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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

Thursday 27 June 2002

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Jeudi 27 juin 2002

**Standing committee on
public accounts**

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**Comité permanent des
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Loi de 2002
sur la divulgation des indemnités
de cessation d'emploi
des employés du secteur public

Chair: John Gerretsen
Clerk: Tonia Grannum

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Thursday 27 June 2002

Jeudi 27 juin 2002

The committee met at 1009 in committee room 1.

The Chair (Mr John Gerretsen): I'd like to call the standing committee on public accounts to order to deal with clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 53. I'd ask for an opening statement by Ms Bountrogianni, the sponsor of this bill.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I want to raise the issue of the agenda this morning and the decision, which I'm not aware of, to do this morning's agenda in this order. I'd suggest to you, given that we have found ourselves partway through the draft report of the Ontario Innovation Trust, that it would seem more logical to proceed with that and then go to Bill 53. I know there was discussion on including Bill 53 in our deliberations today, but I would submit to you that it would be more appropriate to do them the other way around.

The Chair: That may be so, but just for the record I should state that there was a notice sent out from the Clerk's office on May 16 to all members of the committee to the effect that Bill 53 was to be scheduled for one of the meetings in June, the date to be determined. It was agreed that the deadline for the filing of amendments regarding Bill 53 be May 24.

Then another notice was faxed on June 13—two weeks ago today, the day I got ill, and the meeting was adjourned—at which time there was general discussion prior to that and, as a result, the committee schedule was faxed to everybody on the committee that day, which said that on June 27 there would be clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 53, Public Sector Employee Severance Pay Disclosure Act, 2001.

I know that last week when I wasn't here—I was dealing with my own private member's bill in the House—Mr Maves raised the issue that this came as a surprise, but these issues were discussed, and what I've quoted to you is what was agreed upon and faxed to everybody. If the committee wants to change that, it's up to the committee to do so. But for the record I should state that's the information that went out to everybody, and so it should not have been a surprise that we were going to deal with it today. However—

Mrs Munro: I'm not suggesting it was a surprise. I know we did have those discussions and I was in receipt. My concern is simply the order. I would prefer to finish the draft report, or at least spend the time on the draft report, and then go to the clause-by-clause.

The Chair: Any further comments?

I've just been informed by the clerk that we are in open session right now. If we go to the report, we'll have to be in closed session, and if we go into open session later we'll have to bring the recording people back. But as long as it's understood and if nobody has any objection or any comments—

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Chair, is the suggestion to go to Innovation Trust and then to clause-by-clause? Is that the suggestion?

The Chair: The suggestion is that we finish the Innovation Trust draft first and then go to clause-by-clause of Bill 53.

Ms Martel: The member is here and we've only got four amendments. It's a two-page bill and, if I recall, there was unanimous support for the bill, so I don't see that this is going to take us very long. I think we should just get to it. We'll get it done, and then we can move to Innovation Trust.

The Chair: Any further comments?

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'm looking at the agenda of June 20, and it is suggested that agenda was—I assume it progresses accordingly. That particular day we were considering the road user safety program, and the next thing on the agenda was the Ontario Innovation Trust. So I assumed, in my small way, that's the progression we make, and I was very surprised when I saw the agenda come out this way, that it had been turned around. I thought at one point when we left the other day that there was going to be some discussion on the report of the final recommendations on the road safety one, that the wording was going to be given back to us on the changes that were made.

The Chair: The normal practice is that once the legislative research has been done—

Mr Stewart: I'm the new guy on the block, so that's why I'm asking.

The Chair: —it had an opportunity to go through the draft amendments, and that report will come back. But it doesn't necessarily come back immediately the next week.

Mr Stewart: That's my misunderstanding then. I assumed it was to do that, and then we were going to go to the Innovation Trust, because it is on the schedule for the 20th, and then move to 53 afterwards.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Unless there's something I don't know and there is disagreement with the bill, this won't take long. I don't

have large statements to make. I actually have one statement to make and then will move the amendments.

The Chair: I'm at your disposal. What do you wish to do?

Mrs Bountrogianni: I was also told, and I've got the agenda, that at 10 am I should be here to do this. Actually, I think it's rude. What's happening now is quite rude, on a non-political level; it's just rude.

Mrs Munro: I would go back to my earlier position and request—although I can make a motion—that we do this in the order I have suggested.

The Chair: Could we have your motion then, please?

Mrs Munro: Certainly. I move that we consider the draft report of the Ontario Innovation Trust as the first item of our agenda and that the second item of our agenda be clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 53.

The Chair: Is there any discussion on that?

Ms Martel: Recorded vote.

Ayes

Hastings, Miller, Munro, Stewart.

Nays

Bountrogianni, Martel.

The Chair: The motion is carried.

We'll now go in camera to deal with the Innovation Trust report. We'll take about five minutes for the room to clear.

The committee continued in closed session from 1017 to 1127.

PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES'
SEVERANCE PAY
DISCLOSURE ACT, 2002
LOI DE 2002
SUR LA DIVULGATION DES INDEMNITÉS
DE CESSATION D'EMPLOI
DES EMPLOYÉS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Consideration of Bill 53, An Act requiring the disclosure of payments to former public sector employees arising from the termination of their employment / Projet de loi 53, Loi exigeant la divulgation des versements effectués aux anciens employés du secteur public par suite de la cessation de leur emploi.

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order again for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 53, An Act requiring the disclosure of payments to former public sector employees arising from the termination of their employment.

It's Mrs Bountrogianni's bill, so I will call upon her to make an opening statement and then we'll go through clause-by-clause.

Mrs Bountrogianni: I'll make a very brief opening statement, because I really wish to have the amendments discussed and passed today.

This is basically an extension of the government's own sunshine law that for anyone receiving a severance of \$100,000 or more, that information should be made public. That's my only opening statement.

Thank you for the opportunity to bring this to this committee.

The Chair: Any other comments by anyone?

Mr Stewart: I'd like to speak to the bill. First of all, let me say that I think the intent of the bill is good and the general direction of the bill is very good. But we're dealing with something here that is totally different from dealing with the release of somebody's wages, the reason being that there are so many extenuating circumstances to what people get on severance pay.

I've employed people for 40 years and I have great difficulty, whether it be in the private sector or the public sector, when other employees know everything about everybody else. I truly believe that this type of thing—not on the dollars and cents of salary—tends to infringe upon certain people's rights.

I may have made \$70,000 or \$80,000 a year for somebody and I may have worked for him for 30 years. My severance package may be for merit or it could be for service; it could be for a lot of things. If I happen to be given something over \$100,000—let's say it's \$101,000 and I was here 30 years or whatever it might be—somebody sitting beside me, who may not have done the job that I did, may end up saying, "God, I want to get a severance exactly like that." I think you're opening up a real—for lack of a better word—can of worms, that we are indeed interfering with things that should be left somewhat in private, as such.

The other concern I have is, what will happen for people who may want to become employed in the public sector? I guess the public sector gets criticized from time to time because of work habits and a number of other things they do. I'm beginning to think if you put enough of these types of restrictions and regulations in, how are you going to attract people? How are you going to attract good people?

Please let me say that the intent of your bill is fine. I think there has to be some major flexibility. Because if I go and hire somebody today and I say, "Oh, by the way, whether you're terminated in 10 years or 15 years for inefficiency"—well, we wouldn't go that long with inefficiency, but say it is, or because of some extenuating circumstance within the firm or within the ministry, or there could be untold things there. I'm going to say to him, "Well, when you are let go or when you're terminated, I'm going to tell the whole world about what I'm giving you." I don't think that's right. I believe that you have to look at individual people. I realize that in certain areas what should be given is kind of laid down, but if we are going to attract good people to the public sector, as we are doing—and I know people don't like it when I suggest that government should be run like a business. I went through this the other night in the House and I got a little criticism for it. But for the life of me, when I ask them why not, I never, ever hear anybody

telling me why it shouldn't be. But again, there are those who don't. Of course, everybody says, "It's profit." Well, what do you think revenue is? Revenue happens to be the dollars that allow us to give the priority services that we need.

My concern, again, with this particular bill is the fact that I think there is a degree of infringing on people's rights and privacies. I think it gives an indication that we really don't want to attract the best people. I don't think everybody should know everything about everybody else. I believe that if there are terminations, for whatever reason, there should be some degree of privacy involved with that, and for other reasons they may be trying to get rid of somebody because of some extenuating circumstances that are not maybe appropriate, or whatever.

I think there has to be certainly a degree of flexibility in it. Needless to say, I assume this has been run by the lawyers. Of course it's very debatable with lawyers—sorry, Mr Chair—that some interpret one thing one way and another one interprets another way—

The Chair: Just like politicians.

Mr Stewart: Just like politicians, which surprises me.

Really, I guess the other one is if it has been run by the privacy commissioner. What was his position? I guess I would ask that before I continue with any additional comments on it.

But there again, don't forget, we're dealing with the public sector here. We're dealing with people whose rights we could be infringing on, I believe. We're dealing with things like merit and ability and duration of time.

If I've been here, let's say, 20 years, and you publish that I got a severance of \$101,000, the automatic thing the public's going to say is, "Look at that guy Stewart. Look at the money this guy got. He got \$100,000 when he left the government." They didn't look at how long I worked here. They didn't look at what my position was. They didn't look at anything other than the fact that Stewart got \$100,000 and he's a civil servant who I don't think is worth that many dollars.

We hear it every day as politicians, and I think we're going to hear it every day on this. Public disclosure of wages I have no problems with, but I do on this because their wages are set at a certain level. It's between \$30,000 and \$40,000. I could have an employee who is maybe making \$25,000, \$30,000 or \$40,000 and, because of extenuating circumstances, give them \$100,000. The guy sitting beside him maybe didn't do as well.

I just have a little problem. So I'll shut up for a minute, but I'd like to go back because I would like to hear what the privacy commissioner said.

Mrs Bountrogianni: First of all, it did go through the lawyer. Second of all, the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner was here and made a presentation during the hearings and found this to be a balanced bill and, in fact, the amendments that I will be proposing came mostly from the privacy commissioner. He felt that these amendments would make it a better bill. There are precedents in other provinces.

With respect to your comments on privacy, this is public money. The public has a right to know how much money they are paying people for their salaries and their severances. As you may know, this came out of a lot of golden handshakes from people—unlike yourself—who left on their own accord and still received millions. In my city alone, hospital officials—\$2.5 million—who were not accountable, who were not effective, who were not efficient—it was just an easy way to get rid of them.

My first bill on this, with all due respect, was a better bill and was more comprehensive and would have given more accountability. But that was touted as infringing on privacy because it was very detailed. This is a very simple bill. It's basically saying that if your severance package is over \$100,000, the public has a right to know that; that's all. In fact, sooner or later, the public does find out. It may take years, it may take a lot of FOIing, it may take a lot of very good reporters digging and digging. That publicity is often more negative than the one-day story of how this person is going to receive a \$200,000 severance. Quite often, not knowing, and the rumours around the not knowing, are much more negative toward that public sector executive.

But really, it's about the right to know. There are precedents across the country and in other provinces. The privacy commissioner was very supportive and, in fact, wanted to strengthen it by these amendments. It was unanimously passed. The minister responsible for Management Board was very supportive of this bill. At least, that's what he said, and I think he's an honourable minister. So I find it very curious that you're trying to delay it or block it with arguments that have been discussed and resolved in this committee and in the Legislature.

The Chair: Any further comments?

Mr Stewart: No, I'm not trying to delay this thing at all. What I'm trying to do is suggest to you that there's got to be some flexibility in it. Maybe the fact is that \$100,000 is too low. There are all kinds of people who make \$20,000, \$30,000 or \$40,000 who might get a severance of \$100,000. This—

Mrs Bountrogianni: What's wrong with the public knowing that? They know what we make.

Mr Stewart: That's fine.

Mrs Bountrogianni: And we get the criticism and then we move on.

Mr Stewart: They elected us.

Mrs Bountrogianni: They are paying for these people, too.

Mr Stewart: I know, but there are employees who I believe should have some privacy and I don't think, in this particular case, that they have.

Again, I go back to what I said to you. I have absolutely no problems with wage—none whatsoever. With my wages or the public sector wages I have no problems. But when it comes to severances, I have difficulty because there are too many extenuating circumstances. You can talk about those, whether it be hospital people or whatever. They may get \$200,000 or \$300,000 and you'll

save \$1 million over the next two years because they're gone.

You know—sorry, I shouldn't say what I was going to say. I know that because I've seen it in business and I've seen it in other areas, because some of the people get to that point where they are the top executives with major jobs, they feel they are irreplaceable and they don't do the job very well, and we're looking at a few of those situations right now. I believe it's certainly very low. I think you're infringing on the rights of some of the lesser-paid people in the various ministries and I have difficulty with that. Whether you class it as public sector money or not, it's still the fact that it's there and could be. I don't know if my colleagues want to say anything or not.

1140

The Chair: Ms Martel's next.

Ms Martel: Just very briefly, we had Tom Mitchinson before us and he was very clear. He said there was nothing flawed in the bill. He said it did provide a balance between accountability and privacy. He also said that we have a clear precedent already that we can point to and that's the government's own sunshine law, where the salaries of \$100,000 are disclosed. So I'm finding it really hard to balance that it would be OK to disclose \$100,000 worth of salary, which we do through your government's sunshine law, but we wouldn't do that if someone got a severance package of over \$100,000.

We are talking about public money; we're not talking about private sector employees. We are talking about executives who are outside of a bargaining unit who get a golden handshake. It seems to me that the public does have a right to know those issues when someone leaves their employment. I don't think for a moment that it's going to stop people from applying. What we saw in terms of the public hearings, that people were doing that from one post to the next, which was even worse—just moving from one job, getting a severance, and going on doing it again somewhere else, and a lot of expenditure of public money. So I don't know how the government members in particular can say it's OK to have disclosure under the sunshine law for salaries but it's not OK under the severance package. That's a contradiction I can't understand.

The Chair: Any further comments before we go through clause-by-clause?

Mrs Munro: I would like to say a few words about Bill 53 and specifically about advice that government members have received on a piece of legislation that we all agree is well-intentioned, and we certainly understand the motive of the member in bringing it forward. As all of us know, this is the bill that requires that if a former public sector employee not subject to a collective agreement receives \$100,000 or more as severance pay, then the former employer is required to make public the amount of severance paid.

Obviously, as we all recognize, there is some similarity between this bill and the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, which certainly was consistent with the

position that, as Ms Martel has referenced, was significant to this government and its commitment to providing the public with information on the most senior people in the public sector. It was, as has been referenced, referred to as the sunshine law because its intent was, of course, to do exactly that: to provide information, in a public disclosure way, on those kinds of salaries that were being paid.

But under this legislation, public sector organizations and government ministries, as you know, by March 31 of each year must disclose the names, the positions and the compensation paid to those employees where it is in excess of \$100,000. But by setting a threshold of \$100,000 in salary for public disclosure, the legislation parallels similar requirements in the private sector and, quite frankly, the whole idea was to provide the public with a better picture of how compensation levels for senior people in the public sector compare to those in the private sector. Obviously, the intent of that legislation was in fact to return the notion of public into public sector salaries.

I certainly understand that greater accountability in public sector salary disclosures is also in line with the recommendations made, as was referenced here a moment ago, by Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner. Organizations subject to the legislation, as we know, include municipalities, school boards, hospitals, colleges and universities, all ministries of the Ontario government, crown corporations and agencies of the LCBO and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

Ms Martel: Why doesn't she just table it?

Mrs Bountrogianni: On a point of order, Mr Chair: Is this a lecture?

The Chair: Ms Munro has the floor. According to our rules, she has up to 20 minutes—

Mrs Bountrogianni: That's not fair. If you don't want to pass this now, that's fine. But we're wasting everyone's time here with a little lecture about your sunshine law. We know the sunshine law. Let's just forget this stuff.

The Chair: Excuse me. Mrs Munro has the floor.

Ms Martel: Why doesn't she table what she's reading?

Mrs Munro: I think the important point for us to understand is the fact that we recognize the intent of this is to follow in that legislative logic, if you like. But we think that Bill 53 needs to reflect more aspects of the sunshine act to be a truly workable piece of legislation. So I would just like to give—

Mrs Bountrogianni: Did you bring any amendments?

The Chair: Mrs Bountrogianni, she has the floor.

Go ahead.

Mrs Munro: If the members of the committee will bear with me, I'll break down some of the various aspects of the bill to give us an understanding of the potential the bill has.

The first problem was referenced a moment ago, and that is on the question of the definition of severance pay. Upon reflection, I think you would see that it is a very

narrow definition. It refers only to the amounts received by a person in connection with a retirement compensation arrangement, as defined in the Income Tax Act. A retirement compensation arrangement is a special arrangement under the Income Tax Act to provide funds to a custodian for future compensation for employees who retire or lose their employment. This type of arrangement does not cover what is commonly known as severance pay. So I believe there are issues with regard to the definition that need to be addressed.

As many members will know, severance pay can take many forms. It can be some form of cash payout. It could include a retirement compensation arrangement, as the definition states. It may include some more creative settlements, such as an ability to cash in unused sick time or holiday time. It could include almost anything.

The members need to remember that any law that deals either directly or indirectly with the Canadian Income Tax Act, as this bill does, or at least for defining terms, is dealing with a document that contains almost 3,000 pages. A severance sunshine law would certainly have to comply with the definitions and regulations that govern this country's income tax.

Having a proper definition is particularly important in a bill like this, because once a sunshine severance law is in place, there—

Ms Martel: Chair, on a point of order: I'm sorry. If she were making some arguments, I wouldn't whine. She's reading from a prepared text. I'd ask the member—look, why don't you just table it with us, and we'll read it at our leisure? I think it is a real abuse of the committee's time that she is reading a text prepared by someone—who knows?—and taking up the committee's time when we can't deal with the amendments. Table it, and let's get on with the amendments. This is ridiculous.

The Chair: That's not a point of order. She has the floor for up to 20 minutes, the way I understand it, the way our rules operate. Any member can use the time any way that he or she wishes. So continue on.

Mrs Munro: Having a proper definition is particularly important in a bill like this, because once a severance sunshine law is in place, there may be, but I hope not, organizations that would look extremely hard to find loopholes to exploit. That is something I'm sure the honourable member didn't intend.

I understand that the member originally introduced a similar bill following a severance scandal at a hospital in her constituency. It would be a shame to put a law in place that a hospital or any other organization in the broader public sector could simply do an end run around.

To move on, if Bill 53 is to go forward, a number of protections that are already part of the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act should be added to make the bill workable. For example, it is uncertain whether Bill 53 would override an agreement regarding severance pay that attempts to limit the disclosure of such information. Bill 53 should prevail or not contravene any agreement that attempts to do otherwise.

1150

The bill also lacks flexibility for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations dealing with certain issues. These include: excluding certain persons as employers; how information should be disclosed; whether specific payments are to be included or excluded from severance pay; and changing the \$100,000 threshold for disclosing severance pay.

Let me expand for a moment on the last example.

Interjection.

The Chair: Just a minute. According to standing order 107, in committee a member can have the floor for 20 minutes.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): There's an opportunity for all sides to propose amendments. None was proposed and now we're getting a lecture on the background of how other people may do this. It's an embarrassment.

The Chair: Mr Patten, Mrs Munro has the floor and she will continue. She has six more minutes left. Go ahead.

Mrs Munro: Let me just continue on the question of the last example. If the bill receives royal assent and becomes law, five years or even 10 years later the threshold is still set at \$100,000, because the government doesn't have the ability to amend the legislation. Obviously, I see that as a problem. But as I said, it is only one of the many with this particular piece of legislation.

The spirit of the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act is one of openness and transparent accountability, and those are certainly key to this. In the recent budget introduced by the Minister of Finance, there was the announcement that the government would increase the accountability, openness and transparency of its own books. On page 53 of the budget papers, the heading reads "Improving Accounting Practices."

"Implementing better accounting and reporting practices means providing more accurate and relevant information to decision-makers and the public. The government will continue to pursue improvements to its accounting practices to foster more efficient, effective and business-like management of public resources, such as the treatment of services that are provided on a cost-recovery basis."

In addition, the government will proceed with accounting improvements which both the Ontario finance review committee and the Provincial Auditor have called for.

As I'm sure the committee members realize, these changes will help them better understand the highly technical working of the government's finances.

To continue, the section of this bill focuses on the termination of employment of an employee who is not subject to a collective agreement. The section seems, at least to me, to go against the spirit of openness and transparent accountability. I feel that to maintain the spirit of this bill, it should be applied equally and fairly to all employees whose organizations are required to comply.

It is also unclear as to how the \$100,000 or more figure for disclosing an employee's severance was calculated. Under the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, the figure was derived from the Securities Act, and as I noted earlier, the legislation parallels similar requirements in the private sector. It may seem, on first look, that the honourable member simply copied the figure into this bill. However, that does raise an issue that I would like to discuss.

There are many honest, hard-working broader public sector employees who, upon termination, will receive severance packages in excess of \$100,000. Really, in today's dollars and for a severance package, that is not a lot of money; perhaps it is as a salary, but not for severance. If a long-serving government employee had a buy-out or severance package that paid two years' salary based on years of employment and they made \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year, well, I think you can see where I'm going with this. It may seem like they are receiving a pretty good deal, but in reality they are receiving their due. And for that, they have their name in all the newspapers.

I believe if this bill is to go forward, careful study must be given to the threshold figure. We wouldn't want to set it either too low or too high.

The Chair: Can you conclude? You've got one minute left.

Mrs Munro: OK.

In previous discussions earlier this year, a number of high-priced severances paid out to public sector managers across the province were identified. Mrs Bountrogianni noted at the time that as taxpayers and citizens, the public didn't have the right to pick up the phone and ask how much an executive received in severance pay. The argument is that the public sector boards would be more careful when drawing up employment contracts for their executives if the law required severance deals over \$100,000 to be made public. This forces public-funded organizations to be more accountable internally by providing the necessary information to its board of governors in order to make sound decisions.

The Chair: I think that's the time right there. Mrs Bountrogianni was next.

Mrs Bountrogianni: I guess I shouldn't be surprised, but being a relatively new member, I am surprised, because I really did believe that this bill would have a more favourable response. It was passed unanimously. The privacy commissioner is supportive of it. It has gone through the lawyers. We had public hearings in March. If this government was really serious about accountability, they would have proposed amendments. There were inaccuracies in the member opposite's—this is not based on a few golden handshakes in Hamilton. This has been going on across the province for years. Basically, the public needs to know where their money is going. If someone like the privacy commissioner says it's not an

infringement of privacy, I don't see how we can say the opposite.

On a larger scale, I think this is why people make fun of politicians. This is a circus. If you really didn't like the bill, you didn't have to pass it so that you could say you liked it at some level. You could have just saved us some time. You could have saved yourselves some time. You could have saved your staff some time, my staff some time. You could have saved the honourable Chair some time, as well as of course the Provincial Auditor and his staff. This is why good people don't go into politics, because it's games. It's ridiculous.

This is a very simple bill. It has gone through all of the appropriate processes to ensure that privacy is not infringed upon. My original bill was more comprehensive, and I understand the difficulties around that. It was modelled on a BC bill. It did have term limits. It did have some bureaucratic measures that were seen as too much by this government, and that's fine. That's why I came back with this very simple bill, admittedly a very simple bill, just to begin to bring some accountability.

In other words, if the boards knew that the public will know the severance packages, they will be more careful about who they are hiring. That's basically it. If someone is coming from three other hospitals and they've been fired and have received golden handshakes, maybe they shouldn't hire that person for the fourth hospital. That was the intent of this bill: to make the boards a little more accountable, a little more careful about who they are hiring.

The negative publicity surrounding the protection of these golden handshakes has aroused more negative media than the one- or two-day reaction to a severance in the newspaper or elsewhere. This bill has nothing to do with being in the newspaper; it's just basically me as a taxpayer picking up the phone and saying, "How much is this hospital CEO's severance package when he goes?" That's all. That's all that is.

To think that we can't attract good people in the public sector with hundreds of thousands of dollars of salaries is ridiculous. Of course we can. We want people in the public sector who are there to serve the public good, not there to make millions of dollars. Good salaries, good severance packages and open accountability, that's what this bill is about.

The bigger issue for me is, we have wasted so much time. If you are serious, if you have second thoughts, please bring your amendments back in the fall and we will entertain them, as mine were entertained—were not entertained today, but were at least on paper.

The Chair: OK. With that, it's 12 o'clock. We're adjourned until the first Thursday after the House comes back. Thank you for your attendance.

The committee adjourned at 1200.

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