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**Official Report
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Wednesday 11 September 2013

**Journal
des débats
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Mercredi 11 septembre 2013

**Standing Committee on
Public Accounts**

Committee business

**Comité permanent des
comptes publics**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC ACCOUNTSCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
COMPTES PUBLICS

Wednesday 11 September 2013

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The committee met at 0904 in room 151.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): I'd like to call the meeting to order. We've got a bit of a change in committee membership, so I want to welcome our new members. On the government side, Bill Mauro is now a member of the committee and Lorenzo Berardinetti is now a member of the committee. We look forward to their participation in the work of the committee.

Also the big change since we last met is we now have a new Auditor General of Ontario. I'm pleased to welcome Bonnie Lysyk as the new Auditor General of Ontario. She was formerly the Auditor General for the province of Saskatchewan, so we're really pleased to have Bonnie taking over here and look forward to working with her. I will pass it on to her and let her introduce herself a bit to committee members.

Ms. Bonnie Lysyk: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, everyone. I'm really pleased to be here and to be able to work in Ontario and serve you as your Auditor General.

A number of you I think I have met in Regina, so I'm really pleased to see you again. I'm glad that you enjoyed your time, I believe, in Regina. Just for the benefit of others, we hosted the conference that the auditors attend as well as the members of PAC committees across Canada. I think we had about 100 people in attendance so it was a really good conference. I hope that everyone who attended in Canada benefited from the information that was shared.

I look forward to working with a great group of people in my office, as well as in the public sector here, so I'm really happy about that.

Just to give you a little sense of my background for those of you who don't know, I did spend the last two and a half years in Saskatchewan. Previously, I was the deputy provincial auditor in the province of Manitoba, so I've worked in the legislative audit community for a fair bit. I have the comparison of three provinces now, which is kind of interesting.

Before that, I worked with Manitoba Hydro for 10 years. In my last position there, I was assistant to the president. I understand everyone is waiting for the Oakville report. My electricity background is coming in a little bit handy now. I also worked for the liquor board as

the head of internal audit, so a couple of crown corporations there.

Just to give you a little bit of background on what I do besides being an auditor, I serve on the Canadian actuaries professional conduct committee. I'm one of two non-actuaries serving on that committee. That is quite interesting, to compare that to the CA profession.

Again, I'm a CA, MBA, certified internal auditor. My beginnings were with Coopers and Lybrand, now PricewaterhouseCoopers. I haven't just audited; I actually was CFO of an insurance company, and I worked as a vice-president of a large pension fund, so I've got a little bit of different background, there.

But my passion is working in the legislative community and doing this type of work, because I do think that, as auditors, we do give back, I believe, to the public sector and to the citizens of the province. So I look forward to working with the members here and bringing forward some really solid reports.

First week: I have with me Gary Peall, who is the assistant auditor general and has been acting for the last few months. I just want to say thank you to Gary for keeping things going. He's been a lot of good help this past week, so that has been wonderful. Gary and I go back a bit; we have met over the years in various forums.

I think you'll probably ask me one thing, and I might as well just put it on the table in terms of, "Where are all these reports that are coming?" I'll just make mention very quickly that we do plan to issue the Oakville report probably by mid-October; the ONTC, we're looking for by December, sometime then, before the end of the year; and OLGC, at the latest, January.

With that, thank you very much Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to speak a little bit. I look forward, again, to working with the committee and yourself down the road. Thanks.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you very much, Auditor, and we look forward to working with you. It's certainly a very impressive background, and there's a lot of work being done by the Auditor General right now. So I'm sure there's lots to catch up on in a very short time.

There were a couple of motions that were filed right at the end of our sitting in June, so we're going to move to those. Do we have a mover for one of them? Ms. Munro?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Yes, thank you very much. With the indulgence of the committee, I'd ask that we flip the

number, so if the second motion could be the first motion that's read.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Sure, that's fine.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Okay. The motion reads as follows:

I move that: What was the original cost and the "new total" cost of revisions to collective agreements signed with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, and the Association des Enseignantes et des Enseignants Franco-Ontariens that were signed and/or renegotiated after January 2013, and after Bill 115's repeal.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): And Ms. Munro, could you please read the beginning of the motion, too, the first line?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm sorry: The committee requests of the Auditor General to undertake the following audits and analysis. Sorry.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you. Do we have discussion on this motion? Ms. Jaczek?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Certainly, Chair. The government, of course, is committed to open and transparent dealings with the public. Much of the information in relation to this agreement has been made public. I suppose we would wonder if this is, with all the commitments that the Auditor General has in terms of reports coming forward, the best use of her time. However, we're certainly very comfortable in having all this information come forward and be public.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Very well. Ms. MacLeod?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Chair. If I heard correctly, that means the government will vote with this PC motion, and I would very much welcome that.

As you know, for the past year, I have been trying to get information on what the true cost has been with these negotiations. I think that it is very important for me, as the official opposition critic on education, to have those facts in order to do my job. But it's also very important—more important, I think—for the public to know truly what has happened precisely because last year school was interrupted, and there seemed to be an enormous amount of public rancour with respect to two of the major unions.

There have been a variety of other deals that have been signed, for example, with OECTA, AEFO and CUPE. And then, of course, when the government went back to speak with OSSTF and to ETFO, there were "me too" clauses. We simply don't know what some of these costs are. In the Toronto Sun today, a senior education source from one of the major school boards suggested that this could be as high as \$500 million. I'm certainly tracking something close to that. I think it's well within the public interest that we have that information so we all may make our own decisions on whether or not this can be afforded at this time and whether or not that money has been moved from kids' activities in the classroom, which is certainly something that we've expected.

I look forward to receiving support from all parties for this open and transparent request. That is something that my colleague, Ms. Jaczek, has just suggested they are prepared to do. I would call on the NDP as well. This is actually something that is very much in the public interest, something in the public good, and it's something that I've been asking for in the Ontario Legislature since literally last Easter. That Easter Sunday is when the OSSTF report first became available. I've looked at that contract. It is my estimation that the one deal alone with OSSTF is \$114 million. We know the deal with ETFO on the extra 2% was \$112 million. With those "me too" clauses for CUPE, AEFO and OECTA, we're looking at something that I would seriously suggest is well in the neighbourhood of \$500 million.

Earlier, before I arrived here, I had a school board chair from southwestern Ontario call me to ask me to continue to push for this. I want to make that commitment to those in the education sector that I will try to continue to find the true costs of this so that we know that every dollar being spent in education in Ontario is directed to the benefit of our students in the system and not chiefly to make peace for a government that had a very rough year.

I respectfully request that my colleagues become engaged in this process in the spirit of transparency and openness, and also for accountability so moms and dads will have the confidence that the tax dollars they send to Queen's Park are being directed in the best interests of their children who are in our Ontario school system.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much. Mr. Chair, I believe that what we had initially received and the notice of motion currently are somewhat different, and so for that reason, we just need a 10-minute recess to review this. We'll be able to make our decision on that just after a brief recess, if that's possible.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Okay, you're asking for a 10-minute recess.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yes.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): So we'll have a 10-minute recess, then.

The committee recessed from 0914 to 0924.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): We're back in session now. I'll go to Mr. Singh.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Sorry, my colleague would like—

Ms. Cindy Forster: First, I have a question. When we came in here today, we actually had different motions. Am I assuming that those original motions are gone?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): No, the ones that were sent out by the Clerk are the ones that are on the table. What you may be confused by: On the agenda, it's just a synopsis of the motion; it's not the actual motion. The motion that was sent out is exactly as it is here.

Ms. Cindy Forster: So we're dealing now with the motion with respect to the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): That's correct.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to start by saying that the NDP as well believe in open, transparent, accountable government. I think that the Auditor General's office has a lot more issues that are much more important on her plate. Collective bargaining has been happening in this province for probably a hundred years. Are we moving somewhere where we're going to review every public sector or every collective agreement that falls under our jurisdiction to see whether we're getting value for our money?

I think that this is really just a veiled attempt by the PC caucus with regard to their attack on public sector unions, and unions in general in this province. This is a way for them to get information that they can actually use against a union such as the teachers' unions in this province, as well as other public sector unions. Those are my comments on this issue.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you. Ms. Jaczek?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I won't necessarily dispute what Ms. Forster has said about the motivation behind this particular motion. However, I would like to perhaps clarify again for Ms. MacLeod a little bit of what has already been made very clear, I think, by our Minister of Education. Certainly, any amendments to current contracts fit within the existing funding envelope for the Ministry of Education, and there is no new money added to the current two-year collective agreements.

Obviously, there have been some complications in terms of understanding the financing. However, I think it's worth noting that there is a 0% salary increase for the remainder of the current collective agreement, and \$1.8 billion were achieved in savings while protecting investments in the classroom. I know that Ms. MacLeod is very concerned about that; we share that concern. It includes a one-time savings of \$1.1 billion as a result of the elimination of banked sick days, and this saved the province \$250 million in 2012-13, growing to \$540 million in 2013-14. We have been able to provide boards with \$160 million to assist and support them with implementing the agreements, and we've done all of this while still maintaining \$1.8 billion in savings.

In summary, we have been very open. The minister has made these figures public. However, should it be the wish of the committee to have the Auditor General look at these numbers—and we believe very strongly we'll validate these numbers—we're perfectly prepared to support this motion.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you. Further comments? Ms. MacLeod?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I really want to say thank you to my colleagues in the government for this. I really do take exception to what my colleague in the third party said. She knows as well as everybody else here that I have been pursuing this for a year. I speak as a mother of a child in a public elementary school who did lose days from her classroom last year. I did stand up in the assembly since last year talking about the collective agreement

at the time that was imposed, and then the one that was amended, despite us being told that it would not be amended.

There are real and legitimate concerns from school boards across the province who are concerned that the money that will be moved to salaries, benefits and other gratuities will be taken away from front-line classroom care for our students.

At a time when we have unprecedented students failing in math; at a time when, in the city of Toronto, you look at the possibility, as we did last year, that programs like music and arts could be cut; at a time when there are a number of portables in schools in my community of Nepean, in Barrhaven, when a school just opens—up to 23—we have to ensure that the money that we spend in the education sector, the second-largest priority of this government and any other government in the province of Ontario—that those dollars are spent wisely, that those dollars are accounted for and that those dollars are respected, because moms and dads who are working across the province right now—many whom I know, because I have a child in the education system—don't really have a lot of extra money. So we can't continue to have new spending on the government credit card, because we're going to end up paying for it in the long run even more.

I do take exception to what my colleague in the third party said, but I'm not surprised. I understand that they would not like us to review this. However, I think it is in the best interests of parents, teachers who want to teach, and students, and I'll continue to stand up for them as I have.

0930

I want to thank, in advance, my colleagues from the Liberal caucus who will join with the PC caucus in supporting this. I think that is an important message to send. I would appeal once again to the NDP to understand that this is a significant cost if it indeed is the case that the senior school board representatives are suggesting. I want to thank the auditor in advance for her taking this on.

I would be interested in us moving swiftly to a vote on this matter.

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a question.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Yes, Mr. Colle.

Mr. Mike Colle: This is giving me some food for thought, here. I can see what the members of the official opposition are trying to do. I guess they could be commended for trying to bring some transparency to these important negotiations and outcomes and contracts. I think the public has every right to know what the agreements are, because they're so large and complex. So I think that is not a bad thing.

The thing that I'm concerned about, though, is that we have a pretty long-standing tradition of sort of a hands-off approach to the collective bargaining process in this province. It has been here for over 100 years. I'm just wondering, by introducing the Auditor General into the collective bargaining process here, what precedent we're setting.

I know it's the stated, clear program of the Conservatives to eliminate unions, eliminate the Rand formula. We know that, and that's very clear. What I would like to see, if possible, before we proceed on this—and as I've said, generally, I think it's a good thing to give the public more information about these complex agreements—is if we could get some kind of commentary or some kind of input from the Ministry of Labour, or a legal opinion in terms of whether there is some kind of safeguard we can take to ensure we're not impinging on the traditions, and the implications that this might have on the collective bargaining processes in this province.

That's the sensitivity that I think—because I don't think this has been done before. I mean, we can check and see, if we can get some information, if this has ever been done in the province of Ontario before, where there has been a review of the Auditor General of collective agreements that have been agreed to. Can we find that out? I'd like to have that information.

Secondly, is it possible to get either a legal or a labour opinion on this review that has been proposed by the official opposition?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you for your comments, Mr. Colle.

Ms. MacLeod?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sure. Thank you very much. I just wanted to respond to a couple of points, because I do appreciate them, with the exception of just a couple of things that I think he misconstrued, and I know my colleague Rob Leone will want to pick up on this.

Our characterization of eliminating the Rand formula: I don't think that's part of our party's platform, but I guess it's simply convenient for them to use this.

I want to point out, because I was deeply involved in Bill 115 and no one else around the table actually was, that Bill 115 was when the government of Ontario, under the Liberal caucus, brought forward legislated contracts with OECTA and AEFO, and eventually CUPE signed on. That was actually unprecedented: The government of the day legislated a contract.

At the time they brought that in, they did allow movement up the grid, but they said it wasn't a wage increase. We supported it at the time, because it was as close to a legislated wage freeze as possible, but we did have our concerns with it. There was a \$300-million hole in that plan to begin with, so I think it's valid—because it was legislation that was brought in by the government—for the auditor to review that.

Secondly, I make this point: I think that this might be a unique circumstance, but it was because of the legislation that was brought in, and then the subsequent repeal of that legislation and the reopening of those legislated contracts that are within the public interest for the auditor to review. This is also nothing new. We've asked in the past for other issues like this—not exactly like this—to be reviewed by the auditor, simply so it's in the public interest.

Now, my interest here is simply this: We know that there was a \$300-million hole in the initial legislated con-

tract. I know that because I looked through the numbers. We had third party groups validate those numbers and look at those.

Then what happened was the legislative agreement passed, and we supported it, because the Liberals put it forward. Then we had stoppages in our schools. We all had rallies outside of our offices. I certainly served my fair share of hot chocolate to striking teachers, which was fine; they had the right to do that once. They brought the province to a brink.

I remember, and I'll tell you why: I was driving from my hometown of Ottawa to Toronto one evening, and the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board was planning to shut the schools in Ottawa the Friday because there was going to be an illegal walkout. I remember very precisely the Ontario Labour Relations Board working with the teachers and the government at the time. I remember those press conferences. I remember the strife in our schools. I remember the parents' anger and I remember the teachers' discomfort. I remember that very early morning when the Ontario Labour Relations Board said if there was a walkout it would have been illegal, but schools were still cancelled the next day, and parents across the province were stranded. Okay?

Dalton McGuinty then decided that it was time to leave, and you chose a new leader, which is fair; that happens in politics. But what ended up happening, Chair, at the time, if memory serves me correctly, is that at 5 o'clock on Easter Sunday, I got word from the media that the contracts had been renegotiated, that OSSTF had signed a deal. They dealt with new retirement gratuities, they dealt with new maternity rules and they dealt with other issues. That price tag started to accumulate, and it looks like it's \$114 million.

At the same time, the New Democrats were asking a legitimate question in the House about whether or not the Toronto District School Board could continue to maintain its music program in the schools. I remember this because I was the education critic. Those are real and legitimate issues. They are issues that moms and dads across the province were stressed out by. I know this because I'm a parent myself and I talk to parents and I see what's happening.

At that time, we then understood that ETFO was also going to renegotiate. They chose a different path. ETFO chose instead to make up for a 2% pay increase that they had not received when the other unions did. At the time, they ended up, much later, about a month or two later, obtaining a deal with the government of about \$112 million. That threw two other school associations into a bit of confusion because they had "me too" contracts with their teachers, whether that was OECTA, AEFO or CUPE.

There are a number of unknowns, and what I'm simply suggesting here today is to look at the numbers within the education budget and to make sure that that money is already existing there. If it is costing us an extra \$500 million, then prove that to me.

I have been on this for over a year. I have been on this because it is in the best interest of the students of our province, the teachers who teach within the process, and the parents who are sending their tax dollars to Queen's Park and expect three things. They expect their kids to be safe when they're at school; they expect their kids to be able to read, write and do math; and they expect that they are going to have the best teacher in the classroom.

What they do not expect is to have their tax dollars sent to Queen's Park and have collective agreements legislated, then reopened, then changed, and at the same time watch their school boards face very tough decisions because of scarce dollars where they have to make a decision on which school gets rebuilt or which school gets an extension, which program gets to be maintained in the classroom, which program gets cut, who gets the textbooks this week, who doesn't. These are all choices that we have to make with a deficit.

I am simply saying, and I'm appealing to members of this committee: Just do the right thing. Help us obtain the numbers, help us obtain what's happening with these collective agreements, and let's move on and allow the auditor to do her job.

I appreciate the support I'm expecting to receive from the government, and I look forward to reading what that report is. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Mr. Leone.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to call the question, please.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I think the member from Ottawa-Nepean—

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Nepean-Carleton.

Mr. Mike Colle: —sorry, Nepean-Carleton—just proved my point. All she's talking about is the collective bargaining process and all the intricacies of this contract and trying to ask for the Auditor General to basically intervene, in her role, into this process. That is unprecedented. She just proved my point.

0940

We can talk about the impact. We all know the impact of education disruptions. I remember my four kids were in the schools when, every second day, the schools were locked down—

Mrs. Laura Albanese: So were mine.

Mr. Mike Colle: —hundreds of days locked down. I didn't hear any kind of empathy from—I remember the government at that time; I know the Chairman was there. The schools were locked down for a year. We went through hell—sorry to use that language. So let's not talk about the impact on kids today. We went through incredible trauma in our schools—our kids, our families—right across this province.

Mr. Rob Leone: It still doesn't matter.

Mr. Mike Colle: Well, it doesn't matter to you. It matters to people. They don't want to go through that again.

As I said, I agree that there should be some kind of clarity to the costs and the implications. I do not disagree

with that. What I do worry about is the very clear statement by the member from Nepean-Carleton about this whole collective bargaining process, how it worked, how it didn't work and the intricacies of it; and asking the Auditor General to be part of this process now. What are the legal implications, the implications on labour?

I just want us to be careful, and I don't mind going there to get the clarification. But let's just take a pause and ask for some information, even if the auditor talks in private with legal counsel or with the Ministry of Labour, because these are very, very delicate things that could really impair the government's ability to bargain collectively. So let's just check and make sure; that's all I'm asking for.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I would just like to say, could we have a response to some of Mr. Colle's concerns?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you for that. I was just about to ask the auditor and/or the deputy auditor, not wanting to put the auditor on the spot on her first day on the job, about the motion itself, whether you have any concerns with it? Maybe you can also talk about when it might be done, workload and that kind of thing, and if similar audits have been done in the past, if there are any concerns.

Ms. Bonnie Lysyk: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect to the motion and the way that it's worded, it's worded in such a way that we would look at the original cost and the new cost of the agreements, and do it from a financial perspective. We're basically talking about looking at the use of public monies under two scenarios.

Under our act, we do believe that we can do this specifically to the cost component and look at the use of public money. Really, at the end of the day, the report would say, "Here's what the original cost was. Here's what the new cost was," and just lay that out on a factual basis without interpreting whether that's right or wrong. Under our act, we believe that that is possible.

In terms of information, as you're likely aware, under the Auditor General Act, any information that's provided to the office in the conduct of our work is considered confidential, and the working papers are confidential. If there was any information that was considered sensitive to a negotiation that's taking place, that would remain confidential within our working papers. But based on the way I'm reading the motion, looking at original costs compared to new costs, the focus of our audit would be specifically on that.

In terms of time, as you're probably aware, there is a lot on the plate from now up until the December report is tabled, which has quite a few other chapters and other topics in it. The office wouldn't be able to start on this this year. Having said that, if it was the will of this committee to go forward with this motion, we would be able to conduct the work, if it passed in this committee.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Thank you for that clarification. Are we ready to vote, then?

Mr. Mike Colle: Just one other question I had: Has this ever been done before?

Ms. Bonnie Lysyk: There has been work in the office in terms of comparisons of scenarios. In talking with my colleague here, there hasn't been a comparison of one contract to another done. The specifics of this one haven't been conducted by the office before, but the office has done work where we're looking at costs and comparing them to alternative scenarios.

Mr. Mike Colle: Have you looked at collective bargaining agreements before?

Ms. Bonnie Lysyk: That's what I was just indicating. In terms of a specific collective bargaining agreement, one point compared to another, that specific scenario has not been done by the office in the past, correct.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Okay. All in favour of the motion? Those opposed? Abstaining? Okay, it's carried.

We will move on to the next motion. Who would like to move that? Ms. Munro.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I move the following motion: The committee requests of the Auditor General to undertake the following audit and analysis: What is the total cost of the May/June 2013 collective agreement signed between the LCBO and OPSEU?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Discussion? Debate? Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: The government is certainly very mindful, again, of the desire for openness and transparency, but in this particular case, I guess we'd also like to emphasize that the AG has a very full plate, and the LCBO is perfectly prepared to make the details of this collective agreement public at this time, and I'm prepared to do that.

We're also aware that the Auditor General has the ability under the Liquor Control Act to examine the accounts and financial transactions of the LCBO and that they shall be looked at, I believe, on an annual basis. So that ability is already there. However, perhaps to avoid the need for this motion and a special report done on this particular situation, I can certainly be—I'm ready to read in the details of the agreement, as we have learned of them, from the LCBO. The LCBO, of course, is an arm's-length agency, a crown agency, but they are prepared to go public. So perhaps that might satisfy the official opposition.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Who would like to comment from the opposition or the third party? Mr. Leone.

Mr. Rob Leone: When would the LCBO be releasing that? Do you have a time frame?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: We can give you details today. I'm not sure what their timetable was, but we have the information.

Mr. Rob Leone: Can we have a five-minute recess? Is that possible?

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Certainly. A five-minute recess.

The committee recessed from 0948 to 1013.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Okay. I call the committee back into order. Ms. Munro?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Yes. I would like to withdraw the motion that I made earlier.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Okay, very well. That motion is withdrawn. Ms. Jaczek?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I would like to make a motion, Mr. Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Please go ahead and read it in.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts requests that the LCBO make the total costs of the LCBO-OPSEU May/June 2013 agreement publicly available by Monday, September 16, 2013.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Very well. Any discussion? Mr. Singh.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yes, please. I would ask for a 20-minute recess. I understand that would take us to question period, and we'll discuss this at the 12 o'clock slot that we have for public accounts.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): It's 12:30.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Oh, 12:30. Sorry.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Right. Okay. We'll have a 20-minute recess.

The committee recessed from 1015 to 1233.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Okay, we're back in session.

Jagmeet seems to have switched sides.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I've crossed the floor officially.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): This morning when we broke, Jagmeet, you'd asked for a 20-minute recess—

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Again, I apologize for the inconvenience.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): You have the floor now. So go ahead, Mr. Singh.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yes. We were discussing the motion. I think that my discussion may become moot in a moment. I understand there might be another procedural step that might be taking place. But before that, if that does happen, I'll just put my comments on the record.

I think that, with respect to the motion to obtain the cost for the LCBO-OPSEU collective agreement, it's my position that this information is something that's going to be released, I understand, by OPSEU anyway. It's not something that's contentious for them to release. I don't think that it's a proper use of our legislative powers here in committee to demand it when it's something that's going to be released anyway, I understand. So I don't think that it sets a good precedent in terms of the use of this committee's powers.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Are there further comments? Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: From the government's perspective, we obviously wanted to be open and transparent, as we've said many times today. In order to accede to the request by the official opposition, we simply put forward our motion in response to their motion.

As Mr. Singh has said, we anticipate that this information will be in the public domain very shortly. So if

there's a wish to defer this motion, that would be fine with us.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Very well; thank you. Ms. Munro?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much. I want to just begin by saying how much I appreciate the government taking the position that they have. Obviously, we certainly appreciate the willingness to provide the information and continue on a theme of that kind of transparency. I would ask that we have the opportunity to defer the decision on your motion until next week's meeting.

The Chair (Mr. Norm Miller): Is there unanimous consent to allow this to be deferred? Agreed? Okay; it's deferred. Very well, thank you.

I think the next thing that we can talk about is that Ray McLellan of legislative research has been working very hard on getting to all of you the interim report number 2 on Ornge air ambulance and related services.

I think you've just received that, so I think we're going to go into closed session to discuss our next moves with that.

We are in closed session.

The committee continued in closed session at 1239.

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Ms. Cindy Forster (Welland ND)
Mr. Rob Leone (Cambridge PC)
Mrs. Julia Munro (York–Simcoe PC)
Ms. Soo Wong (Scarborough–Agincourt L)

Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes

Ms. Bonnie Lysyk, Auditor General
Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton PC)

Clerk / Greffier

Mr. William Short

Staff / Personnel

Mr. Ray McLellan, research officer,
Research Services