



ISSN 1180-4327

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 7 March 2012

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 7 mars 2012

**Standing Committee on
Public Accounts**

Subcommittee report

**Comité permanent des
comptes publics**

Rapport du sous-comité

Chair: Norm Miller
Clerk: William Short

Président : Norm Miller
Greffier : William Short

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC ACCOUNTSCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
COMPTES PUBLICS

Wednesday 7 March 2012

Mercredi 7 mars 2012

The committee met at 0935 in committee room 1.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): I call the committee to order.

The reason I called this meeting is that, in discussions with the clerk, it was clear, first of all, that we were having difficulty getting someone to come before the committee on the 21st, and then the subcommittee had been in discussions and wanting to have the Ornge presentations take three weeks, there was concern that, depending on how much time was devoted to committee writing, we may get through only one or two of the choices. The clerk advised that he thought the discussion about perhaps needing extra time would best be done by the complete committee.

We do have a subcommittee report that is almost final, which we can discuss and get some additions to, to begin the meeting, and see about getting that passed.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Do you want me to move the report? Okay. I'm assuming you want me to read the whole thing—speed reading?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. William Short): Sure, and then we have two amendments to it.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Okay.

Your subcommittee met on Wednesday, February 29, 2012, to consider the method of proceeding on the 2011 annual report of the Office of the Auditor General and recommends the following:

(1) That each party make two selections from the 2011 annual report of the Office of the Auditor General.

(2) That the following sections from the 2011 annual report of the Office of the Auditor General be selected for review by the committee:

—section 3.01, auto insurance regulatory oversight (third party selection)

—section 3.03, electricity sector renewable energy initiatives (official opposition selection)

—section 3.05, forest management program (third party selection)

—section 3.09, Legal Aid Ontario (government selection)

—section 4.07, Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (government selection)

(3) That the outstanding selections from the third party and official opposition party be provided to the clerk of

the committee no later than Wednesday, March 7, 2012, at noon.

(4) That the committee commences consideration of the selections from the 2011 annual report of the Office of the Auditor General on Wednesday, March 21, 2012.

(5) That upon receiving the special report from the Auditor General on Ornge, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts commences hearings Wednesday of the following week.

(6) That the Standing Committee on Public Accounts does not meet on the date the provincial budget is presented.

(7) That the committee clerk, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized prior to the adoption of the report of the subcommittee to commence making any preliminary arrangements necessary to facilitate the committee's proceedings.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you.

Toby, do you have an amendment?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes. First of all, I want to thank the subcommittee for allowing that leeway to give us, and the third party, for that matter, a bit more time to think about our selections. We just thought it a little short notice, so thank you for that.

Our remaining selection is section 4.14, unfunded liability of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you. All in favour? Agreed?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: As amended?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): As amended, yes. Agreed?

France?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wanted to bring two changes. I know that, first, I had said forest management program for one of our selections, but I had changed it to the energy regulatory oversight. I thought I had communicated this, but I must not have. So can I change it now?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Can I just interject on that, which may affect your decision? We're having quite a bit of difficulty trying to arrange to have anyone come on the 21st, and the deputy ministers and the ministry we have been able to arrange on the 21st now is forest management.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Oh, really?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Yes. So the odds are we'll have nobody on the 21st if we change it at this point; that's the only thing I would advise.

M^{me} France Gélinas: All right.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I might just comment that, having gone through this—and forest management, of course, is very interesting for us, but I can appreciate it, having gone through the deliberations back and forth, and I'd hate to go through days of testimony for something that the third party is not interested in hearing about now. So I would hope the flexibility would continue. We're making decisions now on hours and hours of testimony and questions; I hope there's some leeway for the third party. Those are my thoughts.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Any other comments?

0940

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will dig through my email and see who I sent it to, but I did communicate that it was not going to be forest management but electricity, regulatory oversight.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): I'm not sure where that email went. The clerk is telling me he hasn't received it, that he's aware of, anyway.

M^{me} France Gélinas: All right. Then let me think about that one, but I'll deal with the next one, and the next one has to do with an amendment to point 5, where I think we could add that we deal with Ornge for a period of three weeks, which would help with the scheduling of things—be added to point 5.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): All in agreement?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yes. We've got three weeks of hearings, and I think we had actually identified the dates for that, so if you want to put the dates right in, I think that's probably safe.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): That's up to the committee, so you can either have "three weeks" or the dates; "three weeks" might be a little more flexible.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Just put three weeks in, but the understanding was then—yes, that's fine, if you just want to put in three weeks, but we anticipate, then, that that would be March 28; April 4 and April 18.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): But, for flexibility, we'll just put three weeks in the motion, in case—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yes, that's fine. As long as we get the three weeks.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): —he doesn't report when we anticipate?

Jerry?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Back to the original point that they were talking about, regarding—

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Oh, sorry. Can we deal with that amendment. So the three weeks, is that agreed to?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Of the hearings.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Of the hearings, yes, of course.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): And then there will be report writing—

M^{me} France Gélinas: The report writing and everything we can't control. It's all in your hands, guys.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): All in agreement? Agreed.

Okay. Sorry, Jerry.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: So what I'm hearing in regard to the committee hearings is that if the third party changes their position, chances are there would be nobody available to present on the 21st?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. William Short): Unless the deputy minister that they're changing to is available.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Is this a first choice change that you're making, so your other one that you're replacing this with would be a first choice or a second choice?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would say auto insurance is our first choice and energy, regulatory oversight, is our second choice.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: So what is the likelihood, in the time frame remaining in the House schedule, for us to get to the—so we have Ornge, we have our position, the third party, then the government and then our position, and then the NDP's, in order to fit that time frame.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Perhaps what I should do is ask Will to go through what his best guess is for how much work we would be able to do in the available time through till June 6, so that gives everybody an idea.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: That's exactly what I'm asking.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you, Jerry.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. William Short): I'll give a little bit of detail, and then I'll turn it over to Ray just to talk about the report writing, because we have a couple of options we could do with that.

Assuming that if we make a change right now to the subcommittee report and we cancel MNR from coming in on the 21st, and let's say that no one will be available on the 21st, the first item that we would most likely deal with would be the special report on Ornge for three weeks; hypothetically, let's say the March 28, April 4 and April 18.

That would leave us, on the 25th, with scheduling a pick from one of the three parties. We could do Wednesday, May 2, a pick of one of the three parties, and then we could do Wednesday, May 9, a pick of one of the three parties, but then we'd be incredibly tight for report writing for Ornge and three sections with only the following three Wednesdays available for report writing.

It was suggested that we meet in the morning and in the afternoon for report writing. It could also be suggested that we start earlier in the morning to deal with report writing, because we have more flexibility in the morning than we do in the afternoon. We're only available to meet until 3, until routine proceedings—

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): And earlier in the morning—

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. William Short): Like 8. I know that's happened in the past; I know the committee has met as early as 8 to come in to do report writing. On rare occasions that's happened. But—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: To do that every week is a bit of a stretch.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. William Short): Yes. I'll give just a little bit of time for Ray just to talk about reporting, and then you can open the floor to general discussion on how people feel about this.

Mr. Ray McLellan: I think that people on the committee have been through this before—Ms. Sandals and Mr. Zimmer and Mr. Ouellette. My best guess is, to be realistic about this, and I think that with dedicating the three days to Ornge, which I certainly understand—so on the 18th, I would go away and start to write that report, and realistically, we're probably looking at six or seven days of straight writing to get that done. It would be brought back, I would think, around May 9. Then I think there would be full dedication to looking at Ornge on the 9th. In the interim—certainly on the 25th and the 2nd—you could start dealing with one of your three picks. Ornge would probably go from the 9th into the 16th, I would think. You could schedule—and you don't have to worry about the dates too much, but I can see the 25th as being one of the picks, May 2 being another pick and May 16 being another pick, with maybe the 9th going straight to Ornge. Ornge would come back on the 30th, I would think, and then we'd probably be dealing with a report from one of the three picks. We'd try to finish those off on the 6th. Realistically, based on my experience over the years, I think if you get through—two reports, absolutely, and lucky to do the third.

In an ideal situation, from a research perspective, if we started our work on December 1, which we've done over the years, and worked right through until the middle of June, we would get five done. But we've lost almost four months. So, realistically, we're certainly going to go full tilt, but to be honest about it, I would say two, and we'd be lucky to get a third one done.

I know when you get into something as controversial—when we went back to eHealth, for example, eHealth was more complicated than any of the other reports we've done over the years in here. Certainly, Ornge is going to be more complicated than other reports. It won't be as straightforward as MNR, for example, if we were doing that. I've had a chance to read through it.

I could be wrong, but if I had to gamble, I would say we'll get two and a half reports done and table two, and the other one would probably be left dangling.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Does that include the 21st or not?

Mr. Ray McLellan: I'm taking the 21st, with MNR, out of the mix. I've started on MNR, by the way, but that doesn't matter. Setting the 21st aside, go with Ornge on the 20th and motor right through. Ornge will be a longer report to try to get consensus on and work through. Having said that, that's my best guess.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Liz?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: When I was thinking MNR—and we did get the deputy from MNR to come on the 21st. I obviously haven't talked to these folks, but I'm guessing

that if we couldn't get the deputy to do renewable energy on the 21st, that we're not going to get the deputy to do a different chapter on energy on the 21st; it's the same deputy. If we switch from MNR to energy, it's a foregone conclusion that that deputy can't show up, because he already said he couldn't show up. So if we switch from MNR, what I was thinking, when we thought it was MNR and we thought we did have the deputy, was if we did one pick from each party and went with MNR on the 21st—and then I would suggest that we, from the government side, do the chapter 4, because usually we don't do as extensive report writing on chapter 4s.

So if we looked at the schedule where we would actually be starting report writing on the 9th but have done three selections on March 21, and then after Ornge, April 25 and May 2—that way we would be done one pick from each party. We'd have eight half days for four reports, and by picking that chapter 4, we've made one report easy. So you sort of gain a half day on Ornge, if we can get down to just one half day. It might be doable to get through one pick per party, but if we don't start on the 21st, I'm inclined to agree with Ray that it's impossible to get through one pick per party.

0950

M^{me} France Gélinas: I agree. I know where the confusion came from: It came from me. I apologize for it. There is no point in bringing MNR here. So let's put this one aside, and let's deal with the fact that this is not our pick.

Our first choice is FSCO, and this is the one I would really want to focus on. Our second choice is energy. So let's start the conversation from there.

The layout of what we do when—nobody has a crystal ball for the future, but it's as good a guess as any with the information we have now.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): So, France, are you going to move a change in the subcommittee report, then, to change your choice?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, please.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Can you restate it for the committee, then, please?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sure, that our second choice be the—unfortunately, I don't remember the section number, but it would be the electricity regulatory oversight.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Section 3.02.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Section 3.02. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Okay. Any more comments? Yes, Jagmeet.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yes, thank you. With respect to our first choice, which is auto insurance regulatory oversight, what was the feedback from that ministry, I guess the Minister of Finance?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): They weren't available, and I think there was a letter—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): So every single section was contacted with regard to March 21, and none were able to come.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Except for the MNR.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Yes, Ray, please.

Mr. Ray McLellan: If I can just go back to Ms. Sandals's point—

M^{me} France Gélinas: I don't think we've voted yet on the change.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): No, we haven't. Okay, so we're voting on France's change to the subcommittee report to change the NDP choice. All in favour? Agreed? Agreed.

Ray?

Mr. Ray McLellan: Sorry about that. I just want to go back quickly to amend my comments too for members who are new to the committee.

As Ms. Sandals said, sections 4.07 and 4.14, because they are not full value-for-money audits, they're follow-ups, and those follow-ups are not audits—they're really just Mr. McCarter going back to check on the status of his recommendations. So those, quite correctly, travel through the committee, or have over the years, very, very quickly. In other words, to put a figure on it, I'd say probably 25% of the time you would be required to deal with those, as opposed to a full audit. Whereas Ornge would take a concentrated effort, 4.07 and 4.14 would travel a lot quicker, so that would expedite things. Thanks.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you for making that clear.

Any further comment on the subcommittee report, as amended?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Well, I—no, vote on it, and then I'll comment again.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): So we'll put the vote on the subcommittee report, as amended, then. All in favour? Carried.

Yes, Liz, please.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Given what Ray just said, is it feasible to do 4.07, 4.14 and then one of the third party selections, and then park the others till the fall? I mean, the issue isn't whether or not the public accounts committee will exist in the fall. I think the issue is, the way the motion was structured, that we may not be the people on the committee in the fall. I can't imagine the public accounts committee is going to disappear, because I don't think any party wants it to disappear. So we could park the other three chapters, one from each party, to the fall. It's just that it doesn't make much sense to deliberately do hearings in the spring if there may be different people to do the report writing in the fall, so that we want to do hearings, report writing—I don't know whether that's feasible, but that's the only way I can see getting through one selection per party in the time we've got available, if we're spending three weeks on Ornge.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Certainly. Toby has a comment.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Further to that and also further to the letter we have received from the Ministry of Energy,

the official opposition, our first choice, is 3.03, renewable energy. That is our first choice. I don't know whether—I guess we have a letter; maybe it takes another letter or another communication—but we do wish to go forward with our first choice as soon as possible. I know that the deputy is not available in March. We're doing Ornge on into April. I would hope that the opposition's first choice would go ahead after that.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): So what you're saying is, if it comes down to doing one section, the section you'd like would be 3.03, electricity sector, renewable energy initiatives.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yeah. That is the opposition's first choice.

I don't know the protocol as far as rotation or priority—

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): I think it's based on who we're able to get in terms of deputy ministers and other officials.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Just further to that, if there's a problem with that, having not sat on the committee, I don't know whether the committee has had an emergent meeting on a Monday to catch up with some of this, because we're starting so late. We had an election and then—

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): We'd need permission from the House.

Maybe what I should ask is, Liz was suggesting that we meet both the mornings and afternoons on—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Every Wednesday.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): —every Wednesday as a means to be able to get more done, I guess, in the short time we have available.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I thought that just assumed. I didn't think that there was any question that it was going to be anything other than that.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Historically, when we've been report writing, we've often just met in the mornings. But we already have authorization to meet morning and afternoon, so we can expedite report writing by meeting morning and afternoon. I'm already counting that in how many hours we get to do report writing.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): I think Will has as much as he needs at this point to be able to go about his work of trying to set things up now, so I think we've accomplished all we need to for this morning, unless there's anything else? France.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to table a motion. If it's okay, I would read it into the record.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Go ahead.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Is it? Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): I gather that the usual procedure is to give some sort of advance warning. Am I correct on that?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Past practice in the committee is to give some advance warning, but go ahead and read it into the record.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm not very good with that, am I? Okay, I'll improve. How's that?

I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts immediately request that the Auditor General examine the contracts between the Ontario Power Authority and gas-fired plants proponents TransCanada Corp. (Oakville) and Greenfield South Power Corp./Eastern Power (Mississauga), focusing specifically on the potential cost to ratepayers of the government's 2010 and 2011 decisions to cancel the projects, and report back in a special report.

Basically, what I'm asking the auditor to do is to look at how much did it cost to cancel those projects and to report back to this committee.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): We should get that written out, should we—or a copy for everyone, please?

M^{me} France Gélinas: A copy for everyone, please.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Will can get it copied.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: A point of order: We're supposed to get written notice when a motion is that complicated, so let's just take it as a given that we won't be debating that till the next meeting.

1000

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Let me get some advice from the clerk, please.

Okay. So there's nothing in the standing orders that says you have to give notice. It has been the past practice of the committee to give notice, though.

We should recess so that the clerk can copy this motion. We'll give you a five-minute recess for the clerk to copy it.

The committee recessed from 1002 to 1007.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Okay. So we've now got a copy of the motion put forward by the member from Nickel Belt. Debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: Just a second. Where is my copy?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. William Short): Oh, sorry. I think there are two with Mr. Moridi.

Mr. David Zimmer: Just give me a second here.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Sure, no problem.

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Comments? France.

M^{me} France Gélinas: So, as has been the practice in the past, we have tried to work with consensus here, and we have really tried to move things forward, basically for the good of the taxpayer and for the good of the people that we represent.

The Auditor General has taken direction from this committee before, and from his statement from before, the fact that we're having this conversation, you know—he's not foreign to the fact that I will have tabled that motion. If it comes from a recommendation from this committee, then he really looks at his workload and looks as to when it would be feasible.

We are not putting a gun to his head. He still will decide, on his own accord, as to when this will take place, but he will take into account the fact that it is the

wish of this committee that he look at the value for money that the people of Ontario got through those two deals. This is something that is perfectly within his scope and ability to do. This is something that he could decide to do on his own. This is something where he will know that at least one of the parties—and once you talk, we will know how many of us are interested, but I think if it was to be brought forward as consensus building, this is an area of interest to the people of Ontario. The fact that our hydro bill keeps going up is something that I'm sure we've all heard about. Here's an opportunity to show that we want transparency in some of the decisions that are made, and who else but our auditor to really tell us the goods as to the value for money that we got?

So I'm asking for the committee to support this motion with the full understanding that we are not in a position to tell the auditor when he does the work. He is a big man who will decide within the allocated resources when this work gets done, but he will know that this is work that we would like him to do, and that once this is done, we would like him to report in a special report here again. We're not taking any decision power away from his scheduling and all of this. What we're doing is asking him now to look at doing value-for-money audits on those two contracts.

1010

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you for your comments, France. David?

Mr. David Zimmer: While I appreciate the intent, where the member is trying to go with this, it strikes me that the whole thing is premature. I mean, the motion says it wants to focus specifically on the potential cost to the ratepayers of the decision to shut those down, but what's going on now is that the government and the two private sector companies, the one involving the Oakville situation and the one involving the Mississauga situation, are in the midst of the negotiations to figure out who's going to pay how much, if any, as a result of the government's decision to cancel the contracts. Those are very, very delicate and very, very sophisticated negotiations.

Now, put yourself in the mind of the negotiators, either on behalf of the government or on behalf of TransCanada Corp., which is the Oakville situation, or Greenfield South Power Corp., which is the Mississauga situation. Their negotiators are sitting around the table and they're back and forth about who's going to pay what and so forth and so on. And suddenly it's announced that the Auditor General is going to look into or come and do an investigation or an audit to give his opinion on what the potential costs are as a result of these decisions and who's going to pay those amounts of money and all of those other sorts of things.

If you're a negotiator now for the government trying to get the best deal, you've got a real problem on your hands. Your decision then is, "Well, do we stop the negotiations and wait and see what the auditor does? Do we continue with the negotiations?" The same problems are on the backs of the two private sector companies, and, I

would argue, the Auditor General is in a very difficult position because he's now a third party going in there with his view of things, which may alter the positions of the negotiating parties.

So I think the whole thing is premature. We ought to sit back and let those discussions conclude and the parties will settle those differences between themselves. Then, frankly, it may be appropriate—it probably is appropriate—for the Auditor General to step in and look at that resolution and the events leading up to the resolution and say, “This is what happened. This was a good deal; this was a bad deal,” etc. But let those negotiators finish their work. Do not tie their hands. Do not put them in a compromising situation.

Here are two examples from other fields: Supposing there was a labour negotiation going on now between the government and some of its unions, and in the middle of the negotiation, this committee sent in the Auditor General to do some report on some aspect of the events surrounding that labour negotiation. That would really throw a wrench into the system, and we wouldn't do that. We'd let those negotiations conclude and then take a look at it.

A second example might be, supposing there are negotiations arising out of this recent rail crash out Burlington way. So the railway company is in there and the various government agencies are in there and the other parties are in there, assuming it was an ONR or a GO train thing, and we suddenly send in the auditor to get in there to give his opinion on who did what and how much it should cost and so forth. That's just premature.

So for those reasons, I'm not able to support this motion.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Further comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes. I support the motion. I know what we just heard during committee deliberations: this committee has not met for many, many months. I'm not sure when the last formal hearings were—probably last spring sometime, was it?—which suggests there is a backlog of issues where we, as elected representatives, should be giving some direction to the Auditor General. I can understand why this committee hasn't met: There was an election last fall about the time some of this stuff was going on, and then lack of agreement amongst the three parties as far as establishing all of the committees. Some of them are yet to be established, as I understand. So, I mean, this is natural; we're going to have these issues come forward because of a backlog going back—gosh, almost a year, in one sense.

I know it was mentioned; this is complicated. I know the concern about wading into something midstream, but as I recall, much of these decisions occurred something like last October; here we are into March. We do know the Auditor General was wading in in the midst of the Ornge controversy. I don't think the Ornge situation has been settled, but even though there are probably some negotiations going on on many, many issues with respect to Ornge ambulance, which many people in the public are still trying to get their head around, what's going on

there, the Auditor General has been empowered. I'm not sure when he first was asked to look at Ornge, but he's wading in even though we don't have the final information with respect to Ornge.

eHealth: Now there's something else the Auditor General looked at. eHealth, in my mind and certainly in the minds of my constituents, has not been resolved. You know, we hear figures of \$1 billion with respect to eHealth. People ask me, “Are we going to get any of that money back?” I mean, it's fine to see something like that occur and to see that kind of money go down the drain in the eyes of many people, but the question is: Well, that's fine; you can apologize and the money disappeared, but people want to know if they're going to get the money out of some of these people who were responsible for those kinds of expenditures. It's the same with Ornge and the same with this motion with respect to both Oakville and also Mississauga.

I mean, the only information I have and my constituents have—we don't live in Oakville or Mississauga; we just hear about the billion-dollar man. Well, is that accurate? Is this a billion-dollar issue? Is it a billion for each one? I think that it's going to be—as with eHealth, as with Ornge, it takes a long time to get these things wrapped up. In the meantime, I see no reason why the Auditor General should not be alerted to this and empowered to begin to take a look at these two issues as well. As with Ornge and as with eHealth, I don't see the rationale why there would be something that it would be ill-advised for the Auditor General not to look at in Oakville and Mississauga with respect to the power generating stations there.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): France?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you. I think we shouldn't underestimate the good judgment of our auditor. We have been well served by him and his office and he has shown good judgment in other positions. I have full confidence that if the auditor felt that his work was going to hinder any negotiation, he would report back to this committee and let us know. I have full confidence in the good judgment of him and his office. We will ask him to do something. If he comes back to us and says that he has reservations about doing all or part of the work, I would be in full compliance with whatever our auditor tells us.

But I think from where we sit, we're doing him a discredit by thinking that he hasn't got the good judgment to report back to us if there were to be ill or adverse effects from the direction we've given him. I have full confidence in him and his office.

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The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Further comment? Mr. McNeely?

Mr. Phil McNeely: You were going first, Reza.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Go ahead, Reza. You seem to be ready there.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you. We also have full confidence in the Auditor General. We know the Auditor General has been doing a great job in looking at the government's books. In the past, he has done a great job,

and we have full confidence in his judgment. But in the meantime we don't want to put the Auditor General in a difficult position.

As a person who has done lots of business negotiations in his past life before entering politics, I assure you that under these kinds of circumstances, when you are doing business negotiations, particularly when there is a conflict on a business contract as complex as a power station—in this case, we are dealing with two power station contracts which have been cancelled or moved, and very tough business negotiations are going on between two parties. Under these conditions you don't want another person to come in and basically start looking around. You want business negotiations to go on properly, based on business norms. Once it is done, of course, the Auditor General can look at the books at any time he wishes, or his office wishes. But the timing and the procedures have to be right.

I think at this point it's not appropriate for us to ask the Auditor General to look into this case. Mr. Zimmer gave some examples. I think it is right that when there's a labour dispute, for example, you don't want to interfere. You want both sides to get to the table, and once they have done their negotiations, then of course you want to go and look at it.

The Ornge or eHealth examples, I think, don't apply to this particular case, because here we are dealing with business negotiations—contract cancellations between two parties; one side is government and the other side is the contractors. As I mentioned earlier, the contracts are, I'm sure, very complicated in terms of the size of the power plant projects, so it's very involved.

At this point, just speaking purely from a business point of view, Mr. Chair, I think we have to let the two business parties—on one side, government, and on the other side, the contractors—do their business negotiations and come to a deal. Once things are settled, then the Auditor General can indeed go in and take a look at the books and see what happened, how it happened or whatever. But at this point, I think it's very premature for us to request that the Auditor General interfere in this business.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you, Reza. Phil, did you have comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd just like to support the positions taken by Zimmer and Moridi here on the appropriateness of us telling the Auditor General what he should do in, I'm sure, a very busy schedule for himself. He's going to be able to choose to do this for his report, which comes out this fall. I don't think the timing is much different if he decides to proceed, but I will certainly not support this motion.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you, Jerry?

Interjection.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Oh, sure. Go ahead.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I just want to jump in. With respect to Ornge, was there direction given to the Auditor General as far as—we know it's a government ministry, there's private sector involved, there are contracts with

the AgustaWestland helicopter company, I assume someone signed a contract with the fixed-wing airplane company Pilatus that—

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Of course, the Auditor General is not here today to talk about it.

Mr. Toby Barrett: But certainly Ornge—there's public sector-private sector, there's an Italian helicopter company. I don't know who makes the—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Could we correct the record here on Ornge? The Auditor General's annual report is based on audits which the auditor chooses to do, not on audits which the committee directs him to do. If the committee directs him to do it, it's a special audit, which is what we're discussing here, which was the case with eHealth.

Ornge was initiated by the auditor as a routine audit which was originally going to become part of his annual report, but because he ran into the same sort of stonewalling in doing his research that everybody else has run into, he didn't have it ready in time to include in his annual report. So it's like we're getting a late chapter. But he didn't get any direction; he just went in and did it as part of his normal annual report.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you for that clarification. If we could stick to discussion about the actual motion—and Gilles, I think, has been patiently waiting to comment.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, this committee has been pretty non-partisan, even in the case of majority governments. I look back at yourselves as a majority, the Tories and ourselves in times of government, and there has been a fair amount of co-operation on all sides in order to look at the public accounts and to deal with what needs to be dealt with.

For example, the whole issue of the eHealth scandal that happened in the last Parliament: You know, the government understood that there needed to be a clearing, an investigation as to what happened. The government supported, if I remember correctly, that particular request. Right?

M^{me} France Gélinas: No. The request was for use of consultants.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's right, okay. But the point is, often the government side actually works with the opposition, together, in order to get to whatever it is that we need reviewed by the auditor. So I'm a little bit surprised that the government is sort of taken aback here, because there's been a long-standing position on this committee where, in fact, government and opposition do work together.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Sorry, we're out of time, but what I'd suggest, because we do have such limited time, is that we come back at 1 o'clock today and finish this discussion.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: No. Point of order: We did not get written notice of the motion. We did not get written notice of a meeting at 1 o'clock. I don't know about everybody else, but we didn't have a meeting scheduled. I've got meetings all afternoon that have been scheduled, and I would really like to hear from the auditor—

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): I'm sorry, Liz, but we are out of time, and we'll discuss this after the committee then.

The committee recessed from 1027 to 1300.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Okay, the committee's in—France, did you—

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to make a—

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): France, did you—

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to make a motion.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): France, did you have something—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Do I get to start?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Yes, please do.

Mr. David Zimmer: Hold it before we get started.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): I recognize France. Go ahead, France.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay. So, this morning, I put forward a motion that would ask our auditor to look at, basically, a range of costs—and this is how the motion is worded—potential costs to the ratepayers associated with the cancellation of the gas-fired plants in Oakville and in Mississauga.

We all know that our electrical bills keep going up and up. This is an issue that is important to a number of people, and this is an issue that our auditor is well equipped to shed some light on.

This morning, I have heard from members of the Liberal caucus that they felt it was premature to ask our auditor to go and do a value-for-money audit of those two projects. I would say the first argument is that this happened in 2010. We are now in 2012. I'm guessing there are some issues on the books that have been settled and certainly are worth reporting on.

The second one, the one in Oakville, was done during the election, so it's only six months old. But then, I would certainly refer to other cases where the auditors do go in when there's ongoing negotiation with the private sector.

You will remember that we were in the exact same situation two years ago, when I moved the motion forward that we look at the use of consultants by our hospitals and the health care sector. When the auditor went in, he reported to us that while he was going in, hospitals and other players of the health care system were in the process of negotiating contracts with consultants, but he did his work in a way that did not interfere with what our health care system was trying to do. He was still able to report to us some pretty telling numbers. Not only was he able to report to us some pretty telling numbers, but although ongoing contracts were going on, the government acted. You brought forward legislation; you brought forward—it was a worthwhile endeavour that, to me, led to value for money for the taxpayers of Ontario.

So I guess the point I'm trying to make is that to delay this is not going to help the taxpayers of Ontario. As well, our auditor has the skills to go in and recognize that if by him being there it's going to have an influence on any one of the parties that he's looking at—he has

enough good judgment to know what to do and what not to do.

But here again, I think the report that we would get from an ongoing negotiation of pulling out of a project may lead the government to take swift, decisive action that would be in the best interest of the taxpayer, exactly like the Liberal government did the last time we did that. We were in the middle of a budget year; we were in the middle of a session. The auditor came, did his report about the use of consultants, and lots of existing contracts continued to be negotiated, but the government acted. They acted swiftly and they acted on the recommendations that the auditor had made, that gave the taxpayers value for money.

I have the feeling that we are looking at a situation that is very similar—that, although there is an ongoing negotiation going on, if we shed the light, a very professional light of our Auditor General, on the cancellations of those two contracts, I have a feeling it's going to be for the betterment of the taxpayers of this province.

So I would urge you to support the motion. If you want to do an amendment that would make sure that we are respectful of the ongoing process and that we don't jeopardize the negotiations that are going on, I would have no problem with this. Far be it from me to try to interfere in a negotiation that is going on. But I think our auditor can shine a light on all of this, report back to this committee through the House, and basically save the taxpayer a whole lot of money.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Ms. Sandals—Liz?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yes. Before I directly address Ms. Gélinas's comments, I'd actually like to go back to the comments that Mr. Bisson made before we left for lunch, or left for question period. He talked about the fact that this committee has an ongoing history of collegiality, and I think that's actually really important to talk about, how that has worked, because there are a lot of new people here.

This morning, we were having the discussion around how we could schedule things, and we've tried to accommodate getting those things scheduled and to make it so that we could have a look at Ornge. We agreed to the three weeks; we agreed to do the report from our side that's the shortest, trying to figure out a way. So we want to make it work the way it has always been.

But I think it's important to go back and look. We've always, I think—and I've been on this committee now for seven years and a bit. In that whole time, with maybe one exception, all the reports were unanimous reports. There were a couple of instances in those reports where the committee as a whole was unhappy with the response, and we all agreed together, including the government side, that we would call the people back. I can think of assistive devices. I can think of some of the issues around IBI services for autistic children, where the whole committee, including the government, said, "The answers that we're getting are not acceptable," and we actually called the deputy and the ministry back for more information or sent a letter and said, "We want you to

work on this for a bit and then come back for more hearings.” We asked for additional information. It was a very collegial process, as Mr. Bisson said, trying to get that information.

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When we got to eHealth, it was actually, for Mr. Barrett’s information, Minister Caplan who asked for that report, because there are actually three ways in which reports land on our table. One is the auditor’s annual report, where the auditor chooses what to audit; one is where a minister asks for an audit, and in the case of eHealth it was the minister who asked for the eHealth audit, and when that came, the government worked with everybody, dropped everything. We did a three-week series of hearings into eHealth, and I think, Ray, that you came in to do that. I think much to Ray’s surprise, as much as anybody’s, in the end we actually, even on eHealth, came to a unanimous report. It might have taken us a little bit longer than with some of the other reports, but we came to a unanimous report.

When it came to Madame Gélinas’s motion around doing something with hospital consultants—I think it was yours, on the hospital consultants—we worked with you on the motion. The government—remember, we had a majority on the committee then—worked with getting that motion massaged so that we were directing the auditor to focus on what we wanted, and we worked with the auditor. And what was critical about that discussion was that the auditor was here, and we worked with the auditor to fine-tune the motion.

Similarly, and I looked back in Hansard while we were away, when you look back in Hansard, and you made reference—no, I don’t know as you did, but there was another motion about whether or not we should be doing a special audit on the Niagara Parks Commission. When you look back in Hansard there’s actually quite an extensive discussion between the committee—so there’s a motion that Madame Gélinas tabled, and then there’s quite an extensive discussion with the auditor about amending and fine-tuning the motion so that what we’re asking for, as a committee, is something that it’s realistic to ask for.

When we’ve asked for a special audit—now, as I say, eHealth was a special audit triggered by the minister, not by the committee. The one that we did where the committee triggered the special audit and the other ones where there have at least been motions to trigger special audits, we’ve worked with the auditor. As we all know, the auditor is in Australia today. He informed us in advance that he would be in Australia today and he told us that he would be back on March 21, so everybody on the committee knows where the auditor is and knows that he will be back following March break. So that everybody doesn’t think that he took a long holiday, he’s actually attending to business. He’s been invited to Australia to speak at a conference there on auditing in the public sector. But the culture of the committee has always been very much that we include the auditor in the discussion.

Looking back, first of all, with respect to—and I’m going to get Mr. Zimmer to speak more as we go around, because he’s the legal beagle here, not me. But it occurred to me that while you were talking about the special motion that we did, the special audit on consultants, that there were hundreds of contracts that hospitals had with consultants of various sorts. Yes, no doubt at any given point in time if you’ve got hundreds of hospitals who use consultants for a variety of things, of course some of the contracts will be under negotiation. That’s almost irrelevant.

No matter what we ask him to look at—we ask him to look at procurement: Some of those procurement discussions are under negotiation at any given point in time, and if they’re under negotiation, he wouldn’t look at the ones that are under negotiation. He looks at the ones that are in place and what’s going on with things that are in place.

But in this specific motion, we’re talking about looking at two specific contracts, and those two specific contracts and the information that this motion specifically asks for, which is the cost to the taxpayer, is a matter that is currently under negotiation on those two specific contracts. So, it isn’t like there are hundreds of other contracts out there that he can look at. It’s the two specific contracts that we would be asking him to look at that are currently under negotiation.

Now, I’m not a business person, so I don’t do commercial contracts, but I do have 15 years’ experience before I came here as a school board trustee who was very active in negotiations at a school board. Trust me, the last thing you do while you’re in the middle of negotiations is ask for a public audit of the negotiation process, which is essentially what this motion seems to call for. It’s doomed to failure.

Imagine what would happen if the government, when we had demonstrations on the streets back in the education wars, as I think of them, back in the 1990s, had said, “Oh, and by the way, we’d like you to go in and audit value-for-money school board contracts, collective agreements while they’re under negotiation.” That would have been a recipe for trouble. We all know that.

No, it’s not a good idea, Mr. Barrett. I take negotiations seriously, be they commercial negotiations or collective bargaining. It isn’t a good idea to deliberately disrupt negotiations, thank you.

We have a history and, in particular in this case, we have the Auditor General being previously asked to look into this issue because what we did find—and I’m quite happy to hand this around. We can hand these all around. The way we got this letter was, it was actually in a media release that was sent out on September 29, 2011. So that was in the middle of the election campaign, obviously. The media release was from the NDP campaign and the letter in question—for the sake of Hansard I’ll read the letter in question into the record. The letter is addressed to the “Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

“20 Dundas Street West, 15th Floor

“Box 105

“Toronto, Ontario
“M5G 2C2”

It’s obviously addressed, “To the Auditor General,” and it reads:

“During the election campaign”—as I’ve previously noted, this was sent during the election campaign of 2011. “During the election campaign, a debate has erupted over Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty’s plans to cancel construction of a gas-fired electricity plant in Mississauga.

“This commitment comes after the government cancelled a similar contract in Oakville.

“Clearly, both decisions”—oh, and I should tell you that this is signed by Andrea Horwath, leader of the Ontario New Democrats. I didn’t mention that. That’s where the letter is from.

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“Clearly, both decisions carry fiscal risks with potential impacts on ratepayers and/or the fiscal position of the province. The lack of disclosure has left the public in the dark on the possible costs associated with these decisions.

“Estimates in some reports have indicated that cancellations costs could reach \$1 billion”—and there is a reference to “Killing Gas-Fired Power Plants Could Cost \$1 Billion,” Toronto Star, September 26, 2011.

“In 2004, the Legislature passed the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act with the aim of ensuring all parties, and all Ontarians, would have a full sense of the province’s fiscal challenges. The Minister of Finance stated at the time, ‘We owe a duty to our shareholders, the 12.5 million people who rely on us for quality public services. We have a duty to them to report honestly, thoroughly and completely what the circumstances of their government are.’” And that’s a quote from Hansard, October 27, 2004.

“Given the potential costs of the cancellation or relocation of these projects, and the current Premier’s unwillingness to share any information about these potential costs which could affect the province’s finances or electricity ratepayers”—and this is the important sentence—“I’m calling on your office to review the contract and these risks, and I urge Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Hudak to support this independent review.

“Sincerely,” and the original was signed by Andrea Horwath.

So, according to the press release, this letter was sent. I have no reason to disbelieve it was sent. They sent a press release and said it was sent. I have never spoken to the Auditor General about it. I wasn’t aware this letter had been sent. I was probably busy knocking on doors on September 29 and missed this particular NDP press release. So I wasn’t even aware of this particular letter until a few minutes ago.

But it does seem to me that with what we do know about how the process works, when the Auditor General initiates an audit, the Auditor General, at the start of the audit, informs the ministry—in this case, it would be the Ministry of Energy—and the agency—in this case, I

believe it would be the Ontario Power Authority that would be the agency that actually held the contracts in question. The auditor informs the ministry and the agency when he is about to conduct an audit.

What we know is that the auditor has not informed the Minister of Energy or the Ministry of Energy that he is about to conduct such an audit, and the auditor has not informed the OPA that he is about to conduct such an audit. We know that there has been at least one formal, written request to have such an audit, which the auditor has declined to act on.

It seems to me that it would be very prudent of this committee, which has a history of behaving in a collegial manner, to defer this entire issue until the time when the auditor returns and we can get first-hand from the auditor why the auditor chose not to act on this request, because, as Mr. Zimmer, as a lawyer, is quite prepared to talk about, this would appear to raise a lot of legal concerns when we ask the auditor to go and audit something which is the subject of an ongoing and active negotiation.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Could I raise a point of order?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Point of order, go ahead.

Mr. Toby Barrett: So the auditor declined. Do we have that letter, as well, from the auditor, that he declined? I don’t see it here—

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): That’s not a point of order. Thank you for your comment, though.

Continue, Mrs. Sandals.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I would not have that correspondence. The auditor receives, to the best of my knowledge, lots of suggestions from opposition politicians, from members of the public, from whistleblowers. The auditor receives lots of letters. He doesn’t share those with the government, nor does he share his responses. The only reason we have this is because the author of the letter chose to send it out as a press release.

Interjection.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: We’re quite happy to recess if France wants to look and see if there was a response. My inference was, because the ministry has not been informed there is an audit, he has not currently acted on the request.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Go ahead, France.

M^{me} France Gélinas: To summarize in 60 seconds what has taken half an hour, there are three ways to direct an audit: The minister requests it; the auditor decides on his own; or this committee passes a motion that directs. There are only three ways to get an audit done. Those are the three.

Anybody can write to the auditor. That’s not a way to direct an audit. What I’m asking this committee to do is to use the powers that we do have to ask the auditor to look at this. We, as a committee, have the power to do this. We are one of the three ways that an audit can be done.

Mr. David Zimmer: On a point of order here.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Go ahead, Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. David Zimmer: With respect, for the NDP member now to say those are the only three ways you can effect an audit—obviously, the leader of the NDP, Andrea Horwath, wrote to the Auditor General, and my colleague has read that into the record. Just to supplement that: On the same day that the letter was sent to the auditor, Andrea Horwath, leader of the NDP, issued a press release to the public, out there in the public domain, including the minister's office, everywhere, and the press release said, "Toronto, September 29, New Democratic leader Andrea Horwath"—

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Sorry, that's not a point of order, but you're welcome to continue to debate—

Mr. David Zimmer: No. It's a point of order in the sense that I think the leader has—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Maybe the clerk could verify. What are the ways that we can mandate the auditor to do an audit?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): The clerk will clarify that. He has the act right before him.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. William Short): Under section 17 of the auditor's act, special assignments, "The Auditor General shall perform such special assignments as may be required by the assembly, the standing public accounts committee"—

Mr. David Zimmer: Just a little slower.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. William Short): Sorry. "The Auditor General shall perform such special assignments as may be required by the assembly, the standing public accounts committee of the assembly, by resolution of the committee, or by a minister of the crown in right of Ontario but such special assignments shall not take precedence over the other duties of the Auditor General under this act and the Auditor General may decline an assignment by a minister of the crown that, in the opinion of the Auditor General, might conflict with the other duties of the Auditor General." That's section 17, which does relate to this committee.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: That raises a really interesting question.

Interjection.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Sorry?

Mr. David Zimmer: No, go ahead.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Because I think what I heard you say was that if the minister makes the request, the auditor may decline, but if the Legislature or the Standing Committee on Public Accounts makes the request, it didn't, in what I heard you read, say that the auditor could decline. Is that correct?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): I believe the auditor can decline, even if this motion that's before us was passed. He can decline to do it. It's still his choice.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: But is that what the standing order says?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): That's something we should bring up with the auditor.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Exactly. If the auditor was here I'd ask the auditor, and we wouldn't have you sitting on the

hot seat, Chair and clerk; we'd just ask the auditor. The auditor isn't here, which is actually the whole point: The auditor isn't here.

I have no idea why, when he was asked to look into this, he chose not to do it. But what we know for absolute certain is that he was asked. We know for absolute certain that he has not notified either the ministry or the OPA that he chooses to initiate an audit—

M^{me} France Gélinas: How do we have this fact? How do we know that he hasn't?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): France? Go ahead.

M^{me} France Gélinas: How do we know that he hasn't?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: How do we know that he hasn't notified the ministry that he's going to do an audit?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Correct.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Because I asked the Minister of Energy, "Have you got a request from the auditor to do an audit?"

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Jagmeet?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much. First of all, let's clarify: According to the authority under section 17, it states very clearly that there's only one instance when the Auditor General may decline. It says very clearly that it "may decline an assignment by a minister of the crown." There is no indication that if the Standing Committee on Public Accounts or if the assembly, or if there's a resolution passed—that the Auditor General may decline. The "decline" only refers to an assignment by the minister, and the reason given is that, in the opinion of the Auditor General, it might conflict with other duties. So the declining portion in section 17 does not refer to a request or resolution made by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, nor does it indicate that it refers to the assembly. That's just my reading of section 17.

But more importantly—

Mr. David Zimmer: Just a second.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: But that's really important—

Mr. David Zimmer: Point of order.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Jagmeet, I think that's a question where we really do need the Auditor General here to be able to answer for 100% certainty. That's the advice I'm getting from my clerk for the committee.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Certainly. That makes sense.

But beyond that, what's important—

Mr. David Zimmer: Hold it.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): If we can let Mr. Zimmer go ahead.

Mr. David Zimmer: That was the point that I wanted to make, Mr. Chair, but you've made the point for the record.

Secondly, I'm at a bit of a disadvantage here because I don't have a copy of the—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Standing order.

Mr. David Zimmer: —standing order. Could I have five minutes—

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): If you'd like to recess, we can make a copy of it.

Mr. David Zimmer: Yes, I would like that.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Okay, we'll take a five-minute recess.

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you.

The committee recessed from 1333 to 1340.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): We're back in session. Everyone's got their copy of section 17.

France?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, I was happy to hear that I had the support of the Progressive Conservative caucus for this motion, but at this point, I doubt that I have the support of the Liberal caucus for this motion. But they brought a valid point: that the input of the auditor may help us move forward as a group. Given this, I would suggest that we wait for the auditor to be present to continue this conversation or debate, whatever we're supposed to call it.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Is there agreement on that from the committee? All agreed. We'll reschedule this for when the auditor is at the meeting.

There's a couple of other things; one thing that we'll discuss after we adjourn, but I would just like to ask something. As has been described here today, in the past the committee has worked in quite a non-partisan and collegial way, I think was how it was described, and I'm wondering if it might be the will of the committee that, for future motions, we give at least a 24-hour notice so

that the auditor might be here, for example, and just for the benefit of all committee members. Is that something the committee members would agree to?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Whenever possible.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Minimum 24 hours.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: If something comes forward as a result of a discussion, we want to defer that for 24 hours.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): So it's the agreement of the committee that we will try to do our best to give a minimum 24-hour notice for motions.

Yes, Liz.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I mean, we're not talking about scheduling stuff, which we're just doing by consensus and then you need a formal motion; it's when we've got something like a new audit or something like that—

Interjection: Substantive.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: So it's substantive, we're talking about.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Okay, that's good. Thank you very much, committee members. I appreciate you all coming back in at late notice. It was sort of a last-minute decision on my part, but I just felt we had such a short time frame to meet that I'd just as soon we didn't use up time when we'd scheduled somebody to be here. I know I was supposed to be in a few other places; I'm sure you all were.

We'll adjourn now.

The committee adjourned at 1341.

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Wednesday 7 March 2012

Subcommittee report P-3

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Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes

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

Clerk / Greffier

Mr. William Short

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Mr. Ray McLellan, research officer,
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