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Tuesday 8 May 2007

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(Hansard)**

Mardi 8 mai 2007

**Standing committee on
estimates**

Office of the Premier

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Cabinet du premier ministre

Chair: Tim Hudak
Clerk: Katch Koch

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 8 May 2007

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The committee met at 1622 in room 228.

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

The Chair (Mr. Tim Hudak): I call the committee on estimates to order. We are here to resume consideration of the estimates of the Office of the Premier. There's a total of one hour and 32 minutes remaining. Members will recall that when the committee was last adjourned, the official opposition had completed their 20-minute rotation. That means that we will start with the third party for 20 minutes, followed by the government for 20 minutes. The remaining time will be apportioned amongst the recognized parties of the committee, which looks like approximately 17 minutes per caucus, and then we are concluded.

I will begin with Mr. Tabuns of the third party.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr. Chair, in keeping with past traditions, at the beginning of questions we have some answers to questions posed by the third party. Would now be the appropriate time for us to offer those, at the beginning of Mr. Tabuns's presentation, as we've done on other days?

The Chair: They'll be relatively brief?

Ms. Shelley Gibson: Yes.

The Chair: Please go ahead. Thank you.

Ms. Gibson: One of the questions that was tabled by Mr. Ferreira at the last meeting—he asked about the number of staff in the Premier's office in 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07. The staff as at March 31, just taking a snapshot at fiscal year-end: 2004-05, 59; 2005-06, 52; 2006-07, 60.

Mr. Ferreira had also asked for some detailed information a couple of sessions ago regarding costs for catering and hospitality in 2005-06. As I had mentioned in the last session, in order to get that level of detail, we actually had to go back and review each individual invoice in the services category. We've done that. Based on that review, I can confirm that the 2005-06 expenditures for hospitality and catering to support business meetings related to the Premier's office is \$13,545.96.

Mr. Ferreira had also asked for a list of the vendors in the services category, so as requested, I'm coming back with that list. It was in relation to the \$95,402 that's shown on page 4 of the 2007-08 results-based plan briefing book for the Office of the Premier. As I mentioned in previous sessions, expenditures in the services list in-

clude such things as office machines and equipment rental, hospitality and catering, meeting room rentals, communications and events support services, as well as vehicle-related charges.

The list of vendors includes—I'll try to be brief but there are a number of them—4 Office Automation, PitneyBowes Canada, Ricoh Canada, Compass Group Canada, Sodexo, What A Bagel, Imperial Coffee, Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Château Laurier, Holiday Inn, Toronto Marriott, AVW-TELAV Audio Visual Solutions, Isdale Ryane Inc., Intelliprompt teleprompting systems, MEDIACO Network Production and Communications Inc., Presentation Services, Audio-Visual Executive Express, Daniel Grant, Showtech Power and Lighting, Canadian Bar Association, Law Society of Upper Canada, Ministry of Transportation and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Another question that Mr. Ferreira had asked in one of the previous sessions was how the \$2.3-million salary and wage estimate was arrived at for 2007-08. It's on page 14 of the 2007-08 results-based plan briefing book.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): Page 14?

Ms. Gibson: Page 14, yes. So it was the figure specifically—the \$2,348,500. We've gone back and reviewed printed estimates since 2002-03, and you'll see that the salary and wage estimate for the Premier's office has consistently been around \$2.3 million. In fact, it has reduced slightly over the past couple of years. As you can appreciate, salary and wages is a fluid expenditure. In any organization there's a normal amount of staffing change and turnover, and given that we've maintained the \$2.3 million as an estimate going into 2007-08—the only change between 2006-07 and 2007-08 estimates was the reduction of approximately \$20,000 to offset the increased statutory appropriation costs.

Another question that Mr. Ferreira had asked was the 2005-06 line-by-line estimates for the ODOE accounts. On page 14 it gives the actuals, and Mr. Ferreira had asked for the estimates. So I've pulled out the 2005 printed estimates book and confirmed the breakdown of the other direct operating expenditures as follows: transportation and communications, \$112,400; services, \$126,800; supplies and equipment, \$20,100.

Only two more questions that Mr. Ferreira had asked: He had asked, I believe at the last session, if the amounts that were charged to each ministry to support staffing costs were similar; I've gone back and looked now, and they are. Each ministry pays approximately \$198,000.

With some minor variations, this has been the case since 2004-05. I had already read the list of ministries in a previous session.

The last question that I believe was asked both by Mr. Ferreira and Mr. Runciman was information related to MNR air travel. There were various questions related to air travel about the Ministry of Natural Resources fleet. My staff have spoken with MNR and I'm able to give a little bit of information to the committee members, so hopefully this is helpful.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is responsible for providing or arranging non-scheduled air services for the Ontario government. This includes executive flight services for the Premier's office, as well as, for example, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor. Flights are arranged in order to ensure cost-effectiveness without compromising safety and security. MNR maintains the allocation for these executive flight services. MNR operates two King Air 350 aircrafts that are well-suited to providing executive flight services. These aircraft are based in Toronto and Sault Ste. Marie respectively. I understand that the basing of the aircraft in two locations is done in order to save costs and provide operating flexibility.

I think I've covered a number of questions, not exactly as briefly as the Chair may have wished.

The Chair: Outstanding, Ms. Gibson. Thank you very much for reporting back. Deputy Premier, that concludes the report-back part? Yes.

We'll go to the third party. Mr. Ferreira, you have 20 minutes of time in this rotation.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to thank belatedly my colleague from Toronto-Danforth for filling in for me ever so briefly.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Excuse me, Mr. Chair. That time comes out of the time, I believe, of the third party by virtue of the questions having been posed and the responses back to that party's questions.

1630

The Chair: Yes. Thank you for reminding me. You're absolutely correct: That time does come out of the third party; the response was to a third party question. Mr. Tabuns had asked for the response. My apologies. You have 13 minutes left on the clock.

Mr. Ferreira: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Time is precious. I want to thank Ms. Gibson for getting back to us on a few of those questions.

I want to follow up on a couple of the answers. The catering item for 2005-06 was a figure of \$13,545—

Ms. Gibson: It's \$13,545.96.

Mr. Ferreira: And 96 cents. Thank you.

Ms. Gibson: I told you we had to go back and look at each invoice, so I got it right to the decimal point.

Mr. Ferreira: I commend you for your effort, and I hope I didn't take up too much of your time this weekend.

The list of vendors that you rattled off there—I'll ask about a couple of them. What is Château? What is that or who are they?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Château Laurier.

Ms. Gibson: Château Laurier.

Mr. Ferreira: And that was for accommodations, hospitality—

Mr. Patten: It's in Ottawa.

Mr. Ferreira: I'm well aware it's in Ottawa—the capital city of Canada, Mr. Patten. It used to be Bytown, right?

Ms. Gibson: I can tell you for sure which ones on the list are hospitality and catering, having gone through them in great detail; the other ones I can only speculate at. I would assume, because meeting room rentals are included in the services category, that this would be for the purposes of a meeting room.

Mr. Ferreira: How much money was spent at the Château Laurier?

Ms. Gibson: I don't have the detailed figures. I brought the list of vendors. That was what I understood to be requested, not the specific level of detail.

Mr. Ferreira: Oh, not the vendors that are on this list that you've given us.

Ms. Gibson: Sorry. This is the list of vendors. I didn't bring the financials—I brought the financials for the hospitality and catering that you asked for specifically.

Mr. Ferreira: For 2005-06?

Ms. Gibson: That's correct.

Mr. Ferreira: Were you able to look up 2004-05 as well?

Ms. Gibson: For hospitality and catering?

Mr. Ferreira: Yes.

Ms. Gibson: No, I'm sorry. If that was a question, I missed that.

Mr. Ferreira: I was hoping that you had. What about the interim actuals for 2006-07 on the hospitality and catering?

Ms. Gibson: No, I'm sorry. As I said, the books still aren't finished on 2006-07.

Mr. Ferreira: All right.

Ms. Gibson: We've got the estimates that are the interim actuals that we've reported in the Ontario budget. Those are the ones—

Mr. Ferreira: Which dollar for dollar match the estimates for the year. That doesn't really give us an accurate snapshot of where we actually are.

I want to move on to the Premier's travel. Is his ground transportation provided by the OPP?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: We confirmed that last week when we had those questions. I said that ground transportation for the Premier has for some time now been provided by the Ontario Provincial Police. I suspected that they would not be particularly partial to discussions of how they go about that, and I can confirm for members of the committee that it was the preference of the OPP that a discussion of the Premier's ground transportation not be a subject of particularly intense public discussion, just from caution with respect to security.

Mr. Ferreira: I can appreciate that, and I'll try to keep my questions to a scope that doesn't interfere with the security concerns.

The cost for that ground transportation: Is that borne by the OPP or by the Premier's office?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: To the very best of my knowledge, it's borne by the OPP.

Ms. Gibson: I would imagine that would be correct.

Mr. Ferreira: Does it get charged back to the Premier's office?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: No.

Mr. Ferreira: And the driver or the chauffeur?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: It's not a driver; I believe it's an officer.

Mr. Ferreira: And how many vehicles are in the Premier's fleet?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: This is the nature of questions that, as best as I'm informed, the OPP was not partial to a public conversation around. It may be a matter that we're able to arrange a personal briefing for you around. I could contemplate that, but for now we'd prefer to abide by the advice that they offered.

Mr. Ferreira: Fair enough. Air transportation—and I'm sorry I missed it. Were you able to find out how many times the Premier flew out of the Toronto City Centre Airport, more locally known as the island airport?

Ms. Gibson: No, I don't have that level of detail.

Mr. Ferreira: Are we able to get that information any time soon? Today's the last day of—

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The operation of King Air is a matter of the Ministry of Natural Resources and does not pertain particularly to the budgetary allocations of the Office of the Premier.

The Chair: As Chair, I think it's a relevant question, and I'd ask that if you can't reply today, try to respond in terms of the Premier's office or particular minister's use of these planes. I think it's relevant to the discussion.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: He didn't even ask about ministers' use, and now you're defining his question more broadly than he even asked it.

Mr. Ferreira: Well, no, Mr. Smitherman. I did ask about that last Wednesday, if you take a look at the Hansard. I did ask about other ministers and senior officials in the Premier's office using the King Air turboprops, I believe they are. If we could get that sometime in the future, I think that would be helpful.

If I'm to understand this correctly, it seems that all of the travel expenses are picked up by other ministries or other agencies of the government—the OPP, the MNR. So which of the Premier's travel expenses exactly are covered under this particular line item of transportation and communication?

Ms. Gibson: If there's a lead ministry that's associated with an event or a meeting, that lead ministry would pick up the cost in order to keep the costs all reported together. Anything that remains in the Premier's office would be directly related to a Premier's office expenditure. So I would imagine, when you asked about Château Laurier, for example—if that charge remains on the Premier's office books for a meeting, that would be related to a Premier's office meeting as opposed to one related to an event that a ministry might pay the costs for.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Also, there would be circumstances where, in the operation of the Premier's office, a

commercial purchase would be required to support staff and, I assume, from time to time, the Premier as well.

Mr. Ferreira: Such as trips abroad and whatnot?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Well, not just that. I think that—

Mr. Ferreira: Long-haul domestic.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: And even shorter domestic flights, where appropriate.

Mr. Ferreira: Ms. Gibson, in the 2005-06 actuals, of the \$216,548 that was spent under transportation and communications—do you see that?

Ms. Gibson: Yes. You're on page 14, right?

Mr. Ferreira: Page 14; my second-favourite page. What portion of that was specifically for transportation?

Ms. Gibson: Sorry, I don't have that level of detail.

Mr. Ferreira: I thought you had, in being able to answer the previous questions.

Ms. Gibson: No, the previous questions were specifically related to hospitality and catering in the services category. That was the specific question I took away from either the last session or the session before. I'm sorry, I didn't understand—

Mr. Ferreira: I must say, I'm a little bit frustrated. I would expect that the witnesses would plan for the questioning that would come from those of us on this committee. I would have the expectation that plans would be undertaken to have that information readily available when you're before the committee. I'm disappointed that it's not.

Mr. Chair, I don't know if that's the normal course of practice around here, but I would have expected that in order to ensure that our valuable time is used as productively as possible, the witnesses would come with information that would assist us in our questions. I'm disappointed and frustrated that that's not the case today, after a five-day intermission since our last sitting of the—

Ms. Gibson: I would offer my apologies to all the committee members. This is my first appearance. I'm sorry if I wasn't as prepared as I should have been for this. I will have certainly learned from this experience, should I have an opportunity to come before this committee again.

Mr. Ferreira: We've learned over the past five days of sitting on this committee that perhaps the briefing process in the Premier's office with regard to the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. scandal was lax and that poor judgment may have been employed. I would suggest that this may be another example of that. But anyway—

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I guess that's the royal "we," is it? You're the voice for the—

The Chair: Mr. Ferreira has the floor. I don't think he's asked a question.

1640

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Was that not a question?

Mr. Ferreira: No. I was making a statement, Mr. Smitherman. But thank you.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I thought the "we" invited us all to offer an opinion since you're only one.

Mr. Ferreira: Mr. Smitherman, I think I have the floor, and if I—

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm just filling the void, waiting for a question.

Mr. Ferreira: Mr. Smitherman, how many times have you flown out of the island airport in the past 12 months?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I don't have that information at hand. I try, to the very greatest extent possible, to avoid the island airport because I'm not one of those who prefers its operation. On occasion I have, but very, very rarely, is the best information that I could offer.

Mr. Ferreira: Ms. Gibson, with the list of vendors that you provided for us earlier, I can pick out a couple of them, Pitney and Ricoh being office equipment. Imperial—is that Imperial Oil or is it Imperial Coffee—

Ms. Gibson: Imperial Coffee. That would have been one of the vendors that would have contributed to the catering and hospitality cost of \$13,545.96.

Mr. Ferreira: And which were the other vendors?

Ms. Gibson: Compass Group, Sodexho and What A Bagel.

Mr. Ferreira: Sodexho—and what was the other one?

Ms. Gibson: Compass Group, Sodexho and What A Bagel.

Mr. Ferreira: Do you have available the number of functions or meetings or events where that \$13,545 would have been consumed?

Ms. Gibson: No, sorry. I didn't count up the number of invoices or expense claims.

Mr. Ferreira: Would you be able to get that for us?

Ms. Gibson: I've made a note of that.

Mr. Ferreira: Would that amount include alcoholic beverages provided by Compass or Sodexho or Château Laurier?

Ms. Gibson: I don't know this for a fact, but the vendors that I recall from coming up with the \$13,000 figure were Compass, Sodexho, What A Bagel and Imperial Coffee. So I would imagine that the Château Laurier is not a hospitality or catering charge, because it isn't in the list of those vendors. Given that, it would probably be for a meeting room rental, which wouldn't be related to alcoholic beverages.

The Chair: Mr. Ferreira, that does conclude that round of questioning. It's time for questions or comments from the government members. We'll go until five minutes to, and then we will recess for the vote.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I had a question for Mr. Dean. I enjoyed his eloquence the other day, and I had another question based on what he was saying. I was trying to think of something I could ask him that could get the information I was looking for, and I began to think about when we first came to office three years ago and we were surprised—horrified, actually—to find we had a \$5.6-billion deficit. We pledged that under our watch we wouldn't leave any other government with that kind of a deficit.

Deficits of this magnitude certainly prevent governments from being able to make good decisions and spend money on health care, education and infrastructure, and certainly tie their hands regarding being able to make future decisions when they don't have the resources they think they're going to have when they arrive in office. So

in our term of office we passed a piece of legislation, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act.

Mr. Dean, you clearly have a thorough knowledge of how government works, and public service. From a civil service perspective, have you ever seen this kind of legislation proposed before? Your thoughts on that?

Mr. Tony Dean: Thank you for the question. I'd like to just start, if I could, on behalf of my colleague Ms. Gibson, to say to the committee that Ms. Gibson and others of us at this panel have made an effort to bring as much information in as timely a way as we can to this committee. I think the record will show that at almost every session we have started the process by providing fairly fulsome information, and we did the same today. I recognize the graciousness of Ms. Gibson's apology, but we are doing the best we can to bring as much pertinent information to this committee as we possibly can, and we'll continue to do that.

I'm very happy to answer the question and will do so directly. No, in my experience, I have not seen this degree of transparency in government before, particularly in the process of developing the budgets.

We have, for the first time in the history of the province, a pre-established election date, which in itself puts more predictability, certainly from a public service and public administration perspective, into the planning process than we've ever done before. That predictability has allowed us, I think, to work within the intent and spirit of the new fiscal accountability and transparency requirements.

The Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act is without precedent in the country in terms of the degree of disclosure at the end of a mandate of the fiscal picture for the province. It has requirements that go beyond anything we've seen before in terms of accountability and transparency in building budgets and making budgets in Ontario. My sense is that this will be looked at as a model by other jurisdictions.

I can certainly say that the requirement that there be in the fall economic statement a report on tax expenditures is an OECD, and therefore, obviously, an international, if not global, best practice. It's sort of reflective of where we're trying to go as a government, because we want to be as transparent and accountable as we can.

I'm just going to touch briefly—you know that the key requirement of the legislation is the preparation of a pre-election report. We saw that tabled on April 23. That provides not only an unprecedented degree of transparency but it also asks the Auditor General to provide an opinion on the reasonableness of the budget, based on the economic forecast used, estimates of revenues and expenses, and the ratio of debt to GDP. We're currently waiting for the Auditor General to opine on the reasonableness of that report. It will be a first.

I would also point out that that report I think is a highly educational document in the sense that in a very concise and plain-language sort of way it outlines the way that budgets are made and built in Ontario and makes the process of planning for budgets much more transparent to the public than we've seen in the past. I

think it's fair to say that most regular Ontarians probably don't pore their way through budget documents, but certainly that year-end report or pre-election report is a very accessible budget.

The act also stipulates that for each fiscal year the executive council must plan for a balanced budget unless there are extraordinary circumstances, and we've certainly seen that bar met. Of course, there must be a prudent debt-to-GDP ratio, planning for an annual balanced budget, a regular cycle for reporting financial and economic information and a requirement that each year the minister release a multi-year fiscal plan in the budget papers that are laid before the assembly.

I could go on. There are other features to this legislation that I think are very important. But the bottom line, in terms of a response to your question, is, no, we haven't seen this breadth and depth of accountability and transparency in the fiscal world before. It is breaking new ground.

Mrs. Jeffrey: Do we have more time?

The Chair: We're going to break in two minutes and 48 seconds. You have time for a quick question.

Mrs. Jeffrey: I have a supplementary, so maybe you can think about it while we have our break. Can you walk me through the process of how the new law transformed the public service and how it changed the way you do your job?

Mr. Dean: Certainly I can, and in the break I'll give more thought to that. I will say that the presence of a known election date probably is one of the biggest factors in changing the work of the public service. In the past, around this time in a mandate, we were guessing about whether we were working on a penultimate budget or a final budget of a mandate. To take that guesswork out of the business of public administration by a well-telegraphed, if you like, election date, has significantly improved our ability to plan, to forecast and to prepare for the degree of transparency that is required under this new legislation.

I'd be happy, when we come back, to talk about that planning process, how we do that and the very hard work that public servants put into that. Of course, behind every piece of government business—every decision, every regulation, every piece of legislation—is an enormous amount of work provided by the professional public service. As you know, I'm always looking for opportunities to talk about that, so thank you.

Mrs. Jeffrey: Thank you, Mr. Dean.

The Chair: Okay, folks, we will recess the committee for the vote taking place in the assembly on the motion from Mr. Ferreira. We will reconvene the committee immediately after the vote. We are recessed.

The committee recessed from 1652 to 1701.

The Chair: All right, folks, members of the committee, Deputy Premier, Secretary of Cabinet, we are back in session. We had left off with 11 minutes on the clock for the government members. Then we begin our 17-minute rotations. Ms. Jeffrey, you had the floor.

Mrs. Jeffrey: I think we were hoping that Mr. Dean could walk us through the act and how it impacts his

employees, and he was going to give it some thought as to how to answer it.

The Chair: There you go. Mr. Dean, after some consideration during the vote, you have more to add?

Mr. Dean: I have a couple of quick things that I might add. Some other key features of this legislation are as follows: The budget must address the fiscal year of the budget and the following two years. So now we're looking out further than we have in the past. It must include Ontario's fiscal policy objectives for the period of the plan; it must include a comprehensive assessment of the risks that could have a material impact on the economy or the public sector during the period of the plan; and if a deficit is anticipated, the details of the recovery plan must, of course, be included.

That legislation has also made the budget-making process itself much more transparent. There is a requirement for a mid-year review. That must include a description of the key issues that should be addressed in the next budget, and that's of course provided in the fall economic statement. It must include information about the estimated cost of expenditures that are made through the tax system, which I just talked about a few moments ago.

There must also be details of how the public can participate in the pre-budget consultations so the people of Ontario have a chance to say how their money should be spent, but also to indicate the key areas that the Ministry of Finance is interested in.

Additionally, within two years after each provincial election—the mid-point, if you like, of the mandate—the minister must release a long-range assessment of Ontario's fiscal environment, which is also a new feature of transparency. It has to include a description of anticipated changes in the economy, in the population demographics during the following 20 years, a description of the potential impact of the changes on the public sector and on Ontario's fiscal policy, and the minister must describe key issues that are likely to affect the long-term sustainability of the economy and of the public sector.

So what are we doing inside, if you like, the public service in parallel to these legislative changes? We are always looking for ways to be more effective in the use of public funds, whether that's responding to the Premier's request to find \$750 million in savings from within the OPS—and we've done that successfully. We're looking at process changes, at structural changes and we're responding to this government's call to put in place a results-based planning framework to achieve specific results in support of government priorities, and that means, more than ever before, aligning budget dollars with the key priorities of the government. So what you'll have seen, I think, over the last three or four years in budgets is a very tough fiscal management approach to the large number of ministries, but key public priorities, particularly in the area of health and education, have been the focus of budgets over that period. That managing-for-results approach, of course, requires integrated planning and budgeting and measuring performance and aligns performance with priorities and expected results.

Another structural change that we thought important was to create a new treasury board office. Prior to the creation of this treasury board office, we had two areas within government that were overseeing, in somewhat of a duplicative way, the fiscal business of government. We had Management Board looking at in-year spending and we had treasury board looking at multi-year spending, and we thought it important to bring all of that fiscal oversight into one place, and for that reason created a new treasury board to integrate central capacity for fiscal strategy, for expenditure planning, for risk assessment, controllership and internal audit functions.

I have to say that users—clients, if you like—of that new treasury board have been very pleased with the fact that they have one place to go for fiscal approvals. Of course, we like happy customers internally and externally. The treasury board office also supports performance-measurement program review and program evaluation, it manages the results-based planning and estimates process and in-year monitoring and, of course, works closely with the Ministry of Government Services in assuring controllership and leadership in the areas of I&IT, human resources, procurement and corporate management policy.

So, lots of transparency. There are huge demands for transparency. As we do all this, one of the things that we have to do and have to strive for is the right balance between appropriate levels of accountability and not inundating ministries, departments, with rules that actually slow down the business of government. One tries to apply a risk-based approach which puts tough accountability measures where the money is, where the risk is. We're being, I think, quite successful in finding that appropriate balance.

Mrs. Jeffrey: I think Mr. Patten had a question.

Mr. Patten: How much time?

The Chair: Five minutes.

Mr. Patten: Five minutes. Okay. As a matter of fact—that's interesting—I was going to ask a question about the treasury board, because you may recall that my line of questioning had to do with some of the agencies that now have some new accountabilities related to the accessibility of our auditor. My question was—actually, I have two questions—related to treasury board, because I know there was a restructuring that you just explained, in terms of a more comprehensive role that they have in planning, especially fiscal planning.

So, around that, I have two questions. In terms of the treasury board guidelines, we know that sometimes ministries forget—inadvertently, of course; some of them—but the guidelines that treasury board has, related to procurement, for example: What is the scope of the application to outside agencies? We know, as you had mentioned, that outside agencies have an accountability to the government in terms of their annual report, that they have to come up with a business plan and they have periodic review. In terms of your overall cabinet board and treasury board relationship with the agencies: What has changed, and is it now more pervasive, as the intent was, in terms of the accessibility of the Auditor General?

Mr. Dean: Thank you for that question. Yes, indeed the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act has extended many of the accountability requirements of our legislative regime beyond government itself out to agencies. We have seen, as well, salary disclosure requirements extended to our hydro companies. We've seen FOI requirements extended to our hydro companies. But with respect to our agency structure, yes, the fiscal requirements, the fiscal framework, the accountability requirements and the conflict of interest requirements that apply to public servants in the Ontario public service have now been extended out to agencies. There's a requirement to test those, and of course those are recorded in memoranda of agreement between ministers and agency heads.

So, not only has this government gone deeper in terms of accountability requirements within its own backyard—within government and the Ontario public service—it has extended those accountability requirements out very, very broadly. Of course, that includes the reach of the Auditor General, who is now empowered to look into those agencies, in fact to any organization receiving transfer payments, and the hydro agencies as well. So, yes, indeed, over the last three or four years we've gone deeper and we are required to go broader in terms of accountability measures. I think there has been a good response to that, and that has been implemented quite smoothly and working very well.

1710

The Chair: That does conclude our time in the 20-minute session. We now have three segments of 17 minutes each again. I'm going to break the committee five minutes before the vote to be on the safe side; otherwise, it's going to be too tight.

Official opposition, you have 17 minutes.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Again, welcome. I guess this is our final 50 minutes or whatever, maybe, of the Premier's office at estimates.

I have just a couple of things on clarification. It started out with some of the comments on the OPP security around the Premier and ministers, etc.

I was at a retirement last week for an OPP officer who had spent his whole life on security. He'd worked with different jurisdictions from around the world, including the RCMP and any dignitaries who came into our country.

My questions centre around the delegation that went to the Far East this year—to India and Pakistan. I understand that some police officers went on that. I'm just naturally saying, after the other questions, that there's no question—I'm assuming that any costs associated with that trip around security would be borne by the OPP budget. Can I say that?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: To the very best of our knowledge, yes.

Mr. Dunlop: And I think that when a delegation leaves Ontario and goes to a country like India or Pakistan, they would work with the forces in those nations as well. If there's anything you have any different to add to that, I'd appreciate it.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: That's our understanding of the way it works, yes.

Mr. Dunlop: Okay. On the delegation, I know—it doesn't matter where a politician goes; there's always someone who keeps a close eye on their travel expenses and hotel rooms, etc. It's one thing in the province; one thing when it's nationally. But when it's international trips, there are always some concerns around it.

I would like to ask a few questions on how those kinds of delegations are arrived at, or how you decide who will go. First of all, do you have the total number of people who were in the actual delegation on the trip to India and Pakistan?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I must confess to not having any of that knowledge at hand, but we'll be very happy to do our best to work through it. I'm not sure whether either of my companions here might be in a position to at least offer some overview.

Mr. Dean: By way of overview, I would say—and I promise to be brief in this—these trips over the last couple of years, and particularly with the India-Pakistan trip, we saw an absolutely relentless focus in planning for that and, I think, in the execution of it in investment attraction and absolutely maximizing economic opportunities for the province. So the selection, the invitations, the work with delegations would have been designed around maximizing the value for Ontario by way of exports and, indeed, investment attraction. So the support built around those trips obviously is closely related to its purpose. You will have seen, from the external players, a mix of business, academic, research and scientific communities, plus staff from the ministries that would be aligned with those external delegations to promote relationships. The numbers that form part of those delegations we can provide for you, if that's of interest.

Mr. Dunlop: I appreciate that. You've clearly mentioned that a lot of thought went into who attended the delegation and where they went. Would the Premier's office or Cabinet Office actually bring back a comprehensive report at any time saying, "This was the trip to the Far East, these are the people who attended, this is what it cost and this is the economic benefit to our province as a result of that"? Is that the type of thing you would report back on? There's probably not an obligation to do that, but just for the benefit of the next trip, because there's probably going to be a trip next year or the year after to that country or some other place in the world, would you in fact do that type of thing?

Mr. Dean: I'm not sure that it's always done, but I can tell you that in relation to the India-Pakistan trip, deputy ministers have been asked to follow up and track the benefits, the agreements, the success accruing from that trip. So that is something that is being done. That will culminate in reports to me and likely, in turn, to the Premier, yes.

Mr. Dunlop: As far as elected members, MPPs, I think, Ms. Jeffrey, you mentioned to me that you were someone who was on that trip, were you not? Can you tell me actually who went, as far as the MPPs, elected members of provincial Parliament?

Mr. Dean: That, I don't have in front of me. I wasn't on the trip; I can tell you that. But we would be able to provide that information to you. I will, though, say, just to clarify, because I know you were expecting a little bit more, that the lead ministries are the ones who will take responsibility for following up and they'll report to me.

In particular, I can tell you that I've had discussions with the Deputy Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities because we saw a very high degree of success in discussions and memoranda of agreement between educational institutions. He has undertaken to follow up on all of those and to provide a report to me. But in terms of personnel, I can say that, by far, the large majority of people on the trip were members of external delegations—universities, business, the cultural/arts sector, if you like—and they always, and certainly in this case, far outnumber the number of people who are accompanying the Premier.

To the extent that public servants are there, they're there to ensure that external delegates make successful linkages to the appropriate officials and business interests in the countries being visited so that we can maximize the benefit to Ontario and Ontarians and get as much value out of these trips as we possibly can.

Mr. Dunlop: I appreciate that because I know we've gone through this for a few years on the economic development offices that we have around the world. This may be under the jurisdiction of Minister Papatello's office, but can you tell me now: What countries in the world do we actually have—we used to call it Ontario Exports. It has changed names a few times. Can you tell me what offices we have around the world now, because I'm thinking of the Far East, whether or not it would be a good location?

Mr. Dean: Because I want to provide you with an absolutely full and accurate list, I'll do that before close of proceedings today. That's a commitment I give to you.

1720

Mr. Dunlop: Okay, and that was countries like—

Mr. Dean: Certainly Tokyo, London, New York, Mumbai, I believe at this point. New Delhi is another one, and Beijing at this point, I believe. I want to provide you with a complete list, and I will do that shortly.

Mr. Dunlop: Okay. I'm sort of getting off-topic a little bit, but on these external offices that the province of Ontario would operate, through the Premier's office, would they actually have a yearly economic report on the advantages of being in that particular country and operating that office and what kind of investment that brings in to Ontario and/or would there be any opportunity that they would actually cost us jobs by having companies leave Ontario and relocate in those countries? Am I making myself clear on that?

Mr. Dean: You are absolutely, and my strong sense is that those analyses are conducted and, of course, we're interested in assessing the value of those offices and the personnel. I can tell you that one of the things we've moved to in creating and restructuring those offices in the last two or three years is to partner with the federal government. This is another area where I think cross-juris-

dictional collaboration is absolutely critical. We're now co-locating those offices either in embassies or high commissions.

I had the opportunity, actually, this past Friday, to meet with the Canadian High Commissioner in London, Jim Wright, who was glowing in his report on the success of the Ontario office there and the value added, if you like, the multiplier effect that is obtained from co-locating both provincial and federal resources in the same place so that they can work together to target the most appropriate sites for investment and work together as a team. That's what I think we'd want to see happening.

Mr. Dunlop: Mr. Dean, the folks who are in charge of these international provincial offices, do they report to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, or do they report to somebody in cabinet through the Premier?

Mr. Dean: They report through the Ministry of Economic Development.

Mr. Dunlop: So there's no direct line from the Premier's office to, say, an office in London or New York?

Mr. Dean: That is correct, although I will say that I have seldom seen so much interest shown in where those offices are, the efficiency of the operation and the approach that is taken to aggressively attract investment to Ontario. So the fact that there's no direct line of accountability should not be taken or the assumption should not be made that there is not a huge interest on the Premier's part in just getting every single cent of value out of those operations. There's a high degree of interest in that.

Mr. Dunlop: Obviously you would want to maximize the benefit of the office and have the most economic development that's on the plus side for the province, but in a lot of areas we worry about the loss of manufacturing jobs. I know our neighbours south of the border—there are many, many incentives for a number of the American states, and they come right up and meet our manufacturers and say, "This is what we have for you in Pennsylvania or in Kentucky or Utah." I know of companies that have actually left, and it's kind of sad to see.

Is the Premier's office involved in anything like that, where there would be a loss of manufacturing jobs, or again, is that from the Premier's office through to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade? Who would be monitoring the loss of jobs?

Mr. Dean: The growth of jobs and the job picture in general is something that is of interest to most central agencies, including the Premier's office and Cabinet Office. Just like the growth side, concern about the restructuring of the manufacturing and the resource sector is something that our political colleagues are highly attuned to. One of the things that certainly I am asked to do is to ensure that those ministries play a key role in keeping successful companies successful; helping those that are in a little bit of trouble to grow and to remain in business; and, where necessary, supporting those that are not successful. To provide for an orderly adjustment process is something that's very, very important.

The Chair: Sorry to interrupt, Mr. Dean. We're going to pause at this point in time. We will recess for the vote

and reconvene back in this room immediately after the vote.

Mr. Dunlop: That's all I had anyway, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You have about two minutes left. I don't know if you want to use it or not.

Mr. Dunlop: I'll just waive it now.

The Chair: We're recessed until after the vote.

The committee recessed from 1726 to 1734.

The Chair: All right. We are back in session for the standing committee on estimates. I heard from Mr. Dunlop that the opposition was ceding its last two minutes of time. I will, then, turn to the third party. Mr. Ferreira, you have 17 minutes.

Mr. Ferreira: I'm hoping that Mr. Dean—he's on his way back?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Yes, he has just gone to—

Mr. Ferreira: Can we perhaps recess until the third witness is able to join us?

The Chair: If it's all right with everybody, we'll pause the time. I'm sure he'll be in here—there he is. We will just continue.

Mr. Ferreira: Mr. Dean, I must say I've enjoyed listening to your answers. You display a great deal of dedication and professionalism, and I know you've served the province extremely well over a lengthy career. I want to thank you for that.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Where's this going?

Mr. Ferreira: My motives are honourable, Deputy Premier. Mr. Dean, in your last round of answers to questions from the government members of the committee, you referred numerous times to accountability and transparency. Now, as we know, this House has been consumed over the past two and a half weeks or so with an issue that demands accountability and transparency. I want to ask you, based on your experience and your expertise, on the issue of the expenditure of \$32 million of taxpayer money, do you think that there should be some kind of audit of how this money has been spent?

Mr. Dean: Let me say at the outset that there are some things that I am going to wade into at this committee and there are some things that I'm going to decline to opine on. I will say only that the Auditor General has far greater ability to examine expenditures of all sorts than he had three or four years ago. In the context of his annual year-end report, he has the ability to examine anything that he believes is material or that requires the examination of his office. I have absolutely no doubt, and I have full confidence in the Auditor General, that if he feels that there should be scrutiny on any spending of any sort across government, including that done in the context of year-end spending, he will examine that and he will report on it.

Mr. Ferreira: What about in between the issuance of his annual reports? We know that in federal practice, the federal Auditor General comes forward a number of times per year on issues of concern to taxpayers. Do you think that a similar practice would be useful in the province of Ontario, where the Auditor General comes out with interim reports, if you will?

Mr. Dean: There are situations in which that would be helpful. I think that any advice to government and the public that the Auditor General provides is of value. We know that from time to time the Auditor General does conduct in-year reports. We also know that towards the end of the fiscal year it becomes increasingly difficult for him—and remember that in the current context, we have asked the Auditor General to review the budget. He has some new responsibilities, and we've talked about those responsibilities under the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. My sense is that towards the end of the fiscal year, he's reviewing all of the books; he's reviewing now all transfer payments. My sense is that it's probably more difficult towards the end of a fiscal year to engage in those—we might call them special audits—than at other times of the year. But should he do them? Yes. Do they add value and help us to improve government processes? Yes, they do.

Mr. Ferreira: Does the present situation, where we have seen \$32 million rushed out the door in the last few weeks of the most recently completed fiscal year, warrant a special audit, in your experience and expertise?

Mr. Dean: First of all, I'm not sure I would characterize the circumstances that you describe in the same way. I will say that there is an unprecedented degree of fiscal accountability in this government. You find it in the Legislature, and the Legislature is a place where ministers are held to account. You find it in the context of the estimates committee. This is a critical part of the legislative process that looks at the spending patterns of ministries and, if you like, takes the lid off them. We have an Auditor General who is fully empowered to look at any expenditure in the context of his work that he thinks is material. I think that adds up to a pretty significant degree of accountability. That's, I think, pretty important to take note of.

1740

Mr. Ferreira: Can the Premier's office go to the Auditor General and say, "Here's a matter that we'd like you to look into"? At any time, is that something that can be done?

Mr. Dean: There are circumstances in which the government can ask the Auditor General to inquire into certain circumstances—

Mr. Ferreira: Why—sorry to interrupt—isn't that being done in this particular case, do you think?

Mr. Dean: In which particular case?

Mr. Ferreira: In the case of the \$32 million that has been handed out by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration without an application process of any sort.

Mr. Dean: Let me just say this, and I'll return to something that I said at the outset: One of the reasons that I have been around providing public service for a number of years is that I know when it's appropriate for me to wade into areas in a public context and where it isn't. This is one of them. You have my answer. I think it's a full answer.

I can only say that we know a couple of things: We know that the Auditor General is an officer of the Legislature and will inquire into things of his own accord

that he considers to be material. We also know that—and I think the Auditor General has gone on the record in saying this—towards the end of the fiscal year, he's focusing on the bigger picture: the year-end or the first pre-election report and the estimates of every ministry. There will be things that occur to him; there will be things that are brought to his attention, in the public sphere or the sphere of the Legislature, that he'll be aware of. If he chooses to determine that those are material, I have absolutely no doubt that he will look at them very, very carefully.

Mr. Ferreira: In the course of your work on a day-to-day basis, I would imagine that you provide advice or guidance to the Premier's office. Is it fair to characterize it that way?

Mr. Dean: I do provide advice. Sometimes I'm asked for advice; sometimes I provide it because it's a fundamental part of my job.

Mr. Ferreira: You don't have to give me specifics, but what types of issues are you solicited for advice on?

Mr. Dean: If one takes a step back, my job, as with other professional public servants, is to provide advice on good public administration and the operation of government. I'm asked also to, and I'm, of course, responsible for, helping governments, Premiers, elected governments, deliver on their policy commitments. So I'll provide advice, and my colleagues will provide advice, on the information, the facts, the data, that drive that policy, and the policy options that are available to government.

Governments, elected officials, people who are accountable to the electorate at election time, make decisions. I think it's a very, very important distinction to draw between the professional public service and my elected colleagues. I'm not required to stand for re-election; my job is to provide continuity and to provide for a professional and non-partisan and stable public service across political mandates and between political mandates. So decisions are the business of politicians, and I leave that to them.

Mr. Ferreira: And I have to say that you do your work very well; it's quite apparent to me.

You mentioned policy commitments. Earlier, we heard you wax quite eloquent about one of this government's core commitments, and that was to provide accountability and transparency on how public funds are spent. You've suggested that the government has been able to achieve some of that.

This is a hypothetical question, and you may choose to answer it or not, but if in the course of your work the Premier's office came to you seeking advice on whether the issue of the \$32 million that had been handed out by the citizenship and immigration ministry—if they came to you asking whether you thought that there should be a financial investigation audit on that expenditure, how would you respond to that?

Mr. Dean: This isn't the place and time for me to respond to hypothetical questions. That's how I would respond to it. This is one of the areas in which I'm meeting the committee's expectations for brevity, I think.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): You should run; that's good.

Mr. Ferreira: I must say, Mr. Dean, I think the government would be well served to have you sitting in during question period for ministers.

I understand that some ministers of the cabinet have described the amounts as a pittance. I disagree. I think that the accumulation of \$32 million is actually quite substantial. In your experience, when an amount like that is spent—\$32 million—is there oversight from the Premier's office when funds of that nature, special funds, special grants, are handed out? Is there oversight from the Premier's office in the direction of how those funds are spent?

Mr. Dean: The creation of budgets, entire budgets, is a function of government decision-making—

Mr. Ferreira: This—sorry to interrupt—particular amount was not budgeted for. It was monies that were available to be used before the end of the fiscal year.

Mr. Dean: That's certainly true. What I would say on this is that there's a level of materiality around investments that will attract attention. I can say that, historically, as I think back over a number of governments, year-end spending, which of course is a result, for the most part, of unanticipated revenues as well as prudent management on the part of ministries, offers every government an opportunity to strategically determine the extent to which that money is available to pay down debt or to invest in areas that will buy down future costs, or invest in key economic, social or community priorities. It's a process that I think everybody around this table will know and that, necessarily, is a truncated one. It occurs in the last month or two of the fiscal year.

Where there are significant infrastructure projects, for example, that we know are part of the government's plan—highways, transportation corridors, borders—and there's an opportunity to pre-invest, those opportunities are often taken by governments. The extent to which the Premier's office is aware of every detail of those expenditures depends on the level of materiality, and probably depends on the style and operation of the Premier's office of the day as well as the amount that's available to be considered for year-end spending purposes.

1750

Mr. Ferreira: In your years here, have you witnessed another government of any stripe use funds in this specific manner?

Mr. Dean: In the sense of—

Mr. Ferreira: Where no applications are submitted, where the money is a free-flowing tap to select groups, it seems, across the province.

Mr. Dean: If we stand back and look at the accounting framework in which year-end spending occurs, I think one would have to say that modern accounting is something—and this is something that we experience at the federal level as well—that actually creates the conditions where, in some cases, unconditional grants are made around which there are limitations on the conditions that can be associated with those expenditures. To

that extent, I would think that other governments find themselves in a similar situation.

Can we do better in accountability? Can we do better in the way that we approach year-end spending? I have absolutely no doubt that we can. I think we get better every year in terms of accountability. We've got some distance to travel. The business of accountability and transparency is a journey that this government and other governments have been on for some time. But again, if you stand back and look at this in context, we see a very significant effort and focus of this government placed on legislative accountability and on the powers of the Auditor General to ensure that appropriate accountability exists.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dean. Mr. Ferreira, thank you very much. That does conclude—

Mr. Ferreira: Mr. Chair, if I may, just for the purposes of the record—

The Chair: Sorry, your time has expired.

Mr. Ferreira: I'll be very brief. It's not a question. It's just a comment.

The Chair: Sorry, your time's expired, unless colleagues from all parties would allow some more time for the NDP. We're already over the time that you're allowed with Mr. Dean's answer.

Mr. Patten: Go ahead.

Mr. Ferreira: May I? I've sat through the majority of the eight hours over the past five days, and I want to thank Mr. Dean for his candour and for answers which have been quite insightful and enlightening for me as a new member. I thank you for that.

I also want to thank Ms. Gibson for her efforts. I certainly appreciate those, and those that you've undertaken after hours to try to get us the answers that we requested. Thank you for that as well.

The Chair: Folks, we do have six minutes left on the clock today. We have a vote taking place. We do have 17 minutes total, so there are a number of options. Mr. Patten, you could try to wrap up today, or we could call everybody back for 10 minutes next time if that's the committee's prerogative.

Mr. Patten: Yes, I'd like to take a few minutes. I have a couple of questions. My recommendation—and I would seek your advice, Mr. Chair—is that rather than bring everyone back for another eight minutes or something of that nature, the committee would then be free to start their next round of estimates. So I would seek unanimous consent from my colleagues when I've finished the time that I have for questions this afternoon.

The Chair: Customarily, when we get to this point in time, we need to have all-party consent. Are you guys good? Super.

Mr. Patten: My question is likewise to the secretary of cabinet. I missed one afternoon and I don't know whether this was asked of you. In my research, I found it interesting that the Premier's office and, I might say, many of our commissions, our offices of the Legislature—I'm thinking of public accounts—are rather frugal, comparatively speaking, when we compare ourselves to other jurisdictions. I'm thinking of the Pre-

mier's office in terms of its particular budget, with a population pushing 13 million people—which has a comparable budget to Manitoba, which has a population of about 10% of what the population is in Ontario. My question is: Do all jurisdictions account for their expenditures and estimates in a standardized fashion as proposed by the Canadian public accounts association, so it is a fair comparison to be able to make between jurisdictions? Would you like to comment on that?

Mr. Dean: I believe that, generally speaking—and I doubt that there are many exceptions—we are able to compare, in an informed way, the size and shape of our government operations and our political office operations across the country. It is true that, I think across the board, Ontario—based on comparisons with other jurisdictions by office, but also if one looks at public servants per capita, we are, if not the smallest public service per capita, perhaps the second-smallest public service. Obviously, it means that we work harder and that our colleagues in the Premier's office work harder under that regime. We do see other political offices—minister's offices, Premier's offices in other jurisdictions—being significantly larger, and we can say that for the public service as a whole, as well.

Mr. Patten: Having been a long-standing member of public accounts, this issue raises itself every once in a while, especially when the auditor's budget is coming forward, of course. The argument is made in terms of its relative responsibilities and population and the size of other jurisdictions. I can recall the annual meetings of public accounts committees across Canada, federally and provincially, where some of my colleagues, for example, from PEI, marvel at—they ask, “How big is your riding?” I say, “I've got about 120,000 constituents in my riding.” “What?” Of course, they have 22 members throughout PEI for a population of about 135,000, so—

Mr. Dean: That's 3,500 to 4,000 members.

Mr. Patten: About 3,500 to 4,000 members. I said, “You must get to know every family,” if you divide that again by four. Of course, they say, “Yes, that's true.”

My final question would be—you had mentioned earlier that you get together with other secretaries of cabinet throughout Canada. Can you just give us a bit of a glimpse of what hot issues you face? What are the kinds of things you talk about that would be germane to a sense of what may be common issues throughout Canada?

Mr. Dean: Certainly.

Mr. Ferreira: This is going to be gripping, isn't it?

Mr. Patten: It is. It's interesting.

Mr. Dean: I didn't want to use that word, actually. “Intense and interesting meetings” is the way that I would describe them. There are common issues across the country. One of them is the challenges that governments across the country face in implementing and working with the nationally established accounting rules—accrual accounting, for example.

Another one, which is very, very common, is the issue of human resources and compensation. We are all facing, as are other large organizations, a demographic crunch. We are in intense competition with the private sector and

with one another for good public service resources. The country, including the federal government, has looked to Ontario for leadership in these areas. Our approach to attracting new professionals, particularly to reaching young people—getting them is one thing; retaining them, keeping them, in a traditionally-organized organization is something else, and how we develop our resources is very important. As I mentioned earlier, how we reach down and make the best of the very diverse workforce that we have in the Ontario public service—we actually have a workforce that is highly representative of Ontario's population and therefore we have a tremendous ability to start reflecting that diversity in our leadership ranks.

In the world of compensation, generally speaking, across the country, we find that at the low levels of the organization, compensation's fairly comparable. As we move up through the organization to the senior ranks, there are significant differences in compensation levels, not only when we compare ourselves to the private sector but also to other public sector organizations, in particular, hospitals, school boards, municipalities and universities. Our ability to recruit senior executives in public service organizations is becoming increasingly challenging.

We're very fortunate, actually, in attracting people who want to come to public service to make a difference and are prepared to come at compensation levels that are significantly below those that would be available to them in other sectors. That's something that we're facing as well, across the country.

The third thing—

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt. If we are going to do our votes before Mr. Tabuns's motion, we need to proceed. I don't mean to be rude, but just in the interest of time—or do you want Mr. Dean to continue? It is your clock.

Mr. Patten: No, in the interest of time, I'll comply with your requirement.

The Chair: Thank you. We are going to stand down the rest of the time. I'm sorry to interrupt, Mr. Dean, but that's what I thought the committee's expectations were.

Now we proceed with the votes of estimates. Shall vote 2401 carry? Carried.

Shall the estimates of the Office of the Premier carry? Carried.

Shall I report the estimates of the Office of the Premier to the House? Agreed.

Thank you, folks. Deputy Premier, principal secretary, Ms. Gibson and staff, thank you very much for your attendance and for your responses to members' questions here today. This does now conclude the Office of the Premier for estimates.

I remind members of the committee that we do reconvene here in room 228 tomorrow. We begin the consideration of the estimates for the public infrastructure renewal ministry beginning at 3:30 p.m., or immediately following routine proceedings.

The committee adjourned at 1803.

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