeholders, including the Ontario Hospital Association. So the report has just been released today and we'll take a look at it.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, I appreciate your interest, but I also have a concern. As you know, in a lot of situations, the government says that it's the other ministry's job or they pass the buck—so people like to call it, passing the buck.

I'll give you an example of what happens in this situation. As far as pensions go that we're dealing with in the House right now, I've been told that some fall under the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act that's federal, yet there are jurisdictions that the province takes over. In fact, our province manages 92% of the pension plans in Ontario. So there is some overlap and there is some dual legislation that sometimes intercedes and creates chaos.

I would think that if you are handing out birth certificates or whatever you're servicing, licensing, whatever you're doing, that information would be a big part of your mandate, especially personal information. You're creating these kiosks throughout the province, you're very proud of the fact that you are going to be within a 10-mile radius, but some of these records are very critical. I think that maybe your ministry, in my humble opinion, should work alongside the health ministry to either improve their situation or work together to form another form of delivery that would be suitable to protect these people, these vulnerable citizens who are in a position where they can't find their records or don't know where they are; they don't know what ministry has them and who's responsible for them.

So there's nothing wrong with moving ahead and expanding either ministry's responsibility or connecting together and—either giving it to one or the other. But to say it's not under your auspice, I have a tendency to disagree.

Among other key issues the commissioner raises in her annual report is the privacy by design.

"Privacy by design is a concept developed" at the IPC "back in the 1990s that has been widely adopted globally by a growing number of organizations and jurisdictions. It prescribes that privacy be embedded directly"—now, here we go, Minister; here's exactly what I'm talking about. "It prescribes that privacy be embedded directly into the design and operation," of an organization, "not only of technology, but also of business processes and networked infrastructure."

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): A minute and a half left.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you.

"Instead of treating privacy as an afterthought—'bolting it on after the fact'—privacy by design is proactive and preventative in nature—an increasingly effective approach in today's world of increasingly interconnected technologies and extensive data collection."

So that falls right in line; it dovetails right into what I was trying to get across to you. I'm hoping that you'll look into this and try to improve the record situations of the sometimes elderly or even young people in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Do you have any comments?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Yes, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to say that this report was released today. We are going to look at each and every recommendation. Our government will look at each and every recommendation, and wherever we would need to move on the areas in order to protect the privacy of the citizens, our government is absolutely committed to do it. We will work very closely and take your input into consideration.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Minister, you now have 30 minutes to respond to any of the comments made this morning, or in the last 10 minutes. If you'd like to use any of that time, you could use all 30 minutes, and if you wish not to use it, we immediately go back to 20-minute rotations.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Actually, I am going to use the 30 minutes, because I'm sure my deputy ministers are very eager to give some input on the comments that were made this morning.

I gather from this morning that the areas of interest were ServiceOntario, information technology, procurement, consulting services, accountability, Ontario Shared Services and, maybe this afternoon, the newly released report as well by the privacy commissioner. Let me just take each of those areas one at a time and try to address some of the issues that were raised this morning and also maybe try to highlight some of the things that we have done in those areas.

I'm going to start with ServiceOntario. As the Ontario government's single gateway to government information and transaction services, ServiceOntario is making it easier for individuals and businesses by offering access to a wide range of services through multiple channels: online, in person, at kiosks and by telephone. So we are using multiple channels. Most driver, vehicle, and routine health card services as well as other services will be available under one roof.

1600

When the initiative is fully implemented by the end of the year, availability of most driver and vehicle licensing services will increase to almost 300 centres across Ontario. By the end of this year, close to 95% of all Ontarians will be able to go within 10 kilometres to

integrated ServiceOntario centres which offer both driver and vehicle services and routine health card services.

Furthermore, ServiceOntario has transformed government service delivery by being the first in North America to provide a money-back guarantee for public services within a set period of time.

ServiceOntario is also improving services for individuals. In 2009, ServiceOntario completed a province-wide implementation of the fully electronic newborn registration service, extending the service to new parents and all birthing facilities across Ontario. All births, including home births, can now be registered online.

In 2009, ServiceOntario launched an online research tool through its website to provide information about government services, locations and kiosks. You can find that on www.serviceontario.ca. In addition, an online appointment-booking service was integrated. This is in addition so that you can go on the Internet as well to access services. It was integrated with the service location finder so customers can book appointments at select locations, view maps, get directions and find location details. ServiceOntario received a Showcase Ontario 2009 award for merit for both the service location finder and online appointment-booking service initiatives.

ServiceOntario also enhanced customer service by improving its automation of documents in all 54 land registry offices, province-wide, in May 2009.

As of February 2010, BizPaL, an online service that allows entrepreneurs to generate a customized list of permits and licences they require from all levels of government to start or expand a business, was available. Currently, 76.8% of Ontarians can use BizPaL in their municipal areas, and the number of local governments adding their business permits and licence information to BizPaL is increasing each year.

As part of the three-year Open for Business project, MGS launched a business info line contact centre as well. The contact centre provides information and referral services to the public. Callers can access multilingual services and reach several ministries and program areas using the easy-to-navigate business info line integrated voice response system.

The Ministry of Revenue and the Ministry of Labour were successfully integrated into the business directory, enabling them to utilize the benefits of a single business number, a unique identifier for business that can be shared across government programs that are part of the business directory community. This is a solution that allows for the sharing of business information between program areas. Where permitted, it improves data integrity and simplifies business-to-government interactions, as business owners will eventually be recognized across various government program areas by the single business number instead of different numbers for every program. ServiceOntario received a Showcase award of merit for the single business number project in 2009.

Let me just talk a little bit about the information systems area.

The corporate I&IT branch manages and delivers I and IT services across the Ontario government. This includes more than 70,000 desktops, BlackBerrys, laptops and printers; 353 websites; and e-mailboxes, the largest email system in Canada. I&IT continues to modernize key government IT applications which are near the end of their useful technological life. The major application portfolio strategy, MAPS, is modernizing government applications and ensuring the continued delivery of critical services. MAPS had addressed 32 at-risk legacy systems as of March of this year. The government has a study to help drive significant savings in information and information technology. I&IT spending continues to be managed downward, from 10.1% of the provincial government direct-spend, excluding transfer payments and debt interest, in 2001-02 to 6.6% in 2008-09. As a result of our study, we have removed \$100 million in base funding from budgets while at the same time ensuring there was no service reduction to staff or citizens.

More savings were achieved through four major infrastructure consolidation initiatives, and those four are enterprise email, service and data centre consolidation, desktop management, and service management. As a result, the Ontario public service went from eight email systems to one; a 15% reduction in the 6,000 service fleet; and eight I&IT service desks to one service desk. These are solid examples of our efforts to manage large-scale consolidation initiatives.

In addition, as recommended by the special task force on large-scale I&IT projects, Management Board of Cabinet is provided with quarterly status updates on large projects to ensure strong oversight. I&IT clusters across the OPS are at work to help make the lives of average Ontarians easier, from automated cheques cut at the Family Responsibility Office to new online services for businesses like BizPaL.

The I&IT organization is making a big difference in terms of our ability to better serve the people of Ontario. I&IT created IT Source in 2009, a modern, mobile workforce of skilled IT professionals who now move from ministry to ministry to support large-scale IT projects and applications and can be deployed to deal with emergency IT-related situations. IT Source is already greatly reducing the need for outside IT consultants in the OPS.

The province also continues to invest in broadband infrastructure so more Ontario citizens who live or work in remote areas can access online government services. Two broadband infrastructure programs move forward, including the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus original network project and building broadband in rural and northern Ontario program for cost-sharing under Industry Canada's broadband Canada program. Under the rural Connections broadband program, there are now 47 approved projects at various stages of completion, representing a commitment of almost \$26 million.

Let me just talk a little bit about HROntario. HROntario is providing the enterprise policies, strategies,

programs and services that enable the OPS to be an employer of first choice and to deliver quality public services. It is providing corporate management policies to ensure an accountable and professional public service. It is promoting OPS transformation and service excellence. HRO has delivered a number of strategies, from the multi-year OPS human resources plan where we are providing professional recruitment services from five new regional recruitment centres and an executive talent search unit, and streamlining the recruitment process, removing barriers and supporting quality hiring outcomes. We are attracting youth and new professionals through outreach activities and a number of employment programs. In 2009-10 we offered a total of 6,000 employment opportunities for youth and new professionals.

HROntario is working with the diversity office to update a number of HR policies to support OPS diversity and inclusion goals. HROntario has implemented a number of initiatives to improve oversight, accountability, transparency and to reaffirm the government's commitment to protect taxpayers' dollars:

- the Public Sector Expenses Review Act, which enables the Integrity Commissioner to review the expenses of executives at 22 of the government's largest agencies;

- launched the public disclosure of expenses website;

- revised the travel, meal and hospitality expenses directive; and

- revised the agency establishment and accountability record as well.

1610

HROntario also promotes OPS transformation and service excellence. It led and supported the implementation of the OPS service directives that require all ministries to develop, publish and improve service standards and place a greater focus on timely, accessible, client-focused service delivery.

To assist professional newcomers to earn valuable Canadian work experience, in 2009-10 the government expanded the OPS internship program for internationally trained individuals to nearly double the number of six-month paid internships across the OPS from 75 to 130 positions. This has been a very, very successful program for us. Ontario is the only province to launch an innovative internship program specifically for professional newcomers. We are proud to be leading in this area.

The newly established labour relations secretariat will have the capacity to analyze internal and external factors that drive collective bargaining outcomes in order to develop comprehensive strategies and provide guidance and advice related to bargaining. It will also provide oversight and strategic advice on OPS and broader public sector collective bargaining.

In 2009-10, the youth and new professionals secretariat in HROntario provided access to approximately 6,000 employment experiences for youth and new professionals through six employment programs, including the internship for internationally trained individuals program launched in October 2009. In addition, secretariat staff

attended approximately 150 outreach events this year, a 9% increase over 2008-09 to increase awareness of the OPS as the employer of first choice.

The Ontario public service was named Canada's best diversity employer for 2008. This created the momentum for a new wave of excellence and recognition for the OPS. In 2009, the OPS was recognized as one of Canada's top 100 employers, one of greater Toronto's top employers, one of Canada's best diversity employers, and one of Canada's top employers for Canadians over 50. In 2010, the OPS was selected as one of Canada's top 100 employers again, one of the GTA's top employers again, one of Canada's best diversity employers and one of Canada's greenest employers.

Procurement: On average, Ontario does business with over 50,000 suppliers every year, and approximately 95% of these are located in Ontario. The government's procurement policies help deliver value, innovation and integrity to Ontario and enable the delivery of modern and efficient public service to the citizens of Ontario. The Ontario government's procurement policies ensure that it obtains value for money by using open and fair competitive processes when it acquires goods and services.

Ontario vendors are highly competitive and are routinely selected through a competitive process to supply the Ontario government. Since 2003, this government has introduced many changes to its procurement policies to strengthen transparency and accountability in the procurement process. Most recently, in July 2009 a new procurement directive was approved and communicated across government, reflecting this government's commitment to greater controllership and accountability in the acquisition of consulting services. New rules were also announced that the Ontario government and all its agencies will not pay consultants for any hospitality, incidental and food expenses.

Consulting services are not the only commodity where the government aggregates its spending power to get the best value for taxpayers. MGS manages more than 70 enterprise contracts, variously called vendor of record arrangements, volume licensing agreements and memorandums of understanding. Altogether, we refer to these enterprise contracts as our vendor of record program or VOR program.

The VOR program includes commodities ranging from food and clothing to print technologies to volume agreements with Microsoft and Oracle. The government procures almost \$700 million worth of goods and services annually in this manner. Studies suggest that regional participation ensures participation by small and medium-sized enterprises.

Let me give you some examples of the savings. Some examples of recent savings achieved through the enterprise VOR program are \$56,000 for general office seating, \$394,000 for a travel management company, \$2.2 million in rebates for our purchasing card program and \$8 million in IT task-based consulting.

The supply chain management vision within MGS is also managing the new and innovative Green FIT

program to promote green technologies and products that are created in Ontario.

Consulting services: The government has aggressively and successfully reduced the use of consultants. It has reduced the use of consultants from \$656 million in 2001-02 to \$304 million in 2009-10. This is a reduction of \$350 million. We have actively pursued strategies to lower the cost of consultants through the establishment of enterprise vendor of record agreements and programs to reduce the use of consultants in government. Since 2003, 1,415 positions have been approved for conversion to replace work previously done by consultants, resulting in an ongoing annual savings of approximately \$58 million.

The government of Ontario has tightened its policies on the acquisition and use of consulting services to ensure greater accountability and transparency in its procurement policies and processes. These improvements will strengthen public confidence in the prudent stewardship and responsible management of every dollar of public expenditure. Reducing our reliance on consultants will help provide the services Ontarians need in a more cost-effective and efficient way.

Accountability: We have demonstrated a strong commitment to transparency and accountability. For instance, our new expense disclosure website, launched on April 1, 2010, is a demonstration of the government's commitment to improving the transparency and accountability of government. In the past, this type of information could only be accessed through a freedom of information request or by reviewing public accounts. Now it is available for all to see.

The government released a revised travel, meal and hospitality expenses directive, effective April 1, which provides stronger and simpler expense rules and implements additional accountability measures to ensure taxpayer dollars are used wisely.

In November 2009, the government passed the Public Sector Expenses Review Act, which gives the Integrity Commissioner the authority to review expense claims of senior officials, appointees and the top five expense claimants in 22 of the largest agencies. Under the newly implemented Public Sector Expenses Review Act, appointees, senior executives and the top five claimants at 22 of Ontario's largest agencies are required to publicly disclose information on expenses. They are now being required to abide by the same rules as ministers, political staff and senior government managers. These initiatives protect the interest of taxpayers and strengthen the government's accountability for these agencies by raising the standard of oversight and by requiring all agencies to adhere to the same rules.

Compensation structure freeze: Ontarians value and appreciate the contribution of those who deliver their public service. They also expect those who are paid by tax dollars to do their part to help sustain public services.

In the 2010 budget, released on March 25, the government announced that it will extend the existing freeze of the salaries of the members of provincial Parliament from one to three years; freeze the compen-

sation structure for non-bargaining, critical and Legislative Assembly staff for two years; and freeze the compensation structure of the broader public sector and Ontario public sector for two years for all non-bargaining employees. Over two years, these measures would help direct up to \$750 million towards sustaining schools, hospitals and other public services. This is a balanced and responsible plan that requires employers and employee groups in the public sector to work together and do their part to sustain public services.

1620

The size of the Ontario public service: The Ontario public service is arguably the most efficient, professional and cost-effective public service in Canada. The OPS makes sure our food and water are safe, makes our communities and workplaces safer, reduces hospital wait times, gives students and teachers the tools they need to succeed, brings jobs and investment into Ontario and delivers key government services. Statistics Canada data show that Ontario has the lowest number of provincial public servants per capita, and is also the lowest in expenditure per capita on general government services in Canada.

On December 2, 2008, the government placed a cap on the size of the Ontario public service and also committed to reducing the size of the Ontario public service by 5% by March 31, 2012. In the first year of this three-year plan, OPS is on target to meet the 5% reduction. With one third of the target met to date, MGS is working with ministries over the coming months to achieve a commitment to the balance of the reduction. We believe in providing top-quality public services.

Let me talk a little bit about Ontario Shared Services. Ontario Shared Services is the Ontario government's enterprise business and employee service provider for back-office administration and supply-chain management services. It provides strategic advice, controllership and cost-effective service delivery in four business areas: financial processing, human resource processing, supply-chain management, and enterprise services. In January 2010, Ontario Shared Services was recognized as a leading public sector shared service organization by Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Their report highlights Ontario as "a model for other governments hoping to take their shared services enterprise to the next level." That was in their report.

Over the last five years, Ontario Shared Services has focused on best simplified and automated transactional processes, with the understanding that keeping it simple will make it easier and less costly to deliver these services. Ontario Shared Services leadership will not only continue looking for opportunities that drive efficiencies and reduce unnecessary administrative costs, but will also be a key contributor to increasing overall public sector performance.

Where are we heading in the future? The long-term vision of the ministry is to deliver modern government services to both the public and line ministries that are simpler, faster, smarter, more connected, diverse and

inclusive. This will be achieved through transforming and improving government services; engaging our people; providing Ontarians with reliable, cost-effective, easily accessible government services; and maintaining and managing government costs.

As we move forward with the work of this ministry as a force for both enterprise-wide and public service delivery, we will focus on our strategic priorities and outcomes. We are moving forward together on a strong foundation, and I am confident that we will continue to bring Ontarians change and progress they can be proud of.

I'm going to ask my deputy minister of ServiceOntario if he wants to add anything to what I have said.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): You've got about five minutes left in this rotation.

Mr. Bob Stark: From a ServiceOntario perspective, from a ministry perspective, the improvements we've made around providing access to services more effectively for both citizens and businesses, driven from the view of a customer-first kind of attitude through the organization: Over the past several years, we have centralized a number of services from various ministries into ServiceOntario, and that has given us an economy of scale and an opportunity to focus across the organization, which historically has been in ministry silos, to allow us to introduce new, innovative products.

We're particularly proud of some of the inter-jurisdictional services we've introduced; for example, newborn registration, which is a partnership between ServiceOntario and Service Canada, where new parents can go online to request a birth registration, a birth certificate and a social insurance number across both jurisdictions. Within a week to two, the parents have delivered to their homes both the birth certificate and the social insurance number, which historically has taken literally months to transact.

Another example in the business community would be our BizPaL service, which is a partnership between the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government where we've been able to bring together the capability to find out what licences and permits businesses need to start up. Historically, what that has meant for businesses is that they've had to go to individual municipal, provincial and federal offices to get that information. Today, going through an online process, they can get all that information within a matter of minutes.

I think those are some good examples of what we're trying to do in ServiceOntario to make a significant difference to how citizens interact with government, both provincially and across other jurisdictions.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): You've got a couple of minutes left of the 30 minutes.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Great. Thank you so much. We're a ministry of service; that's what we do. Whether it's external-facing, through ServiceOntario or the Archives of Ontario, or internal services around I&IT or human resources or shared services, our goal is to make it more efficient, improve processes, take out cost and de-risk it.

One of the measures we have, in terms of how well we're doing, is external recognition. The minister mentioned some of those things. Being written up by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard as the model to emulate for back-office service anywhere in North America, I think, is a good testament to the fact that we're doing a few things right.

The fact that we've won the Canada's Best Diversity Employers award three years in a row, the Canada's Top 100 Employers award two years in a row and the Green Employers award in 2010—those are other good indicators that we're moving in the right direction in terms of delivering our commitments around service, which we've made both to the rest of the OPS as well as to external and third parties.

The other thing we're doing is spending time benchmarking our services, and the cost of our services, against best in class. One of the things we recently benchmarked was our cost of providing email services. We found we are among the best of the best when it comes to providing internal IT services like email to the rest of the OPS.

So those are some of the measures. Our focus is on service delivery. Our goal, our passion, is to continually get better, so that taxpayers will notice the difference: They'll be able to get cheques faster; we'll be able to deal with requests for services, and these will be handled more expeditiously. We'll continue down that path. That's the goal of the ministry and the mandate we're on.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Thank you. That's just about perfect. We'll go on to the official opposition. You have 20 minutes, Mr. O'Toole.

Mr. John O'Toole: Great. Thank you very much, Chair. This is a large and complex ministry; there's no question about that. I envy the minister for having such quality people briefing him as well as they do and preparing those very laborious notes he read; I mean that respectfully, of course.

I have nine questions this morning; they're typed, and I'll be presenting them to Hansard. They're spoken more slowly—I have a time constraint, as you know. We can't have as much time as you have to prepare them and analyse them. In fact, we just got the stuff.

But I want to bring a little bit of substance to my understanding. Again, I referred earlier this morning to the small bit of time I had in a minor role as parliamentary assistant. I remember reading a report—I was just so impressed, as I was with Art Daniels, by another report called Delivering Results Through Quality—you used the term here today. It's called Transforming Public Service for the 21st Century. It's an excellent report, issued in April 2000. You still haven't got the job done, and it's 2010, 10 years later. Here's the paper. It outlines almost exactly what you're saying here today. I commend it for your reference. If you'd like, I could give you a copy, because you probably haven't had time to read it yet. I have. Actually, it's a very good report. You're still working on the substance of it, and that's good.

1630

The HR part is quite interesting too. I kind of looked at the sunshine list as a starting place, and I looked at

your organizational chart. You have 4,641 employees; that's a large company. So I commend the civil servants who are working under the direction of whomever has the football and gets to call the game. There's a lot of talent there, and I see it even now in the preparation here today; there's a lot of staff here.

Ten percent of your workforce made the sunshine list; probably more should have. They may have got their income some other way; I have no idea. I'm not implying that they may have been expensed, because you've cut down on consultants considerably—you told me that. Anyway, 9.7% or 555 of your employees.

When I was a superintendent at General Motors, I had 500 employees in the department I had just before I left there. Now, I didn't know what everyone did. I had people there sort of organized like a pyramid, a 10 in 10 or 20 in one supervisor ratio, so that's probably not too bad—close to 10%. Now, the surprising part is that you had close to 15 people who made over a quarter of a million dollars. I'd like to know what job descriptions go with these titles. They make more than the Prime Minister, and I haven't heard half of their names. That's troubling to me and, I'm sure, a surprise to most of the government members—more than the Prime Minister. I look back at this report I referred to. It's 10 years old, and we're still working on it. Anyway, I'll try to get to a few questions here.

Earlier this morning I asked one of the questions that I'm submitting today. I'll just repeat it here: What kind of job descriptions go with some of these, and are there performance-based, objective criteria? You've told me that in birth certificates you're at 90-some per cent and that ServiceOntario is a very good model. What are the matrixes for measuring this stuff? Are they performance-based? For anybody who is making over the \$100,000, how many goals did they score? It's not a subjective thing. Are there really clear job description criteria with measurable outcomes?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me refer this question to the deputy minister. I think he's more capable of answering, because he deals with performance reviews and setting up performance objectives as well.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Thank you, Minister, and thank you very much for the question.

Chair, there's no question that MGS is a very large ministry, to one of the member's earlier comments. It started pre-2000—in 1998, actually—when the Shared Services Bureau was created. This was formed by the transfer of staff and resources from a number of ministries into a new organization. They were responsible, at that time, for the delivery of enterprise-wide internal business support services. Also in 1998, an I&IT strategy was approved that organized ministries into a number of business clusters with a CIO and corporate chiefs to provide stewardship over things like common infrastructure and corporate policies and standards.

This was the start at that point. Before that, every ministry had its own IT, HR group, back-office services and so on. The intention was to start to centralize those

where there were some economies of scale available. That has been the strategy over the course of time, and that we've continued to drive along. We were asked to do the same thing for HR, and in 2008 HR Ontario was created. This was established in July 2008 to oversee the operation of the Ontario public service human resources service delivery organization, and it consolidated a number of HR services to provide more integrated corporate policies, programs and services. We set up five regional recruitment centres and we have also done a number of other things.

More specifically to the member's question, we have put in place a talent management process and a performance management process which now would incorporate all of the individuals whom he mentioned. It starts with a very detailed job description for the position. It would highlight their responsibilities and the types of skills or attributes we would be looking to hire for that individual when we get them into the job. Then there are performance criteria set up. There's a performance plan that is created between the individual and their manager once a year. It's set up at the beginning of the year, so at this time of year, usually in April, it would be prepared for the fiscal year that would run from April 1 to March 31. In that performance plan would be very specific outcomes. There would typically be somewhere around six to a dozen very detailed deliverables. With those, there would be a set of metrics to say how you will know success is achieved if you deliver on that particular—

Mr. John O'Toole: Chair, can I interrupt? Perhaps you could send me a note on that, because we get such limited time here. I think you've substantively answered the question. You have an operational plan, you have a process of reviewing these things and you have some metrics that you measure against.

Pardon me, I don't want to be rude for cutting you off here, but I want to get to a couple of more questions kind of on the same line, but one of them is quite real. I look at, and I'm impressed, I might say—that some of this online ServiceOntario stuff is quite important, given the technology in the world-is-flat kind of environment that we operate in. When you can register pretty well everything—personal property registration, real property registration, birth and death—the whole deal can basically be done online through some legitimate means, securely etc.

I had a private member's bill, so this question may be a bit selfish—one of the big abuses today, according to banks as well as the elder communities, on elder abuse is that currently, under the Substitute Decisions Act—and I had a private member's bill dealing with the power of attorney. Power of attorney today: You can download it online—commendable—sign it, put Minister Takhar's name on it and go out and clean out his bank account, because if you have a poor clerk at the bank only taking maybe \$200, and the next day \$200,000—do you understand? I called for a registry. That's all I wanted, some registry for the power of attorney—not possible.

Then I heard a question the other day by the NDP about the shared service things across platforms, because

when we were there, MTO was like a silo, health was like a silo, a hunting licence is a silo; none of them talked to each other and it was complete inefficiency by design—and job protection. I'm happy that what you're doing has efficiencies. There's no question that it has efficiencies. Possibly more efficiently—keep pushing on it and you'll finally find ways to do that.

Is it possible to simplify the process a bit for—Minister, you could pick this one up. Today's power of attorney is a large issue of people taking—call the Canadian Bankers Association—it could be their parents' money, slowly but progressively, until they're penniless. There are court cases pending, and police have no problem with it; they don't want to look into it because it's kind of a civil matter. Could it be possible for you to look into something like that—a registration for the power of attorney? You may have to have a PIN number. So when I go to the bank and I say, "Look, I have the right. I have power of attorney. I've just come in from Alberta to help pay my mother's bills"—or something. It's very important.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say that I think it is the duty of the government to protect the vulnerable in any way, shape and form we can. I think we need to take a closer look at some of the suggestions that the member is making right now. I will ask my officials to do that and see where we can go with this.

1640

Mr. John O'Toole: I think it would demonstrate to me that this process itself, of us listening to what your ministry's business plans are and having access to you to ask direct questions, is important outside of strictly political questions.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Did you want an answer from that?

Mr. John O'Toole: I think I have a suggestion that he's interested in expanding the application.

Now, there is another question. It's another issue that is so complicated: when they transferred from Polaris to Teranet. I happen to know a few people who were involved in that business, and there were some people who weren't qualified to read a title and what was registered on title. So when the transfer occurred to get to the Teranet phase we're at—it was occurring when we were government, actually. Now it's sort of been hived off, it's kind of a profit centre or whatever. It was sold, I guess. You still have control of it; I have no problem with that.

Here's the deal: There are errors in there. I know for sure that some of the registered on title were ignored, and I've asked you a question about this in the House.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Yes, you did.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's rights-of-way that were on property that are older than 40 years are assumed to no longer exist if they're not there. So it's reverse onus. If somebody only notices it on the sale of a property, they say, "Holy jeez, somehow it got transferred to Teranet." That easement got dropped. It's in the budget, Bill 16. It exempts all those 40-year-old rights-of-way. Good luck

to you. It's about \$4,000 to re-establish the right-of-way. In fact, most cottagers, when they go to sell these heirloom cottages, are going to find that they really don't have any access. It is a big issue. Are you aware of it, and are you trying to at least acknowledge it, or how is it being fixed?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say—I think I said that in the House as well—I am aware of the issue, and we are moving towards automation of the records.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: What we are automating is what actually is available in manual records. If it is not in the manual records, then it's not being automated.

Mr. John O'Toole: Okay. What if it is in the manual record, but didn't get automated? That's the issue. The lawyer has to go back to the original paper record, verify that that right-of-way was, in fact, registered and that it was missed in the transfer to the digital record.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I think that if it is in the manual record and doesn't get automated, then there is a process to rectify that.

Mr. John O'Toole: It should be free. That's all I'm saying.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: The deputy minister can maybe shed a little more light on this.

Mr. Bob Stark: Sure. As the minister said, under the Registry Act, an interest in real property expires 40 years after initial registration. If the process for renewing the interest has not taken place, the interest will not be recognized in the automation or conversion. So if they haven't taken the step in the manual process, up until the point of conversion—

Mr. John O'Toole: But I think you know what I'm implying. It's implied that people are looking at this stuff on the gazettes that are issued on these regulation changes. A ministerial letter was sent out—that's how it got changed—to avoid future liabilities going forward; I understand that. But I think you should fix it. I think it is a right. It's sort of like the negative option billing that Rogers tried a few years ago: "If you don't send me back the thing, your rate's going up." I think that's poor business, and it's unethical, in my opinion.

I'm going to raise one more question here. This is on the enhanced driver's licence. Most of that, I support. I'm not sure how useful it was. It was good politics, not necessarily good policy. But one that's even more glaring here to me, I think—Keith Leslie from the Canadian Press summed it up. I thought he did a nice job on it. He said, "It's 'offensive' and 'misleading' for the Ontario government to promise to donate a portion of the sale price from new 'Support Our Troops' licence plates," to these families. These are the families of injured service personnel. I've had them in my riding, and I live in a riding that has the Highway of Heroes right through it. I'm at a ceremony—in fact, there is one this week. General Natynczyk is there and it's a "Hi, how-de-do?" thing. It's all about supporting the Canadian Forces Personnel Assistance Fund.

I gather each plate is \$75 or something in that order. How much of that for each plate actually gets to the

families, after you've paid \$100,000 to the person who looks after the program?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: First of all, let me say this: I said in my opening speech, when I was talking about ServiceOntario, that I was in Petawawa to open a new ServiceOntario centre. There I had the opportunity to actually work and meet with the people who are sort of the beneficiaries of this money that we are giving back the fees to them. And they are very appreciative of the fact that it's being done, because it's—

Mr. John O'Toole: But how much money? It's \$75, and I think they're only getting two dollars. You should be getting two dollars, and they should be getting \$75. You got this whole thing wrong; you're taking credit for something that they don't get anything for.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: But I think—

Mr. John O'Toole: You better clean that up. I don't think it's good. You better buy a couple of extra poppies this year.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: What happened was, these amounts were in fact agreed upon with them. These are the people who really need this money, and they're very appreciative of the fact that we're doing this.

Mr. John O'Toole: I attended the fundraiser this year. You probably did, too; I hope you did. I know Premier McGuinty did. It was True Patriot Love. I knew both principals who were involved in that event. One of them was my son, who has served in the forces for 10 years and is really hung up on this stuff. They raised millions of dollars. So all I'm saying is, take another look at this program. Take credit for it, but do it right or don't bother doing it.

One other thing here—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): You've got three minutes left.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm going to go back to the accountability part. I just can't let this pass. Minister, I think, you know—you're a business person. I've looked at your acumen, and you've got a lot of check marks on there, I'll say that. But the Truth in Government Act that we had last week and that your members unanimously voted against—give me one reason why you would have voted against it. Why couldn't you have just said—and I read your speech; I have a copy of it here from Hansard. Whoever wrote it for you did an excellent job; you did a pretty good job reading it. The point I'm saying is—I always like to make fun about these things, but I'm quite serious, actually.

When you were trying to take credit for this thing—and when I looked online, I haven't really seen any evidence yet. Now you say that you've cut down on the consultants. Well, it's still a million dollars a day—it's probably more than that. Then I look at the LHINs, and you're reporting their salary in some hospital budget. Then I find out that some of them, including the Deputy Minister of Health, was such shameful—he was an excellent guy, and if he's worth \$700,000, pay him \$700,000 if that's the deal. Even in the budget, you said you're going to cut back. You're in charge of all these

contracts. These people's salaries aren't frozen. If they're in a grid—I worked in personnel—they're still going to get the money in the grid. Do you understand? If they're classics, or whatever you call them in the public service—you may have frozen the grid, the maximum, but if you're still working in the grid, you're going to get raises.

So it's not transparent, it's not accountable, and ours is frozen. You could argue that we're overpaid. Who knows? Maybe you're underpaid. I honestly think the ministers should make—you should make the same as your deputy, about \$385,000 or something.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I thought more, but that's okay.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no, no. We don't want to be greedy. Just leave it at that.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay. You've got a minute left here.

Mr. John O'Toole: Can you actually affect a change in any of the collective agreements where somebody is getting a grow-in raise within their classification, even though the Premier said that he has frozen the wages?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me answer your first question first.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): You have about 30 seconds to answer the question.

Mr. John O'Toole: Take as long as you want.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): I have to go to Mr. Miller in 30 seconds.

Mr. Paul Miller: Just use up my time.

Mr. John O'Toole: You get tomorrow.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I had a background in finance, and all my life I was involved in developing policy, processes and procedures. One of the things that you always look for when you're developing internal control is, what are the benefits you're getting versus the cost that you will incur? We looked at the proposals and your bill, and we gave them very thorough consideration. The issue was that it basically cost close to \$30 million to implement all that is in that bill. And then you have to say to yourself, if you're going to spend \$10 million on an ongoing basis and \$20 million to implement the process, are you really going to get the benefit out of it that will offset implementing these costs?

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. O'Toole. We'll now go to the third party for the next 20 minutes.

Mr. Paul Miller: To the minister or his assistant or director, I'd like to know, do economic development objectives play a role in procurement policies, and is there any attempt to use Ontario tax dollars to further Ontario economic objectives? Could you give me a detailed answer on that?

1650

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Yes. Let me say that our overall policy is that it should produce value for money, but we also feel that sometimes there are new technologies that companies develop, in which case they could become leaders in the world. We are encouraging

on a very proactive basis that if a new technology is being developed that fits the overall objective of the province, that we feel they can become leaders going forward, and if we can use those products—actually, we are encouraging them to come to us as a demonstration project. If they have a demonstration project with us, then they can at least get a reference from us and then they can showcase that they are selling it to the Ontario government, and that can open doors for them moving forward.

After the demonstration projects, they have to be competitive with other suppliers of similar products to sell to the government. But we are sort of giving them a chance and becoming a reference point for them if they have a new technology with which we feel they can have a real niche and they can become leaders.

Mr. Paul Miller: Following along on that note, what steps is your ministry taking in the tech field to improve your ministry's service situation?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Do you mean in information technology?

Mr. Paul Miller: Information technology, as well as programs that you are now examining that would enhance your present system.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I actually outlined quite a few of those objectives before. Let me just say that the government of Ontario had very old systems. Our reliance on systems is so heavy that if the systems don't work, it can create a real problem, not just for the government but for the people of Ontario, so the government has moved in a very systematic way to replace some of those old systems with the new systems.

It does a couple of things. It basically improves the productivity, the efficiencies, and as a result you can actually decrease 5% of your Ontario public service as well. It also increases the efficiency and becomes more responsive to provide services to Ontarians.

My deputy minister actually has a background in information systems. That's where he came from.

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, he looks like a tech guy.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: I'll take that as a compliment.

Mr. Paul Miller: It is a compliment.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: We run about 1,800 to 1,900 applications in government, but there are about 200 of them that are absolutely critical to the core business of government: delivering cheques, keeping prisoners behind bars and supporting the services that we provide to the public.

We went through a process a couple of years ago and looked at the 200 most critical business applications. We risk-rated them: We looked at their ability to continue to run, how obsolete they might be, and then, if they stopped running, how difficult it would be to get them to work again. We identified 77 that were at risk of failure, and the investment has been in those 77 applications, to make sure that they are refreshed or renewed or replaced so that they will continue to run over time.

The biggest, most critical of those are all key delivery pieces of technology for government services.

The application that supports the Family Responsibility Office, collecting funds from fathers, primarily, payable to kids for child support—that system—we are refreshing so that we can ensure we can collect the money faster and more fully and get it to the mothers and the children who need it.

The SDMT is a system that supports Ontario Works and the Ontario disability program, ODSP. That is a system desperately in need of refresh. Right now, when the government announces an increase in payments, for instance, it takes between six and 12 months of programming time and effort to be able to change a system which essentially is hard coded. Replacing that so that we can get those changes in quicker and get those cheques out to the public faster is one of the things we're doing.

The third big one would be around the road users' safety suite of applications. These are Ministry of Transportation applications that were built primarily in the 1960s. These are older systems. They do everything from licensing vehicles to dealing with overweight permits for trucks to our own licensing for personal licences and so on.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you. I guess one of the biggest problems that we've faced in opposition is our concern about the use of consultants. It has become a major issue, as you know, facing your government. After the eHealth debacle, now that they're going to look into other major agencies—20, I believe, of the major ones—what role is your ministry going to take in reference to the reduction of costs of consultants?

We were overwhelmed with the amount that's spent. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe eHealth spent \$388 million in five years trying to develop a system, and a good chunk of that went to consultants, with no systems, no hardware. If I'm incorrect, tell me, but I believe you got about \$100 million worth of hardware and systems and tech assistance from that five-year experience, and over \$200 million went to consultants. We've gone through that, and I don't have to repeat the questionable conduct of some of the consultants. That was one agency, and it was over \$200 million for consultants in a five-year period. I don't even want to think how much is being spent on the other 19, and I'm sure we'll find out.

Then you did mention, if I'm not mistaken, that there are another over 200 municipalities, agencies and other things that the Ontario government has indirect or direct jurisdiction over, and obviously some of those agencies would be hiring consultants too. So I'd be willing to estimate that it could be billions that are spent on consultants over a period of a very few years.

What is your ministry going to do to clean up your own yard and then recommend to the other ministries any success stories you've had? Because I do believe that yours was one of the largest consultant-paid agencies. If I'm incorrect, tell me. I want to know what you're going to do to save tax dollars on these consultants. What are you getting for your money? Did you get anything for your money, or was it just another debacle?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me just start by saying that I think we have already moved ahead to tighten up the policies with regard to hiring consultants, not just in my ministry but I think throughout the government and also the agencies that we manage as well.

The numbers will tell you a little bit of the story. I think in 2001-02, we had \$656 million that the previous government spent on consultants. That number is down to \$304 million in 2009-10. So there's a reduction of more than 50%, almost \$350 million, out of that number.

What we have done in our ministry is this: One of the major expenses of our ministry was hiring IT consultants. We are actually moving ahead to convert 1,415 positions to full-time-employee positions, so they will not be consultants; they will be employees. That is going to save about \$58 million on an ongoing basis to us. That's one. But this is not the only benefit of doing that, actually. It retains the expertise within the Ontario public service as well. So we are moving in that direction.

The other is, we have provided very strong policies and tightened our policies with regard to expenses on hospitality, incidentals, food expenses. Those kinds of expenses will not be allowed anymore for consultants to charge to us. They will have to use the vendor-of-record people for hiring consultants as well.

The deputy minister might be able to add a few things.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Just to your question of consultants, there are two other things that we've done that I think will be quite valuable in terms of driving down the costs.

One is, we've put in place a vendor-of-record program where we have negotiated rates for consultants where they have to be used, so that it limits some of these higher-priced consultants and the use of those that we had seen in some of the agencies in the past. So that will drive down the overall cost of consultants where they're used.

The other thing that we've set up as a bit of an experiment, but early indications are it's working quite well, is that last year we established in the information technology area a program that we call Information Technology Source, which is a modern, mobile workforce of Ontario public service staff who will be deployed to projects. We would deploy consultants to projects, so they won't live and work in a fixed location. They might, like consultants, finish a project after a few months and move on to something else.

1700

This is new and innovative for us. We have 167 full-time equivalents. These are staff, now on board, who are replacing consultants we would have hired to do special project work. We see that number growing to 275 full-time equivalents this year, which will again further replace work that consultants would otherwise have done.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay. My next question is, who holds the trademark or the copyright for Privacy by Design, and does the minister have any plans to introduce Privacy by Design in Ontario?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I think you're referring to the report that was issued today by the Information and

Privacy Commissioner. We are looking at some of the recommendations that were made in that report, and this was one of the issues that was raised.

I don't know whether the deputy minister has any more information on it that he can share with you, but we are going to give very careful consideration to all the recommendations—

Mr. Paul Miller: The reason I say it is because I'm also concerned about the use of consultants to implement the program. Once again, I caution you to look very deeply into who owns the copyright and what it's going to cost the government if they try to implement it. It's a concern.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: My understanding is that Privacy by Design and privacy by access are both part of the office of Dr. Ann Cavoukian, our Information and Privacy Commissioner. I'm not aware of any licensing agreements for them.

Mr. Paul Miller: How much time have I got, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Eight minutes.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay. I guess the final area I'd like to go into—you were very good this morning during your presentation on your pride in the diversity in your ministry. I'd like to ask a few questions along those lines, and maybe you can enlighten me on where it stands.

I'd like to know, first, what percentage of members of the OPS are visible minorities. That would be my first question. Can you give me some numbers?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Deputy Minister, do you have numbers? Actually, we have our head of human resources here as well.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: I'll ask Angela Coke, the associate deputy minister for HR Ontario, to join me here. I don't know whether or not we have that information available.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd be willing to get it later, if you can get it for me.

Ms. Angela Coke: I'm Angela Coke, the associate deputy minister for HR Ontario. We don't actually collect the data from people directly. We do an employee survey, and folks answer some of the questions there and self-identify. But we don't have a program at this time that actually collects that workforce data directly from folks.

Mr. Paul Miller: Some of the people who have brought it forward would like that information and would hope you're opening doors a little more in that area.

How has that changed relative to 2005, which you mentioned earlier today, and 2000 and 1995? Have there been any major changes, any program changes or ministry directives in that area?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me just say a few things. First, it's very important for us to make sure that the Ontario public service reflects the community. If you go around and look at the Ontario public service, you can feel that it is visibly reflective of the community. You don't need numbers. You can actually feel it; you can see it.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm not quite sure I can drive all over Ontario, but—

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I'm talking about even here. Even here, you can see it.

Mr. Paul Miller: Oh, here?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Right. Outside, in some areas you might not see it, because there might not be visible minorities or people with disabilities and so on.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay. All right.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Not only that, but even in leadership positions: I recently had a chance in the South Asian community to highlight some of the people in leadership positions. We have two deputy ministers who are visible minorities and two ADMs who are visible minorities, as well as people at the director and manager levels. I think we are making progress in that direction.

Maybe the deputy minister—

Mr. Ron McKerlie: I would just add that Ontario is also the first jurisdiction anywhere to have a chief diversity officer, Noëlle Richardson. We're quite proud of that and of the work Noëlle has done in her office. One of the ADMs in our ministry is focused on diversity and one on accessibility, and Noëlle supports them and the important work they're doing.

We have also done a great deal of work in terms of mentoring relationships; for example, between visible minorities and deputy ministers. We've set up that program, and it's working well, but the purpose of that is to help people understand some of the issues and some of the obstacles and barriers that perhaps exist to advancing visible minorities through and up the system.

We also have a three-year strategic plan, which we think will be incredibly helpful. It has a number of goals to help move us forward in the area of diversity. We've created what we call a diversity lens, through which we will view a strategy and policy to ensure that we're considering the needs of people who come from diverse backgrounds. We have also set up a number of networks to support our different diversity groups. We have a group called BOPSers, which is for black OPSers; we have SANG, which is our South Asian network; EANG, our East Asian network; the OPS pride network; FrancoGO for our francophone employees; D-Net, the network for employees who have disabilities; and TOPS, which stands for Tomorrow's OPS, for youth and new professionals as they join.

We've tried to make it as accommodating as possible to connect people, to mentor them and to break down barriers.

Mr. Paul Miller: My next question dovetails nicely. You mentioned Noëlle Richardson, Ontario's chief diversity officer. Maybe you can define for me exactly what her role is, and that will go into the next two questions. What is her role as chief diversity officer?

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Noëlle's responsibility is two-fold: one around diversity and one around accessibility. Around diversity, her goal is to ensure that the OPS is, and is seen to be, a diverse, equitable and inclusive organization; that systemic barriers are broken down; that we provide support for people of all backgrounds so that people feel welcome when they join the OPS; and that

they have equal opportunity to advance to their full potential. She leads the programs and the developmental strategy and policy for that area.

Around accessibility, we support the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The OPS was the first organization of 360,000 in Ontario that was ready on January 1, 2010, for the customer service piece, which was the first piece of the accessibility—

Mr. Paul Miller: So the programs you just mentioned would be part of her mandate?

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Last minute.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay. Last question: Exactly what does your office of diversity do, other than the programs and her mandate? What other role do they play?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me just answer that question, because I had the chance to work with that office as well. One of the other objectives is for them to do outreach, so they can go and meet with communities and highlight some of the things we are doing in the OPS. Just last week in the Attorney General's office, the people celebrated South Asian Heritage Month. We want to encourage those kinds of activities to go on as well. The chief diversity officer was there as well. She plays a key role in making sure there is outreach and encourages people to take pride in the culture they have.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): We'll now go to the government members, starting with Mr. McNeely, for the next 20 minutes.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister, for being here today. I was very interested in your presentation this morning, and I'd like to congratulate the OPS, led by your ministry, for the awards you won for the green office. I think that is excellent. I've always been a proponent of e-working, as you know—and I worked for you as a parliamentary assistant in transportation. I think it's great to see you going ahead with the telecommuting pilot project. You've won the awards. You've set yourself some high standards. Congratulations. I'm glad to see that in your presentation and as a big part of your ministry.

1710

I have a climate change challenge that goes on with high schools in my area. Arctic ice will be gone in about 10 or 15 years. We're now at 386 parts per million for carbon dioxide in the atmosphere; we're going to be at 400 within five or six years. China has now surpassed the US in greenhouse gases, and coal is still the fuel of choice. So I think what you're doing here, leading by example, is extremely important.

What I wanted to talk to you about today is the ServiceOntario improvements. I got my health card about a year ago, and it cost me probably—60 kilometres at 40 cents—\$24 to drive in to Ottawa to get it. I had to pay \$12 for parking. My wife went to have hers renewed the other day, and she just took five minutes going down to St. Joseph Boulevard in Orléans. I think this is an

excellent initiative and one that is appreciated by people. We've had over 10 calls now. With your constituency office, you don't often get a lot of calls for what you do, but this has been one of the big areas where people are very pleased to have the office so close to do so many things. You're going to be moving those forward with other issues.

The newborn registration was something I wasn't aware of. Two or three years ago, that was a big issue in our office, where you often had to go to city hall to start the process and it was a three- or four-month process for parents who got caught in that situation.

Getting a birth certificate, health card or driver's licence is the only direct interaction many Ontarians will have with government. What is your ministry doing to improve the customer service it provides Ontarians? I know you told us that this morning, but I would just like you to go through some of the more important initiatives you have under way.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Thank you very much for asking this question. Let me tell you that I think the work we are doing at ServiceOntario is very important work. People's expectations are very high with regard to service these days. I'm very proud of the work that is being done in ServiceOntario. I always feel this is where the government and the public meet. If we provide good service to people, then people think that the government is doing a good job. If we don't provide good service, then people think that the government isn't really working.

Probably the DM will give you a lot more detail than I will, but what we are doing on the ServiceOntario side is modernizing and integrating the ServiceOntario centres. One third of those centres are actually government centres, and two thirds will be the private issuers network centres.

When I was the Minister of Transportation, I had responsibility for the private issuers network, along with you, and I want to say that you didn't work for me, you worked with me. So thanks very much for doing that work at that point in time.

What we want to do is make sure that we can provide all services under one roof so that people don't have to go to one part of the city to get their driver's licence and another part of the city to get their health card. They should be able to go to one centre and get all the services.

Two or three weeks ago, I was in Ottawa and was able to announce that we are adding the health card services in six private issuers networks in the government centres. That saves people time, it saves people money, and it also gives a good name to the ServiceOntario brand; that we can provide all those services under one roof.

In the Ottawa Hospital, I also made an announcement about the birth registration. It used to be a three-step process. Now, in one step, you can get your registration, you can get your birth certificate, and not only that, you can get your social insurance number as well.

So it is saving people time, it's saving people money. It's the right thing to do. We want to make it easier for people, because their lives are very busy, to get the right services everywhere.

Our commitment to service excellence is paramount, and we want to make sure that people see that they can get the kinds of services they need at ServiceOntario.

People with disabilities should be able to get the services they need—and we are also providing options for people. If they want to go to ServiceOntario, they can do that. If they want to use the Internet, they can get those services through the Internet. If they want to go to a kiosk, they can get those services.

We're also providing them with other options. They can call and make an appointment, so people don't have to wait in line to get some of the services.

Moving forward, we are also going to make sure that we provide flexible hours for service, based on the needs of the communities. We want to provide some services that are available in the evening in some centres wherever there's a demand, or maybe over the weekend. So we are looking toward becoming more flexible and providing services more in tune with the needs of the communities.

I will ask the deputy minister if he wants to add anything more to this.

Mr. Bob Stark: I'd be very happy to, Minister. Thank you for the question. Maybe I can just add a little bit more detail and a bit of history on what has gone on in ServiceOntario.

First of all, we all know that expectations of citizens are rising over time. In fact, we also know that citizens expect government service to be on par with the private sector, if not better. ServiceOntario represents a way that we can show the public what we're doing in terms of service, and help them with the myriad of government services they need to navigate through.

ServiceOntario's story started in 2004. In 2004, we started to add additional services to the ServiceOntario suite of services. In particular, we added hunting and fishing licences. We added driver and vehicle services and health card services. So now we're serving some 12.7 million Ontario residents with a variety of services, including such things as birth and marriage certificates, health cards, drivers' licences, licence plate renewals, fishing and hunting licences. In fact, we've facilitated well over 44 million customer interactions in the past year.

We're also on the way to improving access to services, and in particular, the health card services. ServiceOntario is creating, as we've mentioned, one-stop shopping experiences, if you will, so that when we've integrated these services across the province by the end of this year, it will be possible for citizens to go to one location for all of the routine services.

Previously, for health card services in some of our communities, the rural remote locations in particular, citizens have had to wait up to six months for services to come to their communities. By integrating these services and creating the one-stop opportunity, we now have the routine health services and routine driver and vehicle licensing services under one roof. Roughly 300 locations across the province are an extension of our existing government offices and an extension of privately run

offices, which have historically handled driver and vehicle licensing. So it'll be much easier for citizens to conduct health card services across the province.

For health card services in particular, historically we've had 27 permanent offices for health card services in the province. In the future, we'll have 300 locations where the access is significantly improved. In rural communities, we will have expanded our offices from two permanent offices to 163 offices. In northern communities, we will have expanded from six health offices to 67 health offices. It's all designed to get as close to the citizens as we can. In fact, about 95% of citizens will be within 10 kilometres of one of our integrated ServiceOntario centres.

1720

In addition to the key services now offered under a single roof, we will be able to make service improvements not available before, such as integrating driver's licence and health card renewals, so you can go into one location, stand in one line and get both your driver's licence and health card renewed. Clearly, that saves a customer's time, so there's reduced travel and reduced waiting in our offices.

By focusing on what is important to the customer, ServiceOntario will be at the forefront of service delivery to individuals and businesses in Ontario.

Our progress to date: As of the end of April, ServiceOntario had completed implementation of integrated services in 26 locations across the province. Integrated services will be introduced into a total of 293 offices, representing 225 communities, by the time this implementation is complete in December of this year.

ServiceOntario is also making it easier for many customers who now use online services. Customers can renew their vehicle registration, and we guarantee that the sticker is delivered to their home within five days. That service is available at our ServiceOntario site, serviceontario.ca.

We will also continue to make service improvements on our online channel to respond to customer preferences.

You mentioned Ottawa, and the minister mentioned that we opened a site in Ottawa. In April, we celebrated the latest ServiceOntario centre launch in an Ottawa community. Citizens can now renew their health card, driver's licence and vehicle registration at six new ServiceOntario centres conveniently located across the province.

Mr. Phil McNeely: And one of them in Orléans?

Mr. Bob Stark: And one of them in Orléans. That's correct.

When this is fully implemented by the end of the year, Ottawa will have six privately run service providers, two public centres and five kiosks—a very sound representation in that region.

In keeping with our commitment to accessibility, four of those locations currently offer extended hours: some evenings and Saturday mornings.

These centres currently transact over a million driver and vehicle licensing transactions and over 200,000 health card renewals—very active centres.

These newly integrated centres will make it faster and easier for Ontario residents to access government services. The opening of the new integrated ServiceOntario centres is another step in ServiceOntario's plan to build a one-stop service network in which, as I said, 95% of Ontarians will be within 10 kilometres.

ServiceOntario is committed to high-quality service delivery and service excellence. We have embraced the OPS-wide service excellence campaign and service directive to create the internal service standards that support—

Interjection.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you very much for that and—

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me just add one more thing to this. I think we are focusing on customer service, but more needs to be done on this front. We still have the legacy system. Even though we are integrating all those services into one place, the health cards have one system and the driver licences have one system. We want to move to a system in which all those services can actually be provided at one counter, not from just one location. That will enhance the quality of service as well, as we move forward.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Chair, I'd like to share my time with Ms. Mangat.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Go ahead.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Minister, as we all know, Canada is a country of immigrants. A large number of newcomers prefer to settle in the province of Ontario because it's a great place to live, work, raise families and invest.

Having said that, you know and I know that Peel is growing. Every year, 27,000 newcomers settle down in the region of Peel. On a daily basis, I meet newcomers in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South as well as at events, and I'm sure you do the same, because it's the same region. They are facing problems not with the upgrading of their credentials—I must say that at the time you and I had immigrated, we had to jump through different kinds of hoops which newcomers right now are not facing.

Our government has done a great job, which I'm very proud of, helping newcomers in upgrading their credentials so that they can integrate well, professionally and socially, in our society.

The problem is when they come here and upgrade their credentials, they face a problem in finding jobs. Whenever they go to employers, they say, "Oh, you don't have Canadian experience." My question to you is, what is our government doing to help those newcomers find meaningful work experience for internationally trained individuals, no matter if they're doctors, engineers, teachers or other professionals, so that they can jump-start their careers? They don't only benefit themselves but also the people of Ontario, and they also contribute to the economy of the province.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Thank you for that question. Let me say this: I can completely relate to what you

said. When I came here in 1974, I faced the same kinds of issues: Your qualifications don't get recognized, your experience doesn't get recognized. I wish sometimes that we had these kinds of programs when we came, because it makes life so much easier for people if you can give them some sort of experience, and then they can go and look for a job, because it also gives them a reference point.

In the Ontario public service, we have an internship program. I think this is a model program in its own right in our public service. What it does is, when a new immigrant comes—most of the immigrants are highly qualified from an education point of view and from an experience point of view, but when they come here they do face the situation that they don't have a reference in this country, and sometimes people are also looking for some Canadian experience. But how do you get Canadian experience if you don't get a job? What happens in this case is in the internship program, every year we have about 75 people we bring into the Ontario public service. The idea is to give them six months' experience so that they can actually get used to the environment of working here but at the same time they can also get the reference point, and then they can go and look for a job outside.

This program has been very, very successful. The idea was to give them six months' experience so that they can go and get the jobs outside, but experience has shown that because these are highly skilled people, almost 80%-plus actually end up in the Ontario public service.

So it helps us in two ways: One is, it helps us to become more diverse. The question was being asked, how do you become more diverse? This helped us to become more diverse. The other is, we bring highly qualified people who have years of experience and qualifications into the Ontario public service as well.

What we have done is we are actually expanding this program from about 75 positions to about 130 positions this year. We feel that this is the right thing to do to integrate immigrants into society, because if they become more productive, they become better citizens, and they also add to the economic well-being of the province.

I'm sure that the deputy minister wants to say a few more things about it.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): You've got about 30 seconds to wrap up.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Just a couple of things: First of all, Ontario is the only province to launch an innovative internship program specifically for professional newcomers. We're very proud of that. Secondly, I would say that we have had 351 interns between the launch in 2006 to the end of March 2009. We put 351 interns into 23 ministries across the province. As the minister said, our goal is 130 interns at this particular time. They've been in cities from Hamilton to Guelph to Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay in areas as diverse as community development coordinator, policy analyst, web design specialist, business process analyst, hydrogeology research intern, so lots of different types of jobs. Eighty-one per cent of them have found full-time professional employment as a result of this.

1730

We've been recognized by the Career Edge Organization now four years in a row for our leadership in breaking down barriers for newcomers through the OPS internship program for internationally trained individuals. I think it's quite an acknowledgement of the work we've done in this area.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): We'll finish up today with 20 minutes from the official opposition.

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, it's the first of two days, which is certainly not enough time, but we'll go on here.

I want to talk about the section on corporate information and information technology. It's a pretty important part, a complex part. I'm trying to follow the numbers here, actually, and I need your help. The program is said—I'm just reading the introduction—to provide advice and leadership on information management and information technology in government. It's something that hasn't happened since 2003—it's been ongoing, as we've already established. There are still problems. The NDP asked a question about the ministries sharing stuff with the police, the cruisers. All this stuff is available. It's a matter of propriety or security—and you mentioned Guelph.

Anyway, the difference in the estimates is where I'm getting the problem. If I look in the estimates—I'm looking at page 58 in the results-based briefing book here—it shows that there is a change of \$52 million, which isn't much in the scheme of things, but it's a lot of money for Ontarians and it's taxpayers' money. Will the ministry account for the change in spending and what new programs and initiatives this \$52 million is going to bring forward, specifically, in as short a time as possible? What do I get for \$52 million?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: That's a very good question. Let me say first that we need to make investments in our I&IT systems, because the current systems are old. If they break down, we won't be able to provide the kind of service that we need to provide to Ontarians. So we are moving in a very systematic way to take each of those systems, the major application systems, and then convert them into new systems. That's why the investment is needed. So \$37 million of that increase is related to enterprise-based key technology systems, out of the \$52 million. Then the \$7.8-million increase is to fund the next-generation government mobile communication project, which is also required by the Ministry of Community Safety, and the \$7.2-million increase is related to the transition project and maintenance of the Guelph data centre. We are building a Guelph data centre, which is also, again, a very important part of the overall strategy for information technology for the security of our systems.

I'm sure the deputy minister wants to add a lot more and tell you—

Mr. John O'Toole: We only have a limited time here, so I'd appreciate a quick answer.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: We talked about the major application portfolio strategy earlier. We spoke of the key

applications that the government was looking to replace and what they would mean for the people of Ontario in terms of faster cheques and their driver's licences and so on. The biggest chunk of that, the \$37 million, relates to those key technology systems and the cost for the next year to work on those. The government mobile communication project, which is the next-biggest chunk, is the land-based radio systems that are used by the OPP for communication amongst their cruisers, but also other systems like ambulance dispatch and things like that. That's what that piece is. This is a system that's coming to end of life, probably in the next three or four years, so it's getting ready to replace that.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's the problem with a technology solution. It's like trying to catch a rabbit: When you get one, there are four more of them. The BlackBerry is a good example, and the iPhone and the iPad and all the rest of it. It's not the panacea. I was on the Smart Systems for Health board when we were government, and I can tell you they just spent money like it was water. I don't think we can find it in here. I'm not blaming you. But I'm saying it's so big and so demanding to build the infrastructure, human as well as technical. Good luck to you.

Anyway, on agencies, boards and commissions, I know you're doing your best. We'll try and keep an eye on it. Maybe sometimes you could float me one of those soft questions and I'll ask it. You'll say, "Gee, the opposition is pressing me to get this information out there." I'll look good; you'll look good. What the heck.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Thank you for the suggestion.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, there you go. I have email; you can send it to me. I'll say it came in a brown envelope.

Anyway, I'm on agencies, boards and commissions now. This is on page 80, and this is the section here where you look after all these tribunals, or you're supposed to. As the ministry has undergone numerous changes over the past few years, there has been confusion as to which branch of the organization agencies, boards and commissions are associated with. The branches and offices portion of the MGS website has not been updated since June 2009, approaching a whole year. As well, the website included the Alcohol and Gaming Commission as a branch of this ministry. However, looking through the expenditures in estimates, it's no longer associated with MGS.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: That's right.

Mr. John O'Toole: But it is in here partially. Some money is still showing in there. I don't know if it's a part year—is this done deliberately? I'm an ordinary guy. I'm not a CA or anything like that—well, you're not a CA either—but could the minister table a list of every agency, board, commission and branch that the ministry mandate covers? I want that.

At the very least, considering the extremely large staff in this ministry—some would say too much; it's almost 5,000—could they update their website for clarification?

Because you're spending all this money on technology. I can't find anything. If I look in this little book here—or the big book—it's sort of like trying to find your way out of a maze. Do you understand? It really is a cornfield here without an entrance point. So there are a couple of questions for you, but no real answer.

The business service program: I was at one of your announcements and—whatever. Those are questions. Don't ignore that.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: No, no.

Mr. John O'Toole: I hope somebody here is taking notes.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Actually, we can answer some of those questions, if you'd like.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, it would probably take too long to answer them.

A direct quote from the ministry: "develop and implement operational procedures, policies, guidelines, best practice and tools to facilitate consistent application of the procurement policy framework"—this is a quote from you, actually—"... leadership supply chain management strategy, including support of the supply chain leadership council." And this is a quote directly from you. Could you maybe tell me what that means? I know you talked a bit about the procurement issue here earlier.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: The leadership—what is it, exactly?

Mr. Ron McKerlie: Supply chain leadership council.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Supply chain leadership council. The main objective is for them to look at all the procurement contracts over \$1 million so that we can ensure that we are spending the money wisely and effectively.

It is a council that is headed by our ADM responsible for procurement, along with other ADM colleagues from the major ministries. They look at all the expenditures over \$1 million and the procurement process we are following for those over \$1 million.

Mr. John O'Toole: There was a question earlier by Paul here. He was talking about the finance plan. It's got some name under the Ministry of Finance where it's coordinated procurement—I forget the term, but Paul used it earlier today. He said it has got nothing to do with this. It's finance—

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: You're talking about shared service—

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it wasn't shared service.

Interjection: Ontario Buys.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Ontario Buys.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, Ontario Buys. That's under the Ministry of Finance, and I've seen that. But there again, it's not clear to us lay people here. I mean, you have five or six people making a quarter of a million sitting around here giving you—so you probably know the answer, or at least you've memorized it. The point I'm trying to make, though, is that we can't get this.

What you've just said now about this supply chain leadership council's objective—in fact, we had World-wide Purchasing when I was with General Motors.

Worldwide looked at the best source quality indexes and all these other measurements. It's probably the way to go, but who's running it? Are you running it, or is Dwight Duncan running this corporate strategy on leadership and supply chain—

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: It is in our ministry.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's in your ministry.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Yes.

Mr. John O'Toole: Would that be for consultants, technology, suppliers?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Yes, this is for any procurement over \$1 million.

Mr. John O'Toole: Would that be across the broader public sector, like the MUSH sector, or just your own functions?

1740

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Yes; everyone in government.

Mr. John O'Toole: How about MTO? They're kind of the biggest spender on—

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Yes, they are part of that.

Mr. John O'Toole: They're part of it? So you look at all these contracts—how is the funding for something like Metrolinx? This is going to shelve this province. It's about \$5 billion a year if you look at the MoveOntario plan. Would you be in charge of all those contracts?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: No. That is being handled by the—

Mr. John O'Toole: Would it be MTO or you?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: No, the MTO.

Mr. John O'Toole: MTO. That's a big chunk of change over the next while; \$5 billion a year is what they want. You're already short \$21 billion, and I know he cancelled it for this year. The Toronto transit system is very upset; David Miller as well.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: We started with \$5.6 million short, right?

Mr. John O'Toole: Whatever. Anyway, again on the technology side, where are the best places to look in these votes—I'm looking at a single page here of all the votes—to find the technology piece? Because if I look at the commonalities here, that's the biggest piece that we have to be able to keep an eye on. That's first; you can tell me that in a memo or something. But how do I measure? Is it reported to quarterly? Who is it specifically in your ministry? Is it you or is it some specific deputy? Is it ServiceOntario? Is it biz, or whatever it's called?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: All the major information technology projects are reported quarterly to the treasury and Management Board. It goes from our ministry to the treasury and Management Board, and basically, what it talks about is what the size of the project is, whether the project is on time, on spec, on cost, and what progress is being made from quarter to quarter. The deputy minister can tell you a little more about it.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: There are 22 IT projects over \$10 million that are currently being reported to treasury board/Management Board of Cabinet, but half of those would be within the OPS. We also track and report on

e-health projects, so the members would get an update in terms of how those projects are going.

The member also asked for us to table a list of MGS agencies, boards and commissions. That information is found on pages 17, 18 and 19 of the results-based plan briefing book, so I just draw the member's attention to that, and we'll consider that request fulfilled.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's part one of one of the previous questions I had there.

Yes, they're all listed here. I did go through those, too, actually. I guess I was looking for the oversight function in the ministry. If those are current and accurate, then I should be able to say that these are the people who are on those agencies—the chair, who is a politically appointed person—and I should be able to question you, in writing, to—for instance, there's a whole deal on the Alcohol and Gaming Commission here, which is where I'm most troubled. There have been a couple of people who either quit or were terminated or suspended, or whatever. They probably got huge severances. Where do I find this stuff out without spending that \$9,000 that I mentioned earlier this morning? This is troubling. There's something wrong with that. It's clear: It's wrong. I'm not even a forensic auditor—

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: The Alcohol and Gaming Commission is actually part of the Ministry of Consumer Services.

Mr. John O'Toole: Okay. It's in here, though, but it's not yours.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Last year, it was in our budget but from this year, it's being transferred to the—

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll have to get a hold of whoever that is. Okay, we're moving along here and kind of running out of time.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Seven minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: We've got the disclosure online presence. Recently, you responded to one of my order paper questions tabled on March 11 regarding the cost of Ontario's online presence. However, your response merely indicated the number of online transactions completed every month; it did not indicate costs. That's still an unanswered question. I find that a lot of those are just—I know that you sign off on them.

Minister, what is the cost of building and maintaining the website required for Ontario's online presence, where two million transactions occur online each month? What's the cost of that? Do you have a cost per transaction of these inquiries? And are they recoverables?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me refer to the DM. He might have a little bit more information than I have—

Mr. John O'Toole: You've got a unit cost at the front of the thing of how much per capita you're spending on technology, which is a false number, really. As the population grows, your number goes down, because population grows 27,000 people, one of your people over here said. So what's the cost per transaction—\$2 million a month?

Mr. Ron McKerlie: I don't have the numbers with me.

Mr. John O'Toole: But you can supply something like that?

Mr. Ron McKerlie: We can certainly look into seeing if—

Mr. John O'Toole: If you're the best in the world, are we competitive on the cost per—that's the number. We need to have dollar values. Some \$2 million in transactions per month is actually a good sign.

Corporate information technology: That's on page 58 of your briefing book. Again, if I look at corporate information and technology, the very first line on there—this isn't a vote number—is a 13.9% increase. The next one is 150%. They're not large, large numbers. It's off by a few million in the overall scheme of things. Under "capital," it's up considerably. Could you give me some idea? Those are large numbers.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Which page are you on?

Mr. John O'Toole: Page 58 in this book here.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: I think that's last year's book.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, okay. Pardon me. I've spent all that time reading the wrong book.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: That's why you have the wrong questions, too.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it could very well be—I apologize. How come I didn't get this?

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): We did.

Mr. John O'Toole: We did? Honest to God, I'm sure my staff—they're fired now.

Anyway, these questions were dealt with about a week or so ago—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Four minutes left.

Mr. John O'Toole: Okay, struggling along. Some of the questions have hit, though. I have a better handout here.

I'm just going to go back to the drawing board in terms of some of the—can you provide us a list of these agencies that—you said you're down so much in these consultants. I forget the actual numbers that you used.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: It's \$350 million.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. They're down quite a bit. Are some of the agencies using consultants now?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: The agencies that are under our responsibility are actually very small agencies.

Mr. John O'Toole: If they're using consultants, would that show on their annualized budget?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Yes.

Mr. John O'Toole: It would show in your budget somewhere?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: It would be on theirs.

Mr. John O'Toole: I should be able to find that in there.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: It will be on their budgets.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, it will be on their budget. Right. And that's what I'm saying. You're going to be reporting those all online.

Mr. Ron McKerlie: The 10 agencies that report to MGS—if that's what you're talking about—will be the ones listed in the current year's report on pages 17, 18 and 19. Those agencies would use minimal, if any, con-

sultants. Some of the larger operating agencies would use consultants. Those costs would be consolidated on their books and the ministry responsible for that agency should be able to answer those questions.

Mr. John O'Toole: You were saying that you do monitor and report, in some of the contracts, the eHealth stuff as well. You're kind of overseeing the expenditures in eHealth now?

Mr. Ron McKerlie: When we get asked for help from eHealth directly, we can certainly support them. We are helping them with some of the IT work as well. They have their own board and their board provides oversight to the agency and governance around their costs.

Mr. John O'Toole: I guess that is a serious blow to my inquiry today, not being as prepared and the wrong book. Thanks for pointing that out, Chair. It's still roughly the same thing. It's the accountability part of it that is most stressful.

Just on the summary, the last thing here: I know how important the BizPaL part is. I was at your announcement and I thought you had a good working relationship with your federal counterpart and it seemed unnecessary to be critical of something that is a good idea. You're saying that currently 77% of Ontarians have access to this service through their municipal jurisdiction. Do you fund those? There are different regions, some of these different service areas. Do you fund municipal partners in this stuff?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: BizPaL is a very important initiative from the Open Ontario perspective. We want to make life for business people easier, so what we are saying to them is that if you need any information about opening a business or expanding a business, then we can provide you the information, whether it's about Ontario, whether it's about the federal government, or whether it's for the municipalities. You can go to the system and say that you want to open a business here and this is the kind of business you want to open, and it will tell you what the licensing requirements are for that business.

It is very helpful from that point of view. It's actually a joint project between the federal government, the province and the municipalities.

Mr. John O'Toole: Do you fund some of the service providers and regions? These are economic development departments or other groups, maybe even under the umbrella of the regional economic development department.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: The Ministry of Economic Development funds it. When I was the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, some of the responsibility fell under us. We fund some of the economic development. We provide some assistance to them, yes.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay. Minister, thank you so much. Thank you to Mr. O'Toole from the official opposition. We will adjourn now until tomorrow afternoon, right after routine proceedings.

The committee adjourned at 1750.

CONTENTS

Tuesday 11 May 2010

Ministry of Government Services.....	E-5
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	
Mr. Ron McKerlie	
Mr. Bob Stark	
Ms. Marian Macdonald	
Ms. Angela Coke	

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Chair / Président

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord PC)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

Mr. Robert Bailey (Sarnia–Lambton PC)

Mr. Robert Bailey (Sarnia–Lambton PC)

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

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry L)

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls L)

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga–Streetsville L)

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord PC)

Mrs. Amrit Mangat (Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud L)

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans L)

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham PC)

Substitutions / Membres remplaçants

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan L)

Mr. Paul Miller (Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek ND)

Clerk pro tem / Greffier par intérim

Mr. William Short

Staff / Personnel

Mr. Avrum Fenson, research officer,
Legislative Research Service