



No. 17B

N° 17B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
Second Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
Deuxième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 16 May 2001

Mercredi 16 mai 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 16 May 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 16 mai 2001

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC SERVICE STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT
À LA FONCTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 15, 2001, on the motion for second reading of Bill 25, An Act to amend the Public Service Act and the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act, 1993 / Projet de loi 25, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la fonction publique et la Loi de 1993 sur la négociation collective des employés de la Couronne.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It is good to be here this evening and to be sharing a few thoughts on this, yet another bill taking us down a road that is becoming all too familiar to those of us watching the unfolding of the agenda of this government, which is primarily about a couple of things.

One is reducing the involvement of government in the life of the citizens of this province, getting it out of areas where traditionally, over the years, it was deemed by all of us around this place to be the most appropriate approach to offering public services, making sure we were supporting the common effort and the common good of each person who called Ontario home, and making sure those services were provided across the province in every jurisdiction in an equitable and accessible way so that those services weren't so expensive that some people could access them and others couldn't.

It was a style of life, a way of organizing community, a way of serving each other that stands out very obviously as something that serves this province well no matter how you look at it. People around the world trying to get a handle on how they might best set up government and the delivery of public services and meet the needs of their constituents, look to Canada and Ontario as an example of how you do that in a cost-effective and efficient way, in a way that speaks to accessibility and to inclusion, something I think this government needs to take a really close look at.

There are other jurisdictions around the world in this day and age that are doing very well with their economies which have not forgotten that a good economy

always works for all people, always includes all people, and that at the end of the day, by way of the wealth and goods that are generated and created by the contribution of all people, those goods are shared in a way that reflects an understanding of the term "inclusion."

We have before us here this evening, and have had for a short time now, another piece of legislation by this government that will clear the path to walking away from that very valuable and time-proven approach to the delivery of services to the people of this province.

When the government first came to power in 1995, full of the excitement that comes with the kind of election victory they had—nobody, I think, expected them to win in the way they did, not unlike when we came to power in 1990—full of the excitement and energy and enthusiasm and commitment that comes with that kind of victory, they began to move very quickly to make their mark on the common life of this community, began to move in a very aggressive and not very well thought out way to implement their agenda of, yes, tax breaks, primarily for those who make the most money, reducing the involvement and ability of government to serve people across the province—an agenda that began to pick winners and losers.

1850

It's interesting that where the private sector is concerned and where business is concerned, this government is on the record, time and time again, as saying, "Where the market is concerned and business is concerned, we shouldn't be out there, as government, helping, facilitating, supporting, working with businesses," because in their view that was picking winners and losers. We could have a discussion about that on another occasion, perhaps, because I have some real, grave concern about the lack of interest and involvement and understanding by this government re how it could and should be out there giving leadership and acting in partnership and co-operation with communities and organizations and financial institutions and businesses to make sure our economy continues to stay strong no matter what comes at us by way of an upswing or a downswing in the global experience or—most important here in Canada and in Ontario—what happens across the border in the US. But this government chooses—ideologically, I suggest—not to want to be involved or give leadership, because they feel that is picking winners and losers.

From another perspective, they don't mind picking winners and losers. They don't mind pointing to various sectors of our society and saying to them, "You're not living up to your capacity. You're not contributing in the

way you have the potential to contribute.” As a matter of fact, in some instances they’re saying to some folks, “You’re getting in the way of progress.” One group, of course, is the poor. One of the things they did very early in their mandate still shocks me to this day: all of us woke up one morning in July, not even a month after the Harris government had been elected to power, to find they were moving to take away 21.6% of the income of the most vulnerable and most at risk of our families. They felt this would somehow stimulate them, encourage them to get out and get work, as if they weren’t trying to do that already, as if they weren’t doing all in their power to make sure there were enough resources in the home to look after their children as it was, as if, somehow magically, taking the money away from them would make them less a hindrance to progress in that community or across this province.

I think this speaks to the short-sightedness in some of the understanding and approach this government takes to some of these very difficult, challenging, complicated and important considerations that we, the elected, have a responsibility to be very thoughtful and intelligent about. But they found out that when you do that, you create more problems in the long run than you solve. Of course, the statistics and reports and the evidence are beginning to show that their approach to dealing with the poor and the vulnerable in our province is, in fact, creating more poverty and deeper poverty and wider poverty than we’ve seen in our history.

They realized, then, that they needed to do something different. So instead of coming back here and having a conversation about how we might do that better and differently, how we might pull some people together around the challenge that was presented there and perhaps look at some of the studies that had been done over a number of years around the question of how you better serve the general populace and those in the populace who need special services perhaps more than others, they decided to bring in a private sector corporation, Andersen Consulting. This gets us to where we are today, which is Bill 25, an attempt by this government to put in place further aids to their contracting out more and more of the work that we in this place have a responsibility to oversee and manage and, at the end of the day, be held accountable or responsible for the value of that product as it’s rolled out.

The government, in their push to target people, to reduce government, to turn over the operation of this province in many significant ways to the private sector—many of them their friends and benefactors and supporters—found that it wasn’t that easy. There were difficulties; there were challenges. There were things that they didn’t think out fully. This bill is another example of this government coming back, after the fact, to try to correct or put in place further legislation—actually I would suggest to you, after all we’ve heard over the last five or six years about red tape—further red tape in some significant and important ways so that they might be able to turn over more and more of the operation of this place

to their friends and benefactors out there in the private sector instead, as I said before, of sitting down with the stakeholders, with those who are going to be most affected by decisions that this government makes and trying to figure out how we might do things more intelligently, yes, more cost-effectively, more efficiently.

It’s an ideological, very narrow drive that we see here to turn the operation of government over to the private sector, to target groups of people as being problems so that you can move them out of the way and then get on with the business of making money, I guess, creating wealth and turning that over to a smaller and smaller number of people and providing less and less service through the public sector to communities across the province while more and more allowing businesses to sell services so that they not only get the money that we put into it by way of the public purse to provide the service, but now with a lot of those services, by way of extra billing or fees or licences of various sorts, these corporations can make ever increasingly more money.

As you know, that which drives government, the rationale for government, the motivation for government and the services that government delivers and the motivation for employees who work for government—not always focused on the bottom line and how you can create or generate more profit—is much different than the motivation or the rationale that a private sector entity or enterprise would bring to a particular challenge or business or service delivery model. I think that’s why you’re beginning to see in this province, as this agenda rolls out, more and more anxiety out there among workers, more and more anxiety in the leadership of communities and in some of the institutions that used to be the beacons of everything efficient and right, such as school boards and the boards of governors of colleges and universities. So this government continues to take us down that road.

1900

This bill will facilitate the privatization of government operations by making it more attractive to the private sector to take over the management of government employees, where they a few years ago in some sectors moved out and turned over, by way of contract, services to the private sector only to realize the hands of those corporations and businesses were tied somewhat by some of the regulation that was still in place, because government at the end of the day will still be or should still be responsible and accountable. They found that it wasn’t as easy as they thought it was going to be. The companies that they turned these contracts over to found at the end of the day that it wasn’t as lucrative as they thought it was going to be, so they came back and said to the government, “You’ve got to make some changes. You’ve got to make it easier. You’ve got to cut this red tape here and that red tape there so we can deliver these services in a fashion that sees us able to make more money doing it.”

Anybody who understands how that works or how that has worked knows there is only one place that these private sector operators can actually at the end of the day

make money, because they still have to buy their goods and services the same as government does in the communities in which they exist, and they still have to pay rent for their facilities and buy vehicles at the same cost as anybody else. The bottom line here is, they want to make their workers work for less and thereby generate more in the bottom line of the company they serve.

This isn't about serving people. This isn't about improving services to people. The example I used a few minutes ago of turning the delivery of social services over to the multinational corporation, Andersen Consulting, now morphing into Accenture, is a perfect one of that, where a body of people elected from across this province, from different political persuasions, from different parts of the province, is gathered here to act as the conscience of the community of Ontario to deliver programs. There probably isn't anything we do that is more important or fundamental to the development of a caring, civil and intelligent society than how we look after those who are most vulnerable and most at risk.

So what do we in this place? Because there was a fear on that side that those of us on this side who are often labelled as bleeding hearts might have too much influence in terms of how we deliver those programs, we might bring—

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): You're not a bleeding heart.

Mr Martin: Yes, I am a bleeding heart, Wayne, and I'm proud of it.

If we have too much say in how those programs should be delivered, it might cost government a little bit more. It might not be in keeping with the downsizing of government that these folks feel is necessary for the economy to boom the way they expect it will—"Then we'll just take it right out of there altogether and we'll turn it over to Andersen Consulting and they'll do a good job."

You should have understood from the beginning, and maybe you did but you weren't saying anything, that what we're beginning to realize out there is that Andersen Consulting, as will be most of the private sector operations that will take over because of the introduction and passing of this bill, won't be about improving services; they won't be about making sure the services we deliver as a community of people on behalf of our constituents are the best they can be. They'll be about making sure they're, yes, efficient and delivered in a way that smacks of getting the most you possibly can, never mind the health and safety concerns, out of your employees. But more than anything they'll be about, "How do we make some money out of this?"

The contract this government has with Andersen Consulting is about Andersen Consulting getting a percentage of every dollar they are able to claw out of the hands of the families and children who are among the most vulnerable and most at risk in our communities today, and that, I dare say, will eventually come back to haunt all of us.

It's a huge mistake. I suggest, by passing this Bill 25 and making it ever more easy for this government to move on its agenda of turning the operation of government and the delivery of government services over to the private sector; in fact we will wear the results and it won't be a happy day.

That's one part of this bill. There are a couple of other parts we could spend 20 minutes on: the one where this government is giving thanks to the Ontario Provincial Police Association for having supported them in the last election by making it easier for them to move in and take over some of the support workers in OPP offices across this province, giving them the right, legislatively, to raid a brother or sister union so that they can collect at the end of the day, it says here, over \$1 million in union dues.

You guys are interesting. On the one hand you criticize us for working in tandem and in partnership with organized labour and taking money from them to help us run our campaigns, working in this place to make sure they are allowed to do that which they do best, which is organize workers so they can make a decent wage, have benefits and pensions and have safe workplaces, and then bring that forward and make it the order of the day for every workplace across this province by way of labour and employment legislation. And yet, here they are themselves with their own particular friendly, hand-picked unions, most of them in the policing industry, saying to them, "Thank you very much for your support during the last provincial election. Here's a little gift. You can go out now, once we've passed Bill 25, and virtually, without any concern or worry about legislation, raid another union's members and thereby collect over \$1 million."

I say this bill, given that it facilitates the agenda of this government, will not in the long run service any of us very well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I was interested in the presentation made by the member for Sault Ste Marie. He was, as usual, talking about the push of our government to reduce the size of government and move a lot of that out into the private sector. I stand for that. I'm very proud of the fact that we are doing quite a bit of that.

He talks about running into difficulties and challenges. Whenever you make challenges, there is no question that there are difficulties in challenges. I can tell you, if we waited until it was perfect, it probably wouldn't happen. That's what a lot of governments do. They sit there, they wait and wait, they jig and rework and then finally they roll it out and, lo and behold, it's probably not perfect then either.

Some of our philosophy is, if it could be 90%, 95% or 98% right, then let's get it out there and we can fine-tune it later on. Lo and behold, an awful lot of things we rolled out worked very well. Yes, some had to be fine-tuned, there's no question, but at least we had the intestinal fortitude to try a lot of things and get them out there.

I hear from the member for Sault Ste Marie that he is really concerned about those corporations, that they might make a profit and how terrible that might be. It's going to cost as much as it did before, with the civil service doing it, and then there's going to be a profit added on. That isn't exactly the way it works. It's been proven in many other jurisdictions, and we're finding that very true here.

I think of the maintenance of highways. Yes, that first year or so there were a few hiccups, but I look at the maintenance of the 401 in my area and it's working extremely well, particularly in this past winter with the weather being pretty rough.

He also commented that this bill is not about improving services to people. That's what this bill is all about: to give flexibility so it can be innovative to our civil service, so that in fact we can improve customer service. Their hands have been tied in the past. They won't be in the future.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I'd like to congratulate the member for Sault Ste Marie for his very thoughtful debate on this bill. Actually, I'd like to acknowledge the temperament change of the member for Northumberland: much more reasoned debate on bills as compared to the past. I hope that doesn't change.

I'd like to pick up on one of his phrases, that you had the "intestinal fortitude." I'd like to refer to explanatory note 3 and point out an inconsistency.

"Proposed subsection 22(4.1) of the act clarifies that the giving of reasonable notice or compensation in lieu of reasonable notice is not a precondition to be met before a public servant can be released,"—and here's the important part—"and that a public servant who has been released shall not be reinstated."

The inconsistency is this: a public sector CEO who is let go receives a great, big, huge severance and can be reinstated within the public sector within the province of Ontario. About a year ago I introduced a bill, the severance bill, which was passed unanimously by all three parties and which died because this Legislature was delayed by this government, by this Premier, which would have stopped those golden handshakes.

1910

Earlier today I introduced a simpler bill which would just publish the severance packages of public sector CEOs. What's good for the goose should be good for the gander. If public servants who are unionized are treated this way, public sector CEOs should also be accountable. Again, using the member for Northumberland's words, I hope the government has the intestinal fortitude to actually take the bill, make it their own and pass it quickly so we don't have these golden handshakes across the province where CEOs mess up, are given hundreds of thousands of dollars to leave quietly and we, the public, don't even have the right to pick up the phone and ask how much their severance package was.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I agree with the premise of the member for Sault Ste Marie that

the government brings this bill as another mechanism to get to the rush of privatization, to figure out how to privatize everything that moves.

I want to bring to light one experience we know of this government since 1995 where they have privatized and bring to the record what has happened. In 1995-96 the government said, "We are going to move to privatize highway maintenance across Ontario." There used to be a system that said that 50% of the work that was being done to maintain our highways across the province was done by MTO employees, and 50% was contracted out to the private sector to supplement the work of the MTO. That way, you had the best of both worlds. We, as a government, thought that was a very reasoned way to do things.

In 1995-96 the government said, "We're going to move to privatization." When they moved to privatize, the Minister of Finance of the day, Ernie Eves, and the then-Minister of Transportation, Mr Turnbull, said, "We are not going to do this and we will reverse privatization if we can't save at least 2% for the taxpayers of Ontario." Here we are, fully six years after the fact, paying more for highway maintenance than ever before, not because there's more snow, not because the government has put more plows out, but because we're getting bigger bills from the private sector.

The worst part is, we're not even getting better service. We are now having closures of highways I can speak of across northern Ontario where we never used to have them before. Highway 11 from Hearst down to the Kapuskasing-Timmins area is very seldom closed in the winter. I don't remember it closing in the period of at least 10 years during the time I was driving. But under the privatization model, those highways are closed on a regular basis in the winter. Why? Because the private sector can't do it well. So we're not saving money and we're not getting better service. It's strictly ideological.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): I hope Brian Adkin and Jim Drennan from the Ontario Provincial Police Association are watching tonight. This is an issue on which the opposition has been talking around the bush and not addressing. What this is about is choice. Presently OPSEU members employed by the Ontario Provincial Police who are civilians want to become members of the Ontario Provincial Police Association. They feel they are better represented by that association than by OPSEU. These are the working families, some of the men and women who work in the radio rooms as dispatchers, some who work in garages.

The member for Elgin-Middlesex-London has the Ontario Police College in his riding. As he knows, several hundred employees who work at the police college, the vast majority I've heard from, also want to leave the umbrella of OPSEU and be represented by the Ontario Provincial Police Association. Presently they are not allowed to do that. So you have police personnel everywhere else in the province, whether it's London, Toronto or Hamilton, represented by their associations, their associations in turn represent their civilian mem-

bers, and guess who's not allowed to do that because of the OPSEU agreement? The province of Ontario. The OPPA cannot do that. They cannot represent their civilian members, and that is wrong. Those civilian members certainly have something in common with the people they work with.

And no more double-talk. I asked Brian to watch how the opposition votes on this, especially the rural areas. St Thomas has the St Thomas police department. Right across the street is the Ontario Provincial Police, which polices outside St Thomas. Those civilian members can't be represented by the OPPA. That's wrong, and I've asked Brian Adkin and his membership to follow this vote.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie has two minutes to respond.

Mr Martin: I want to thank the member for Northumberland—indeed his tone was different tonight—and the members for Hamilton Mountain, Timmins-James Bay and London-Fanshawe. I was actually disappointed the member for Kitchener Centre didn't get up. I thought he was here to listen and maybe have a little dialogue back and forth, like old times, you know? But no. I guess what we've got to do here is get him wound up a bit.

The member for Timmins-James Bay presents a perfect example. The government privatizes the maintenance of highways and at the end of the day finds out that it's costing them more, and I guess it isn't quite as lucrative for the private sector, the corporations, because they keep billing the government more. So what do they do? Instead of sitting down with that group of businesses and saying, "We've got to work this out and negotiate and find a way to make this work," or in fact admitting that they made a mistake and going back to doing it the way that they used to do—because so far it's contracting that they're doing—no, they're going to bring in a piece of legislation to fix what they've done already. Like knee-jerk—"We'll make it illegal for such and such to happen."

It's not unlike what's happening in the hospital sector. They downsized, cut back on the budget, forced those hospitals in many instances to turn pieces of their operation over to the private sector, but they're still not able to make it as cost-effective and efficient as they'd like it to be, as they'd like to force people into doing. So what are they going to do? They're going to bring in a piece of legislation and they're going to make it illegal for hospitals to run deficits. That'll fix it. That'll fix it in a hurry. You'll have a whole bunch of hospitals out there either breaking the law or not offering the services—

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Galt: I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak on Bill 25 and, by the way, I'll be sharing my time with the member for London-Fanshawe. He'll be covering about the last five minutes of my presentation.

Here's a bill originally brought in some 122 years ago; there have been no changes for 40-some years. By the way, Mr Speaker, I just reflect back on some of the comments that were made a few minutes ago when we were

having some of the two-minute hits. There was a nasty insult tossed across the House at me, and I thought you would have interfered, when a member for Hamilton Mountain, a Liberal, actually complimented me. I consider that as quite an insult to be coming from the opposition. It's obvious that I'm doing something wrong, so we're not going to allow that to happen in the future. Maybe she'll withdraw it, I don't know.

1920

A 122-year-old act and no changes in the last 40 years—certainly it's about time there were some changes made. I look back to some of the quotes that came from the 1993 study that the NDP commissioned, and you know this flies right in the face of what the previous member was saying. Here's one excerpt from a public servant that said, "We sometimes take a long time to get it wrong." Boy, better turn things around, but you didn't. "Overall the Ontario Public Service does not perceive that it is getting good value for tax dollars." This is right from the inside. "Give us some results and value for our tax money. We can't afford you!" That's a member of the public. Only one in five respondents thought they were getting efficiency from the Ontario government.

From Bob Rae: "Fewer than four in 10 Ontarians agree that the services provided by the Ontario government are of value to the taxpayers' money." He goes on to say, "In business you know that customers matter because if you don't pay attention to customers they go elsewhere." Well, when you have a monopoly like government where else can they go?

Then the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan commented in 1996: "Everyone agrees that we need a more efficient and smaller public service."

The member for St Catharines commented that, "Government could be more efficient by providing services during times that are more convenient to the public and not the other way around." That's a lot of what this bill is about.

Just to put this into context—

Mr Martin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Northumberland is making a great speech here tonight and I thought there should at least be quorum to hear him, don't you think? Is there quorum?

The Acting Speaker: Would you like me to check and see?

Mr Martin: Please.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): Quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: I appreciate your making sure there's a quorum here to hear my presentation.

Some of the amendments in this Public Service Act are really about looking at the evolving market and the evolving industry that we have here in Ontario and how the services should be properly delivered. So much of it relates to changing customer needs, even though the

member from Sault Ste Marie pointed out differently, which I really have to disagree with.

So much of this has to do with customer service. As I look at the kind of customer service that's been going on in Ontario, the changes in the last decade, we now have 24-hour shopping in many stores, stores that are open seven days a week. You can remember a few years ago when the only time we could go to the bank or get any banking services was from 10 in the morning till 3 in the afternoon and then, lo and behold, they even went to 6 o'clock on Fridays. That has totally changed with Internet banking, with the ATMs that are available and telephone banking. It can be done 24 hours day. You can get your money out of an ATM. They've been doing that for some time. It was very obvious to me and obvious to those in the government that something had to be done.

We talked a lot about red tape when we first came to office, but a lot of what people think of in terms of red tape has to do with customer service. Lo and behold, our government has responded in many ways to that customer service, and with the change in this bill it's going to be much easier in the future, as we have brought in things—one of the most recent things we brought in were early years centres recently announced by the minister responsible for children. That's really about one-stop shopping for those parents who want to find out what kinds of services are available to them as parents. In many communities, there will be 25 different organizations that help and work with you, and here, with an early years centre, it will be a common place where parents can go to find out what kind of services are available.

We also brought in, shortly after we took office, the one-window approach to planning and development. Prior to the 1995 election, I often heard a developer say that they would be trying to develop a subdivision not for themselves but for their children or even for their grandchildren, that it took that long to get a plan approved and in place, and with that one-window approach, with it all going through municipal affairs rather than having to send to 16 or 17 other ministries to get approval, it was all done through one particular window, being the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

More recently, we brought in common counters. I believe there are some 50 of those across Ontario. This is where a person can go and find out what is available from the Ontario government. With many of the consultations that were going on—by the way, that's indeed a hallmark of our government, extensive consultations, going out and hearing from the public—one of the things we were hearing was that they couldn't sort out where these services were available. One way can be through these common counters. They either have it there in sheet form or they can print it off the Internet, but it's certainly a big boost to people who want to know what's available from the Ontario government.

We also have the kiosks where you can go and register a business. I think many people will recall not too many years ago where, to register a business, it took weeks and weeks. You had to send in names and you had to send in

various proposals to various government departments. Now it can be done in 20 or 30 minutes—certainly within an hour. That is indeed a big turnaround in registering a business.

We've also brought in kiosks where you can renew your auto licence plates or you can renew your drivers' licences. That can be done 24 hours a day. Whenever you can get to the kiosk, you can have that upgraded. That sort of parallels the ATMs which we're all so familiar with, where you can go and get cash at any time—of course provided you have some cash in the bank to start with.

It's very important that we review and that we investigate new ways of doing things. We heard the criticism from the member for Sault Ste Marie about the private sector, and moving out and having them do more of the government activities. Governments around the world, at least in the developed world, are looking to partnerships, knowing that it can't all be done by government alone, partnering with various organizations.

Certainly the private sector is one that we need to be more and more involved with, and it's only through this kind of legislation that that is going to work smoothly. As we read the book *Reinventing Government*, the slogan in there is, "Government is here to steer, it's not here to row." In the past we've been doing, as government, an awful lot of rowing rather than steering, and it's time we got to the business of government rather than trying to do everything out there for them.

This bill is about efficiency, effectiveness and reliability, really a cornerstone of the public service, and it should be. I'm sure, with this bill in place, it's going to be into the future. There is no question that families and industry are looking for more for less. Why should government be so different? Looking for more for less: I know we've heard it often, but it's so important that we look at those kinds of efficiencies.

We hear especially the opposition talking so much about the government money, like it's our money to be spent or not to be spent. The government has no money. It isn't the government's money; it's the taxpayers' money—the 11 million people here in Ontario, hard-working Ontarians. It's their money; it's not the government's money. Yes, we oversee some, but it's definitely not our money.

This bill, if approved, will help to attract and retain the quality of staff that we really need in Ontario. For way too long we've overlooked and not really recognized the people in the areas of hi-tech, scientists, those with specialized skills. The only way they could be recognized in their salaries was to give them an administrative role. A lot of scientists really do not want to have an administrative role. They would rather do their scientific thing and not be involved with administration—do what they do best—and with this bill, that will certainly be possible.

This bill is also about accountability, a 120-plus-year-old bill, 40 years with no changes. It's about time we did something and brought accountability in. Certainly, by bringing in the flexibility to reduce waste, reduce in-

efficiency, the delegating of authority is part of this bill. Let me stress that this is not delegation of responsibility. There is a significant difference. It's about accommodating some cross-functional activity of various ministries so that it's not all working in the single silo.

We've heard so much about these silos and not talking to each other. It's about activities of the public-private partnerships. Right now that's next to impossible. It's about having deputy ministers who are able to delegate that authority, whether there's private sector involvement or working with other ministries.

It's about allowing and encouraging innovative and creative solutions so that we will have those efficiencies. Taxpayers indeed want results. They don't want a whole lot of explanation about some bureaucratic hurdles as to why they can't get something. They want results.

That's been a hallmark of our government, as we look at things like three years in a row where the budget has been balanced; this year, paying off \$3 billion on that debt. It's about meeting the target in five years of having 725,000 net new jobs and being well over 100,000—heading for the 800,000 that we committed to in the next five years. That's about results and that's what the taxpayers of the Ontario have been looking for.

When we talk about accountability, just have a look for a moment at something like education, the accountability we've brought in there: student testing, teacher testing, a common curriculum, a standardized report card; looking at the Red Tape Commission; with health care—hospital report cards, bringing in triage and going after the federal government, which started out 50-50 with health care funding, deteriorating to some 7%. We've got them up around 11% to 12%. There's a long way to go. Holding the feds' feet to the fire to get some dollars from them for the grain and oilseed producers in Ontario—they were not very fair with them at all.

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Then we talk about accountability, about when the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale brought in the Executive Council Amendment Act, 2001, Bill 21. Lo and behold, it was about attendance, and 30% of the Liberal Party wasn't here to vote. I think that is absolutely deplorable, and this is a bill on accountability. But accountability is about a consistent message. I know that the Liberals just don't understand what a consistent message is. When you have a leader who says first he's for and then against hospital closures, when you have a leader who's first for and then against reopening hospitals, when you have a leader who's been against and then for additional health care funding, when you have a leader who's been for and then against raising taxes, that's not accountability. That's absolutely deplorable. Then, just to tell you about trade missions, he was talking about, "Mike Harris isn't criss-crossing the planet," and then he talks about, "Mike Harris is going to champion this province abroad," and then he talks about, "I just don't think that is the most efficient way for us to hustle business." This is the inconsistency we've been hearing from the Liberal Party of this province.

I just want to wind up in a few minutes, to summarize before I turn the Legislature over to the member for London-Fanshawe. This bill is about greater flexibility and administrative efficiency. It's about the opportunity for more democracy in the workplace, particularly with the OPP and the civilian employees. It will help to clarify the political activity rights of those members, and also those restrictions, so they understand, and it's well laid out for them.

It's also about clarifying the government's intention regarding the collection, use and disclosure of information as it relates to the delivery of human resources services.

Applause.

Mr Galt: And when I get a round of applause from the Liberals I'm quite upset, because I know I've been insulted once again. But I would now like to turn the floor over to the member for London-Fanshawe, and I look forward to their enthusiastic response, that they will in fact be supporting this bill.

Mr Mazzilli: Bill 25, An Act to amend the Public Service Act: I'm very passionate about this because it's about representation. As I said earlier, I hope that Brian Adkin, Jim Drennan and the rest of the Ontario Provincial Police Association are watching, and watching closely.

At least the member for Sault Ste Marie has been consistent, as has been the NDP. They support OPSEU and OPSEU supports them, and they will not do anything for OPSEU to lose any members. They have a consistent view here. But I believe this is about representation. The employees who actually are represented under the umbrella of OPSEU who work for police agencies, provincial police agencies, these members have no choice as to whom they're represented by. It has to be OPSEU. We've heard from those members, and these are dispatchers, some may be garage personnel, Ontario Police College employees in Aylmer, and they don't have that choice.

I heard from police members last time there was a civil service strike: they did not want to be on strike. But you know what? They didn't have any choice. That's what I heard. I asked Brian Adkin and Jim Drennan to watch the vote closely, because in my riding this doesn't affect me. I will be voting for this simply based on what I believe is the will of the people who work for those agencies. Rural ridings, and I asked Brian to watch this, are generally policed by the Ontario Provincial Police. Their civilian members are whom you are voting against here. You're saying, "No, you don't have the choice of being represented by the Ontario Provincial Police Association. You have to take OPSEU."

Now at least our friend from Sault Ste Marie—they've been consistent with that view and I applaud them for sticking to that. However, I look forward to seeing how Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals vote on this issue, because they have many rural members. I don't know if they have thought of the impact of this.

Elgin-Middlesex-London, outside of St Thomas, rural, mostly policed by the Ontario Provincial Police and the

civilian members represented by OPSEU. Those same civilian members have lobbied me; they've lobbied the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London. Those same members that work at the Ontario Police College have lobbied me, have lobbied the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London. So I ask that this vote be watched closely. No fuzzy words about, "Well, we're voting against it because there's something else."

You know, that's what we get from Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals on every issue. Tax credit for religious schools: "Well, we're going to vote on it because maybe we don't believe in it. Maybe we don't believe in it, but we kind of do." But our friend from Sault Ste Marie is very clear. They support only public education and nothing else—very clear.

I asked Brian Adkin and his membership to watch Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals on this issue and not accept, "Oh, there's some fine print that we don't like." If they vote against this, what they're saying is every civilian member of the Ontario Provincial Police does not have a choice of being represented in the workplace by an organization that they feel better represents them. That's what this is about.

When you look at the position of the members from the Ontario Police College, what you have there is civilian instructors who are represented by OPSEU teaching police cadets who are actually represented by police associations. So the instructors at the college don't even have the same right to be represented by a police association. They have to take this simply because of an amendment to the Public Services Act.

Mike Harris and our party support choice and we support choice for those employees.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I'm very pleased to have a moment to respond in particular to the Tory members who would dare to bring forward Bill 25 and then suggest that Brian Adkin and all of the OPPA should watch us closely. Brian Adkin from the OPPA watches us closely every day and in particular has watched the Conservative government and what they've done in terms of public service since the day they took office in 1995. Brian Adkin has more political instinct in his baby finger than this member will find in his entire being.

The point is, if you choose to put one hostage in a bill—this bill is about privatization of the public service. Let's not make any bones about what this bill is about. You want to cushion it around with the OPP and make it another police issue that you can go vaunting around Ontario. Fine. People like Brian Adkin and the OPP know exactly what this bill is about. It is about contracting out government services, reliable government services and civil service workers in Ontario who have been reliable, whom we have been able to count on. That is what this bill allows this government to do. Let's call it by what it really is.

To suggest accountability by this government—it is a farce to call this government accountable by any stretch.

You expect it of the broader public service; I expect it of the Ontario government and that means that the Premier can be in this House to answer questions himself. That's why today I asked that our own Premier of Ontario put an electronic monitoring device on his ankle so we know his whereabouts, and include a zipper on it so as the clock approaches 1:30, right around question period time, we can have the Premier of Ontario sitting right here in the House and say, "Zap, time to answer the questions," because that's what the public of Ontario is demanding.

Brian Adkin and the OPPA know Ontario Liberals have been supportive from day one, so let's not for a moment believe that Bill 25 or anything else from this government, is going to purport to be supportive of the public service. That is a joke.

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The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. The chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: I want to comment on some of the remarks made by the members for Northumberland and London-Fanshawe. The member for Northumberland seems to think that we on this side of the House don't understand the private sector or private enterprise. Many of us were in business before we came to this place, so we understand it. But we also understand there are some things that make sense to be delivered by the private sector; there are other things that don't: the delivery of government services to people. The spending of the money that is collected from all of us should not be put into a system where there's a bottom line and a for-profit piece of that action. Any money we collect from each other by way of taxes should be spent, every penny of it, on the delivery of services that we can all access.

There's lots of things, there's a whole whack of things out there that the private sector is very good at, as a matter of fact better than anybody else at delivering. They're in that sector and they should do that. God bless them if they make money, and lots of it, because as you know and as I've said, it contributes to the economy of that region. But don't deliver services, particularly services that affect those who are most in need, the vulnerable and sick out there, by using a private sector model where there's a for-profit incentive there for that company.

I want to talk to the member for London-Fanshawe and tell him that in terms of this OPP move of their support services, there is in fact in place under the Labour Relations Act now a facility for that to happen. It's a little bit more difficult than what this legislation will allow to happen, but then that shouldn't surprise any of us. This government thinks it can fix everything by the stroke of a pen, by bringing in legislation and just decreeing that something is illegal or whatever. There is in place a process that unions can use if they're not happy with their representation.

Mr Wettlaufer: I find it hard to believe the two opposition parties were briefed on this bill, because they certainly don't understand it.

I can remember back about eight or nine years ago when the taxpayers of this province were all upset about

the efficiencies of government. This applied to both the Liberals and the NDP when they were in power. Then in 1992, Bob Rae—you'll remember him, Tony, the NDP Premier—was quoted by the *Globe and Mail*, October 11, 1992, as saying, "Fewer than four in 10 Ontarians agree that the services provided by the Ontario government are of value to the taxpayers' money." He understood a little bit about business because he also said in that same article, "In business, you know that customers matter, because if you don't pay attention to customers they go elsewhere."

Then subsequently, April 11, 1996, in a Liberal Party news release, Lyn McLeod—I say to the member from Windsor West, you know her; she sits right near you—said, "Everyone agrees that we need a more efficient and smaller public service."

What we're doing here is trying to establish efficiency and better service. How do you get better service if you do not have the technical expertise? We want to be able to have the flexibility to go out and hire the expertise for a term-limited job; job specific. That could mean up to a three-year period before renewal. There's no problem with that, because what that will do is free up the civil servant's time to spend on what he or she needs to do, and we'll have the expertise of this external source.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'd like to take this couple of minutes to respond to some of the comments from members on the government side. Let me tell them that we on this side of the House understand very clearly exactly the intent and meaning the government has put in Bill 25, and it's not a walk on the beach for our public employees. Let me tell them that.

When the public employees read between the lines of Bill 25, they will cringe when they read privatization. Let me say to the members on the government side that we don't have to go to the private sector to get those temporary experts. We put them into the schools, we educate them and then, because of their own faults, we lose them to the private sector and to the United States. I really don't call that good politics on behalf of our people in Ontario.

Let me say that when they speak of choice they do not give choice a chance. They don't. I wonder how they explain to their constituents when a deal, a decision or a policy is changed time and time over behind closed doors. I can't explain to my people and neither can they, because of what this bill does. It's not so innocuous as they say. It falls to the Premier, to the minister, to the deputy and any other person they want to appoint to make a decision on behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario, without coming to this House for a say. We don't have a say when they make a decision. I do not call that democratic or being accountable, and I think the people of Ontario will remember that. I think the public employees of Ontario demand and deserve true respect from their own government. They won't get it through Bill 25.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Northumberland has two minutes to respond.

Mr Galt: Certainly the member from Kitchener Centre had some absolutely brilliant observations. He just whispered to me that he'd missed the most important part and that was to compliment me on such a great speech that I had presented.

The member for Windsor West's comments about privatization and the public service and the accountability of the Premier: I wonder what she thinks. Should the Premier be over there helping Ontario get the Olympics or not? She seems to be jealous that maybe he's out there doing a good job and just may win the Olympics for the city of Toronto and for the province of Ontario.

Just let me relate to you the inconsistencies that party has. This is about travel and it's about what she was referring to: "I'm really surprised that Mike Harris isn't criss-crossing the planet telling people what we've got going for us here." That was in the *Sault Star* on August 13, 1996.

But then, "But what I mean is when is Mike Harris going to champion this province abroad?" That was McGuinty, Fourth Reading, December 18, 1997. On Talk 640 the host said, "But really, should Ontario be chasing down trade with China?" What did McGuinty say? "I just don't think that is the most efficient way for us to hustle business." Which side is it that they're on? This is something like the deputy leader here coming across that the Premier should always be in the House. The deputy leader doesn't seem to understand his productivity in getting things accomplished for this province of Ontario.

I was thrilled—absolutely thrilled—to hear the member from Sault Ste Marie actually say it does make some sense that some aspects are in the private sector. I didn't think he wanted anything out in the private sector. I thought he always wanted every service in the province of Ontario to be run by the government. It's kind of refreshing to hear that he actually believes that something should be in the private sector. It's refreshing to hear those comments come from that member.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Sergio: I'd like to add some comments on Bill 25.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Tell them you want to share your time with him and I'll go get him.

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Mr Sergio: Yes, I'd like to share my time with Mr Peters.

Let me say that this bill is not as innocuous as we think it is, for a number of reasons. There are a number of good reasons why I think we have to let the public in general and our public employees know of the content of the bill and the intent of the government on Bill 25.

There is still a very vivid memory of Bill 26, and this is one of those branches that is springing out from that infamous, ominous Bill 26. Really, what is the intent of Bill 25? It is not, as the member from Northumberland was saying, that this is for trans-functional accommodation of issues between various departments or various ministries. No. Indeed, this very short and seemingly innocuous bill does a lot more than that. What it does is allocate power further than where it is already, that is, in

the hands of the Premier and his staff and the hands of the various ministers, deputy ministers, the big bureaucrats who are telling the government what to do, where to go and in what direction. It is a fact that when decisions are made behind closed doors on such important issues as public servants, and we don't have a say in this House, and policies come out from the government unknown to the employees and unknown to us, I believe this is not the way we should be dealing with this particular issue.

It's very serious when anyone who has been given power by the Premier or one of the ministers or someone else below them makes a decision with respect to hiring, firing, putting together or dismantling. There is one area in here which deals with privacy of individual rights. I wonder how we deal through that particular ministry or tribunal when personal information is not kept so personal and private.

These are just a very few of the issues that I would like to touch with respect to Bill 25. I have here my colleague who I think wants to delve much deeper into the content of Bill 25. But let me say that privatization is something the public employees in Ontario are watching very carefully, and they don't like it. I will stop at that and I will allow my colleague to continue on Bill 25.

Mr Peters: I want to thank my colleague for filling in for me. My time came up a little sooner than I had expected.

I think the most important thing we need to recognize in this piece of legislation that's here in front of us this evening, and what I think the citizens of Ontario need to recognize, is that the intent within this piece of legislation is to make it easier for this government to contract out other parts of the public service to the private sector. I think we've witnessed first-hand the effect of the privatization agenda of this government. We've seen the drastic effects it's having on service within this province. I think it's a sad day that this agenda of privatization that has been put forward by this government is continuing today.

There are a number of issues within this bill that I think are very detrimental to public safety and to environmental issues in this province. We've witnessed first-hand the effects of privatization, particularly in the area of the environment. We've seen first-hand what's happened around this province with the drastic cuts that have been experienced, particularly by the Ministry of the Environment, and the contracting out of services and the privatization of services—and the reliance on services that had been traditionally looked after and traditionally provided by government employees, that these services are being contracted out to the private sector.

One of the issues that we need to deal with this evening is one aspect of this bill, which is the term classified and the three-year term unclassified categories. We're very concerned, and I think all citizens of Ontario should be concerned, because we're extremely proud of the work the public service has done in this province and the work they've done on behalf of Ontario citizens, work they've done paid for by our tax dollars, work that we know they have done with the professionalism they bring

to the job. We're extremely concerned that that professionalism Ontario citizens have come to enjoy over the years is going to be lost as a result of changes that are proposed in this piece of legislation. We know the reliability and professionalism that public servants bring to the job. We know too, though, that when you privatize those services, that professionalism and reliability cease to exist.

We also know that public servants who don't have the security of working, who don't have that job security, are going to be reluctant to speak out against improper government activities, because if you're working on a three-year contract and you're hoping that contract is going to be renewed and you see something that isn't right in the delivery of a public service or in dealing with the public, you're going to be reluctant to speak out in that regard. You're going to be concerned that if you do speak out, that is going to affect the renewal of your contract. I don't think that's an atmosphere we want employees to be working in.

We've seen what has happened as we've seen services privatized. We've seen what has happened in Walkerton. It's a tragic circumstance that happened there, where seven people lost their lives. It's a sad day that we have to deal with that. We're hearing at first hand, on a daily basis as the Walkerton inquiry unfolds, the results of privatization of government services and cutbacks to the public service in this province. That's very sad.

Another aspect of this bill that is of extreme concern is that it allows the deputy minister to delegate his or her powers to hire, fire, promote, transfer or discipline to another deputy minister in any other ministry designated as the private sector person. Again, this is an erosion of the public service in this province.

I've heard references made that this is an antiquated bill and a piece of legislation that needs to be changed. One thing we need to recognize that this government fails to recognize is that the services our public servants have provided over the years since this province was created in 1867 have been services that—they know they're government employees; they know their salaries are paid from provincial taxes. Those are employees who have taken pride in their work, employees who have known that the work they do benefits the 12 million citizens in this province. But what we've seen time and time again since this government was elected in 1995 has been this constant attack on and erosion and demoralization of the public service in this province. That's extremely sad.

I think taxpayers want value for their money, but they also want something more than value for their money. They want to know the employee is committed to the job. They want to know that employee is there and is going to look out for their best interests. Those are guarantees we have right now as a result of having a good public service, but those are guarantees that are going to erode and disappear because of the intent, the privatization attitude of this government. I think that's very sad.

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We've seen what has happened. I want to talk a little bit about some of the effects of privatization and the

direction in which this government is going in that regard. I want to talk in particular about the corrections ministry. That is something that could very well be affected by this, because what this will allow is further privatization of the public service, where the deputy minister could delegate his or her authority for jails, environmental protection and public safety issues to a private company whose only interest is profit.

We've witnessed that already with the decision to privatize the new facility in Penetanguishene. What concerns me is that the seed that has been planted there is a dangerous seed that is going to grow in this province, because that experiment this government is playing with, with taxpayers' dollars, is a very dangerous experiment, an experiment that I think is going to have ramifications far beyond the life of this government, ramifications for the citizens of this province that are going to be extremely difficult to overcome.

Minister Sampson has constantly stated that Ontario needs to spend its correction dollars smarter and more efficiently, but there are two problems with this argument on privatization: first, the recent auditor's report shows, after five years of Tory spending, more money on fewer inmates and worse results; second, the policy direction they are headed in will clearly not deliver smarter spending.

Scotland on Sunday reported that a recent private prison project will cost over £160 million more than previously claimed. A leaked document regarding one jail in particular, which was hailed as a cheap way of running corrections in Scotland—it was run at £290 million over 25 years, instead of the £130 million agreed to in the contract. So we've witnessed that example in Scotland as a result of the move toward privatization. It's a move that is taking place in this province. There's no doubt in my mind that that same trend of understating what something is going to cost down the road is going to permeate into this province.

Scotland is also having other problems, including the covering up of actual staffing levels with the argument that released information would destroy commercial confidentiality.

We have examples in New Mexico in the United States, where corrections regularly inflates the numbers in administration, and so the city has been forced to hire more employees to review and oversee the whole billing concept.

The Oklahoma Department of Corrections has levied a large fine against a correctional facility for failing to meet its contractual obligations regarding medical care of state prisoners.

In Utah, Cornell Corrections with the state Department of Corrections is prepared to complete a contract for the state's first privatized medium security prison, which will house inmates for \$62 a day. The problem is that the state already houses them for \$43 a day.

The Miami Herald recently reported that Governor Jeb Bush is considering shutting down Wackenhut's privately run prison to save money.

I truly wish this government would look at other jurisdictions and not be bent and determined on this privatization move, because as I said previously, this is going to have drastic effects on this province down the road.

Minister Sampson talks about accountability, and this government is big on talking about accountability in this province, but you lose that accountability by contracting out employees and you lose that accountability by having three-year employees. Accountability exists when you have employees working for you on a full-time regular basis. Minister Sampson introduced the Corrections Accountability Act to ensure that the private prison company that will be contracted with to run the Penetang facility is accountable to the government. He's not the first one to try this, though. We have countless examples of other jurisdictions that have had enormous problems with accountability. This is not a new experiment, and the minister should realize that this legislation will not guarantee access to accountability.

We can go on. We can look at what has happened in New Mexico, in North Carolina, in Texas and in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin state Attorney General recently said, "The thought of private citizens in our state is so wrong that we need to work towards having our own good corrections policy."

I've heard reference made to Camp Turnaround this evening. Camp Turnaround is some success story in this attempt at privatization: escapes the first day, public correctional officers called in to secure the facility, cherry-picked inmates, overbilling and a budget that so far is now \$400,000 above and beyond the contract signed by the Ministry of Correctional Services. This is a pattern that's emerging as strikingly similar to that of the United States.

Look at what's happening in London, in the riding of the member for London-Fanshawe, with the Maurice Genest centre, a centre that's been privatized. We are seeing that centre not running the way it did when it was part of the public service. That was a model centre.

This government is working toward destroying the integrity of that centre but, I think, more importantly, working toward destroying the good work that civil servants did in ensuring that young individuals who were incarcerated had that ability to have good people help them get out of that facility and make a valuable contribution to the community. This isn't the intent of this government. This government is determined to continue its privatization agenda. It is a very sad day for this province that we've continued down this road.

We've witnessed, and I don't know why the government can't get this through their heads, what's happened with the privatization of the Ministry of Transportation in this province and seen where this government is going again, with Bill 137, to allow the privatization of more ministry services, including driver vehicle licensing, inspection and enforcement. What's sad about that piece of legislation and sad about the legislation we are dealing with here this evening is that there's no requirement for

public protection, safety, privacy, accountability or escalating costs of services.

We know first-hand that the public auditor has repeatedly warned that this government, the Harris government, is putting public lives at risk in its bent and warped direction, its rush to privatize, but worse yet, this rush to privatize with no apparent savings. That's a very sad day, and this government's track record of looking after the privacy and protecting the citizens of this province is deplorable.

We are on the road to more privatization in this province with the Province of Ontario Savings Office. The Province of Ontario Savings Office was established over 80 years ago to look after, most importantly, the rural parts of Ontario to ensure that they had access to banking facilities, that farmers in this province had access so that they weren't going to be gouged by the banks. This government is bent and determined, with its privatization agenda, to sell off POSO, a real risk to communities that have a Province of Ontario Savings Office that we are going to see those communities lose those facilities.

We've already seen their track record when they first intended to look at the privatization issue. They had their knuckles rapped by the Information and Privacy Commissioner of this province because they gave to a private corporation the addresses, social insurance numbers and account balances of those individuals. This direction is wrong. This government is wrong-headed in its direction to privatization.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It is a pleasure to rise this evening and make a few comments on the comments from the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London.

I listened to his comments on privatization. First of all I want to say a little bit about Bill 25. I thought the intent of the act was to amend the Public Service Act. I'm not getting the same overtures from the act that the member has. He's talking about Camp Turnaround and privatization of correctional services.

I look at things like what's fair and what's equitable in the province of Ontario. I have to refer to another institution in my riding, the OPP general headquarters. Across Ontario I understand there are something like 2,500 civilian employees working for the Ontario Provincial Police. Those particular employees across this province want the opportunity of choice in the bargaining unit to which they belong. I don't see a problem with that. If that's going down the path of privatization, then maybe I'm wrong on that issue; the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London is thinking it's the privatization issue. I think it's an issue of fairness, and this bill will allow civilian employees of the Ontario Provincial Police who belong right now to the Ontario Public Service Employees Union to join the OPPA, a very strong and a very important collective bargaining unit in the province. I think it's fair and I fully intend to support this particular bill.

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Mr Crozier: A significant part of this bill, though, is about privatization. I spent some time, in leading off on

this bill the other night, to provide not only the government members but those who may have been watching that night, a history of the public service. There was a time when we didn't have a public service that was professional because outside workers, those outside the capital city, were all patronage appointments.

The problem with this is that if you start to move into the private sector again, you're going to be influenced by those who have the money. Part of the point we've been trying to make in all this is that you can't just write off the civil service and replace it with the private service, because there are too many outside influences. The old dollar will start to speak. You might think you're going to save money, but there are some people who are going to get rich on this thing.

We can speak individually, about jails—that experiment is underway and I guess time will tell—but when you take the civil service in its entirety, this bill allows deputy ministers, as we've gone over and over the last few nights, to delegate their authority to other deputy ministers, and then, beyond that, the authority can be delegated to this very mysterious person or persons. That's the part that scares me, and I think that's the part that should scare a very professional civil service in this province. "Person" or "persons" both start with the letter "P," and that's privatization.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I want to acknowledge, as the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London has, that this is a bill about privatization. This is a bill that will facilitate this government's privatizing ambulance service, privatizing jails and corrections, privatizing highway maintenance, privatizing home care, privatizing long-term care, privatizing hydro-electricity. For anyone who's noticing across Ontario, those are all the things that are on the privatization block by this government.

This government has said very clearly that despite the fiascos in California and the fiascos in Alberta, where people are now paying three and four times the price for electricity and sometimes can't get electricity, this government is going to do the same thing. It's going to sell off a publicly administered, publicly owned hydro-electricity system knowing that the result here will be as it has been in California and Alberta: people will pay more.

Similarly, the auditor pointed out that the government has an agenda of downloading ambulances on to municipalities, knowing that municipalities are already cash-strapped and they will have to sell off the operation of those ambulances to private operators. The auditor pointed out that the net cost to the people of Ontario will be \$100 million more a year. It will cost that much more money to operate the ambulance service in a downloaded municipal structure or in a privatized structure than it would cost if were part of a coordinated, province-wide ambulance system.

The point here I think for the people across Ontario, the citizens of Ontario, the taxpayers of Ontario, is that this is going to cost more. Hydro will cost you more,

ambulance service will cost you more, just as privatized home care is starting to cost more, just as privatized highway maintenance is costing more, and the Provincial Auditor noted that as well. So this bill really is all about privatizing Ontario's—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Questions, comments?

Mr Wettlaufer: Was it Chicken Little that said, "The sky is falling. The sky is falling"? Just because you say it, that doesn't mean it will.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes. It was Chicken Little. Just because you say it, that doesn't make it so.

We don't need this act to privatize the civil service. But there is such a thing as a collective bargaining agreement, and that collective bargaining agreement exists for a reason. It protects the employees in OPSEU. It protects them.

What is the purpose of this bill? It's twofold, one of which is to give us some flexibility to provide to the government, to the taxpayer in exceptional circumstances—the member for Essex knows this; he's been briefed on it—skilled expertise. I cannot envision the possibility of exceptional circumstances existing for us to replace 60,000 employees. It's just impossible. It ain't going to happen.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: Now, there we go. Yes. When you don't know what you're talking about, talk nonsense. That's what you're doing.

The second purpose of this bill is to provide democracy for the civilian employees of the Ontario Provincial Police. Why should they be forced to belong to a union they don't want to belong to, that they feel does not represent their rights? They want to have the same rights as civilian employees of the municipal police forces.

The Deputy Speaker: Response.

Mr Peters: I'd like to thank the members for Simcoe North, Essex, Kenora-Rainy River and Kitchener Centre for their comments this evening.

In particular to the member for Kitchener Centre, I'm trying to see here in the explanatory note where it talks about new classified services etc, where it says "for exceptional circumstances," and I don't see that. We know what your exceptional circumstances are. Your intent is to do away with as much as possible and to destroy the public service in this province. We've seen that agenda. It's an agenda that's been first and foremost in this government's eyes from the moment they were elected in 1995. We know that's your intent.

The citizens of Ontario, through their tax dollars, have come to expect good service from their public employees. It's a service that our public employees have provided for us since 1867. What you're intent on doing—this is a privatization bill. This continues along the lines of seeing the privatization of the Ministry of Transportation, the privatization that we're seeing leading toward it within our health care system.

This government is determined to do everything it can to destroy the public service in this province, and the

public service plays an important role in delivering those services. I want to thank those members who recognize the true intent of this legislation and what is in it. It's a sad day when the government members don't recognize what is within this piece of legislation.

The damage that is being done is damage that is going to take years and years to repair. It's a sad day for the citizens of Ontario to have to deal with the agenda of this government, the agenda of the privatization of this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate. I would just mention to members that we are now in 10-minute speeches.

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I'm pleased to enter the debate today on Bill 25, the Public Service Statute Law Amendment Act, 2001.

Members of the opposition and third party seem very resistant to a greater role for the private sector in improving the province's infrastructure and building tomorrow's Ontario.

2020

We know that the province faces challenges in providing better transportation links, increasing capacity in schools, colleges and universities, helping our hospitals and health care facilities meet the needs of a growing and aging population, and helping to bring high-tech benefits to all the people of Ontario.

This government is committed to these priorities, but we cannot do this alone. The tax-and-spend days in this province are over. No longer can we gain all that we need out of tax dollars. We recognize that there is a need for tax dollars to be invested in areas of public good, but to do so exclusively by taking money from hard-working Ontarians is not sustainable. Both the Premier and the Minister of Finance have said we cannot continue to just increase government spending.

We must look for innovative ways whereby we can do more with less, not only in health but in all sectors. This requires innovation and thinking outside the box, but there are only so many things that we can do just thinking outside the box. When legislative frameworks become so outdated that they do not allow us to move with the times, we need to address them.

This is exactly the case with the Public Service Act. Its main provisions are more than 120 years old. It has not had a significant update in over 40 years. Forty years ago, in 1961, typewriters and hand-delivered mail had not even begun to give way to computers and e-mail. Women were almost completely absent from senior management, be it government or otherwise. Most families got by on a single income and worked 9 to 5. People had only begun to dream of walking on the moon, and we all lived under the threat of nuclear war.

The world is a much different place now. Countries are different, families are different, and the way we all work and live is so much different. The way government functions, the way it manages its resources, should likewise be different.

We have chosen our priorities. We are spending record amounts on health care, which Ontarians have told

us is their number one priority. But we cannot responsibly pay attention only to health care at the expense of all else. At the same time, we cannot continue to tax more. Ontarians' tax burden is too high, and this government is committed to doing something about that.

So what to do? If we don't have enough cash for all the priorities, as we might like, and refuse to take more money away from taxpayers, what do you do? One solution is the introduction of public-private partnerships which allow the government to take action on its priorities and those of the people of the province, while being responsible in the way we spend tax dollars.

There are many examples of this. SuperBuild is a great example. SuperBuild will coordinate all government infrastructure investments and spearhead the innovative development of public-private investment partnerships. At a minimum, \$20 billion will be invested over five years to renew hospitals, high-technology links, highways, educational institutions and other infrastructures.

These investments will deliver great benefits to people all across Ontario in all walks of life. They are programs which Ontarians want and need. Combined, they are programs which would outstrip our financial resources, if we acted alone. But when in partnership with the private sector, we can meet many more priorities than by ourselves.

I know there is more we can do, but to continue to make the most of the talent in our public service while working with other stakeholders, we must make some internal changes that will allow us to do so. Taxpayers are very unsympathetic to government when they are told bureaucratic hurdles prevent us from making most effective use of their resources. This should be the case. We should be adapting to the taxpayers, because in the end the government is their servant, not the other way around.

While making these changes, all people are concerned that we maintain a public service that is efficient, accountable and reliable. The Public Service Act sets out these principles and maintains them through a reporting line which makes each person employed in the public sector accountable to the deputy minister and, through them, to the government and taxpayer.

Nothing in these revisions detracts from the way in which public servants are accountable to the people of Ontario. All people who are affected by this will be accountable to the deputy minister, the government and the people of Ontario. Even if a person works with a private sector partner, they are still employed by the government of Ontario. Even if some authority is delegated to another person, the deputy minister is still responsible for those actions and still responsible for events directly related to that.

There is nothing in this act that would allow a person to deny their responsibility to the people of this province. Do the members opposite really think that a senior civil servant would allow a situation to develop which would invite problems, abuse or neglect? Here I thought they had faith in our professional civil service, and it seems,

from their comments over the past couple of days, that in fact they have very little. They are urging the government not to change the law, because it would allow these professionals and independent civil servants to abscond their duty and deny their accountability to taxpayers.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Every civil servant is still accountable. At the end of the day, they still must justify the decisions they make. If the decision involved delegation of some authority, they are no less accountable than they would be if they were down the line to a manager in the same ministry.

These changes are badly needed, and by opposing them, the members across oppose bringing government services into the 21st century to better meet the needs of the people we serve.

Changes in the Public Service Act will make government programs more accountable to the people of Ontario by giving it the flexibility required to reduce the waste and inefficiency involved with administering government programs. This amendment does not change the basic pillars of the Public Service Act. It still ensures accountability and makes its primary goal an efficient and reliable public service.

These changes will allow public servants, who are committed to delivering top-notch services, the ability to adapt to the world around them, moving into the 21st century. These changes are badly needed to meet the limited resources and the limitless ambition of our public service. We owe it to the people of this province to give their public service the flexibility it needs to deliver on its promises.

It's a pleasure for me to enter this debate this evening, and I'm anxious to hear the other members and their comments on this issue. Certainly it's a bill that this government truly supports, and the members on this side support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions, comments?

Mr Crozier: The member for Thornhill brought up the point about delegation. I just want to refer to the bill under the area of "Collection from public servant." This is about private information and this scares me: "A person engaged in providing an integrated human resources program is authorized to collect, directly or indirectly, personal information about a public servant from a public servant." Then that "public servant may use personal information about a public servant disclosed by a person engaged in providing an integrated human resources program."

When it says "a person involved in a human resources program," it doesn't say "another public servant." We could get ourselves, I believe, into the same position as the government got itself into with the public savings office, where it took personal information, and it got out into the private sector.

Now, these are the kinds of things in a bill like this that scare us in the opposition and that should be of concern to those members in the government. And it goes on to say, "A person engaged in providing an integrated human resources program"—ie, private sector—"may

use personal information about a public servant disclosed by a public servant.”

2030

This is so convoluted that I don't think there's any doubt that private information about public servants can get into the public domain. As was mentioned earlier by my friend from St Thomas, from the riding of London, that they've already had—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Hampton: I think there's one thing we need to draw attention to from the member from Thornhill's speech, and that is that she at least admits part of the government's agenda here with these so-called private-public sector partnerships, although what we've seen from this government is that private-public partnerships mean that the public gets stuck with the responsibility and the private sector gets the money.

Let me give you an example, and I think this is all going to emerge on the public stage very quickly. The government says that they're engaging in a private-public partnership with respect to the operation of the Bruce nuclear facility. Well, we've had a chance to get some of the documents related to that, and what we're able to see so far is that the British Energy consortium is going to be handed the capacity to make billions of dollars in profits while the people of Ontario are going to be stuck with the billion-dollar cost of decommissioning a nuclear station once it's outlived its useful life, and the taxpayers and people of Ontario will be stuck with the billion-dollar cost of storing the nuclear waste.

So we should thank the member for making the government's agenda clear. This government's definition of private-public sector partnerships is that the private sector gets the money while the taxpayers and the public of Ontario get stuck with the liabilities and the responsibilities.

If I could just refer to highway maintenance in Ontario, the Provincial Auditor has pointed out that in fact it is costing the people of Ontario more money to have private operators handle highway maintenance than it costs having the civil service do it. So we can look forward to, unfortunately, a—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Dunlop: I am pleased to make some comments on Bill 25, and I'd like to thank my colleague from Thornhill for her comments. I think she made a very interesting—in part of her comments she mentioned about the government, about the province of Ontario, moving into the 21st century. As a municipal politician and a business person coming to Queen's Park, that's one of the things I admired most about the Mike Harris government, because they spoke for responsibility and accountability. They talked about things like private-public partnerships. And unlike the leader of the third party, I look at things like the maintenance of our road system, the opportunity for companies to actually bid on that work. I don't see any problem with the level of maintenance we have. I think all governments for at least the last 20 years have tried, they've worked with the private sector, to provide

good road maintenance across the province of Ontario, and we see this with other things as well.

For example, our government believes strongly in the private sector. We are Conservatives. We are basically capitalists. We believe in that method of doing business. Perhaps the opposition would rather see all cars manufactured by the public service. Perhaps they'd rather see all manufacturing done by the public service. We on this side of the House, as the government, do not believe that way. For that reason, I support this bill, I'll continue to support it and I thank the member for Thornhill for her comments.

Mr Sergio: Just a couple of comments on the presentation by the member from Thornhill: there is one fundamental truth that came out of her presentation, and that is that the government of Ontario is the servant of the people of Ontario.

Mr Mazzilli: That's what it is.

Mr Sergio: That is very true. That is a good assertion by the member. But if that is the case, that the government indeed is the servant of the people of Ontario, it has to be responsible, and it has to be accountable as well. I'm afraid we are moving closer, especially when it comes to our public employees, to privatizing this very important sector. If we're doing that, who is going to be responsible for private actions on behalf of the people of Ontario and the public employees of Ontario?

With something like the 407, who is accountable for the 407 now? I wonder. Shouldn't we hold the government responsible for their actions? We know too well that once you turn it over to a private entity, you lose that control. If you lose control, you're losing accountability, and once you lose accountability, then the government that is supposed to be the servant of the people of Ontario has abdicated its responsibilities and turned over those very responsibilities to someone else down the road, who has not been elected by the people of Ontario. They want to know who ultimately is going to be accountable for the actions of a private consortium. I think the people of Ontario would really like to know that.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mrs Molinari: I'd like to thank the members from Ottawa Centre and Kenora-Rainy River, the member from Simcoe North and the member from York West, for their participation in this debate.

The member from Kenora-Rainy River commented that my debate here this evening made it very clear to him what this bill is, so I'm pleased to be able to provide that clarity for the member. With that, I'd like to quote from a 1993 study that the NDP commissioned. It found, “Against a backdrop of economic constraint, multiple demands on resources and increasing complexity of our services, we must examine our business practices to ensure their effectiveness and efficiency in meeting our customer service needs. We must find more efficient ways of financing our business by redeployment of resources, by streamlining of our organization and by employing appropriate technology.”

It goes on to say, “Our vision must be to commit to high-quality service delivery that achieves the best value

for tax dollars anywhere. The leadership challenge to accomplish this mission is large. We must accept it. Ministries and central agencies must work together to set priorities, remove barriers and undertake bold strategies to meet the service expectations of our customers. Ontario's citizens deserve no less."

That was in a study commissioned by the NDP, and the member from Kenora-Rainy happens to be the leader of that party. I wanted to make sure I read that into the record this evening.

2040

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I am pleased to add my comments to this debate. As you know, we're talking about Bill 25, An Act to amend the Public Service Act and the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act, 1993.

There are some things that are blatantly obvious when you peruse these sections in Bill 25. One of the things that is very clear from the very beginning, and that is really wrong, is that this specific bill has been in circulation internally for many months. There have been a number of meetings. There have been many communications between ministers and ministries. Yet when it came down to producing the notes and giving an opportunity to OPSEU and other members of the public who are interested in discussing this issue, we find that was reduced to—I have the proof in my hands because I'm reading from a letter that was addressed to Mr Wilson, and the union had only been given a five-day opportunity to respond, to make their briefing and their presentations on this bill.

While this government had many months, my question to those who are responsible for Bill 25 is, why has OPSEU only been informed about this and given the opportunity to respond in that time frame, that window, only a five-day opportunity to make submissions on these discussions? That isn't right. There should have been more time given because of the urgency of this situation. We also know that this specific bill makes it easier—that's the intent of it—for the government to contract out part of the public service to the private sector.

What's wrong with this bill? Having made my first comments on the opportunity of five days, let me make my second comment to what's wrong with this bill.

The second item is the question of a quality public service. What makes for a quality public service? I think that what makes for a quality public service is, first, that there should be security of employment, and second, that there should be some sense of stability with the employer. The question that must be raised is, when government services are handed over to the private sector and when the ministers make that decision to contract out those services, what assurances will we have that there is stability in the workforce and security for employees? Are these employees going to speak out when there's a real problem? I suggest they may not speak out if their job is at stake. Consequently, if there is something wrong as there was in Walkerton, will the employees speak out

if there's no job security and no job stability? I submit to you those are the two fundamentals for a quality public service, and those will not be in place. At least I don't think so. Maybe someone can enlighten me about this, but I think those items will not be in place.

The other issue I'd like to address is that of profit. We don't think there's anything wrong with making a profit. That's not what's wrong here. But I think that when you contract out services like providing security for jails or services like ambulance service—the government now is talking about perhaps contracting out some services that are hospital-related. We certainly know about highway maintenance. We also know that licensing and drivers' licences are now being contracted out. It wouldn't stop anyone from a contract—marriage licences. The point is that if there is profit involved, and obviously that is the private sector cry, then I submit that the quality of public service will have to suffer and we'll be suffering because of that.

The other point I want to make is that it also reduces the accountability, because it blurs the lines between various ministries. The minister will be able to designate a private sector person. This is valid across ministries, by the way. A minister would be able to designate a private person to be responsible for service delivery. To my mind, this will blur the lines of responsibility within ministries.

I found it very interesting that the member from Thornhill, when she made her presentation, indicated that this bill is also designed to root out inefficiencies in the system. I would submit that we have the Red Tape Commission, and the Red Tape Commission was supposed to be organized to root out inefficiencies and ineffectiveness in the government. Here, on the one hand, we have the Red Tape Commission not being able to do what the member from Thornhill is saying private sector opportunities will do. Obviously there's something skewed here. If we have to contract out services to the private sector in order to root out inefficiencies, then I would submit that this government should look at rooting out inefficiencies prior to contracting out these kinds of services. Why can this government not root out inefficiencies now? Why would we need Bill 25 to root out these inefficiencies?

I was on the private bills committee. We made certain recommendations about how to root out inefficiencies. In fact, when a municipality is forced to come to Queen's Park because they're unable to get a law passed that will permit that municipality to cut the grass in front of city hall on certain public lands, then obviously that is wrong. That is an inefficiency that should've been rooted out. While we were making these recommendations to the Red Tape Commission, it just seemed that many of these recommendations went into a black hole and nothing much was done. In short, what I'm simply saying is, we don't need Bill 25 to root out inefficiencies. We can do it without Bill 25.

Now, I grant you, there are some sections in here which are somewhat useful. OK, we will grant that. But

the major point is that you're introducing so many acts, so many various parts of this bill that are not really essential.

The bill also speaks about public-private partnerships. Of course, we can go on all night to talk about that and the inefficiencies found within that form of operation.

I see I'm running out of time, but simply let me remind you that this bill, as it stands, has not received enough discussion. The persons who are affected by it would request that you give them more time so they can make their presentations properly. I would ask tonight that you do that, that you consider that and that you provide this service to OPSEU.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions? Comments?

Mr Galt: It was rather interesting to hear the presentation by the member from Davenport, particularly when he got into the area of consultation. He is making reference to some only five days of consultation. I think maybe his math is just a bit rusty and just isn't quite up. Actually, it occurred between April and June. That's over a three-month period during the year 2000. Actually, they've had opportunity for input all the way from June 2000 right up until May of this year. That's a full year as well. I think he should check those facts. But then that's typical of the opposition as they look at consultation, because really the hallmark of our government is consultation. Maybe they're reflecting on how they acted when they were in government.

Also, he talked about rooting out inefficiency, that you can just draw with a magic wand called the Red Tape Commission and there, bingo, all the inefficiencies are gone. With changing times, you can always improve on various scenarios, various situations. If you think the status quo was OK, man, you are in big trouble. It sounds like just because he thinks we struck the Red Tape Commission, everything is in order.

Then he goes on to comment that we don't need Bill 25. Here's an act, 122 years old, that hasn't been touched in some 40 years, and this member from Davenport says that we really don't need to bring in Bill 25 to change the Ontario Public Service Act. I think it's way overdue, and he might have criticized us for not bringing it in in our first term. But certainly when you see the kind of review that was carried out by the NDP, it's very obvious that this bill is indeed needed.

2050

Mr Peters: It's a pleasure to stand up and support my colleague the member for Davenport. I think the member points out very clearly that we know what the agenda of this government is. The agenda of this government is to see the privatization of as many services in this province as possible.

We also know what the other hidden agenda of this government is. This government is on an agenda to try and break unions in this province. We know that OPSEU has been a good representative of individuals in this province in ensuring that we have good delivery of public services and good public servants. But this government has been on an attack agenda to work toward destroying unions in this province. What we're seeing here is not

only the privatization of more public services in this province, but again, another attack on collective bargaining and on unions in this province. I think it's a sad day, what we're seeing come out of this government, with this bent, warped agenda of privatization.

The public wants to have good service. They want to have service delivered in the proper manner and they want to have public servants who are going to be accountable. This government, which talks about accountability and prides itself on accountability, is showing its true colours. They're taking away the accountability to citizens in this province, the accountability for guarantees to citizens in this province to know that they are going to have their services delivered in a proper way. It is an extremely sad day that we're seeing this happen.

We've seen what's happened with Camp Turnaround. We've seen what's happened with the Genest centre in London. We've seen what's happened around this province with the privatization of roads. We've seen what's happened with the privatization of labs. We know what's going to happen with the new jail in Penetanguishene. The privatization agenda of this government is extremely foolish.

Mr Hampton: As the debate has taken place here tonight, the kinds of operations this government is interested in are becoming more apparent.

Let me just use as an example something that exists out there now. Sunnybrook hospital is a public hospital. It was paid for with public money and it's maintained with public money. It falls under the auspices not only of Ontario legislation but also the Canada Health Act. But this government is doing something which is quite incredible at Sunnybrook hospital: it is actually operating a private, for-profit cancer treatment centre there.

The government talks a good line about accountability, but we've asked now for almost six weeks for a copy of the contract, a copy of the agreement which sets up this private, for-profit cancer treatment centre in a public hospital, and the government that boasts about accountability says, "Sorry, we can't give you a copy of the contract. We can't disclose any of the financial relationships. We can't disclose whether taxpayers' money is being used efficiently, whether it's being used effectively. We can't disclose whether or not the treatment regimes here are in accord with what is the usual medical practice. Because we've entered into this business relationship with this private, for-profit company, we can't give any of this information to the Legislature of Ontario, nor to the taxpayers of Ontario."

This is the kind of public-private working relationship that this government has in mind, where taxpayers' money goes to private, for-profit agencies, but the taxpayers of Ontario are denied the opportunity to know what's happening.

The Deputy Speaker: Further comments or questions? The Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr Speaker, may I say that you're dressed rather elegantly for the occasion this evening.

It's a privilege to stand and join in this debate on Bill 25 tonight. I've heard the comments from members opposite and members of this caucus as we engage in this debate. Often we hear comments that are really not based on the contents of this bill. I suppose that's not unusual in this place. We hear comments that are based on ideology. We hear comments about privatization. We hear comments about the effects of privatization in other sectors. All of those of course are biased by the prism through which the observer looks.

I note with some interest that if we were to take all of the observations of the opposition members—the member for Davenport, the leader of the third party, all of those observations—and really take them to heart, what we would have is an Ontario that never changed, where we never changed anything, where we were condemned to 40-year-old acts that had never evolved and modernized and come together in what is a growing and increasingly complex society. I wonder if that would be good for the people of Ontario.

If people reflect on that, I think they will find the comments of the member from Thornhill this evening to be very well reasoned, because the member from Thornhill stood in this place and spoke for a moment about the difference this would make to the lives of people who are directly affected by Bill 25, and those are good effects. This will make Ontario a little better for those people. I believe the intention of this place, of this Legislature, is to look reasonably and rationally and to do those things that make life better for the people of Ontario, and surely that's the purpose of Bill 25. I thank the member from Thornhill for making that obvious to all of us this evening.

Mr Sergio: I have to compliment our colleague the member for Davenport on a wonderful presentation on Bill 25. Taking some of his comments, I think we have to say that the people who are involved here are our own people—

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: That's fine. I'll take the extra minute here. That's OK.

The important thing to remember here is our own employees, the public service. They are the same people who have families; they have to send children to school, they have to buy homes, they have to buy cars and they have to support our economy as well. Who said that a happy employee is worth a lot more than an unhappy employee? In which direction are we moving? Which way is the government going about it?

There is an urgency to look at the fairness of this particular Bill 25, and at a particular area. When we allow the powers that be to dictate who to hire and when and under what conditions, or who to fire under the same conditions, and even to discipline and stuff like that, the question is, how can we allow fairness to take place when the checks and balances are not here? Because it is no longer the Premier, it is no longer the minister, it is no longer the deputy; it's someone else down the line who makes the law, if you will. That is not fair. I think we should be aware of that.

The Deputy Speaker: Response? The member for Davenport.

Mr Ruprecht: I want to thank the members for their comments.

I would like to address myself to the specific comments that were made by the member for Northumberland. He said we should check our facts. Well, the fact is I'm looking at a letter that was written to Mr Kevin Wilson, who is the director of the corporate labour relations/negotiations secretariat of the Management Board Secretariat. In the letter there are various points, but one of the major ones, and it's the first one, talks about the "shortcomings in the consultation process."

Here is the member for Northumberland saying that the hallmark of the Harris government is consultation. If that's the hallmark, then I wish the member from Northumberland could stand in his place and answer this question. This letter says that OPSEU did not have a year to respond and make specific comments on Bill 25; no, it had five days. I'm reading from the letter, "Public Service Act 'reform' has been under active consideration for many months"—internally, of course; Discussions with Management Board and minister to minister and even at the lower levels.

That may be the case. But I'm telling you, that was internal. When it came to the crux of opening up the process and the windows of opportunity to provide input from the public service, from those who are affected specifically, and that's OPSEU, it was a five-day opportunity. It says here, "This contrasts sharply with the consultation 'window' being provided to bargaining unit public servants and their unions. OPSEU has been given a five-day opportunity to make submissions on a vague discussion paper, really just a series of questions."

2100

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hampton: I want to talk about what government members have increasingly admitted here tonight, and that is that the Public Service Act and the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act are both being amended so that the government can in effect invite private for-profit corporations to take over more and more of the operations of the public service.

I referred earlier in my remarks to what's happening now at Sunnybrook hospital as an example. Sunnybrook hospital continues to be a public hospital within the legislation of the Ministry of Health—publicly funded, publicly administered—and also falls under the legislation known as the Canada Health Act. This government has decided that many of the services that are operated out of Sunnybrook hospital are now going to be turned over to private for-profit corporations. So this government has created a relationship with a private for-profit corporation that is operating a cancer treatment centre. They get money for this from the government of Ontario. They get taxpayers' money.

When someone is providing a health service, and they are getting taxpayers' money for this and have a contractual relationship with an agency of the government of

Ontario, one would expect—this is taking place in a public hospital with public money, taxpayers' money—that the citizens of Ontario would be able to have some accountability mechanism for what's happening, but in fact there is no accountability mechanism. The taxpayers of Ontario or the patients are not allowed to see how this private for-profit corporation is being paid, how much they're being paid and whether they're being paid more than a cancer treatment centre operated by Cancer Care Ontario would receive. You're not allowed to see any of those things.

We are told from questions we've asked that in fact it's costing more money to treat patients at this private for-profit cancer treatment facility than it costs in any other Cancer Care Ontario facility, and similarly that the treatments are limited so that when there is a particularly complex case, ie one that might be more costly in terms of the treatment required, it's put back into the public system. So we're told from the questions we've asked that this is costing the taxpayers of Ontario more money, that the operators of the private for-profit clinic are making a lot of money off this, but that when they come across complex cases, they feed those back into the not-for-profit cancer treatment side of Cancer Care Ontario.

I think most people would be upset about that. You're paying more of the taxpayers' money and you're getting less patient care. But what's really galling is that you're not allowed to see any of the agreements. You're not allowed to see how this work. In other words, there is no accountability. Taxpayers' money, public money, is being funnelled into a private for-profit organization, but taxpayers are not allowed to see the machinery of what's happening here, they're not allowed to see all the details of what's happening, and they're not allowed to demand accountability. What a very upsetting situation. What a very wrong-headed thing to be happening to taxpayers' money. But this government is presiding over it and in fact promotes it.

Why is this important? It's important because if you read the sections of this legislation, Bill 25, a number of the sections will not only permit this kind of activity, but they will increase it and will ensure that it happens in a more and more widespread way. For example, changes to sections 23 and 24 of the Public Service Act ensure that the delegation of authority from the deputy minister to any person—not to any assistant deputy minister, not to any branch director, but to any person—means that in effect it will be easier for the government to take what are now public services, turn them over to private for-profit organizations for the operation, and we'll be stuck with the same situation we have at Sunnybrook hospital and with Cancer Care Ontario.

The public of Ontario will not be entitled to find out. "Tell us about this agreement, tell us how much money is being paid, tell us what services are being provided, and tell us the cost per unit or the measurement of that." The government's response is going to be the same as it has been at Sunnybrook hospital. "Under the terms of the agreement we're not allowed to tell you. Under the terms

of the agreement, we're not allowed to fulfill that basic function of government, which is to account to you for how taxpayers' money is being spent."

Why should people be disturbed by this? For a number of reasons. I think most people in the public service want to be held accountable. They want to be able to come forward and say, "This is my job. This is what I'm supposed to do. This is what we're paid. This is the service we're supposed to provide." But it's very easy to see, when you look at this debacle that's happening at Sunnybrook hospital, that even that basic information can be denied, because the former public service would no longer be accountable to a deputy minister. They would be accountable to the manager of a private for-profit corporation who would be able to say, "Sorry, under our agreement with the government, you're not allowed to disclose any of these things. You're not allowed to disclose what profits we're making from the operation of this service. You're not allowed to disclose whether or not we've ratcheted down the public service or done anything like that." So there is no accountability here. In fact, it is the denial of accountability.

I just want to go back to something I spoke to earlier because I think it's important. If you look at the services this government has turned over to their private corporate friends already, the Provincial Auditor has remarked over and over again that what's happening is that the public is being stuck with a bigger bill and is getting less service. If you look at the privatization of highway maintenance, the Provincial Auditor has pointed out that in fact it's costing more for the private companies to provide highway maintenance than it cost members of the public service.

There's a reason for that. The Provincial Auditor has outlined some of the reasons why that's happening. If you have a Ministry of Transportation that is able to go out there and buy vehicles on a fleet basis, they can get a cheaper rate on the vehicles. It's the same as Bell Canada. If Bell Canada goes out and buys 300 half-tons, they can get a fleet policy on the purchase of those half-tons. When you privatize the service and turn it over to a series of smaller private companies, there goes the savings from a fleet purchase policy.

Similarly, where you have a number of vehicles and you're insuring them in terms of auto insurance, you can get a fleet policy when you have a number. But when you turn it over to a number of private companies, there go the insurance savings on the fleet policy. Similarly, when you're dealing with the payment of workers' compensation, or WSIB, when you have a large number of employees all covered by the same general framework, you can get a better rate in terms of WSIB. When you turn it over and privatize it to a number of small companies, there go your savings in terms of WSIB.

The Provincial Auditor has delineated where savings are being lost by this government's desire to turn the operation of services over to private sector companies that lose those economies of scale, but then want a 15% return, a profit, on top of all that. So it's not unusual that

the private operation of the public service will cost 20% more or 25% more to deliver. People are paying more money and in effect getting the same service or less service.

2110

Let me just give you an example of another area that's been privatized. Home care in this province used to be provided by community non-profit agencies like Red Cross and the Victorian Order of Nurses. This government in the last seven years has, piece by piece, turned over home care to a series of private, for-profit corporations, many of them American private, for-profit corporations. Those corporations will tell you, when you look at their annual returns, that they want a 15% return on the contract. So if, for example, the contract is for \$2 billion to provide home care in Ontario, they will want to have at least a \$250-million profit line on top of that.

They will also tell you that they pay their executive cadre a lot more than someone working in the public or community service would receive. So Olsten health care incorporated boasts that they pay their executive cadre \$10 million in salaries and bonuses. Right there, on that contract that privatizes a public service, \$260 million is lost to nothing more than executive pay and the profit motive; \$260 million more in cost to provide the service, but patients are getting less care. That's why people ought to—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions, comments?

Mr Wettlaufer: The leader of the third party is starting to sound like a Liberal.

Mr Hampton: Please don't insult me. I'm at least consistent.

Mr Wettlaufer: Sorry, I didn't mean to insult. He talked about the hospitals, but his example of a hospital was a private, for-profit hospital. It's not that we've turned one over from public to private; it is a private hospital. We don't control hospitals anyway; they have their own boards of directors. Their boards of directors control them.

He also was talking about turning over the public service to a private, for-profit corporation. He's saying that's what we're doing. I don't think we're turning over the public service to a private, for-profit corporation. We have an obligation to try to recruit the best employees possible because we need top-notch talent; that's why.

Mr Hampton: Tell me what is happening at Sunnybrook.

Mr Wettlaufer: But it will be in exceptional circumstances. I've said this over and over and over again tonight. It seems to go in one ear over there and out the other. Maybe that is an explanation in itself.

The proposed amendments will give us the flexibility that we need, something the former leader of your party also advocated, by the way. Bob Rae advocated it, and we talked about that earlier tonight. Some of my colleagues raised that.

The bill does not lessen accountability. The public service is not going to be less accountable. We still will

be responsible for the quality of their services. We are responsible.

Mr Hampton: Tell me about Sunnybrook.

Mr Wettlaufer: I know you don't understand that. We're delegating authority but we're still ultimately responsible. What this will do is allow public servants to be managed more effectively.

Mr Crozier: I want to re-emphasize something that's been said earlier, I'm sure, during the debate, and that is the percentage of the public service that is now under contract. This, to me, is leading even more so in that direction, but almost 25% of the public service is now under contract. Something that I would think the government, in its experience with business, would understand is that there are those things that are called institutional memory and institutional assets. They're almost one and the same. That is, the more you dilute your institutional assets—those who have been with you, those who understand how you work, those who want to work for you—the less effective you can become.

I would have thought as well that over the six years, being the experts in management that those from the government say they are, they would have been able to say, "Even if there are some faults in the civil service"—and we all have faults, so I think that's a statement that I can make relatively positively. Even if there are faults in the public service, I would have thought the great managers of Ontario could have solved these problems; in other words, they could have made the public service, the civil service, more efficient and that they wouldn't have to go to the private sector, they wouldn't have to dilute a civil service that's been with us more than 100 years, and we wouldn't have had to lose the institutional assets that we've built up.

Mr Galt: It's quite interesting, the presentation made by the leader of the third party. I think back to the commission that his government sponsored in 1993. A lot of what he has to say really is counter to what came out in that particular commission. He was in the cabinet at that time, and I would think he would have been supportive of his leader and would have been working with him; you know, things like, "Fewer than four in 10 Ontarians agree that the services provided by the Ontario government were of value to the taxpayers' money." This came from Bob Rae in the *Globe and Mail*. Again, he says, "In business you know that customers matter, because if you don't pay attention to customers they go elsewhere."

The public service is a monopoly, and those customers don't have a choice. Those are some of the things we're hearing so much in the concerns that they express.

It sounds like, from his presentation, something that's privatized is something evil, something bad. We're not talking necessarily public versus private; we're talking monopoly versus competition. Therein lies the difference. The difficulty is with a monopoly. If you bring in some competition, it's healthy all around.

What an opportunity we have today. We've heard how good our public school system is, so we give through the tax break some assistance to those independent schools

that now have a great opportunity to see indeed, as Earl Manners would say, how great the system is. I don't disbelieve him, but now there will be a little bit of competition over and above the separate versus the public. So again, it overcomes more of that monopoly problem and there truly will be competition in there. We look forward to good things from that.

Mr Sergio: I have to compliment the leader of the third party, the member for Kenora-Rainy River, for the presentation on the substance of Bill 25, especially when it comes to our employees, especially the public service employees.

I think it's worth noting that they are taxpayers of Ontario and, as such, they have the same responsibilities as any other Ontarian. They have the same responsibility to grow a family, to educate a family, to purchase goods, to pay the mortgage, to go on holidays and whatever else. But we have to keep in mind, and I think that the leader of the third party has expressed this point extremely well, that the people working for the people of Ontario, our public employees, are wonderful people, and there's nothing wrong either with the employees of a private organization. The only difference is here: once we turn over the sensibility, that responsibility, that accountability to a private corporation, we're losing everything.

Introducing that element and the element of privatizing, of course the public employees of the province of Ontario feel threatened. They don't feel comfortable any more. They feel that the government is not protecting them.

What happens if an employee is unjustly penalized? Who is going to be responsible once it's passed over to a private corporation? Who is going to be responsible? The government won't be responsible, because they don't have the control any more. We are dealing with health issues, environmental issues. Who is going to be in charge of that? I think that's what we're saying.

2120

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Hampton: I want to thank all the members for their comments. I want to point out to the members of the government that they want to be very careful in the limited quotations they've taken from a 1993 study by the then NDP government, because that study was about improving public service, about ensuring that public services were delivered better. It wasn't about privatizing or selling off public services, which is what all of you guys are about. I wanted to clarify that remark.

I also want to point out to people that in all of my remarks I've been careful to point to the comments of the Provincial Auditor. It's the Provincial Auditor who says this government's determination to preside over the disintegration of the provincial ambulance service and to force it down to municipalities, which are neither geographically situated nor financially situated to take over the ambulance service, is going to cost \$50 million a year more, to operate the ambulance service. So people are going to have an ambulance service that is no longer integrated and will not be as efficient or as effective, but will cost them \$50 million more.

Similarly, the auditor has called into question the ministry of corrections and the private operation of jails. We need to put it right on the record that when a private corporation operates a jail, when they have their annual general meeting, they're not going to ask the people who work in the jail, "How many inmates did you rehabilitate this year? How effective were you in rehabilitation? How much did you do for public safety this year? Are you better at ensuring public safety?" They're not going to ask any of those things. They're going to ask one question, "How much money did we make this year?" because that's why the corporation exists.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): It's my privilege to be here to talk today about the amendments to the Public Service Act that our government has introduced. Over the past few days, there has been a lot of talk about the proposed amendments we are here to debate. Some people have chosen to focus on the Workforce Information Network and have made claims that it will lead to a violation of individual privacy. That's just talk. I am here today to tell the real truth about the proposed amendments to the Public Service Act, the WIN project and our e-government initiatives.

Our efforts to bring e-government to the Ontario public service do not stop with WIN. We are committed to taking the steps necessary to bring help to the delivery of government services, both internally and externally, into the 21st century. We must help equip and position Ontario to meet the challenging needs and expectations the people of Ontario have. We believe there should be an involved government embracing technology and the benefits it brings to the workplace. Technology enables government employees to do their work in a more efficient manner, and ultimately helps improve and provide the taxpayers with a greater value for their money.

We have moved to ensure that government is prepared to meet the needs of Ontarians into the 21st century. The government of Ontario continues to make progress on its development and introduction of electronic business initiatives across the Ontario public sector. Our goal is to become a world leader in the delivery of electronic services by 2003. By improving the way we do business and aligning our initiatives, we are ensuring that the taxpayers of Ontario continue to receive the best value for money while accessing services when, where and how they want. By reforming our infrastructure design and information technology delivery, we are able to compete better today and through the coming years. Our new electronic programs and services are the way in which we will improve how we do business.

Compared to other jurisdictions, Ontario ranks very high in what it is accomplishing and doing in the area of electronic service delivery and e-government. Making use of technology involves much more than computers, fax machines and e-mail. It involves projects like the Ministry of Natural Resources, of which the minister is here tonight, and the on-line campsite reservation system; government of Ontario service kiosks where you can

renew drivers' licences, among other services; and of course each ministry has its own Web site where people can access a wealth of information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. I might add that the MNR's campsite reservation system is working very well, with a large number of people responding to that on a regular basis, an increase in the people who are using the facilities.

But this is not all. Several internal initiatives are reducing the amount of time our employees have to spend on time-consuming administrative tasks. This frees up hours upon hours of time to better deliver services to people, services that are accessible, consolidated and provide value for money.

These are some examples of our initiatives and our forward-looking approach to doing business. We will continue to look for ways in which we can improve our services and make the best use of the taxpayers' resources. While we will always be on the lookout for new and innovative ways to deliver services, we will also strive to ensure the security and integrity of our information technology infrastructure. Only by doing this will we be on the cutting edge of secure, reliable technology that enhances efficiency while helping diminish privacy concerns.

Ontario is a world leader in this field and has arrived here because of its coordinated approach to ensuring we address issues surrounding the integrity of our resources. The measures we have taken include implementing iSERV, a central unit responsible for both privacy and operations, to ensure the security of the government information technology infrastructure, systematically implementing a process to identify and deal with areas of

high risk, and implementing an information protection centre to proactively ensure the technological infrastructure is safe from corruption.

This approach covers the entire public service and ensures we adopt policies which are rigorously applied and train all employees to understand their role in this important process. This comprehensive approach will help protect our investment and ensure that we will be able to sustain our important services to the people of Ontario.

Some of those who are watching this debate tonight may be wondering what WIN is and whether the amendments to the PSA compromise the security of the personal employee infrastructure that WIN tracks. These legislative amendments do not jeopardize employee information. This, with all due respect, is a red herring, and I'll tell you why. WIN is the Ontario public service's integrated, enterprise-wide, human resource management system which provides access to information and HR services for employees, managers and HR professionals across the ministries of the Ontario public service.

The objectives of the project are to provide consistent HR data across the OPS, improve access to HR information to support management decision-making, streamline inconsistent HR business processes, enable easy access by employees to their HR data through self-service, and support for manager accountability for people management.

The Deputy Speaker: We've reached the hour. Thank you very much.

It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2129.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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		Vaughan-King-Aurora	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et des projets de loi d'internet privé**

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Garfield Dunlop,
Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy, Frances Lankin,
Frank Mazzilli, Ted McMeekin, Bill Murdoch
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

CONTENTS

Wednesday 16 May 2001

SECOND READINGS

Public Service Statute Law

Amendment Act, 2001, Bill 25,

Mr Tsubouchi

Mr Martin	773, 777, 780
Mr Galt	775, 777, 781, 789, 792
Mrs Bountrogianni	776
Mr Bisson	776
Mr Mazzilli	776, 779
Mrs Pupatello	780
Mr Wettlaufer	781, 785, 792
Mr Sergio	781, 787, 790, 793
Mr Peters	782, 785, 789
Mr Dunlop	784, 787
Mr Crozier	784, 786, 792
Mr Hampton	784, 787, 789, 790, 793
Mrs Molinari	785, 787
Mr Ruprecht	788, 790
Mr Snobelen	790
Mr Ouellette	793
Debate deemed adjourned	794

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mercredi 16 mai 2001

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2001 modifiant des lois en ce qui a trait à la fonction publique, projet de loi 25,

M. Tsubouchi

Débat présumé ajourné	794
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