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Wednesday 11 March 2015

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mercredi 11 mars 2015

**Standing Committee on
the Legislative Assembly**

Committee business

**Comité permanent de
l'Assemblée législative**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLYCOMITÉ PERMANENT DE
L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Wednesday 11 March 2015

Mercredi 11 mars 2015

The committee met at 1305 in committee room 1.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): Honourable members, it is my duty to call upon you to elect an Acting Chair. Do we have any nominations?

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Steve Clark: It would be a great honour and a privilege for me to nominate my good friend Laurie Scott, the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): Ms. Scott, do you accept the nomination?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Trevor Day): Are there any further nominations?

Seeing no further nominations, I declare the nominations closed.

Ms. Scott, please take your seat as Chair.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Everybody awake? So we now—if the members are ready—are going to resume debate on the amendment by Mr. Hillier to the motion of Mr. Ballard.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Steve Clark: The way I understand it, the amendment that Mr. Hillier moved—just so people are aware—was that the words “following the committee’s previously scheduled consideration of Bill 12, Protecting Employees’ Tips Act, 2014” be inserted after “Bill 56, Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014.”

That’s the amendment we’re dealing with right now? We’re still debating the amendment?

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I just again, as House leader for Her Majesty’s official opposition, want to speak in favour of the amendment.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sorry, I can’t hear anything—

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay, can we just have some quiet here? Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I’m sorry, Steve. I didn’t hear a word you said.

And just for the Chair, I’m temporarily subbing until our member shows up.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): The Clerk is just going to make sure that’s okay. We’ll just wait a second here.

Would you like Mr. Clark to repeat?

Interjections.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Clark, please—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Start all over again.

Mr. Steve Clark: Check, one, two, check.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That’s funny.

Mr. Steve Clark: Anyway, I just want to make sure I understand things correctly. The amendment I have in front of me, that Mr. Hillier moved, was that the words “following the committee’s previously scheduled consideration of Bill 12, Protecting Employees’ Tips Act, 2014” be inserted after “Bill 56, Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014.”

That’s the amendment that’s on the floor. I just want to speak again in favour of the amendment. I just want members of the committee to know that, as the House leader for Her Majesty’s loyal opposition, I have continued to receive emails from servers throughout Ontario who are expressing their interest in having this bill go through the legislative process.

They saw some encouragement when this bill, as most of us know, was previously tabled by Mr. Prue from the NDP caucus. When Mr. Potts won in last year’s election, as we all know, he tabled this bill. I think people saw that as a very positive thing, that a Liberal member would continue with a bill exactly the way it was presented in the previous Parliament. They saw that as a signal, rightly or wrongly, that the government was committed to having this bill brought forward and given some legislative priority.

I think, personally, when I took the chair and we had a very co-operative discussion about having bills move forward through the legislative process, in addition to having some committee time devoted to e-petitions—I thought that was a positive.

Chair, through you to all the members of this committee: There are committees in this Legislature that have yet to do what we’ve been able to do, and that’s to cooperate on programming pieces of legislation forward.

I spoke yesterday to some of my members in the justice committee, who are very frustrated that there are bills that sit before them, and there has been no movement whatsoever by the three parties to be able to schedule time to debate the bills. So I think what we did here in the committee is very important.

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I continue to have individuals ask me whether they're going to get their one day of bill consideration where they'll be able to come here and give us their comments on this bill. I think it was a great move by this committee to be able to schedule Bill 12 into a programming motion. I just believe that we owe it to them, we owe it to the servers across the province, to move forward on that. We signalled to them, when we programmed this bill, that we were prepared to give it some legislative time, and I really believe that the amendment is in order and it's prudent, and I believe that it would be a very positive step for this committee to move it forward in this way.

I'll just place that on the record today for our discussion. I encourage all the members of this committee to consider the priority of this bill and allow this amendment to not just be debated today, but ultimately be passed so that we can advertise and really show our commitment to moving this bill forward.

Thank you for allowing me the chance to put that on the record, Chair.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Hillier has a motion that he'd like to speak to this—further debate.

You're on that too? Okay.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Just a second. Is it okay?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll alternate. I'll defer to the mover of the motion; absolutely.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Fairly simple comments: I think I'll reiterate what I said last week about an earlier amendment, in that I don't want to couple this to Bill 56 in front of us. I think that we should take a vote on the amendment.

I know that Mr. Potts is continuing to advocate on behalf of that bill within his community and broader communities, but frankly I've heard from a lot of people who are very interested in seeing this government move ahead with Bill 56. They don't want it slowed down any further.

If we had moved things along last week, this would have been the first week of hearings. It's that important, I think, to the people of Ontario that to waste yet another week is two weeks too many. So I'll be voting against this, and I look forward to continuing moving Bill 56 ahead today.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, Mr. Ballard. Mr. Hillier?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Chair. Just to recap a little bit, I used some strong language last week when Mr. Ballard put this motion in front of the committee to basically subvert and obstruct the programming motion that we had all agreed to the week prior, where e-petitions would be scheduled and the three private members' bills would also be programmed for referral and consideration by this committee. Out of the blue, Mr. Ballard put this motion to obstruct the programming motion that we had already agreed to.

In addition to that, Chair—and I want to put this on the record for all members of this committee and the public—there had been agreement in principle by the House leaders that the Liberals would withdraw this motion by Mr. Ballard and that we would move the ORPP bill over to general government. By agreement in principle, it was also determined that we would go back to our programming motion of dealing with e-petitions and the three private members' bills.

That came to a crash just minutes before this committee started again—more shenanigans; more dicking around with the public.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Come on. You can't use those words.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes, I can.

Ms. Soo Wong: You can't use that language.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Hillier, watch your language, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I will.

Ms. Soo Wong: It's unparliamentary.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Well, it's unparliamentary—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Chair, point of order.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Balkissoon on a point of order.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I know you said something about his language, but I think he should withdraw that particular statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: You're not the Chair.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Well, Mr. Hillier, I'll give you the opportunity, if you wish, to do it.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I will be cognizant of the vocabulary, but I will say this: The members opposite have and are continuing to obstruct the work of this committee. They're continuing to obstruct the expressed desire and will of the House. These bills have been passed—Bill 12 has been passed in two Parliaments now. It has been referred to committee twice now. There was agreement, agreement that everybody found acceptable, that this motion would be withdrawn—Bill 56 would be withdrawn from this committee, moved over to the general government committee, and we would get on with the business of the House.

As I said, minutes before this committee sat, that deal fell apart by nobody else other than the Liberals. Both opposition parties had agreed to the desires of the three House leaders, and now there has been a change in plans once again. When are the five members on the Liberal side of this committee actually going to take their job seriously and not prevent the express desires of the House to be dealt with? When are you going to come up with something that we can actually have trust and confidence in? When are we going to have some trust and confidence that a deal that is made to allow this committee to proceed is actually going to be honoured?

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I just want to ask you, Mr. Hillier, to continue to speak to your amendment please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes. This amendment, as my colleague from Leeds-Grenville has mentioned, as we've

mentioned previously, has been referred to committee twice now by the Legislative Assembly. All elected members from all parties have supported this endeavour. All members of all three parties on this committee approved a programming motion to deal with it. It's now being subverted.

I think if there is integrity in our democratic institution, when we say that we're going to do something, we'll stick to it and we'll do it. When we agree in this committee that we're going to do something, that the opposition parties have confidence that the words from the Liberal members will be adhered to, not just at the moment that they speak them, but the week after and the subsequent weeks after.

Anything less than accepting this amendment is purposeful in frustrating the desires of this committee. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further debate? I believe that Mr. Qaadri wanted to make some comments.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't know if I can rise to the level of elegant language just displayed by my honourable colleague opposite, but I shall certainly try.

You spoke, first of all, about the three programmatic bills. I'd respectfully remind this committee that two of those three bills are ours. They are government bills. So there is an organization and, as well, an allotment for our government members to deal with their bills. But in our sense, the fact that we have a major plank of the election platform, the Ontario retirement pension program here, this is what we want to move forward. This can affect millions of individuals. I think, with due respect to all the bills that are before this committee—two of which happen to be, as I say, ours—we think that the retirement issue takes precedence.

The other thing as well, as my colleagues have mentioned, we respectfully do not wish to be tied with, for example, the amendment that you have brought forward, because we have a very aggressive legislative agenda. We were, as you will recall, three years in essential stalemate of a minority government here, and we had a huge amount of legislation which is still pending.

I would just again, with respect, perhaps quote one of your own former members, the honourable Ted Chudleigh, member from Halton, who said that government bills "take precedence." He said that, by the way, in this committee in the presence of Mr. Toby Barrett. I would hopefully try to either come in below or above the previously expressed language and simply say that in your desire to do the people's work, this is our take, this is our understanding of the people's work: a bill that requires proper hearings, which we should have been actually executing as of this moment, and allows us to move forward with the government, the regulatory and the administrative aspects of it—because it is, as you'll appreciate, Mr. Hillier, a huge undertaking to create an entirely new retirement system for the province of Ontario.

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The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further debate? Mr. Balkissoon, you're next.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I was just going to listen to my colleague, but I have to say a few words.

I've sat on this committee for a long time. I sat last week and the week before. I'm very patient and I listen to what my colleagues on the other side state. I have to say that over the nine years that I've been here, I've always been respectful of my colleagues, no matter what party they're in. But when I see the party discussion deteriorating to what I call street language, it boils over in me that I need to say something.

I think we need to respect each other. The public sent us here with good intentions. There's nothing wrong with using diplomacy and language, but when you get to street language, it's an embarrassment to the public that's watching out there or seeing us perform, and I resent that. I think a little bit of respect will help us to go a long way.

The member across the way feels that if he really shows his temper and his aggression, we will fall below the table and let him have his way. Unfortunately, in politics, that doesn't happen.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Balkissoon, I have to remind you, as I had to remind Mr. Hiller, to speak to the amendment before us.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Yes. I've sat on this committee and many other committees. I've been in this Legislature for nine years. Private members' bills, we all know, during second reading in the House—the majority of them get approved by all parties, but very few of them see the light of day at the next stage. In fact, it's less than 5%. The argument being put forward by my colleague across the way about three private members' bills really doesn't sink in a whole lot with me.

I would say to you, I remember sitting on the poverty committee. The member was not here; it was an internal government committee. I can tell you that this was one of the issues raised at the table for folks in my riding, some kind of a benefits plan that would help them, because they were struggling to live on the COLA guidelines from the federal government and what we were paying in ODSP, social welfare, CPP and everything else. So this ORPP is very important to my riding.

I would say to you, Mr. Potts's bill is very important also, but you know what? I have two private members' bills of my own that I've introduced and debated, and they were important to me and they never went anywhere.

I'm seeing Bill 56 as a government bill. I see a better opportunity for it to get approved, and my community will benefit. I will tell you, I've discussed this with my colleague Mr. Potts, and he knows the government has to get its business done. So we're asking to deal with Bill 56.

I know my colleagues across the way probably have another issue which is probably not at the top of getting discussed here as to why we're delaying the process, but I think we should move on with business.

The most important thing is, we need to have respectable language and respect for each other in the committee.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, Mr. Balkissoon. Further debate? I believe Mr. Singh wanted to make some comments also.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Sure. Thank you all. I wanted to just draw attention to this point. It's important to note that Mr. Qaadri highlighted the importance of the ORPP to the Liberal Party, and I think that's fair. It was one of the foremost pieces of your election campaign, and I understand that. In fact, as New Democrats, we absolutely see the necessity of a retirement plan for Ontarians. We realize very well that people are struggling to pay their bills to survive in this society. Particularly when they're older or approaching the age of retirement, people are in a very difficult position, and absolutely we need to do something about that.

To that effect, the leader of the Ontario NDP, Andrea Horwath, put forward a retirement plan as a private member's bill a number of years ago. We didn't receive support for that bill from the Liberal Party at that time, but we're encouraged that the party has now made this a priority—it's absolutely encouraging.

My only concern is this—we mentioned this on the previous date, and the motion was brought forward on March 4, 2015, by Mr. Ballard. My concern is this: We very well knew—I mean, members of the party were aware—that there were a number of bills in this committee. There were three private members' bills—not to say which is more important or not; let's put that to the side. But there were a number of bills in this committee. In addition, there was the piece on the e-petitions. That was in this committee.

There were other committees, at least three to four other committees, that were not even sitting but they were struck. There are Chairs; there are members named from all parties. So there are valid committees that are able to be up and running at a moment's notice.

What was the strategic decision—I'm just curious about that. If this bill is so important and this was such a priority—and it makes sense for it to be a priority—why, then, did the government not put this into a committee that wasn't tasked with any other duties? The government has the full right to choose whatever committee they want. You're welcome to choose this committee. To me, it doesn't make sense as a strategy to put it into a committee where there could be the potential that some members might be upset. It's not New Democrats who are upset, but I'm just curious: What strategy, what thought process, was the Liberal Party invoking when they decided to put it into a committee that had other business, as opposed to an empty committee which could easily have handled this issue?

That's my concern. As New Democrats, we're absolutely in support of an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. We'd like to see this move ahead. In fact, we'd like to see this be put into a committee, perhaps, where there's

no other business so we can actually prioritize it in a meaningful way.

Those are my comments.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, Mr. Singh. Further debate? I have a list going, so do you want to alternate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like them to answer Mr. Singh's question, if that's possible.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Qaadri, you're on the list. Are you willing to answer?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: At the outset, first of all, we certainly welcome the NDP's support of this bill. We would respectfully invite it to manifest a little bit more prominently. I think this is perhaps, from the NDP's perspective, an opportunity to make late amends, because neither did your election platform have the words "retirement" or "retirement pension plan" in it—I do acknowledge the perpetual claim that these existed previously—

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Qaadri, I will ask you to speak more to the amendment.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Right.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: But he asked a question.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Fine. With regard to this amendment, as I say, there are a number of government bills. We will offer them to the different committees in a priority sequence. We feel that this major election platform should be brought forward.

I might, with your indulgence, Madam Chair, also just clear up the myth that all these committees of the government are sitting idly. I am the Chair of the justice policy committee; we have a subcommittee meeting attempting to be scheduled for tomorrow. We have four bills before it. The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs has been in pre-budget consultations; general government is doing Bill 31 on Ontario roads; there's Bill 17, a private member's bill, the Protecting Child Performers Act, and Ryan's Law, Bill 20; regulations and private bills have been reviewing regulations, and so on.

I'd just like to clear up this myth of idle committees on standby, kind of on call.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I would just like to remind everyone to try and focus on the amendment that we have here before us. I know it's easy to get off topic, but if I could remind everyone who is going to speak to keep focus on the amendment.

Mr. Clark, you're next.

Mr. Steve Clark: Mine is a procedural question, Chair. Mr. Qaadri referenced some Hansard; that was at this committee. I just wondered if there was an opportunity for all the members to have the Hansard of that committee meeting that he was referencing. I'd like to see the context in which Mr. Chudleigh made those comments in front of Mr. Barrett. I wonder if there's an opportunity for us to take a bit of a break while that section is being copied and distributed to members.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay. I'll ask, is everyone fine—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Madam Chair, if you wish to read the exact date, record-tracking information—

Mr. Steve Clark: No, I'm not asking that. I'm asking that we receive a copy of the Hansard of that committee meeting.

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The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Can we take the time for the Clerk to make photocopies to distribute to the members?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like the Hansard of the complete two-hour committee hearing that he's referencing.

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: I believe it was in regard to a programming motion—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: No. I want to see the reference of the discussion.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: We can provide the date. That's about it. You can go check it.

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, I'm not going to leave the committee and go check it, so—

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We're just checking with Mr. Qaadri on the date of the—

Interjections.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Chair, I have the information right here. If I have the floor, I'll speak.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Qaadri has the floor.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Mr. Chudleigh, the former Progressive Conservative member from Halton, argued in the same committee, and Mr. Barrett was present, that government bills should take precedence over private members' public business in committee. This was made before the Standing Committee on General Government—Hansard, dated December 20, 1999. I have the information here.

Mr. Steve Clark: That's paraphrasing. Let's get the Hansard.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: A Hansard request is a question for research, not us.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm advised that we're going to continue with further debate while the request is being processed by the Clerk. He's got the date. Thank you, Mr. Qaadri.

Mr. Hillier, I believe you have the floor.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Chair. A couple of the Liberal members mentioned the word "respect" during their commentary. I understand that respect is that you do what you say you're going to do. That's a keystone to respect. If you want to earn respect, when you say that you're going to do something, you do it. If you say one thing and do another thing, that is not earning respect. That's what we have seen from the Liberal members in this committee. They told us one thing, voted on one thing, and then the following week did something very, very different.

What is an embarrassment is how cavalier the Liberal members take these amendments and take this committee. That is what the embarrassment is: when you tell people that you're being a representative and then you change your mind. So—

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I do have to remind the member to please stick to the amendment.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes, I'll speak to the amendment. But I wanted to clarify some of those comments by the Liberal members about embarrassment and respect.

Chair, we all know that government bills take precedence. We also know that there are a number of committees that are not actually considering any bills at the present time. They may have some subcommittee meetings happening, but they are not considering bills, government or otherwise. If this government really took seriously and honestly its statement about the urgency and priority of Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan bill, they would have referred this bill to one of those committees that were otherwise unoccupied with legislative business. Indeed, that is what the agreement was by the House leaders up until about 12:55, about five minutes before this committee sat. Up until five minutes before this committee sat, there was room in other committees—that would not circumvent the desire of those other committees. There was an agreement that this bill would be referred to a committee that is otherwise unoccupied. Regardless of the government bill taking precedence, it does not take precedence over respect of one another in this committee or respect of one another in this House.

Bill 12—this amendment—is respectful of the decisions that this committee made two weeks ago. I'm going to hold and expect that the Liberal members on this committee will uphold their vote and will uphold their responsibility to this committee and to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, Mr. Hillier. I believe Ms. Wong—if you'd like to make a comment, further debate.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I believe Mr. Singh earlier asked a question about why this bill came to this committee. I recall last week, Madam Chair, that I asked the Clerk for clarification: Does the minister or any member of the House—when they discharge a bill, could it go to any committee? His answer was that a minister or members can discharge any bill to any committee. That's what his ruling was.

So let me remind the member opposite: It doesn't matter which committee. The fact is, it has been discharged to this committee—end of story. That's the right of the minister, and we heard it from the Clerk.

The other thing is, as the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, we know we have your colleague's "raise a glass" bill before the committee. Today, the Minister of Agriculture is discharging the bill about agriculture; it's going to the finance committee. We also know on convention that we do not refer bills, or this bill in particular, going to the standing committees on public accounts or estimates or government agencies. So when you start naming the names of all these other committees, that's not correct.

We just heard last week from the Clerk that a minister and any member of the Legislature has the right to dis-

charge any bill before the House to any committee. The associate minister decided to put it forth to this committee. This is where it is. So when you say they criticize about our not wanting to work, not being responsible, I don't think that's accurate.

I also want to challenge your comments. I think we listen. I certainly like to reach out and work with the opposition members at all times.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, Ms. Wong. I believe Ms. McMahon would like to join the further debate. I, again, just reiterate: Please stick to the amendment that's before us. Thank you very much.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I did want to add to the comments of my colleague in terms of addressing Mr. Hillier's comments in particular.

I sense, Mr. Hillier, a general sense of frustration on your part. I know that your party doesn't support the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. I also know that Ontarians across this province do. I also know that we were elected on this basis. That election is over.

The fact that you don't agree with the legislation should not be a reason for using delay tactics to allow us to discuss what Ontarians agree is a critically important piece of legislation in order that we can provide them with the kind of retirement security that they need and want. In my riding, one in five people is a senior citizen. They are worried about the future of their children and their lack of savings.

If you don't agree with that, Mr. Hillier, that is your right. But I would respectfully suggest—and there's that word "respect" again. You can tell us what your version is of respect, and I'm going to listen to you, as my colleague Ms. Wong just mentioned. We want to work with you, Mr. Hillier, but we are going to differ with you from time to time, and this is one of those moments. So I ask you to also listen with respect, as we have done with you.

You and I had a differing of opinion last week. I asked for you to withdraw and apologize, and you did. I thank you for that. So I would ask that we continue on that basis in order to adjudicate and continue to deal with the work that Ontarians sent us here to do, Mr. Hillier. Bill 56 is part of that conversation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, Ms. McMahon. I'm sorry; I missed Mr. Singh in the rotation. Over to you, Mr. Singh, for further debate.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Sure. Certainly. This is just a point of clarification just building on, if the government is serious about moving this forward—I just did a quick look at the other committees in terms of their agendas, which are available online. So certainly other committees do have agendas. They're doing other work; absolutely.

For example, regulations and private bills has an agenda. They are working on certain items. General government also has an agenda. They're working on various items. Public accounts, of course, is a separate committee that deals with a number of items. It wouldn't be the appropriate place for a bill, perhaps, in public accounts.

But there are two committees absolutely that do not have any legislative work before them at this point in time that are committees that are struck, that have a Chair, that have members, but have no agenda and have no business before the committee at this point in time. That's social policy and justice policy. That's two committees that, according to the online agenda, there are no agendas for, meaning those two committees are not right now dealing with any other work.

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While of course any member can refer a bill to any committee they want—I wasn't questioning their right to do so; I was questioning the strategy behind doing so when there are other committees—at least two, certainly. Government agencies also doesn't have any work before it, but the general use of government agencies isn't normally for a private member's bill—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: No, they got Bill 31.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: But government agencies doesn't have an agenda at this point in time.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: They have Bill 31 referred to them.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: They have it referred. A number of committees have bills referred to them, but they don't have an agenda struck, meaning they're not actually doing work at this point in time.

At this point in time, if the government wanted to move ahead, there are other committees that have work, but they're not meeting. They're not actually sitting with work in their committees. They're not meeting at this point in time. At least social policy and justice policy for certain don't have any agenda. They don't have any work in the committees. They don't have any bills in the committee that are being worked upon. Members are not meeting and discussing those bills at this point in time.

That was my point: There are other committees that this bill could go to that are actually not engaged in the work of the Legislature right now. That's a fact. That's why I brought that up.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I just want to remind the members of the committee that if we can have—I'm not hearing too much new in the last rounds of speakers, so maybe speak to the amendment for further debate. There's a bit of a list here still. Mr. Clark was in my queue. If I could ask him to speak.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank you, Chair, for giving me the chance to speak.

I felt that was very good information that Mr. Singh gave. I know it's not on the amendment, so I just ask for your leeway. Through you to Ms. Wong: Perhaps she misunderstood some of the comments that we made about discharging a bill.

I just want you to know that, as House leader, I had one item that I put on the agenda at the House leaders' last week, one thing. I know that the other two don't like it when I talk about what we discuss at these meetings, and I appreciate that and they can chastise me later. All I asked was that this bill be discharged from this commit-

tee. I think it would be a lot better for this committee's discussions to be on these other bills, on e-petitions.

Mr. Singh was very eloquent in indicating that social policy had no business in front of it. This afternoon in motions, we could decide collectively—all three parties could agree—to put a motion on the floor to move this bill out of this committee and put it somewhere else. It could happen.

That was what I was trying to get at last week when we were here, that we work better when we can unanimously agree to something without all the confrontation. I firmly believe this: that our priority should be the co-operative bills and the e-petition discussion that we agreed to.

That is why, again, I support the amendment. I will vote for the amendment because it upholds that spirit. But I wanted to give you that other editorial comment just to know where I was coming from. That's the only thing I asked: Get Bill 56 out of this committee.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, Mr. Clark. Now I have Mr. Qaadri, Mr. Ballard and Ms. Wong. Mr. Qaadri was up next, if that's okay with everybody on that side.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Madam Chair. We certainly welcome the spirit of co-operation expressed by Mr. Clark and look forward to moving on Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act.

I would just, with respect, like to address what my honourable colleague Mr. Singh said. Again, we certainly welcome your support. We would have hoped that maybe some issue with regard to retirement would have been in your election platform.

You've mentioned repeatedly that justice policy has nothing before it. I can state for you—and I've pulled the information—as the Chair of the justice policy committee, we actually have four bills before us right now: Bill 24, Bill 36, Bill 50 and Bill 70, the Highway Traffic Act, Trespass to Property Act, another subsection of highway traffic, as well as retirement savings, specifically by one of my colleagues, Mr. Rinaldi.

As I've said, we'd like to move forward on this. Yes, we'd like to invoke the spirit of, the mantle of, respect, co-operation, mutual co-operation etc. I think we've probably wasted enough time, we could have been in the middle of public hearings. The election, with respect, is over. There was a mandate, a platform, put forward by all parties, and I think that it's time that we acted on it. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Again, before the other members speak, just please try and keep focused on the amendment that's before us. Mr. Ballard, you're next.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Speaking to the amendment as best as I can, Madam Chair—and thank you.

As I said earlier, I have concerns coupling Bill 56 together with any other bill. I think all of the bills that have been put in front of us are good and honourable bills, and all have received support of the House to move along. Just to restate, Bill 56 is a government bill, and I believe

that it takes precedence for two reasons: because it's a government bill, but more importantly because the people of Ontario have said they want to see this piece of legislation put in play.

I have to express some disappointment with, not only the opposition party, but the third party, using—to quote Mr. Hillier—procedural “shenanigans” to try and delay debate and public hearings on the Ontario registered pension plan. Again, had the committee been allowed to proceed last week, public hearings would have started this week. We would be that much closer to a pension plan for vulnerable seniors, come 15, 20 years down the road.

I'm delighted to hear that the NDP supports the legislation, but I am concerned about the discussion about “Why hasn't it been moved?” and “Why was it brought here?” It seems to me that it's delay, that it's inaction, that perhaps the third party doesn't want us to begin debates and public debates on this piece of legislation that they've said is very important. As my colleague said, the NDP didn't even mention retirement security in their platform. When asked about retirement security, their leader in the election said that the government should wait for a federal election. So again—

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'd just ask you to keep more to the topic of the amendment.

Mr. Chris Ballard: To the amendment, I don't want to see it coupled together with Bill 56. I think we need to move on with Bill 56 today.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much, Mr. Ballard. Ms. Wong, you wanted to speak.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm just going to go back.

I appreciate the comments made by my colleague opposite, Mr. Clark. I appreciate your history and some context about some deals that are supposedly made.

I don't believe our side has seen anything in writing, in terms of discharging this bill or what have you. Until I see something in writing, Madam Chair, I don't believe that there's a deal. Given the situation—what's before us is a motion, but more importantly, we need to get on to doing the people's business.

Mr. Clark, I appreciate you sharing with us what you just said, but I need to see it in writing from all three House leaders. I don't know, I haven't seen it. If you could share with us what you just disclosed, what you just said to us, in writing, that this bill has been discharged to whatever committee, that's it's been decided between the three House leaders, then I'm happy to consider it. If you could ask your colleague—because I think we have very important people's business to deal with.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I ask again: to speak to the amendment that's before us.

Mr. Hillier's hand is up, but Mr. Singh's hand was up before that. Is that okay, that I go to Mr. Singh? In the debate, can I just say to stick to the amendment?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Hillier moved an amendment to impact the order of the manner in which we proceed with the bills here. I think it's important then, reflecting on the order of the bills—it talks about the importance of the bills.

I'm going to put forward some facts: First, the Liberal Party brought forward a motion without any notice. Generally speaking, if you want an agreement from other people—if you have notice, if you discuss it, it's more likely to happen. There was no notice on your motion. That's just a fact.

1350

The second fact: You placed it in a committee, the choice by whomever. It's their right to choose the committee they want to put it into, but the fact is, this committee had an agenda. Other committees do not have an agenda. They may have bills that are in the committee, but they do not have an agenda. They're not meeting. This committee had business before it and was meeting. That's a fact. It's different from other committees. They may have had business, but they were not meeting. These are just facts.

Given these facts, bringing a motion without any notice, not discussing it beforehand, putting it before a committee that had an agenda as opposed to a committee that did not have an agenda, which means it's not meeting and not doing work—these are facts which can't be changed. These are just facts.

Given those facts, I think it's very clear that the Liberal Party is not serious about moving this bill forward. These are facts. If you were serious about it, you could have met beforehand, given some notice beforehand that this was the anticipation. That's genuine effort to make something happen: meeting beforehand as opposed to surprising the committee with the motion, one. That's factual.

Secondly, if you would have put this into a committee that did not have any other business in terms of an agenda—they weren't working on anything else—that would also be a clear indication of prioritizing a bill. To put it into a committee that had an agenda calls your priority into question. I'm just putting out the facts before you and the questions that are raised by it.

The third point is, there are three parties here. I've openly said I'm supportive of this pension plan. What other work do you suggest I do? There's nothing you can suggest. You're just making a comment without any substance because there's nothing additional to it. The government calls bills. The government decides to put it into different committees. The government has full control over this. It's very questionable for you to suggest that the third party is doing anything to delay when it's the government that's controlling the entire strategy. The government's controlling the entire rollout.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay, Mr. Singh—

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The government's controlling where—

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much, Mr. Singh. We were a little off topic there. Mr. Hillier is up to speak to the amendment that's before us, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes. Just for some clarification as we get into the amendment here from some comments

that have been said—and I want to be very, very clear: This amendment and any discussion that I've had, in no way has my position on Bill 56 had any relevance to this amendment or any other discussion. In addition, it's not a case of losing an election or not. That has nothing to do with it. This is about respecting the decisions of the committee. That's what it's all about, respecting the decisions and the choices that we all made and that we all came to agreement on.

Just to Mr. Qaadri's point as well, social policy may have four bills referred to it, but it has not set an agenda. It has not agreed to look at any of them yet, unlike this committee where four different subject matters had been agreed to in sequence: e-petitions, Bill 12, Bill 27 and Bill 40. Anyway, we can—

Mr. Steve Clark: Bill 42.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Bill 42.

Mr. Steve Clark: Is that Mr. Ballard's bill?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes.

Mr. Steve Clark: Is that your bill?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Yes.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Okay. So Bill 42.

This amendment restates and reinforces the agreement that we had made. That's all. It has nothing to do about elections. It has nothing to do about being in favour of or opposition to Bill 56. It's about respecting what we had agreed to do.

I really don't understand how the members on the Liberal side expect any member in this committee to be co-operative and to have that spirit of co-operation when we make a decision together, an agreement together, and one side arbitrarily revokes it the following week. That's the essence of that amendment.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Unless anyone would like to add anything more to this debate, are you prepared—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Chair, may we have a 20-minute recess before the vote and a recorded vote when we return?

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Members, are you ready to vote when coming back from the recess?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: We have to.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Yes. I'm just making sure you're all okay. Okay, then: 20-minute recess.

The committee recessed from 1355 to 1415.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, everyone. We are now going to have a recorded vote on Mr. Hillier's motion. Would you like me to read it into the record again—Mr. Hillier's motion?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Amendment.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry, you're right—Mr. Hillier's amendment.

Mr. Hillier moves that the words "following the committee's previously scheduled consideration of Bill 12, Protecting Employees' Tips Act, 2014" be inserted after "Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014."

A recorded vote was asked for, so all those in favour of the motion please raise their hands.

Ayes

Clark, Hillier.

Nays

Balkissoon, Ballard, McMahon, Qadri, Singh, Wong.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): The motion is lost. So we'll resume debate on the original motion, and I go to Mr. Hillier.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to move an amendment to the motion.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Hillier has asked to move an amendment to the motion.

Mr. Randy Hillier: My amendment reads: That the words "following the committee's previously scheduled consideration of Bill 27, Provincial Framework and Action Plan concerning Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Diseases Act, 2014" be inserted after "Bill 56, Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014."

I have a copy that I'd be pleased to share with all members of the committee.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, Mr. Hillier.

Mr. Hillier, I believe you have the opportunity to speak to your amendment as the Clerk is passing out copies to everyone.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Chair. Maybe we'll just give a moment for everybody to have a copy of the amendment.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay. Mr. Hillier, you can begin.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again, going back to the main motion which was introduced that would frustrate the agreement of this committee made earlier on the programming of bills, it's clear to me after the last discussion that, although the Liberal members of this committee are not interested in sticking to the agreement, and clearly they're not interested in advocating for their own bills—the previous amendment was Bill 12, which was a Liberal member's bill, Mr. Potts, representing Beaches–East York. It's clear that they are not interested in advocating for or promoting or representing their own members.

Bill 27 is a Conservative member's private member's bill by Mr. Toby Barrett. Bill 27 is a bill that deals with a very significant problem happening throughout Ontario: vector-borne and zoonotic diseases. I remember speaking to this bill when we did our original programming motion. At that time, I suggested that because it was a health-related bill and a bill that would alleviate and mitigate significant problems that many hundreds and thousands of people in Ontario are experiencing with vector-borne diseases such as Lyme disease—and I spoke with Mr. Ballard as well on this, at length. These diseases are debilitating; they are serious; they are chronic. People in Ontario are crying out for action by this Legislative Assembly on providing some level of assistance and

alleviating some of the very significant pain and injury that they are experiencing, and also significant costs that they are undergoing as well. Many people with these vector-borne diseases are needing to seek medical treatments outside this country, even for things such as diagnostics, let alone proper medications and treatments. So it's an important bill.

Back when we originally programmed the three private members' bills and the e-petitions, because we had agreement, we agreed to consider all bills in the order that they were referred from the House, even recognizing that the health concerns that are addressed by Bill 27 maybe should be given a somewhat greater priority. In that spirit of co-operation, we agreed that we would deal with the bills in the order of referral.

1420

We've seen from the previous discussion and debate that, as I said, the Liberal members are not willing to protect their own bills, are willing to allow their constituents to play second fiddle to the government bills. However, we're not prepared to play second fiddle. We're not prepared to roll over and not represent our constituents. This is indeed a very, very significant and important bill. I would appreciate if the members of this committee put Bill 27 first.

And I'll say to you, there will be no further amendments. If you agree to consider Bill 27 first, there will be no other amendments, and Bill 56 can be dealt with after Bill 27. We've already agreed that it would be three weeks of considerations on Bill 27.

We have hundreds and thousands of people who are affected by these vector-borne diseases, who are pleading and calling out for assistance and help from this government. It would be a grave disservice, in my estimation, if this committee turned its back on those people and said, "We don't care about the agreement that we had. The government House leader's desires outrank all other considerations."

Under the situation as it is right now, if the government continues to push for Bill 56 to be heard and considered by this committee, it is unlikely that Bill 27 would get any consideration at all in this committee, and that would be a grave disservice.

Actually, we have thousands of people who have signed petitions about this bill. They are desperately waiting to have this bill be considered at this committee and to make representations and delegations to this committee so that we can all have a greater understanding of the pain and suffering and financial losses that they are experiencing on a daily basis today.

I really do hope that the Liberal members of this committee will vote in favour of this amendment and not turn their backs on those people who are suffering from vector-borne diseases.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further debate on the amendment before us? Mr. Clark.

Mr. Steve Clark: I do want to put a couple of comments on the record. The first is not on the amendment. I want to thank the Clerk for providing me with the

committee minutes from the Standing Committee on General Government held Monday 20 December 1999.

It was very interesting that Mr. Qaadri would quote from this committee when the ultimate decision of the committee—the way I read the entire minutes of that session—is that the bills before it would be discussed at subcommittee. This is very interesting given the fact that Mr. Ballard's motion is exactly the opposite of what that committee, in 1999—the committee that Mr. Qaadri so eloquently quoted from—ultimately decided.

I really want to thank him for the opportunity to review the minutes and to see, in the very last couple of paragraphs, the fact that if we had followed this motion, this bill to try to de-program our committee would have automatically gone to subcommittee and been discussed there. So even this document that is now before us confirms to me that the motion that Mr. Ballard tabled, while it may technically be in order, certainly isn't the way that government bills are normally dealt with. So I want to thank him, first of all, for allowing me to review the contents of this.

I do want to put some comments on the floor regarding the amendment. I want to share the views of Mr. Hillier. When I left the committee that day and we programmed this motion, I went back to my riding and I engaged a number of people who have been affected by Lyme disease, who were following the debate that took place in the House on the bill by Mr. Barrett and also some other members. I know some of the New Democrat members have been advocates for greater involvement by legislators into Lyme disease. I think it was Mr. Mantha, if I'm correct, who was leading the charge. I know many members, and I'm sure many members of this committee, have had petitions regarding the Lyme disease portion of this bill. I know I was surprised how my riding of Leeds–Grenville is almost ground zero.

I can't get over, first of all, how many people have been affected by the disease. I can't understand why we're not taking a more proactive approach. I get comparisons almost on a monthly basis with what's happening in New York state. You have to appreciate that my riding—I'm in a border community. I have got two international bridges at both ends of the riding. I have a lot of people, both for business and for pleasure, who travel across those bridges at Ivy Lea and at Prescott. They tell me, and they follow very clearly the legislation and the decisions that are happening in New York state, and they're asking me, "Why can't we take a more a proactive approach when it comes to this type of bill?"

They were pleased when I came back. I have to admit, Chair, to you and to the members of committee, that I engaged them afterwards and shared with them the plan that the committee set forward that day co-operatively. I have to tell you, they were very impressed that even in a majority Parliament, legislators were able to sit down in committee and actually plan out bills that they felt meant something to them.

They realize that private members' bills—I've sort of indoctrinated them against the fact that since Confedera-

tion—I think the figure is about 3% of private members' bills that get introduced by an MPP ultimately get passed into third reading. I'm probably a bit of an anomaly because I've had some success in getting private members' bills passed. However, there was genuine excitement from my constituents that this bill was being programmed.

Like Mr. Hillier, they wanted to come to committee. They wanted to share their stories with committee. They realized that even with the days we programmed—many of them felt that that was not enough time. I tried to explain to them the procedures that we have for committees and for hearings, the fact that they are able to not just appear and have their moment at Queen's Park, but they could also communicate in writing to the Clerks.

I believe this is a big priority for the Ontario Legislature. I've told Mr. Barrett this, and I'm so sorry that he couldn't be here today—not that I don't love to have you in the chair, Madam Chair, but I know that if he were here, he would want someone else to be in the chair so that he could debate this. He's done a tremendous amount of work. Anyone who knows Toby Barrett, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, knows that he takes a lot of time when it comes to tabling a private member's bill. He's a stickler for detail. I know that he would support this, because that's why he moved and became part of that discussion to program the committee: He felt a frustration in the last session before the winter break that he was unable to get this programmed.

1430

I know he left that day very happy that he could go back to his stakeholders and engage them and give them a date or a range of dates that this was available. Now, whether that was right or wrong, I did the same thing. But I think we owe it to our constituents all across Ontario to give this very important bill that affects people's health—and I'm looking at the member for Scarborough–Agincourt when I say that because I know, like you are, Chair, she's a very passionate health care professional. This bill should have some time. This bill should be given an opportunity to go through the legislative process.

I agree wholeheartedly with the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I beg the members to support this motion so that we can actually reaffirm our commitment to this bill, to our constituents and to the people of Ontario. This is a big deal, and I think we need to make sure it moves forward. That's what I'll put on the floor for now, Madam Chair.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I have Mr. Qaadri, then Ms. McMahon and then Mr. Ballard. Mr. Qaadri.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: First of all, I would just like to cite the request from Hansard research that was made earlier that Mr. Clark made reference to. It's actually an exact parallel situation. There were three bills that were before this committee. Mr. Chudleigh, in committee, said, "We may be given a government bill, and that would take precedence." By the way, that is precisely what happened. Three government bills were debated,

and displaced an opposition bill—they were, by the way, Bills 101, 68 and 37, and we can invite Hansard to research that one more time, if necessary. It's actually an exact parallel: There were three bills before that committee; they were displaced with the government bill taking precedence.

So I would just respectfully suggest that—first of all, we certainly acknowledge the importance of zoonotic diseases and vector-borne, whether it's parasite or mosquito etc. As a physician, I would certainly support that.

But government is the art of prioritizing. As I recall, I don't believe that was part of your platform, unless it involved the firing of the 100,000 individuals. But I would suggest that we move on to—

Mr. Steve Clark: Chair, come on.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Qaadri, on the amendment—

Mr. Steve Clark: Here they talk about decorum and—

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Clark, you don't have the floor, either, now.

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Clark.

Mr. Qaadri, are you finished?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay. I have Ms. McMahon next.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I do want to speak to the item on the floor, the amendment. Earlier in our discussion, I had characterized the procedural blaze and shenanigans that we're all party to today from the other side as a consequence of their dislike of Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, which of course virtually everyone on this side and others have indicated is an ongoing priority of Ontarians. When I raised that, Mr. Hillier was quick to point out that these delays were not to be construed as a lack of support for Bill 56 or to be confused therein.

I would say the same as regards Bill 27, which received unanimous support in the House. In fact, we continue to support the bill, and the Ministry of Health is already doing many of the things that the bill calls for. There's no one on this side saying that we don't have great respect for Mr. Barrett and his work or for this bill. We just had a public health physician who sits on this side of the House on this committee reinforce that our government cares deeply about zoonotic and vector-borne diseases. So by the same token, right back at you.

We're not saying that we don't like Bill 27, that we don't support it or, in fact, that we don't have great respect for Mr. Barrett, all of which we do. I just want to underscore that and make it clear to you in the same way that you took the opportunity to make it clear to me that the delays here are not to be construed with a lack of support for the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. By the way, if in fact you do support it now, hale and hearty and good on you because that's where most Ontarians are.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Ballard would like to participate in further debate?

Mr. Chris Ballard: We'll try and advance the debate.

I chuckle with the members opposite and the manufactured indignation. I understand it's all part and parcel of what goes on here. But really, the Tories are on the record as changing committee agendas at all times, a number of times, and I'd be quite happy to find some examples, Madam Chair, of when members opposite have, at the committee level, changed the agenda.

We've done nothing wrong. This is how committees work. You have the ability to readjust agendas as priorities change.

I think when Bill 56 was put in front of us, when it was moved and sent to this committee, those of us on this side recognized that it's an important and critical piece of legislation that the vast number of Ontario residents agree with. We need to get on with public hearings. We need to get on with moving it forward. I was delighted to see that the NDP voted with us in defeating the last motion from the PCs that would have delayed that even further.

I think I'll leave it there for now, but I just want to reiterate that this is how committees operate. We can change the agenda, and we need to change the agenda, to be flexible, to move Bill 56 ahead.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, Mr. Ballard. Ms. Wong is next on the further debate list.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the comments made by my colleague opposite, Mr. Clark. When we were debating Bill 27, I recall speaking in support of the bill. I also made reference in my debate in the chamber that a number of public health units, including here in the city of Toronto, and the Ministry of Health through the public health agencies of Ontario, already have an effective strategy in terms of education and promotion.

Just on that whole conversation about health promotion activity—this is what the proposed legislation is all about—we recently lost a giant in public health, Madam Chair, just so you know. Dr. Peter Cole, the former medical officer of health in the region of Peel, just passed away. He had been at the forefront when it came to public health, prevention and health promotion stuff.

So for the member opposite to say that we need to move forward, as if nothing has happened, that's not true. I speak to my colleagues at Toronto Public Health on a regular basis. I speak to my colleagues across the province on public health. If you go right now—go on the city of Toronto website, okay? I challenge the member opposite. On the city of Toronto website, it says right there on the home page about Lyme disease and all the support and education mechanism.

Yes, we understand this passion for this particular bill, but we also saw the Clerk share with this committee what happened back in 1999 when the official opposition was the government of the day, and we saw what the Chair of the committee at that time said, as well as Mr. Chudleigh.

So to say that I'm not interested in this particular bill, Mr. Clark, that's farther from the truth. You know I take health over anything I deal with here in this chamber. To say that we're not doing anything, I would say that you're maybe siding on the fact that—you're disparaging some of the public health units, and I don't think you want to do that, okay? Every day, my colleagues at Toronto Public Health and across the province of Ontario are dealing with Lyme disease and vector-borne stuff. If you believe these are going to be effective policies and what have you, this conversation needs to be national, because bugs and insects do not have boundaries. So the conversation not only is in our committees, but also in the chamber. But to say that I'm not interested or that this is something we want to further delay, that's farther from the truth.

I think the important part that I want to advocate is the fact that we have my colleague Mr. Ballard's motion and I want to see us, in the next 20 minutes, have some resolution to that piece. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, Ms. Wong. Mr. Hillier: Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: First, I just want to respond to some of the members' comments.

Mr. Qaadri suggested that politics is the art of priorities. I always understood that the real quote was "Politics is the art of compromise," and we've not seen any compromise whatsoever from the Liberal members.

As I suggested in my opening remarks on this amendment, if they were prepared to accept this amendment, I would not put forward any further amendments to Mr. Ballard's motion—maybe, while Mr. Qaadri is looking at the laptop, he can look up "the art of compromise," not just "the art of priorities."

Going back again to Eleanor's comments that there needs to be respect—respect for agreements. How can you suggest otherwise when we have agreements and then they're arbitrarily broken and obstructed? That is not the way to do things, not in my books anyway. I would suggest, if we want to see Bill 56 move forward that, when there are agreements and commitments made by this committee, they're adhered to, that we have some conviction to uphold our agreements.

I spoke with Mr. Ballard, as I've spoken with many people, and Lyme disease and other vector-borne diseases are a significant problem. He mentioned that he has many people in his riding who are affected and who are suffering the effects of Lyme disease. So how you can suggest that that is not a priority, and that they should be

left by the wayside—after we have agreed to deal with this bill.

Finally, to Ms. Wong's comments: It sounds to me that she's already made a determination that Bill 27 has no place—speaking of commitment to working cooperatively and whatnot. It's clear from her comments that Lyme disease is not injurious to the people in this province, that the financial hardship that they're experiencing really is of no concern to Ms. Wong. As long as the public health unit says that life is good, then life is good for Ms. Wong. I can tell you, I've had many, many meetings in my riding and throughout rural Ontario where hundreds of people have attended, who are just absolutely devastated. Their families are facing absolute ruin with the debilitating effects of these vector-borne diseases and the lack of medical attention and treatment that they're getting. To suggest that we should not have compassion, because the public health unit says everything is okay, is just not—

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Point of order, Ms. Wong.

Ms. Soo Wong: Madam Chair, I never said what the member opposite said. I would appreciate, if you're going to quote me verbatim, please correct the facts—because I don't recall that I ever said that just now.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I was paraphrasing, and that's clearly what was heard.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Generously paraphrasing. Distorting is more like it.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay. Thank you. Mr. Hillier, you've heard the point of order from Ms. Wong, so I would appreciate—

Mr. Randy Hillier: —it appears that it's okay for the Liberals to distort my comments, but it's not okay—

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): If everyone can speak to the amendment that would be appreciated. Thank you very much.

Mr. Hillier, you still have the floor.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll call for a vote and a 20-minute recess—a recorded vote, Madam Chair.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Are the members ready to vote?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: We're ready.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Seeing the time is almost 2:45 p.m., the vote will be the first thing to take place at the next meeting of the committee. We're adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1444.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Chair / Président

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk PC)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

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

Mr. Granville Anderson (Durham L)

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River L)

Mr. Chris Ballard (Newmarket–Aurora L)

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk PC)

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

Ms. Eleanor McMahon (Burlington L)

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock PC)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Bramalea–Gore–Malton ND)

Ms. Soo Wong (Scarborough–Agincourt L)

Substitutions / Membres remplaçants

Mr. Steve Clark (Leeds–Grenville PC)

Mr. Randy Hillier (Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington PC)

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord L)

Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes

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

Clerk / Greffier

Mr. Trevor Day

Staff / Personnel

Mr. Jeff Parker, research officer,
Research Services