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Wednesday 30 May 2012

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Mercredi 30 mai 2012

**Standing Committee on
the Legislative Assembly**

Standing orders review

**Comité permanent de
l'Assemblée législative**

Examen du Règlement

Chair: Garfield Dunlop
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : Garfield Dunlop
Greffier : Trevor Day

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DE
L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Wednesday 30 May 2012

Mercredi 30 mai 2012

The committee met at 1302 in room 228.

STANDING ORDERS REVIEW

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Good afternoon, everyone. We'll call the meeting to order. I hope you enjoyed your lunch, if you had part of it outside or downstairs.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Delicious.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Yes, I had part of it out there; that's where I had my lunch. But I went to the meeting downstairs, too, for a few minutes.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You're a man for all seasons.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Yes, I am.

The first part of the meeting we have the Clerk, and she has a report on some time she spent in Ottawa.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Was it two to 20?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Two to 20.

You will recall that I had mentioned to the committee that the Canadian Study of Parliament Group had a business seminar that it was holding in Ottawa on May 23. I attended that seminar. I looked all around the room and I didn't see any of y'all there.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order, Chair. You know that standing order whatever-whatever says that you're not supposed to mention that. I want to admonish the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): I'll withdraw.

The seminar dealt with the legislative process. The format was that the first session was basically a primer on the legislative process at both the House of Commons and the Senate. The panellists were a principal clerk from the House of Commons, Ian McDonald, and one of the principal clerks from the Senate, Charles Robert. The second session was a review of a new addition to the Parliament of Canada website that's called LEGISinfo, which is very similar to our status of bills. Panellists for that were representatives from the House of Commons, the Senate and the Library of Parliament. The third session was a panel discussion on the legislative process. The panellists were Paul Dewar, who is the sitting MP for Ottawa Centre; the Honourable Robert Runciman, senator; and a former MP from Rainy River by the name of John Reid.

Matters of interest that came up with respect to the initial session on the legislative process—there are a couple of things the committee might find interesting. One is that at the House of Commons, private members' bills survive prorogation and endure for the life of the Parliament. What that means is that when the House prorogues at the end of a session, private members' bills are carried forward into the next session at the same stage. So if you have a private member's bill that gets past second reading and gets referred out to committee, that bill will stay on the order paper at the committee stage into the next session. That avoids the issue of members having to reintroduce and start the process again for the same legislation, session after session.

They do have a notice requirement for the introduction of bills, and I was interested to learn that there is in fact no vote at introduction and first reading for bills. It's a deemed vote. There is no vote at introduction and first reading of bills; it's a deemed provision.

There is a formalized report stage for bills that are being reported back from committee. That stage is not intended to repeat the committee stage. It is a stage, however, where the House can introduce amendments to the legislation. There is 24 hours' notice required for amendments, and the Speaker selects which amendments can be moved. That is to avoid repeating amendments that were dealt with in committee or that could have been dealt with in committee. The Speaker groups amendments and selects the ones that will be considered by the House at report stage. That was that part of the session.

The LEGISinfo probably only will come into play with this committee if and when you get to a discussion about things like enhancing the information that's on the website, or electronic petitions, that kind of thing. It's really similar to our status-of-bills section on our website, where it lists all of the bills and what stage they're at. It includes some additional information—if there are any relevant Speaker's rulings, major speeches, recorded votes—and it will also list similar bills in previous sessions. There's also a separate box that has departmental information, like any ministry reports or press releases and that kind of thing, that relate to the bill.

With respect to the parliamentarians' panel, without identifying who said what, I've just made a list of the kinds of things that were commented on. There was a discussion about constraint in committee consideration of legislation, often by virtue of time or directives from the

Prime Minister's Office. They had a discussion about the use of closure and its increasing frequency. There was a discussion about committees needing more independence. One of the panellists said that parliamentary secretaries, in his view, had no place at committees since they really end up speaking for the PMO. There was a short discussion on the desire to increase modern ways to engage Canadians, particularly young Canadians, in the process.

There was a concern expressed on the use of omnibus legislation to put forward substantive provisions. There was a feeling among, I think, most of the panellists that we'd gone from omnibus legislation that once dealt with substantive matters that then got—the pendulum swung the other way because of pressure from backbench members that omnibus legislation, if it was going to be used, should only deal with housekeeping issues. Now the pendulum seems to be swinging back to it containing more substantive provisions again.

The McGraw report came up, and there was a discussion about the fact that it was still worth looking at—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): What's that again?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The McGraw report? There was a discussion about the fact that it was still worth looking at, even though it had been written some time ago, on parliamentary procedure.

They all agreed that Senate committees work. There were differing opinions on why that's the case, although the fact that they are maybe less partisan than House of Commons committees certainly factored into it. One quote was, "They work because they're civil and because they have no rotational requirements or speaking limits," which lets them just do the work they have to do without concern with only having five minutes to question a witness or something like that.

There was one interesting suggestion that in the committee consideration of estimates, the minister should be called at the end of the process instead of the beginning. That centred around the fact that really, the committee should probably be in the business of information-gathering about the estimates process first, and when they understood all of the information around the estimates, that's when they should have the minister there to ask questions.

There was a comment from a couple of the panellists saying that, in their view, hyperpartisanship is on the rise and is problematic to the process.

That's my report on the seminar.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Are there any questions to Deborah on her report? Mr. Balkissoon and then Mr. Leal.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Just to go back to the private member's bill, refresh my memory: At their level, not every member gets to move a private member's bill in each session, similar to ours, right? It's less?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): There is a kind of balloting process, yes, and there are more members. I should say, though, that they do more

private members' business during the week than we do. Five hours, Peter?

Mr. Peter Sibenik: Yes. One hour every day.

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The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): One hour a day, every day that the House meets.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I was more concerned about a private member's bill remaining on the order paper. Was there anything related to its remaining because not every member gets an opportunity for a private member's bill in a full session?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): No, I think it's more to avoid the notion that in a second session, for example, you would have to introduce the same private member's bill again and go through the whole second reading process again. In their private members' business process, they have mechanisms that ensure that the bills move along through the process a little better than ours so they don't stack up in committees like ours do.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Mr. Leal, then Mr. Clark.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Deb, regulations, of course, are the enabling piece of a piece of legislation that comes forward. In Ottawa, do they provide any mechanism for oversight of the regulatory aspect of legislation?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What's that? Can you say that again?

Mr. Jeff Leal: One of the issues that's been raised dealing with regulations—it was raised on a private member's bill by Mr. Nicholls a couple of weeks ago. Right now, we have legislation B, which outlines the main thrust and the overview of the legislation, and then it always says subject to regulations to enable this piece of legislation, to make it workable. In Ottawa, is there any process that looks at the regulatory aspect of a piece of legislation as it goes through or after the fact? Mr. Bisson has a good example: What starts off as a car being red, and when the regulation framework comes in, the car becomes blue or orange, whatever colour you really like.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): This is part of the delegated legislation conversation that probably should occur. Peter, I read your paper this morning—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Maybe I'm a little ahead of myself here with the question.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): —and I know that you had a section about how the House of Commons deals with delegated—

Mr. Peter Sibenik: Very briefly, there is a joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate that is responsible for the scrutiny of regulations. They look at the statutory instruments; not just regulations, but also a broad array of statutory instruments that are passed pursuant to some kind of primary legislation or pursuant to a regulation. So they make annual reports.

They also have the power to issue a disallowance report. Basically, it's a report that goes to the House that says, "We don't think this particular regulation should

have been passed,” and it will indicate the reasons for that. The minister or the government is refusing to revoke the regulation, so they can report to the House of Commons, and the House of Commons basically fast-tracks debate and consideration of whether or not it is going to adopt that particular report.

There have been about 10 or so of these so-called disallowance reports that have been issued over the course of the past 20 or 25 years. Not one of them has been adopted by the House yet. What the House usually does is refer it for further study or something of that nature. But it's a bit more vigorous, I would say, than—

Mr. Jeff Leal: —what we have here right now with the committee that looks at—

Mr. Peter Sibenik: Yes. Our procedure was, in part, borrowed from Ottawa's—that's my sense of it—because the list of criteria that you see in the standing orders for the committee to go through to assess regulations is somewhat similar to the list of criteria that this joint committee up in Ottawa uses to assess regulations and other statutory instruments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Because some have suggested that this lack of oversight of regulatory provisions has led to a fairly significant shift to the executive branch of government over many decades.

Mr. Peter Sibenik: Yes, I would say that some other jurisdictions in the Commonwealth offer more vigorous methods of oversight of regulations. Some of the Australian jurisdictions and the United Kingdom as well have things called affirmative and negative resolutions, whereby a particular regulation or draft regulation, as the case may be, requires the approval or disapproval of the House, so to speak, in a resolution of the House in order for it to come into force or for it to be revoked.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I don't want to prolong this, but just as a reflection on the nine years that I've been here, I think we would really help both cabinet members and opposition members to have a better knowledge in this particular area. That's just my view as an individual.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Steve, you had a question, and then Gilles.

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to go back to clarify the private members' business at the federal Parliament. They have an hour a day for five days. The non-votable/votable is if it's passed and it goes to the bottom of the list, and then when it comes back, you'd get that second hour and then vote on it. Correct?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Yes, but there's a determination made at some point about what is votable and what isn't. So not everything ends up coming to a vote.

Mr. Steve Clark: But you at least get that first one-hour debate in the House regardless.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Yes.

Mr. Steve Clark: The other thing that I thought you had said before the meeting was the fact that when the House prorogues, those bills don't drop off. Is that some-

thing that happens anywhere else, or is that sort of a unique situation at the federal level?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Off the top of my head, I can't think of another jurisdiction. They might. We haven't really explored that.

I think in the paper that you received last week about private members' public bills, there was a section that suggested that something the committee might want to consider is to have bills be maintained at the same stage—

Mr. Steve Clark: Because the way I understand it—so after the second hour, if it's voted on and passed, it would go to the committee. If no action was taken by the committee—

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): —within a certain period—

Mr. Steve Clark: —within 60 days, it comes back to the House and deemed to be there unamended.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): It's deemed to be reported without amendment.

Mr. Steve Clark: So that's why you don't have a backlog.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): That's right.

Mr. Steve Clark: Okay. Good.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Gilles, did you have a comment too?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm just intrigued by the Australian model. What is it called again? The regulation—

Mr. Peter Sibenik: Are you talking about the affirmative and negative resolution procedure?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes. So it's the affirmative—

Mr. Peter Sibenik: Affirmative—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Move your mike down there a bit, Gilles.

Mr. Peter Sibenik: Under the affirmative resolution procedure, a resolution of the House is required for the regulation to come into effect. That procedure isn't used as often as a negative resolution procedure, whereby the regulation is going to come into force unless there is a resolution of the House that says no, it's not going to come into force.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So, essentially, when they draft legislation, they do what we used to do here before, which is, almost everything is spelled out in the bill, and only on the rare occasion where there's a regulation, then you have to go through the resolution process to either affirm or negate that resolution from being adopted as part of the bill.

Mr. Peter Sibenik: Except I haven't looked at the Australian system in very much detail. At this point, I'm still gathering information. In a lot of these situations, the affirmative and negative resolution procedure only applies to a particular statute. It might not apply across the board with respect to all regulations.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Can you do the committee a favour by—you're obviously doing some research in here, but what I'd be interested in, and I think the rest of the committee—Mr. Leal has his interests, as well. To

what degree is it used, how is it used, kind of thing; is it used on all?

There was a time that very little was left to regulation, and that is, I think, what Legislatures are supposed to do: We make a decision, and if a future government decides that they want to negate or change what a previous administration has done, bring it back to the House, right? You don't want to be in a position where one government does something and, by regulation, the other government can do or undo it without having a debate and a vote in this House. So you can get back to that.

Mr. Peter Sibenik: Yes. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Are there any other comments on—Steve?

Mr. Steve Clark: We had mentioned about trying to get an overview of some of the speeches and some of the reports that you would have had when you were there. Was there anything that you could pick up for us?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): No, there was nothing in writing. I'm not sure if they provide a transcript after the fact, but if they do, I'll make it available to the committee.

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Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Jeff?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Just a quick question. I'm intrigued also by the estimates. It's kind of the reverse of what we do now. In our estimates now, the minister makes a statement, the minister has the cadre of support people there, and then we start. The advantage, I guess, of Ottawa is—

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): I should clarify that that isn't their practice in Ottawa. There was a suggestion by—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Oh, a suggestion.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):—one of the panellists that it would make more sense to have the minister at the end of the process rather than the beginning.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks. I think there's some merit in it.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Gilles, you had a comment?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes. I just want to be clear: On the private members' part in regards to the 90-day rule in committee, it's 90 sessional days or 90 days?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): It's 60.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Is it 60? Sessional days?

Mr. Peter Sibenik: And there can be an additional 30-day extension.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's sessional?

Mr. Peter Sibenik: I'd have to check on that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Can you let me know?

Mr. Peter Sibenik: Yes.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Is there anything else on Deborah's trip to Ottawa and their comments back? Deborah, thank you so much, then, for that.

We're going to go to the next item on the agenda here. Go ahead.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): The next item that was handed out: There was some talk last time about the weekly sitting times of the House. We've gone back and provided you with the current one and then the last four before that, weekly schedules of the House, in terms of trying to foster some discussion on what you'd like to do in this neighbourhood.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Sorry, Trevor. I think there may be an error on the pre-1986, because my recollection is—and I'm showing my age now—that the House didn't actually sit on Wednesday. It was a Friday morning, not on Wednesday. And then you see that when they made the changes in 1986, they shifted Friday into Wednesday. But we can check that and make sure.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay. Just so we're clear, before 1986, you're saying the House didn't sit at all?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): There was a period of time before 1986, and I think we'll have to take a look at it, but I think—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): But the committees did?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Committees met on Wednesday.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Wow. I never knew that.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I did hear at one point, maybe it was from the Clerk, that Wednesday was a committee day.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Committee, cabinet and caucus.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): And they had night sittings fairly regularly?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Yes. They would break from 6 to 8 and then come back from 8 to 10, I thought, maybe 10:30. But actually, it was only on Tuesdays; it wasn't every night.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Interesting debate.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It would be interesting debate after they had been out for two hours.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So let's agree there are no night sittings.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay. So, folks, we've got the five different scenarios here. Let's have a discussion on how people feel about anything they see here. Gilles has already made a "No night sittings." We could maybe get a discussion. I think it will open up fairly quickly.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I think what you need to hear from everybody, though, is what it is about the current schedule they don't like, and then see where you can fit it, because I think you'll find it impossible.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: There are several of us who were here pre the changes, albeit I was only here for a little bit, and often I'm either credited or blamed for the new schedule, depending on who you talk to.

One of the issues that I do have with the current schedule is I find it is too inconsistent day to day, and I

think there is a way we can bring back consistency so that every day is similar in how the process goes through, not similar in the items that we discuss, if that makes any sense.

I look, for example, at the 1989 to 1997 calendar. That would've withstood the test of time under three, I think, governments—not a long time, and certainly not a decade. I look at that, and it intrigues me in that we could do something similar to what the Clerk has indicated was previously done here, by having a caucus meeting in the morning and then a cabinet/committee sort of day in the afternoon, and then perhaps even wrap up the day with private members' business. In the mornings, from 10 until noon, have orders of the day on the other days, proceed with your routine proceedings and then go to private members' business—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: You've lost me. Can you start all over? I've got to write this down so I can discuss it with my caucus.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, sure. You know what? I'm not speaking as a caucus member; I'm speaking as a private member in sort of my own interest—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I still want to know what it is you're suggesting.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: But I think it's a starting point. I would go—so 1989 to 1997—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Right.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): It's open discussion here.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes. I'm throwing it out there.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: But do you know what, Chair? We won't remember if we don't make notes.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes. I'm just throwing this out here because I think—I've spent a lot of time in the last couple of years looking at this. I look at this 1989 to 1997 piece. From 10 until noon on Monday and Tuesday, we could do orders of the day, continue on with routine proceedings—I am very favourable to leaving question period at a set time in the afternoon. I like what the federal guys are doing with private members' business. So where it has orders of the day, you remove all that, and you put private members' in for an hour. If there's any time in the afternoon, the government could call orders of the day before that, depending on how long your motions and petitions and reports by committees, introduction of bills etc. would last.

I think we had something called—in the previous incarnation of—bear with me here. Here it is. Between 1997 and 2009, routine proceedings had to be concluded by 4 p.m., at which time the Speaker would put all questions and proceed to orders of the day. We could actually stick some orders of the day there as well, for an hour or two, depending on how long routine proceedings would go each day if, say, we even started at 1 o'clock.

Then I like the idea of this notion where you have your caucus in the morning and then cabinet and committee would sit, so that there would be one day a week. I just think it would be more consistent and there would be a better flow for all members.

Finally, on that Thursday, we could do orders of the day on the Thursday morning, where it says private members' business. I don't know how much debate time that would give us, and I think that's something we have to consider.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: So, sorry, Lisa, just to make sure I understood: You're basically saying, orders of the day on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday morning; committees on Wednesdays; and, where we now have orders of the day at the end of the day, that would be private members' business.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Right.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Am I getting that right?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes. What intrigues me—and I'm not speaking on behalf of Steve, although he may agree with me; I don't know. I'm just simply putting this out as an idea because I think we have to start somewhere and hopefully find a consensus of where we're going.

One of the things that I think with the private members' business that they're doing federally is, it doesn't lump everything in together. Because it's not Thursday afternoon, people are actually able to participate if they want to be there but can't be. They're already going to be here or, as the case may be, in Ottawa. I think that might be an option we want to look at.

I just used the 1989 to 1997 schedule because it seemed to be the most consistent and amenable to some of these changes. It's something that we should look at: having that consistency brought back.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: But I did the quick math, and I don't think the hours add up to get the number of hours of orders of the day that we have currently versus what's on here.

1330

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You've done that?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I just did a quick thing. I mean, orders of the day on this 1989 to 1997 looks like it's just one hour, but really, if you look at what we're doing now in the House, it's not four hours a week; it's a lot more.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No, and say if we did the movement where I was going, you'd end up with—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I think the comment was made before that prior to 2003, the number of sittings for the entire year was less than 16 weeks—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Right.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: —or 16 weeks if I remember. You're looking at a whole different government process now compared to then. If you look at the number of hours for orders of the day currently and try to fit it into this, it won't work.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: How many hours of debate do we have right now? Seventeen or 18?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: An hour and a quarter in the morning every day—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: With the exception of Monday.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: —with the exception of Monday, and then in the afternoon it starts at about 1:30 or 1:45 and goes until 6 on Monday, and on Wednesday it's

from 3 to 6, minus the half-hour for routine proceedings. So it's a lot more hours.

It's nice to look at the schedule, but I think you have to break it down into hourly increments and really see if it plugs in.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Could we have an accurate count of the number of hours that we debate right now in orders of the day weekly?

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Yes, we can calculate that fairly quickly.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): Yes.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Lisa, you said you thought the post-2009 schedule was inconsistent?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No, dear, I'm saying that I think the current schedule is inconsistent.

Mr. Jeff Leal: That's what I said, post-2009.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, sorry. I thought you said pre-2009.

Mr. Jeff Leal: No, post-2009. Can you just highlight that for me, because I'm trying to understand where you're coming from?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sure. We have oral question periods, but I find that you have a large chunk of your day on Tuesday when you never know where you're going to be after caucus. Then, of course, there's Wednesdays—we're sitting through a cabinet meeting right now.

I also find it very troubling that we break routine proceedings up from oral question period. I really—maybe it's the traditionalist in me—favour having those with members' statements. Granted, I will say that members' statements now are less partisan than they were when I first arrived here, because people aren't trying to play to the camera as much as they're trying to get something of historical relevance on to the record.

One of the things that I think—I would hope, anyway—we would try to promote in our caucuses is to ensure that we have that period of time, those statements, as ways to get on the public record something relevant in our communities so that they're part of the Ontario record. I think that, to me, is very important, that people are in Hansard and they're part of that history of Ontario. At the same time, I'd really like to see oral question period back with routine proceedings.

One of the things I lament, probably with others as well, is that particularly when we're making a tribute to a former member who has passed or there is something significant, like we're marking Holocaust remembrance or VE Day, it used to be that the whole chamber was there, because it would be before or right after question period. Every member would be there and take part in that solemn experience. Now, we would be lucky if we have, I would say, 30 members in the House at any time when one of those tributes is being made or we're marking a historic event.

I think we really have to think about that, because in my opinion, anyway, we're doing that for a reason. We're marking either a person's passing or a historic

event in the province or the country or the world, and it really does deserve the attention of all members. I just think that now there's that inconsistency because there's this break. Then we have other chops in the day, if you look at routine proceedings.

My big thing, obviously, is that we do finish by 6 or 6:45 at night, for a variety of reasons. I also will say that when the debate started at 6:45, the debate really did decline. I've been there when really good people have been ejected because they had a little too much fun at receptions and then came in to debate. That discouraged me, as a new member. That's why I think, for the sanity of all of us, we might want to chop it off either at 6 or 6:45. And, of course, it's also family-friendly, which is still very important to me and others. But to answer your question, Mr. Leal, I think that I would really like to bring those back together and have a consistent day.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I share your observation, particularly when we honour a member who has passed away, particularly if there's a large contingent of the member's former family that makes the trip, most of the time from outside of Toronto, and the fact that—you're right—the chamber is virtually empty except for people speaking for their respective caucuses. I think you raise a very good point.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): On that particular point too, that's one of the things—in the very first meeting, I believe Deborah brought that up. That was something that she thought we had missed out on somewhat. Maybe I'm not explaining it clearly.

Mr. Jeff Leal: That's fine.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Also, we debate between 12 and 14 hours a week now.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Yes, that's what I have.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: So I guess the question I would have for the Clerk: If we were to look at taking that level of debate time and then putting it into a more consistent or standardized calendar, could we have those same type of hours, something that would be comparable?

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Gilles wants to get in on this.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sure. I'm sorry if I've monopolized the—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): No, no. That's okay. That's what we're here for.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, I've been patiently sitting here watching and listening to this. There are two principles. I want to come back to what Mr. Balkissoon said because I think you started off from the right point: What is the problem, and what do we need to fix? I think that's a good suggestion.

I want to come at it from where you're coming from but probably somewhere you wouldn't think I was coming from. One: The government has to be able to get its agenda through. That's my understanding. Currently, we get about 12 hours and 45 minutes of debate on average per week, if you figure out the math. By the time we do three morning sittings—we do Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and if we happen to do after private mem-

bers', we get about 12 to 13 hours, depending on what happens during routine proceedings. That has to be maintained, right? We all agree. If we don't want to have night sittings, the government has to have sufficient time during the day to be able to debate its bills. I have a bit of a proposal.

The second thing is, I think there's a bit of an agreement that there's a disconnect between routine proceedings and question period, for all of the reasons that people have said. Let me come at it a little bit differently. If we were to say that Monday morning we don't sit except for question period, would normally happen every day is that on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday you would have one hour of private members'. Let me suggest why I think we do one morning each for each of the private members'. It's that, for example, every Thursday there are three bills. There may be a bill that I want to speak to out of the three. There may be none; there may be all. I may want to vote or not vote or abstain on particular votes, depending on what they have going on. The problem we've got now is, I go in because this one bill is really important; but on that one that I really don't want to be associated with, I have to run out of the House.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Let's be real. If you had one per morning, then you say, "I'm not interested in the bill on Tuesday morning, but I'm interested in the bill of Wednesday morning." So it allows you to more cleanly deal with that. So I would suggest the following: The House meets, every day except Monday, at 9. It does private members' hour. At 10 o'clock, you fall into routine proceedings, which would be your members' statements and all of that stuff. Once you've done your routine proceedings, we would then fall into question period. It would be: from 9 to 10, private members; essentially, 10 to 11, or a little bit less, routine proceedings; at 11 o'clock, or a little bit before—whatever we work out for the timing—you'd do your question period and then all your deferred votes. That way, you've got everybody there in the morning. If you're doing—as Mr. Leal pointed out, which I think is pretty bloody embarrassing—an important statement by the government as far as a ministerial statement, or maybe an important statement on the part of a member having to do with something in their riding, and there's nobody there. So at least you've got some—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That's when people are watching. And to your point, and to yours, Mr. Leal—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, let me finish.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sure.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Let me finish where I'm going. The idea is, we would do that. In the afternoons, the House would resume on Mondays and Thursdays at 2 o'clock and go on to 6, and on Tuesdays and Wednesdays we go from 3 to 6. That gives you 13 hours of government time and it allows us to recouple routine proceedings with question period, allows us to deal with deferred votes in a way that's sane and allows the gov-

ernment to get their 13 hours. That would be my proposal.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): So you're saying—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): No, go ahead. I'm trying to get the total hours.

1340

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Gilles, go back with the orders of the day for Monday to Thursday, slowly.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So, for example, Monday morning you would come to work at 10 o'clock. The House would—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: No, I'm talking about the afternoon.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, the afternoon? Orders of the day would start on Mondays and Thursdays at 2 o'clock and go until 6. That gives you four hours each day.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: All right.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Then Tuesdays and Wednesdays would go from 3 to 6, which would give you three hours each day. Add that all up, and it comes out to essentially 13 hours. We're currently doing 12 hours and 45 minutes.

Mr. Jeff Leal: So, Gilles, question period would run from—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Around 11 to 12, or 10:45 to 12.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Quarter to 11 to maybe quarter to 12, and deferred votes from quarter to 12 to 12 or something.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It gives members that two-hour block on Mondays and Tuesdays, because the problem we all have is, we have people coming in to meet with us, and we're constantly trying to find time to meet with constituents or stakeholder groups or ministries for briefings. Then you know, okay, I've got Monday and I've got Thursday from 12 to 2. If we want to make it 2:30, that's fine; I'm not going to argue over that. But it gives members the chance to do their jobs and also allows the caucuses to meet on Tuesday and cabinet to meet on Wednesday. It seems to me it's a bit saner.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Gilles, I noticed you've accommodated the Monday coming in late to allow the members travelling from out of town to come in, but how do you deal with the Thursday now for the members out of town and it's regular business?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Because it's an order of the day. As a member, if I say, "Oh, it's my critic portfolio," I will be there Thursday. But if it's not my critic portfolio and I'm not speaking, my whip then has to worry about the five members or whatever your magic number is on your end, to be there, and the rest of us can go and do what we've got to do, because the reality, which most people will not know—I'll put this on the record—is that we do have ridings, which is about two thirds of our job.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I know the last time we dealt with this and I was on this committee, the Thursday issue was booking the flight and knowing that once you book it, you can't cancel it, because it costs you more. So I just wanted to find out how you deal with that Thursday.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You then know, I'm going to be there or not based on my critic portfolio, and on the Monday morning, if I have a statement, I'll come in on the early morning flight or I'll come in on Sunday. Otherwise, I could make it here for 11 o'clock for question period.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): So in other words, all afternoons are always debate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They're always debates, and private members in the morning, question period, orders of the day.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): I like it. Any other comments on Gilles's thoughts here? Go ahead, Lisa, and then Steve has got some.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, I think we're going in the right direction right now with a variety of the options that are being discussed. What I would like to know is if it's possible for the committee clerk to direct someone to put a couple of options, as we discussed them, together, as we keep moving. I'm amenable to some of the changes, not quite enthused by all of the recommendations, but I'm moving, and I think my position, as well as others', will evolve as we start to discuss this. But what would be really helpful is if we could start bringing something back to our caucus in terms of what a schedule would look like. So if we're talking about different options today, it would be really helpful if they could come back to committee.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): If I could just make a comment as the Chair, I think we're moving in a fairly positive direction here. To continue the discussion here, I like the idea of keeping everything together, the statements, the ministers' statements and that sort of thing. I always thought that was really neat when it was in the afternoon, because it really did draw attention to those couple of hours of the day and it actually did, in my opinion—when there was a tribute to someone or a special speech, we had a lot of people in the building. I think we are really missing that. I go in there some days and it's a special day for cancer or MS or something and there's like 12 people watching this, and then a lot of people are in the gallery and they're saying, "Where are our members?" So I love the idea of keeping them together, whether you shift it to the afternoon or not.

The other thing I kind of like the idea of is knowing that every day we debate in the afternoon, because now it's a little bit confusing. And then you can work your committee structure around that as well, very easily.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, and I think that, to me, Chair, is a big thing. It's sort of inconsistent.

I must say, to your point—and I'm sorry to interrupt, but I've had an occasion where I've been doing a member's statement and I will now, because we're able to webcast, send out the email to folks so they can watch it at work, on their iPad or whatever, and I've had so many people contact me and say, "There's no one sitting behind you. Where's everybody at? The place is empty."

If you're going to do a human interest-type statement as a private member, which all of us in this area are,

we're actually doing a disservice to that statement that we're trying to bring credibility and importance to because it looks like we're just speaking to ourselves in the mirror. I want to make that point because it has personally disappointed me. So I do apologize for having yet again—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): No, no. I think this—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm quite passionate about this.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): People complain to me all the time about that.

Yes, go ahead, Bas, and then Jeff.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I kind of—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Wait. You know what? I've got to go to Steve first. Sorry. Steve has had his hand up for long. Steve; sorry.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: No problem.

Mr. Steve Clark: I was just about to challenge the Chair, so I just wanted you to know that.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): No, but I love this—I think this is a good conversation.

Mr. Steve Clark: I agree. Just to speak to something Bas and I talked about outside: I do think it's nice to have that template. We were talking about the sticky notes to say, if we're going to move this here and put it there to make sure we have enough time—and I think that's the beauty of the discussion is that we throw a whole bunch of stuff up against the wall and we ultimately see what sticks when we go back to our caucuses.

The one concern I have, coming from eastern Ontario—and it goes back to that whole complaint of mine about kids and coverage; right? I don't have any schools come and see me, because by the time they would get here, they'd miss question period and then they would watch the corporal's guard that would be in the House, and watch members' statements and some of the legislation.

One of the reasons why I like some of the things that Ms. MacLeod was putting forward and having orders of the day in the morning was to give that opportunity for people from other parts of the province to be able to come and sit in an afternoon session that would include members' statements, former member tributes, question period, so that we would actually have that opportunity for some communities like mine that are three, three and a half hours, four hours away—looking at the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

I understand the whole point. I was a big fan, when we first talked about this, of having some PMBs every day, and it's just one of scheduling. I don't mind changing the order of the day. I sort of like having the PMBs suggestion that Ms. MacLeod had, of popping them at the end of the day, and also have orders of the day, for sort of the same reasons that Mr. Bisson talked about: If I'm not on duty and I'm not the critic, maybe I wouldn't come in first thing Monday morning. I would have the luxury of coming in for question period and routine proceedings after lunch.

I know we're going to have this debate where some members want to try to come Monday morning and some want to get out of here as early as they can Thursday. I appreciate what you're saying from Toronto. If you plunk private members' business only on Thursdays, you're the ones who are going to be here debating motions, and I don't think that's fair. I think we need to split it up.

One of my big appeals of having question period in the afternoon is access. I know our TV coverage isn't the greatest, and I know we've got bandwidth issues with our website, but I really, truly do think that having an altered schedule, no matter what form, should try to position this stuff closer together to deal with what Ms. MacLeod said about former members, but to have people in the chamber, to have kids in the chamber.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Thanks, Steve. Bas, and then Jeff.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I sort of like what Gilles suggested because I think it's workable and it's the simplest change, but I just had one question of the Clerk. If we deal with one private member's bill per day, how do we deal with the voting—at the very end, or we will vote as we went along?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): You could do either. But I would presume that you would want to vote as you go along, or defer it—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: So we'd have to make time for that vote in that—

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Or if it's morning, it could be deferred to deferred votes that day.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Or it could be done—because we don't use the full hour for the debate anyway.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Or it could be done within the debate time. That's something that I think you, as members, have to discuss, because you're going to want to decide whether or not—if you've got a private member's bill or resolution and you've got people here from your riding to watch the debate—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: You want the vote.

1350

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):—presumably they're going to want to be there for the vote.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: That's why I asked the question, because I think it's important.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Yes. But you could build the vote time into that and have private members' business from 9 to 10, and then build in an extra five or 10 minutes for voting—well, 10 minutes, I guess, a five-minute bell.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: That's why I throw it out, because we've got to make sure we put it on the schedule.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My suggestion is that you can do it under deferred—everything is a deferred vote, and you can either do it after question period or between routine proceedings and question period. The bells ring and tell

everybody to come to the House, have a vote and you're into question period. That's one way.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): I like it. I like it. I didn't think I'd agree with you.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I just raise that one, but I think his suggestion is easily workable.

I just want to make a comment on the Monday morning one and all three private members' bills being debated together. The Toronto members in our caucus have always objected to Monday morning because we were the guys who were scheduled to get here on Monday morning because we live in the city. But that doesn't make it easy for us to get in. Some guys can fly in here in an hour. It takes me an hour and a half to drive in, although I live in the city. So it has some unfairness to it.

I think his is workable. The other ones have some challenges.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Jeff?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Quickly, Gilles, the proposal you put forward: retention of 60 minutes for question period in the morning, I take it?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm just thinking, as a former whip, that the difficulty we always have with private members' and all other votes is making sure we have people: "You've got to stay here. There may be a vote, there may be a vote. Stay, stay, stay, stay." If we can actually change the standing orders to say, "All votes are deferred unless we decide otherwise by unanimous consent," and they're all deferred to the deferred votes time, which I would argue—a suggestion Mr. Schein gave to my ear—that you put between orders of the day and question period, or you could do it after question period.

The point is that you don't constantly have whips in the position of telling everybody they've got to be here all the time; we know when the bloody votes will be. And you don't have the bells ringing all the time, trying to bring people in. People can plan their meetings. "Okay, I'm not on House duty today. I'm going to go and meet with my stakeholders. Oh, excuse me, the bells are ringing. I've got to go to a vote." You can actually plan your day—especially for parliamentary assistants, who are not in the building. It just makes for a bit more predictability. So you say, "Standing order change: All votes are deferred, unless by UC," and we pick a time in that morning in order to deal with that.

Mr. Jeff Leal: From a whip's perspective, that makes great sense.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes. I thought as a fellow whip—

Mr. Jeff Leal: I belong to the union of whips.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have one other thing.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The other thing you said: "Where do we fix what doesn't work?" Part of the problem we have with committees is there's a lot of stuff that quite frankly doesn't need to go to a standing committee; it could go to committee of the whole. What we could do, and this is where I argue against myself, is look at a period where we're actually able to do committee of the whole at the government's call, because it would be the

government that decides if we went committee of the whole. They can go under orders of the day, as we can now, or we can actually say Tuesday night, Wednesday night from 6 to 7:30, if the government wants to order something into committee of the whole and not use House time. They can put it into committee of the whole in that time, but you don't make it open-ended so the House sits till midnight. So on the government's call—for example, Bills 13 and 14: If we had the deal that was originally put forward, we could have sent that to committee of the whole, made the amendments we wanted and taken it out so that the business doesn't get caught up in committee, where we don't need to do that. It's just a suggestion.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Deborah, you've heard this discussion on this sort of change. Do you spy any problems with this type of change?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Sorry, on the schedule that—

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): The example Gilles used here, where he's actually got the hours and that.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): I just leaned over to Todd and said, "It has a certain elegance."

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Or Todd. Does anybody? Again, it's just a discussion. I was just hoping—

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): I actually think there are a couple of things I kind of like about it. I think one of the things you might want to ensure that you do is do question period and then routine proceedings to preserve that certainty in the time for question period, if that's something that's of importance to cabinet and maybe the leaders and that kind of thing. Anyway, you might want to look at those kinds of things.

One of the things I particularly like about it is if you say that the afternoons are government business, that also means that committees have a greater block of time to meet in a day as well because they're not being interrupted by routine proceedings either; they've got the afternoons to meet. By going with this schedule, what you're also kind of doing is allowing a greater period of time for committees to meet.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Can I—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: One little comment: I would caution against—and this is just from a caucus perspective. The reason I said orders of the day first and question period after: I understood the difficulty that question period maybe—you can say always at 11 or maybe—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: You mean routine proceedings, not orders of the day.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, excuse me; question period. The reason I wouldn't want to do question period first is that it's hard enough to get all the questions lined up by 10:30 now. If I go back to my caucus and say they have to be done by 10, the researchers are going to go on strike in my caucus. I'm just thinking from the perspective of

people—by the time the question period meeting happens, the questions are written, the members have done what they've got to do; you need a little bit of time. That's why I was suggesting that question period would be afterwards.

I didn't get into the committees, but that's what I kind of thought when I was looking at this. Part of the difficulty we have in committees now is that often they're interrupted by bells in the house, and I don't mean the bells that the Tories are ringing, but just because there's a legitimate vote that's going on—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I was being nice to my Conservative friends.

Mr. Steve Clark: Sort of.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sort of nice. I'm kind of a nice guy, but not always.

Mr. Steve Clark: I didn't ring them yesterday.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, and you won't ring them today because Ornge is sitting, but that's another story.

But that's the other thing: We can get into a more sane and rational schedule on our committees, because there are four committee rooms—five, actually, if you count the Amethyst Room. We can then start thinking, when we get into the committee section, about when our committees meet, when it makes sense, who needs a larger block of time versus a smaller block of time. I would argue regs and private bills needs less time than a general government committee, that kind of stuff.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay, any other comments on this or any other suggestions? We've talked about the scheduling here, but this is another option, the ones Lisa presented, plus Gilles's.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again, I'm not wed to anything other than, at this point in time, I just want two or three options that we can have in front of us as working documents, and then at some point, we can whittle it down a little bit and bring it to our colleagues in our caucuses, and eventually this will be decided upon by our House leaders and the House.

I probably interrupted because I see Bas's hand up.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Only two.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, you're giving me peace offerings. I don't know—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Two: Gilles and the current one.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No, but I think if there was anything else out there—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I can't seem to find another third one to accommodate the hours. His works, and the current one works.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Okay. Well, I just want to see a few different things out there that can accommodate, something that's so structurally sound that there's that consistency that Garfield and I have talked about and ensures that those routine proceedings are brought together. I guess to echo Garfield's point, it doesn't really matter if it's in the morning or the afternoon; it just sort of needs to be brought together.

My preference personally would be later in the morning or early afternoon, rather than late in the afternoon or early, early in the morning because, to Mr. Bisson's point, for those of us in opposition, it is very difficult to get all of those questions done and written and get on your day and do whatever your media plan is—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: But I think our ministers face the same problem.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Absolutely, and one of the things—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: —because they've got to be briefed every day, too.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: One of the things that we did deal with, I believe and I recall—my memory may not serve me 100%. But I do recall at the time that one of the issues with moving question period to the morning was the ability for some of the bureaucrats as well as political staff to brief ministers. So moving it to 10 o'clock, I think, is a bit of a stretch.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I didn't say 10.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: He's not suggesting 10.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I said 11 o'clock.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, I heard him say 11, but I said moving it to 10 is quite a stretch.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, I see. You're saying switching it.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Everybody has settled in with 10 o'clock right now—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, 10:30.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: So we just leave it there.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would say 11 because you need the time—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: No, but I'm saying—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I like 11 a lot more than 10:30, actually, because it still can be 10:45 before we get going. It also, by the way, helps everybody who needs to either take a train or a flight in from outside of this city on a Monday morning.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay. Is there any—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Well, let's hope they show up for routine proceedings.

1400

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay, so with the indulgence of the committee, the clerk has just said that he would prepare another graph like this. Would you—

Mr. Steve Clark: I just wanted to put on the record that I think it would be good for us to have two very different proposals to put in front of our caucus. That's why I sort of advocated what Ms. MacLeod originally suggested in having an afternoon question period, keeping routine proceedings together and essentially trying to flip orders of the day and private members' business. The reason I'm saying that is that I really would love to see two very different proposals so that our members can have a really good discussion and give us that type of direction that I really think the committee needs.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I need to see it quick, then, Chair, so we can discuss it at our caucus because—I mean, the one that Gilles proposed is very simple, in my mind; it's workable. The other one, like I said, I did a quick hourly count. Because this is not in front of us in hourly blocks, it looks like it will work, but it doesn't.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): We can—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You guys can negotiate this in advance?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Well, the other thing is that you're bringing people in Monday morning early and I don't think that's—I thought that was a request, that we not schedule stuff early Monday.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No, I don't think we should have an earlier session that 10.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: But you would have to because of the 14 hours of orders of the day.

Mr. Steve Clark: We'd either have to go late—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: That was the other problem: Nobody wanted to go beyond 6.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I don't necessarily know that. The House of Commons right now sits until 6:45 and then they wrap up for the night. I don't think it was finishing hard at 6. Obviously, 6 is favourable to me, but so is 6:30 or 6:45. I'm simply suggesting that when we started sitting back again at 6:30 to 6:45 and we'd be here until 9:30 or 12 o'clock at night, the level of debate in this chamber was lower than the Westray mine.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I would personally object to after 6.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): What I'm going to do is, we've got a couple of proposals—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'll get home at 8; dinner will be at 9. It's ridiculous.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): We've got a couple of proposals on the floor—

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Guys, hold on. Let the clerk speak here.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): We have a couple of proposals on the floor. What I'm going to do is try to put together this type of chart for the ones we have so you can visually see what we're talking about. I'll talk to the specific members to see if we've got it right, and we'll circulate it as soon as possible so members can take that back to their caucuses.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): So we'd have it for next Tuesday, then?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): For sure.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay. Is that all right with everyone? Gilles, did you have something else?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I don't know if people caught what I was saying about committee of the whole, but that, I think, is something we should think about because it could take pressure off—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Well, we'll put it there. Like you say, it's the government's option—

Mr. Steve Clark: I agree—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: —discussing bills in committee of the whole, absolutely; especially when we change the standing orders on a provisional basis, that we try it. We certainly don't want to make those permanent changes and then go down the road that the Clerk talked about with the nine days. But I think on a trial basis we should commit to doing committee of the whole House.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: But again, I'd say to you that the House leaders have to agree to call it, and they can either do it by motion or it's in the schedule; it doesn't matter.

Mr. Steve Clark: There are some bills that could go to committee of the whole House right now.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Deborah?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Just a reminder: While you're on the discussion of committee of the whole, I just did have one thing to say about process. When I was in Ottawa, the principal clerk from the Senate told me that the Senate has just finished a three-year review of its standing orders.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to see that.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Mostly what they were concerned about was putting their standing orders in plain language. They have some other interesting things that they've done, too. But specifically, the committee has reported back, and what they will do in the Senate now is take a look at that report on the recommended standing order amendments in committee of the whole House. What that does is allow for all of the committee members to be in the House for that committee of the whole meeting, or most of the committee members, as well as any other members of the Senate who are interested or who have questions. So there is a discussion, much like a discussion that occurs in this committee, only it occurs with all members interested in the House in committee of the whole. That's one of the very good, useful purposes for committee of the whole. So that's just another pitch on my behalf for using committee of the whole.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Committee of the whole, for those of us who have gone through it, is actually quite a good process because essentially I say to the minister, Mr. Leal, "Well, hang on, Mr. Leal, I have a question. Hang on, you didn't answer." And then the Speaker says, "Okay, enough of you. Next." But you don't ask once and you're dead. It's kind of neat.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay, on the House calendar, is there anything else on the House schedule? Is there anything else here anybody would like to discuss?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Can we get the proposed calendar before next Tuesday, so at least we could discuss it at our caucus?

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Yes. We've agreed to do that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Don't adjourn. There are a few things we've got to deal with—other business.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): No, no, we're not adjourning.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, I saw him leaving, so I thought we were adjourning.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Yes, you will have it.

Is there anything else on this that anyone else at all would like to bring up on this particular issue or topic on the House schedule?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: No, we're good. We'll wait for that.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): All right, so we've got a plan for that.

Our next agenda item is? Gilles?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have other business, unless the committee has got other—do the clerk or the Chair have anything else?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): We could start committees, but I'd be interested in your other business—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The only thing is—just while we're all here, a couple of things we need to start thinking about. The House leaders—it looks like we'll have an agreement for committees to be able to travel. So one of the things that I think this committee has to think about is, do we want to look at what's going on in Great Britain, do we want to see what's happening in Scotland, do we want to see what's going on in Ottawa? Because the clerks are going to have to start doing some arrangements far ahead of time. I just want to hear what the government has to say.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Personally, for me, I would say unless I know what the real issue affecting us today is, I can't give you an answer. I would want to travel and see what somebody else is doing if we have a significant problem. But if we have a problem that we could work out across the table here, I'm happy to stay home and do it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What I understood from the documents that I've read up to now is that there are some interesting lessons to be learned from a couple of other jurisdictions, one of those being Scotland, because it's the newest of the Parliaments that has been created. So we are dealing with how do committees work better, how do we deal with private members' and a few other things that are essentially done within the Scottish Parliament. I think there's some value for us to do that, but if we're going to do that, the clerks need to know well enough ahead of time so we can figure out the best time to go. Is it June, is it July, is it August etc.?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: We'll have to find out when those Parliaments sit, as well.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, and that's what I'm asking the clerks to do.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): If we could just get an idea of possibilities of where you'd

like to go, then we could start looking into if they're sitting, what's going on at those times. At this point, it's really just possibilities.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm quite favourable to what Mr. Bisson is saying. I think, obviously, Ottawa is a place we want to go to. It's obviously very close to my house. I've no problem taking the 15-minute drive. That would be really good.

I think the other thing is, we have talked about some jurisdictions in the past few months that were places that we wanted to engage. If there is an opportunity that they're sitting in July or August—it would have to be early August—we should consider that. So if you could provide us with some options—I think we talked about a variety of different places here in Canada but also abroad in the Commonwealth. If you could look at those options, further to Mr. Bisson's suggestion—I'm only concerned with time. Obviously, we want to start getting a report written in August. It's got to be done at a very—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a question of the clerk. Is there any reason, technically, that we couldn't have one of those people come to see us?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): I don't know.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): The summer is going to be a busy, busy summer, I can see right now. For people who think we're going to lay on the beach all summer, they've got a problem.

Gilles, is there any—that's coming from the House leaders, that's your report back?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, what I'm saying is that the House leaders are close to an agreement to allow the committees to travel. For example, this committee has its—the one in Chicago? Public accounts has their meeting in Nunavut.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Chair, I think we should get the information from the House leaders—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, that's my point.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Let him finish up, and then I'll go back to you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My point is, what I'd like the clerks to do—because the House is only here for another two weeks and we have an agreement that's in the process of being dealt with—if we can find out when those Parliaments that we're interested in are meeting, so that we can figure out if there are any of these that we want to see. We had talked about possibly Scotland, England, Ottawa, Saskatchewan and Alberta—I think are the ones that we were looking at. So just come back and give us the dates and all that, and we can decide.

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The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay. Mr. Balkissoon.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It doesn't mean to say we're travelling to any or all of them, right?

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Before we go to Mr. Balkissoon, is there going to be approval for anyone to go to Chicago for that event? Is that something we can count on? Because they have to schedule that as well.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't want to presume what the House leaders' final agreement is, but we have agreed in principle to that. We just need to do what needs to be happening to have that happen. That's the question.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): With the understanding that this all has to go through the House and has to make its way through that approval, if we can get an indication as to which members, if we are approved, will be going to Chicago or would like to be going to Chicago—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What are the dates, again?

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): August 6 to 9.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): So an indication of whether you intend to be going and whether you'll be bringing a guest. We can start looking at our numbers and doing some preplanning on our basis. So that's all we'd be looking for.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay, I was going to go to Mr. Balkissoon first and then we'll go back. Mr. Balkissoon.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Chair, I don't have a problem if we go and research Scotland and wherever, but I think if we're doing it, the information about when the Parliament is meeting, we should also get back as part of that what would be the cost of the committee travelling at the same time, so we can make a quick decision, if we're going to make one. But I think that decision should be made only after we hear back from the House leaders officially.

Now, on the Chicago deal, that's totally different.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): And I think we already had our numbers on that.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Yes, the Chicago one, we have the numbers, and that's fine.

Mr. Steve Clark: We have the numbers; we've got the reservations.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm talking about the one for the standing order.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): I'm trying to look at where it would fit into the calendar, because it looks like it's going to be pretty hectic.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, it's only going to cost me nothing to travel to Ottawa.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: But you didn't go last week.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, that's because I had committee.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: You didn't go last week.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I had committee. Stop your pointing. Stop your pointing. You guys are picking on me. I had another committee. Social policy was in town.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): All right. Now, we have three questions along here.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): No, they were saying yes to Chicago.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Oh, okay. Mr. Bisson, do you have anything?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Mr. Clark.

Mr. Steve Clark: I agree. I think it's very important for us to take those jurisdictions that Mr. Bisson spoke about, look at when they're sitting, and bring it back to us. I think if you're asking those five places, I agree, those are the five we should investigate.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Which ones are the five? I've got Scotland, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ottawa.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): UK.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Westminster.

Mr. Steve Clark: And Westminster.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): So we've got sort of an understanding right now that we're going to get some—first of all, we haven't got the final approval, but if you're planning on maybe going to Chicago, you need to know that that's a certain date. You'll have to let the clerk know if it's at all possible. Then, finally, they're going to come up with some numbers and some times on the other jurisdictions.

What else would you like to discuss today?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): I think we're good for today. I think as long as we know who's going, and once we're off the record I'll find out who's bringing guests—again, all tentative. We've got that, we've got some information to go back and get for the committee, and then we have some members that had to sort of make their way. So I think we're good for today.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): And we will have those schedules for next week for your caucus meetings.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Yes, before Tuesday.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): Before Tuesday, they will go out. Oh, wait. The Clerk wants to say something.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Sorry, it doesn't really have anything to do with the standing order—I was just wondering if we could run something by you so you can think about it. It has to do with pins and ribbons.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, good.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): There was a discussion, I think, the last time about this business of having to get unanimous consent for pins and ribbons all the time. Maybe we could come up with a different process. It would not really require a standing order change, because currently it's based on Speakers' rulings that you have to get unanimous consent.

One of the things we were considering—Todd's taken a look at the multiple requests for the same unanimous consent, things like Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, World AIDS Day, those kinds of things that come up year after year at around the same time of the year. What we could do is something like, on those days, posting on those monitors out in the members' lobbies that today is Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Day and whatever the ribbon is—the ribbons can be made available in the lobbies, as they usually are—and those ones that are posted would not require unanimous consent. That at least takes away from the UCs being required for the general ones that come up time and time again that are non-contentious.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Let me take that. Can you give that and we'll bring it back to the House leaders?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Yes, we'll give you the list—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, give us the list because it is, quite frankly, one of our favourite subjects we like to talk to at House leaders'.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Oh. Okay, good.

The Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Okay, members of the committee, is there anything else you'd like to add today? We'll have that information for you for your caucus meetings and then we'll be prepared for next week.

Okay, with that, no other business? The meeting is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1416.

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente

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Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River L)
Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James ND)
Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre L)
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Mr. Jonah Schein (Davenport ND)

Substitutions / Membres remplaçants

Mr. Grant Crack (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell L)

Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes

Ms. Deborah Deller, Clerk of the Assembly

Clerk / Greffier

Mr. Trevor Day

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