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Mercredi 5 avril 2017

**Standing Committee on
General Government**

Committee business

**Comité permanent des
affaires gouvernementales**

Travaux du comité

Chair: Grant Crack
Clerk: Sylwia Przedziecki

Président : Grant Crack
Greffière : Sylwia Przedziecki

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES GOUVERNEMENTALES**

Wednesday 5 April 2017

Mercredi 5 avril 2017

The committee met at 1600 in committee room 2.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Good afternoon, members of the committee, support staff, Mr. Clerk. I'd like to call the Standing Committee on General Government to order this afternoon.

We are here pursuant to a notice of motion filed by our good colleague from the Progressive Conservatives, Ms. Thompson. As per standing order 126, I then called the meeting for this time.

Just let me clarify: Prior to debating the motion, Ms. Thompson will read it into the record. Then we have up to 30 minutes to debate this particular motion, 10 minutes by each of the three parties. I will start, after she reads it in, with Ms. Thompson to make her remarks. Then we'll go to the third party, Ms. Gretzky, and then to the government side. After 30 minutes of debate, I will wrap things up and we shall call for a vote.

Having said that, Ms. Thompson, would you be so kind as to read that motion into the record?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Absolutely, Chair. Thank you.

I move that the Standing Committee on General Government undertake a study of the mandate of Treasury Board Secretariat and report on whether the government is getting the best possible value for money in relation to the significant raises given to executives as made public in the public sector salary disclosure for 2016.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you. Ms. Thompson.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Chair. I'd like to thank everyone on the committee for joining us today to consider this motion. This is a serious motion which, if passed, will bring the President of the Treasury Board before us so we can ask questions about the salaries disclosed on the sunshine list for 2016.

I'd like to begin by talking a little bit about the purpose of the sunshine list. To my understanding, the reason why Ontario and other provinces have salary disclosure for employees on the public payroll is all about transparency and accountability to Ontario taxpayers. Again, the sunshine list is all about transparency and accountability.

Time and time again, this government absolutely loves to pat itself on the back about how transparent they are.

Every time that the opposition or the third party even suggests a lack of accountability, though, we get shouted down. So here we are today, Chair, asking the government members of this committee to allow us to hear answers directly from the President of the Treasury Board. In the spirit of return on investment, which we all like to achieve, and of accountability, meeting with the President of the Treasury Board would allow us to ask questions of the President of the Treasury Board to determine the value for money on some of the salaries outlined in the sunshine list.

Voting down this motion—I can't stress this enough, and I'm very serious. Voting down this motion would be a signal from government members that transparency and accountability are nothing more than buzzwords that they like to toss around and that they really are not walking their talk on the whole spirit around being transparent. When it comes time to demonstrate their willingness to be transparent, well, Chair, it will be interesting to hear and see what happens at the end of this motion.

Again, we are offering an opportunity for the President of the Treasury Board and for the government to explain to Ontarians, via this committee, why some of the salaries on the sunshine list seem to be out of whack with what many Ontarians would expect.

This is an opportunity to explain why the CEO of Hydro One made almost 10 times the amount of his counterpart in Quebec—and then he was absolutely omitted from the list.

This would be an opportunity for the minister, the President of the Treasury Board, to explain why Kathy Haley earned a quarter of a million dollars for working only 11 weeks in 2016. Again, we deserve an answer. We deserve to have the President of the Treasury Board explain to us what the ROI was in paying an individual a quarter of a million public dollars for a mere 11 weeks of work in 2016.

This is also an opportunity for the President of the Treasury Board to explain why seven Pan Am employees were paid six-figure salaries the year after the games were held. The public deserves to know.

If the committee votes in favour of having a more in-depth discussion with the President of the Treasury Board, Ontarians will have answers. They will have more information. And, seriously, I ask all of you here today, as my fellow committee members: What harm could come of that?

But, Speaker—I just promoted you. Don't tell Mr. Levac.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): I won't.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: But, Chair, if the President of the Treasury Board does not appear, this is going to send a very bad signal. If the President of the Treasury Board does not come to this committee, I feel, and I know so many Ontarians will stand with me on this, that the government is sadly signalling that the people of Ontario are not even deserving of an explanation for these salaries. And that would be flat-out wrong.

I would like to remind the government members that the people on the sunshine list are public servants. They draw public salaries. They work for the public. The dollars that pay their public salaries come out of the pockets of every Ontarian in this province. Because of that, the people of Ontario deserve to know the value that they have received for their hard-earned money. While this money is coming out of the taxpayers' pockets, I would be remiss if I didn't note that life is getting harder for so many of them. More and more people are being burdened every day as they become more financially strained due to this government's mismanagement. For years under Liberal rule, Ontario families have struggled with increased hydro rates, increased fees and increased taxes.

The government claims that it can rein in its spending. Well, let's have a discussion about that, because certainly we didn't see it with the 2016 sunshine list. That list continues to grow under your watch, under the Liberal government watch. In fact, this year, 123,410 employees made over \$100,000. When the first list came out, there were only 4,576 people on that list. Every year, that list gets heavier and heavier. This year, in fact, it was 8,000 names heavier, and that is quite a burden for Ontarians who are already cash-strapped to carry.

We could even account for inflation. In fact, the government's website said that if we accounted for inflation, \$100,000 in 1996 would be \$149,424. The website notes that if we were to make this the threshold, the number of employees on the list would be reduced by 84%. That would still leave approximately 20,000 making the inflation-adjusted amount. Even if we adjust for inflation, the number of public sector employees making top salaries has more than quadrupled.

The fact of the matter is this, Chair: The private sector faces a very different reality. In fact, people in the private sector are lucky to see an increase at all, year over year. So what conclusion can we be left with if we cannot hear from the President of the Treasury Board at this committee, and on the record, to explain these salaries? The alternative is that Ontarians will be again forced to draw their own conclusions, and if the members opposite have noticed, according to the polls that we're all seeing, Ontarians are not drawing the most positive conclusions about the Liberal government right now. This sunshine list has become synonymous with reckless spending and mismanagement by the government of the day.

So I ask the government members of the committee to vote in favour of my motion for the President of the

Treasury Board to appear. The people of Ontario desire and deserve answers to their questions.

In closing, I would like to add the official quote from the President of the Treasury Board from her office's press release on the sunshine list. The President of the Treasury Board is quoted as saying, "It is important for our government to be a leader in openness, accountability and transparency." So I ask committee members: Would a leader in openness, transparency and accountability come before a committee, or will they avoid facing questions? I understand the questions will be tough, but a leader is supposed to embrace these types of challenges and not hide from them. The whole point of the sunshine list is to provide Ontarians with transparency on salaries being paid to the highest public servants, who, after all, work for the public. So I encourage the Liberal members and my friend to my left to vote in favour of transparency.

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Let's lead by example here today. If you all join me just this one time, I promise that I will give no flak if you decide to pat yourselves on the back by doing the right thing and voting in favour of this motion, because Ontarians deserve it.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): We'll move to the third party. Mrs. Gretzky.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I don't have any prepared remarks. I wanted to hear what the member who moved the motion had to say, and I will say that it's very rare that as a New Democrat I would agree with a Conservative member. Often we are at very opposite ends of the political debate—not so much when you're talking Conservatives and Liberals nowadays; they seem to be very similar camps.

But in this case I do agree with her. In fact, as we see the Hydro One CEO bringing in \$4.5 million and then telling Ontarians he feels our pain when it comes to our hydro bills, I think the people of this province want to know exactly how someone making \$4.5 million is feeling our pain. I think the people of Ontario want to know how the government can justify someone making that kind of money on the public dime not making the sunshine list and not being accountable to the public, especially when you look at how, as the member from the PC Party, Ms. Thompson, brought up, he is making 10 times what his counterpart in Quebec is making. How can the government justify somebody making 10 times the amount that someone doing the same work is?

As New Democrats, this is a fight that we've been waging for a long time, saying that we believe that someone who is doing the same work should be getting equal pay. However, in this case, that doesn't mean taking someone from Quebec and raising them to \$4.5 million on the public dime. We would like to know—the people of my riding, my party and those across the province—how the government justifies the CEO of Hydro One making \$4.5 million when we hear day after day after day that the people of this province are struggling.

My colleague Percy Hatfield from Windsor–Tecumseh stood up today and talked about a gentleman who's on ODSP who's in the hole at the beginning of the month. Right after he gets his cheque and pays his rent and pays his hydro bill, he has no money left over to even buy himself food, yet we have a CEO who the government is justifying making \$4.5 million. I know that Mr. Bruner from Windsor–Tecumseh would like to know why this CEO is making \$4.5 million when he is not making enough to be able to even feed himself after he pays the hydro bill that helps pay this gentleman's salary.

The member from the PC caucus also brought up the seven Pan Am executives who made a six-figure salary a year after the games. I myself would like an explanation, as would my constituents and those across the province. Why are people receiving a salary a year after their work is done? There are not too many people in this province who don't go to work, who don't provide a service for a year, and still collect any money, let alone a six-figure salary.

I don't think it's outrageous, nor do I think anyone in this province thinks that it's outrageous, that the President of the Treasury Board would come before a committee and be able to justify to the sitting members and to the people in this province why these people are making the money that they are. There may be a very good reason. I'm not sure that there's a good reason for someone making \$4.5 million when people can't afford to eat in this province, but I'm sure for others on the sunshine list there is a good reason for that.

But the government's job is to explain to the people of the province why those people are making that money. If there isn't a good reason to justify them making that money—we'll likely hear from the government side, like they do in the chamber during debate or question period, that in order to draw and retain good, talented people to these positions, you have to pay them a good salary for that. I'm not arguing that, but it has to be a reasonable salary.

We have to be looking at the reality for the people in this province. What is their reality? How much are they making for the work that they're doing? How much are they living off of, on a day-to-day basis? What do they have left after they pay their bills? We have to really put it into context when you're looking at the people of the province, the ones who are actually paying these salaries for these people. They deserve a right to know why these people deserve so much more than what they're making by going to work 60, 70, 80 hours a day, sometimes working several jobs just to make ends meet. I don't think that it is unreasonable.

Again, I would hazard to say that most, if not all, people in this province expect the government to be accountable. They can't just sit in the House or out in public and say, "We are open and transparent," and then that be actually the truth. They have to live by their words. They have to prove that they are open and transparent. The best way to do that is, in this particular case, to have the President of the Treasury Board come before committee and be open to having questions put, and to

actually answer those questions rather than dancing around them and using buzzwords and trying to get out of answering them. Instead of using talking points, actually explain to the people in committee and to the people of this province why the government has decided that it's okay for people to be making the money that they are and explain to the people of the province, especially in the case of the CEO of Hydro One, why there is such a large gap—and that is putting it lightly—between what your average person in this province is making—as I said, some are working 60, 70 hours a week, working several jobs in order to make ends meet and still struggling to get by, putting their family life on the back burner and putting their children on the back burner so that they can go out and be able to afford to put a roof over the heads of their children and feed them.

The government needs to be explaining to people, I guess the point is, why the work that those people do is valued at less than the CEO of Hydro One who is making \$4.5 million, who dares to say that he feels the pain of the people in this province. I remember from earlier today in question period, one of the members from the Liberals' side yelled over, "Well, he took a \$2-million cut by coming to work for Hydro One in the province of Ontario." A \$2-million cut: I'm sorry, but the people in this province probably don't feel sorry for someone who is making \$4.5 million just because he took a \$2-million cut to his salary.

A question that I personally would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board is: What kind of benefits did he get in trade? Because I'm fairly certain that at the job that the CEO of Hydro One came from, he wasn't getting benefits. That \$2 million was probably in lieu of benefits. So, really, how much did this man actually lose in his salary? Again, people aren't going to feel sorry for someone who's making \$4.5 million because he took a bit of a cut in his pay, when they're struggling to get by every day.

I am fully in support of the motion before us. I think that the President of the Treasury Board has a responsibility and a duty to the people of this province, not just to say that she and her government are open and transparent, but to actually prove it by coming before the committee and answering those questions.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): We shall move to the government side: Ms. Vernile.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you very much, Chair. I'm looking at this motion and I'm reflecting on what happened this morning in the House. I have to say, quite honestly, Chair, that we know that this is yet another political stunt. The PCs are trying to use time-wasting distractions instead of coming up with policy ideas.

In fact, this morning the PCs used a motion to waste half an hour of our time to force an unnecessary vote. We were talking about Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Order, please.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is an act that's going to keep schoolchildren safe—

Interjections.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm sorry, Chair. I can barely hear myself speaking. I was polite enough to listen to when they were speaking, but they are interrupting now.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Order, please.

Continue, please.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Chair. Quite honestly, we're not surprised that this motion here that we're discussing today is yet another procedural motion—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Shameful.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm sorry, Chair. It's very difficult to talk when I'm being continually interrupted.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): I would ask members of the official opposition and the third party to show the same respect that was given to you while you were making your remarks. That would be much appreciated.

Continue, Ms. Vernile.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Perhaps Ms. Thompson does not want to hear the fact that the PCs are a party that has no plan. They have no plan on executive compensation, although they complain about it, just like they have no plan on hydro relief.

They filed a point of order on some government ads, and the Speaker threw that motion out. Chair, we know why they filed that motion, why they didn't want us to communicate with the public about the fair hydro plan, and it's because they have no plan on how to lower hydro rates.

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Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Sorry, Ms. Vernile.

Point of order, Ms. Thompson.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: What on earth does that have to do with my motion? We're talking about the sunshine list. I would appreciate the member opposite sticking to the topic at hand.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): I believe that Ms. Vernile is getting back onto topic, so I'll ask her to continue.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you. Well, you know what, Chair? We see this motion as an example of a larger trend to try to distract us from the work that we need to do. This morning, we were talking about Bill 65 and trying to advance it, and we were not able to because of the stalling tactic that we faced. We'd have that bill in front of us right now. We would be discussing when and where to meet—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Excuse me, Ms. Vernile.

Point of order, Ms. Thompson.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, we are talking about the sunshine list and accountability and transparency to Ontario taxpayers. This is what we're talking about right here, right now. I would appreciate it very much if my motion, which is accountability to Ontario taxpayers, is actually given the same due respect. Instead, they're just using it as an opportunity to play more of their games. Shameful.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): I'm going to declare that it's not a point of order. I was very flexible in allowing both parties previous some flexibility with regard to bringing in some outside comments that were made in the House earlier today. I'm going to ask for the respect to allow the government to continue with their 10-minute presentation, as was given to both parties in the opposition.

Ms. Vernile.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Chair, I'd actually like to agree with Ms. Thompson, that accountability is important. We're accountable to the people who elect us to go into that chamber and to use our time effectively. Today, we weren't able to do that because of this stalling tactic.

Mr. Brown earlier said that he was going to be bringing forward his hydro plan. That was 35 days ago, and he still has not done that. He said, "I will be coming forward in weeks." It has been five weeks and we still haven't seen it.

Chair, we don't mind debating this motion here today, but what bothers us is that we're debating this motion the same day that the opposition used a stalling tactic to try to prevent us from considering a very important piece of legislation.

I know that in my community, Bill 65 is very important. My mayor, my chief of police, my regional chair, councillors—serving as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, while I sat at AMO last year and ROMA this year, I heard from many mayors and many councillors and many chiefs of police who want us to advance this bill that's going to keep schoolchildren safe. That's what we were talking about this morning, but they tripped it up. I want to know what they're going to be saying to their local municipal leaders as to why it is they don't want to see safer streets.

It's very disappointing that they have brought this forward. I know that they want us to bring in the President of the Treasury Board, and yet that's not even in here. What I'm reading here is to "undertake a study." And now she's talking about bringing forward the President of the Treasury Board. So what is it that she wants? They don't know what they want in this motion. They have no plan.

I will now yield to my colleague Mr. Baker.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you, Ms. Vernile. You have just under six minutes, Mr. Baker.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): On a point of order: Ms. Thompson.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Really and truly, an individual of the committee cannot predispose. How are we to develop a report if we can't bring in people to discuss the issue at hand? I think I have a fair point of order here.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): It is not a point of order. The comments were made in reference to the motion that you put forward.

I will now allow the debate to continue. Mr. Baker.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Do I still have six minutes, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Just under six.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I wanted to speak a little bit to the motion that was brought forward by the member for Huron–Bruce—a motion that, as a question, has been asked repeatedly of the President of the Treasury Board, a number of times, during question period. The opportunity has been there to ask the President of the Treasury Board these questions, and continues to be there.

My focus in my time in office has been on a lot of what the member for Huron–Bruce referred to in her remarks, which is about transparency, accountability and value for money. That's the work that I did as part of my management consulting work prior to being elected to office. That's something that I've invested a lot of time in, both as a member of Treasury Board and now as parliamentary assistant to Minister Sousa in finance. It's something that I care deeply about, because the more effectively we invest our taxpayer dollars, the better the services we can deliver to the people of Ontario.

There are a couple of points that I wanted to make in that context. One of them is around the transparency issue. Part of the transparency is the sunshine list, which is part of the government's continued commitment to be open and transparent. I believe, and I think the government believes, that people have the right to know how their tax dollars are being spent.

The member has cited specific areas in the OPS, and specific positions within specific organizations. I think one of the things that's important to talk about is that we've implemented the broader public sector executive framework regulation. This was about making sure that we control and cap public sector executive compensation. The framework requires enhanced transparency through the public posting of the executive compensation framework, and it actually caps compensation for executives at no more than the 50th percentile of appropriate comparators. In essence, we've taken action to make sure that we're managing executive compensation across the public sector.

In addition, in February, a memo was sent from the President of the Treasury Board to all affected agencies to remind them of these requirements. We made it clear that executives won't be allowed to receive the following: payments or benefits provided in lieu of perquisites; signing bonuses; retention bonuses; cash housing allowances; and insured benefits not generally provided to non-executive managers.

These are tangible examples of steps that have been taken by the President of the Treasury Board and by the government to make sure that we control executive compensation, that we provide transparency and that we provide value for taxpayer dollars.

The President of the Treasury Board has been very clear. Ontario public sector salaries were frozen in 2012 and have remained virtually unchanged since then. We've taken care to do the best possible job in managing compensation as we negotiate labour agreements as well. That's why since 2012, the average annual negotiated wage increase has been far less than our comparators, at 0.6%, lower than the federal public sector in Ontario,

which is at 1.7%, Ontario's municipal public sector at 1.8%, and the private sector in Ontario, which is at 1.9%.

These are examples of how we've taken action on managing taxpayer dollars wisely and managing executive compensation down.

Ontarians expect and deserve to have value for money. They also deserve to have qualified individuals in the roles in the public sector who are leading the provision of the services that are so important and that we debate in the Legislature every day. That's why I think it's important to note also that, in addition to having a highly qualified public service, which we do, we also have the lowest per capita spending of any province.

When a submission to the broader public sector executive compensation framework, that I referred to earlier, is not in compliance, just like the minister did with Ontario's colleges, all non-compliant proposals will be rejected, and we will keep salaries frozen and send those organizations back to the drawing board. Salaries will remain frozen if organizations don't comply with the regulation, if the salary proposals aren't modest, or if employers don't provide the public with enough transparency and information related to their proposals.

I just want to be very clear in summarizing and saying that it's our expectation of the public sector that every dollar that is spent will be spent wisely, with good intention, with consideration. I talked about how I came to office committed to work on that, and I've outlined a number of specific steps we've taken to manage executive compensation, get value for money and ensure transparency.

With that, I think I have about a minute left, Chair, or a little bit less?

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Thirty seconds.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thirty seconds? Can I pass it on to the member for Barrie for a moment?

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Ms. Hoggarth.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you. As was stated, it's our expectation of the broader public sector that every dollar of public money should be spent with good intention and consideration. We will continue to monitor the implementation of the executive compensation framework.

We know what this motion is really about. It's about partisan attacks on the civil service, to try to score political points. Ontarians remember that it was the PCs, time and time again during election cycles—

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you very much. That concludes debate.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Chair, I just want—

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): There's no more debate, right?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Okay. Can I have a recorded vote?

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Yes, that is in order.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): I'm now required to put the question forward on Ms. Thompson's motion. As

per standing order 126, just to let members know, a motion that requests a study and a report must be adopted by at least two thirds of the committee, excluding myself as Chair, of course.

I'm going to call for the vote right now on Ms. Thompson's motion.

Ayes

Gretzky, Munro, Thompson.

Nays

Anderson, Baker, Colle, Hoggarth, Vernile.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): I declare the motion defeated.

I want to thank all members of the committee for their work today, as the business is concluded. I wish everyone a great afternoon. This meeting is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1630.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

Mr. Granville Anderson (Durham L)

Mr. Granville Anderson (Durham L)

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre L)

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton–Lawrence L)

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