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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Monday 4 November 2013

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Lundi 4 novembre 2013

**Standing Committee on
General Government**

Employment Standards
Amendment Act
(Leaves to Help Families), 2013

**Comité permanent des
affaires gouvernementales**

Loi de 2013 modifiant
la Loi sur les normes d'emploi
(congés pour aider les familles)

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES GOUVERNEMENTALES**

Monday 4 November 2013

Lundi 4 novembre 2013

The committee met at 1402 in committee room 2.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): The Standing Committee on General Government is now sitting.

The first item on the agenda is the Standing Committee on General Government subcommittee report on committee business. Ms. Damerla.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Your subcommittee on committee business met on Wednesday, October 30, 2013, to consider the method of proceeding on Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence, and recommends the following:

(1) That the committee hold public hearings on Bill 21 on Monday, November 4, 2013, at Queen's Park, during its regular meeting time.

(2) That the Clerk of the Committee, with the authorization of the Chair, post information regarding the committee's business with respect to Bill 21, in English and French, on the Ontario parliamentary channel, on the Legislative Assembly website and with the CNW newswire service.

(3) That interested people who wish to be considered to make an oral presentation on Bill 21 should contact the Clerk of the Committee as soon as possible.

(4) That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized to schedule witness presentations on Bill 21 as the requests are received, on a first-come, first-served basis.

(5) That presentations be scheduled in 20-minute time slots and that groups and individuals be offered five minutes for their presentations, followed by up to 15 minutes for questions by committee members—five minutes per caucus.

(6) That the deadline for receipt of written submissions on the bill be 5 p.m. on Monday, November 4, 2013.

(7) That the research officer provide the committee with a summary of witness recommendations as soon as possible on Tuesday, November 5, 2013.

(8) That amendments to the bill be filed with the Clerk of the Committee by 4 p.m. on Tuesday, November 5, 2013.

(9) That the committee meet on Wednesday, November 6, 2013, during its regular meeting time for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

(10) That the committee Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized, prior to the adoption of the report of the subcommittee, to commence making any preliminary arrangements necessary to facilitate the committee's proceedings.

Your subcommittee met further to consider the method of proceeding on its standing order 111 study relating to the auto insurance industry, and recommends the following:

(11) That the committee meet on Monday, November 25, and Wednesday, November 27, 2013, for the purpose of continuing its study.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much. Any errors and omissions? Seeing none, all those in favour of the report of the subcommittee? Thank you. It is passed.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Chair, I'd like to move a motion.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Could we deal with the agenda first and then we'll put the motion at the end?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Okay.

The Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

AMENDMENT ACT

(LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT

LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI

(CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.

ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): The second item on our agenda is the Alzheimer Society of

Ontario. If you would like to come forward, please, and if you would state your name for Hansard. Also, I'll give you a heads-up at one minute and then we'll start the rotation with the New Democratic Party. Thank you very much. Please proceed.

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Thank you very much. My name is Delia Sinclair, and I work at the Alzheimer Society of Ontario.

Today, 200,000 Ontarians have dementia. In 2020, this will reach 255,000 people. One in five Ontarians care for a family member, and this contributes to more than 70% of the total caregiving needs. This is especially true for caregivers of people with dementia. Greater demands are placed upon dementia caregivers than those with other health conditions, and the lack of support can lead to negative consequences, such as depression, sleep deprivation, mortality and increased risk of hospitalization.

The Alzheimer Society would like to recognize the commitment this government has made to helping older adults living with dementia and their families through the reintroduction of Bill 21.

We support the goal of this bill, which is to help caregivers maintain their current job status while providing care to someone with a serious medical condition. In order to ensure that caregivers who truly need this type of leave are able to access it, we are urging the following amendments to be made:

First, with regard to the term "serious medical condition": The legislation allows for leave in the event of a serious medical condition, but the Alzheimer Society of Ontario would recommend expanding and defining this term to include what types of conditions qualify.

Our concern is whether dementia would be considered a serious medical condition, or at what stage in the disease process it becomes a serious medical condition. What about other neurological conditions or other chronic conditions? We feel that an expansion of this will assist caregivers to know if and when they qualify for leave and will also assist qualified health practitioners when providing that medical certificate.

The legislation still reads that, "An employee may take a leave under this section only in periods of entire weeks." We would recommend that the government consider allowing flexibility in this leave period. As you know, caregiving is unpredictable, and needs rarely conform to week-long increments. It would be more helpful to caregivers if they could bank unused days instead of having to forfeit days if they don't require a full week.

With regard to the medical certificate, we would recommend adding an amendment to waive the costs of securing that certificate. Our caregivers have told us that the cost is around \$50, and for many this is prohibitive. Without the ability to afford a medical certificate, many caregivers will not be able to access this leave.

Finally, with regard to qualified health practitioners, currently right now only those qualified to practise medicine can provide a medical certificate, and this is

required for the leave. We would recommend expanding the definition of "qualified health practitioner" to include representatives from regulated bodies who are part of the circle of support, including registered nurses, registered social workers, home care case managers and disability case managers. Very few doctors provide house calls, so allowing other regulated health professions to sign medical certificates would reduce the need to have the person with dementia travel to a doctor's office. For people already receiving in-home care support, not having to travel to a doctor's office can be a major stress reducer.

Older Ontarians wish to remain at home for as long as possible, and many caregivers wish to continue providing support, but they do need help. Knowing that their job is protected while they can provide this care is the first step to closing the gap in the Employment Standards Act. Let's ensure that caregivers who truly need access to this leave are able to take it by removing the existing barriers seen in Bill 21.

Thank you for inviting me here today. If you have any questions, my contact information is on the back of our submission.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much, Ms. Sinclair, for your presentation. We'll start the rotation with the New Democratic Party.

1410

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you very much, Ms. Sinclair, for your presentation. I appreciate your comments. I appreciate you being here today to speak on this.

It's a pretty interesting bill. As new Democrats, we've seen it—obviously, we do our due diligence on bills, as all parties do before they reach the floor of the Legislature. We analyzed its policy effectiveness. Right here, in the column, I've got it as being medium, and I would actually say that that's a little bit high in terms of its effectiveness. At its basic level, what it really simply does is protect that employee from being fired from their employment, should they decide to deliver care to a loved one.

I'm wondering where you would place the effectiveness of this bill as an overall way to start to deliver a different level of care in home care and bringing in family members. Other than the employment side of it, the functional and practical, and the mechanics of the bill, where would you see it in terms of being effective, or its effectiveness?

Ms. Delia Sinclair: To me, clearly, this is a first step in closing a glaring gap in the act, but this isn't the be-all and end-all of what caregivers need. In-home supports are extremely important and something that we, at the Alzheimer Society, focus on trying to increase the amount of not just in-home support, but flexible support, so basically patient- or family-controlled support: when they need it, how they need it. But this is one step. This is not the be-all and end-all.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Of course, any family member seeking leave to provide care for a loved one will un-

doubtedly be faced with a higher level of financial burden just on the sheer sake that they're taking on another job, really.

Within Bill 21, there are no provisions to support family members financially or to even acknowledge that there is a financial burden placed on people. What would the Alzheimer Society say on that part? What's your position on financial support?

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Our idea would be, for people who are able to take this leave, if there could be some sort of tie-in with either employment insurance or some sort of payment in a similar sense. That would be the ideal in this situation, because you're taking an unpaid leave from work and you still have bills to pay and you still have caregiver fees that you have to pay with regard to providing care, so yes.

I don't know for sure whether the week-long increments were to try and tie that in on the federal level, but as I see it right now, it would be more beneficial to be able to bank those days.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You spoke about the serious medical condition: What qualifies as a serious medical condition? And specifically within Alzheimer's, it's an eventual degradation of that patient's condition. But yet, family members require support right from the outset of a diagnosis, I would imagine. Things in their lives have to change. I'm wondering if you could speak about what thresholds you would see, or what you don't see in this bill, that would address that concern that I think you've already expressed.

Ms. Delia Sinclair: That concern comes from our clients that have told us they've had issues with accessing insurance or other sorts of supports that are supposed to be in place because where they are in their disease progression is not severe enough, or they haven't hit some magic threshold that we're not aware of. We obviously want support from the get-go: when you have a diagnosis. Wherever you are in the disease process, there are concerns that need to be taken care of. The problem is that without it being clear, we don't know, and the issue we've come up against with insurance and other things is that exact situation—

The Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): One minute.

Ms. Delia Sinclair: —where someone is unable to access what they should be able to.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: With one minute left—

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Sorry.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, it's my fault. I thought it was 15 minutes, but it's five-minute rotations, right, Chair? Five, five and five is what we're doing. My apologies.

The flexibility, the one-week blocks: You've alluded to the fact that caregivers need, maybe, a little bit more flexibility. It might only be one day out of the week that they need to be there to provide care. What would you say to that concept in terms of building in some more flexibility?

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Our recommendation is to be able to bank unused days. If you have to take one to two days

out of a week, you should be able to bank the remaining three working days. If it's a caregiver of someone with a serious medical condition, they're probably going to need that time later on. I almost guarantee they're going to need that time.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I appreciate it. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Ms. Scott? You have no questions?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Oh, I just thought you were going that way.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): No, we're going this way.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, that's different. Okay.

Thank you very much for appearing here today. I had a couple of questions. One was about the medical certificates. I see what you're saying; a general practitioner basically charges \$50.

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Yes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Is there another way that we could do it without incurring cost? There is going to have to be some—I don't want to say "proof," but you know what I'm saying. Is there another idea that you have that could—

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Yes. It's not so much that the idea of a medical certificate is the problem; it's just thinking through the actual—at the end, the person getting the certificate paying for it. If there's some way to waive that for a person if they're seeking to take one of these leaves—we understand that you need to have a medical certificate, but it's the cost that goes along with it that's the issue.

Ms. Laurie Scott: No, I hear what you're saying. I'm just trying to think about something to address this.

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Yes. I don't know if there's—

Ms. Laurie Scott: If you have any ideas, please send them. With Alzheimer's, how is it treated now when you get home care? Can you just give me a description right now? I've heard from some people that it's a bit of a grey area, that they qualify to get home care hours. Maybe Saint Elizabeth can answer this too.

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Yes, I think some of our other speakers might be better at describing that, but—

Ms. Laurie Scott: But in general, do you hear that?

Ms. Delia Sinclair: It does depend on the person, their diagnosis, where they are in the disease and what their need is. People progress at different rates and different severities, so it varies greatly.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Is there any type of terminology where it becomes—there's early dementia and then, of course the later stages—

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Yes. The level of cognitive impairment is usually separated into mild, moderate and severe, depending on the person's scores.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Would you have the answer when you say "at what point dementia is considered a serious medical condition"? Is there a term that's applied to that? Does the doctor decide at this point? What goes on right now, whether it's decided as a serious medical condition?

Ms. Delia Sinclair: From our perspective, once you receive a diagnosis, to us that's a medical condition that needs support, but physicians may term that differently. I don't have a threshold that is universal.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay. That's what I was wondering: As you're drafting bills and regulations, sometimes the actual terminology that goes across the medical spectrum, so that we could all be on the same page and there are not delays in qualifying people.

I heard what you said about the banking of the days—that you could bank unused days. That's a very good point. That's why we'd like to have some committee and get back to these glitches that we could maybe refine more.

Qualified health practitioners: That's quite a large group that you've got. Do you have nurse practitioners in here? Just save me reading here.

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Yes, any regulated health profession.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Any regulated. Okay.

Ms. Delia Sinclair: They're in there. I just didn't—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay.

Ms. Delia Sinclair: But yes, they would be helpful as well.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay. In your experience, you feel like social workers and—the others would be nurses, pretty much. Social workers wouldn't have—

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Yes. They're usually nurses or social workers.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Oh, usually nurses or social workers?

Ms. Delia Sinclair: No, no. I'm just saying—

Ms. Laurie Scott: The rest are pretty much nursing backgrounds.

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Yes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Social workers, in that section—do they qualify enough, do you think?

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Yes, just because, depending on who it is, it's either—case managers often have a social work background, a regulated health professional background.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay. That's great feedback. Thank you very much. I think that's all the questions I have, Chair.

Thank you for your time. Thank you for coming here today.

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Mr. Dhillon?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you for appearing before the committee today. Can you tell us what impact this bill would have in terms of the quality of care that family members would be able to give to their loved ones and, if you could, provide some examples?

1420

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Around the quality of care?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Yes, with respect to this bill.

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Okay. Well, I think the challenge around giving a quality-of-care statement is that this bill is about allowing them to take time off from work. It's not really talking about the extras, of course, that they would need with regard to home care or transportation if they are unable to provide care in that sense. It would allow a little bit of peace of mind, knowing you have your job waiting for you when you get back, but there are still issues around adequate home care and what people need at home and when they receive it that would hinder my ability to say anything about quality.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Now, it's commonly known that family members who provide care, give care to their sick loved ones, experience quite a bit of stress at the workplace. How do you feel this bill would impact in terms of alleviating some of that stress?

Ms. Delia Sinclair: I think having some of these leaves in place would definitely take off the stress of worrying about whether I have to—do I choose between having a job or caring for my loved one temporarily? For our population, it's eight weeks off, which is helpful. But with a chronic condition, sometimes that's not enough. That said, it is a start and it's something that would relieve that stress, especially in the transition periods between a person who is able to stay in the community and a person who may need to go somewhere else, whether it's a retirement home or long-term-care home.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you for your presentation. Just in terms of the progress of the disease, when you take a look at this piece of legislation, I think you already answered my question, which was really quite—it works best in those situations where you're in transition, moving from community to—

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Yes, that's one of the areas I can see this really helping. There's also near the beginning, when there's a large number of doctors' visits. Getting a diagnosis is not a simple process. So that would also be an area where I can see this would be helpful for a person.

In the later stages, when a person is possibly already in a home, a leave like this could help if there is some sort of extenuating circumstance or something happens that they need to be there for.

Mr. John Fraser: It works really well for those points that are points of transition and change or that point of increased need, right?

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Yes, I can see that as more beneficial in the progression, for sure.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I just wanted some clarification around the banking. What you're really saying is, banking within the year, right? So you're saying, instead of taking a whole week, take two days and—

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Yes, yes, exactly. So it would be two days, and then you would have three days in your bank, similar to, I guess—at least at my work, you have a vacation bank and so you take some days out of your vacation bank and the rest are there.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, but to me a bank means you can carry them forward, so there's a big difference. All you're saying is, you want more flexibility, right?

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Yes, more flexibility; that's what we're saying.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Are there any further questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for your presentation.

Ms. Delia Sinclair: Thank you very much, everyone.

MARCH OF DIMES CANADA

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Our next presenter will be the March of Dimes Canada. Thank you very much for joining us this afternoon. If you could please introduce yourself for Hansard, and your area of responsibility. You have five minutes for a presentation, and then rotation. The next will be the Progressive Conservative Party. I will just say "one minute"; it gives you an idea of timing. Please start.

Ms. Andria Spindel: Thank you for having us here today, Madam Chair and honourable members. My name is Andria Spindel. I'm the president and CEO of March of Dimes Canada, and with me is Steven Christianson, who is the national manager of government relations and advocacy for our organization. Probably most of you know something of our history, so I won't go into a lot of detail, but I am providing you with our annual report, as well as our presentation today.

March of Dimes has been around since 1951 and is one of Canada's largest service organizations and an advocate for people with disabilities. We're a resource for all Canadians requiring disability supports. We have a wide range of services. Many of our consumers utilize more than one service. We are solutions for independence, and our services include employment, tenant services, assistive devices, home and vehicle modifications, peer support and other programs. Last year, we provided 2.25 million hours of service to over 50,000 Canadians, the majority of whom are in Ontario.

Bill 21, the caregiver leave bill, provides care and personal support for a loved one, and we think it's a very excellent step forward. This is the first time that we've officially seen a provision for recognizing informal caregivers, the work they do and the value of the contributions they make. Providing for the protection of an employee when providing care for a loved one provides great relief to what is otherwise a huge emotional burden for an individual who is already worrying about the care that is required for their loved one. While this bill only provides unpaid leave, it's reassuring to know that this government is in negotiation with the federal government to better coordinate employment insurance-related benefits and to hopefully see a full EI benefit in the future for those who qualify under this bill. This will be critical for tens of thousands of caregivers throughout the province.

As you all know, the current personal emergency leave, providing employees up to 10 unpaid job-protected days per calendar year, is sadly insufficient when it

comes to caregiving. That only applies to employees and workplaces with 50 or more staff. This bill provides a welcome improvement for employees throughout the province. It's also noteworthy to point out that the bill would protect full-time and part-time employees, as well as those on temporary contracts.

We're all affected by the issues of caregiving in our society. Statistics Canada tells us that we're going to have 43% more seniors 10 years from now and twice as many seniors 20 years from now. While these figures are not new to most of you in the room, it's important to understand the relationship between aging and disability, not just for those who live with a disability and grow older, but those who age into a disability. So the challenges of and benefits related to informal caregiving are much greater than what appears on the surface of the statistics related to an aging population.

Some 22% of Canadians—that's already one in five—currently juggle caregiving responsibilities with all the other responsibilities of work and family life, and that number will only grow.

What about the value of caregiving? According to the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, caregiving contributes between \$24 billion and \$31 billion annually to maintaining the health of Canadians. This bill is a great step forward in recognizing and helping to support caregivers.

Since hosting two international conferences on caregiving in Toronto—one in 2007 and one in 2011—we at March of Dimes Canada are acutely aware of the economic contribution of informal caregivers and, equally, the enormous sacrifice that they make, both financially and personally. This bill acknowledges everyone's responsibility and supports families with care-related concerns by sharing the burden.

Protecting the caregiver's job will relieve some of the psycho-social burden. It will defer and alleviate a financial crisis and benefit the caregiver and the care recipient. Employers will have some new business costs and concerns, but will realize a healthier, happier workplace. There will be savings if staff can return to a protected job and have the support of management and their colleagues. Employers will experience a net benefit with less stressed workers who perform and are more loyal to their company.

Time off means fewer physical and psychological illnesses for the employee. Holding a position for them means the company will not have the same level of recruitment costs and retraining costs.

I'm happy to answer any questions about our statement—just one last consideration.

Mr. Steven Christianson: If we have any recommendations on this—and I'll be very brief—the one item in the bill that we would urge you to consider relates to flexibility. We would ask, why is it written into the bill that the employee will have to take entire weeks at a time? Caregiving fluctuates, and I think most of us realize that, sometimes requiring half a day but sometimes only a few days. We not only work in this field but we've experienced that in our home lives and our family lives as well. So we do speak from personal experience.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much for your presentation. We'll start the rotation with Ms. Scott.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I was just going to say, I'll just donate some of my time. You finish off. You carry on.

Mr. Steven Christianson: Thank you very much. So, March of Dimes Canada has supported the premise of the bill, not just in this session of the Legislature, but in the last one when it was originally introduced. We're eager to inform our 50,000 consumers—that's 50,000 households, actually—about the new options available when this bill becomes law, and it's only that measure of writing some flexibility into Bill 21 that we would consider an important note.

Thank you very much for the extra time.

1430

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Go ahead, Ms. Scott.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you very much for presenting here this afternoon and thank you very much for all the work that March of Dimes does in our communities in helping patients and families. I think we've heard not just today, but also before, about the flexibility. I was a nurse in my other life before this job, and there's no question you need flexibility. Nothing's predictable. Emergency appointments come forward; things happen in families. It's just the reality that exists out there.

It's kind of similar to what the Alzheimer Society has brought forward too so far today: an amendment to adjust the flexibility in the time is what you see as the most important thing to change right now.

Ms. Andria Spindel: It's really the only item that we think would improve it.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I don't think any of us probably disagree. I'm not speaking for everyone, but it seems to make the most sense that is occurring.

I don't think I have many more questions for you—unless there's anything you'd like to add, because I have a few more minutes. If there's something you didn't get in that you wanted to bring up or say, you can certainly have that opportunity.

Ms. Andria Spindel: No. I had actually thought somebody here might say, "What about the employer's concerns because of the absence of workers?" I wanted to state that because we are a large employer, we as an employer recognize that this is a contribution that everybody in society has to make. Whether the employers have a little bit of extra cost or the families do, there's a shared burden; I wanted to stress that. We've thought about it, we talked about it with our HR people, and we think that you actually save money when you allow people to take this time, because they're not productive when they're worrying and stressed.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Absolutely. Thank you very much for your time today.

Ms. Andria Spindel: Thanks.

Mr. Steven Christianson: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much.

Mr. Dhillon.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I believe my colleagues have a question.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much for your presentation and thank you for all that you do. I wanted you to elaborate: You said that temporary vacancies can be turned into a positive. Maybe you've just done that, but if you want to elaborate on that or—

Ms. Andria Spindel: There are several ideas. When you have a vacancy and you know it's going to be so many weeks, you often have an opportunity for somebody in the company to take up some extra responsibilities and learn something. I don't always see that as a negative. It's stressful, sometimes, when somebody is gone, but we've had lots of experience with that. We're experiencing it right now with one of our employees who's battling cancer herself. She was off already to take care of three people in her family who were sick, and then she got diagnosed. We don't close the door behind her and say, "Well, she's done." We've actually shared responsibility and given everybody a little more to do for a little while as we try to provide her and her family with support.

So I have enough personal experience to believe it's the right thing to do and that companies can manage and find creative solutions. If you actually go out and recruit, there's always an expense. There are emergencies that are hard to plan for, but oftentimes you can, and take the time to do something on a temporary basis. It's a productive time.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Ms. Damerla?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I just wanted to thank you, Andria and Steven, for the good work you do, because in my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville I work very closely with the CCAC. They often talk about the services you are delivering, and I think now you're also delivering the free exercise classes for seniors in many places?

Ms. Andria Spindel: That's right.

Mr. Steven Christianson: Yes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I just wanted to thank you very much for that.

Ms. Andria Spindel: Thanks to the government for allowing us to do that.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Are there any further questions?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I just have something brief. Would you say that, for the most part, you're in support of this bill?

Ms. Andria Spindel: Yes, we are.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much.

I don't know who's speaking—Ms. Sattler?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you also for the presentation. I just wanted to ask if you might care to elaborate a little bit. You talked about some of the inadequacies of the current personal emergency leave that provides employees with up to 10 unpaid days per calendar year. I

wonder if you could tell us about some of the stories you may have heard from the families that you've worked with about: Have employers been resistant to providing that leave? Has it created issues for the families when they're trying to access that leave? How many families have you dealt with who aren't even eligible for that leave because they work in a firm with 50 or fewer staff?

Ms. Andria Spindel: The first thing I'd say is that the limitation on time becomes the first issue because it's often an unpredictable situation when you take off in an emergency. There is a fear people have that if they are away one day more, they might lose their job, that people are not sympathetic to the fact that they've taken that time. I haven't heard so much about the size of the company; that's a good question. I don't know if Steven could speak to that.

Mr. Steven Christianson: In terms of size of the company, no, we don't have a lot of feedback other than strictly anecdotal that, when people have learned that it only applies to a certain class of employer or workforce, it just seems, from their perspective, rather unfair. Aging and disability, as Andria has pointed out, affect everybody in this room, every family in this room. The challenge of having that eligibility defined by the size of the workplace is a little difficult for some people out there to stomach.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: So you see that this bill addresses those two limitations: One is that it gives access to so many more days, and the other is that it applies to everyone. Thank you for that.

I also wanted to ask—the previous presenter had talked about a definition around “serious medical condition.” In the work that you do with the families you serve, do you see that as being important to—

Ms. Andria Spindel: You're saying to define the circumstances that lead to informal caregiving?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: What is a serious medical condition, yes?

Ms. Andria Spindel: I don't know that we've worked on that, although I thought that might come up. I think that is something that probably needs to be spelled out. Right now, it's up to the individual to define for whom they're providing care and how serious it is. We certainly have been very supportive, because I can't think of any circumstance where we've had doubt when somebody says that some family member is ill or has been in an accident or whatever.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: You mean as employers yourself?

Ms. Andria Spindel: Yes. So I don't know how that would best be defined.

One thing I did want to comment on, just having heard a little of the discussion when we came in about banking: We are not recommending the banking, but I would say that it should not necessarily be a cumulative thing. I think it pertains to the situation. When you need it, you need it. I'm not sure that I'd recommend that you bank it any more than we allow banking of sick time. We believe that sick time that's available in our company is there for when you're sick, not just stored up for a vacation. So I wouldn't be recommending that.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Mr. Christianson, do you have anything more to say about the definition of “serious medical condition”?

Mr. Steven Christianson: Given that a qualified medical practitioner is written into this to have to provide certification of the circumstance, we think that's adequate at this point. Refining the definition: We find that's something with almost every statute out there, that definitions certainly can be refined. Perhaps that can be looked at, six months and a year after this, when the bill is revisited. But I think at this stage, it's a great step forward.

Given that it was introduced in a previous session, we'd really encourage: Let's get this benefit out there.

Ms. Andria Spindel: And allow it to be the medical practitioner's recommendation.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Do you have questions?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: How much time, Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thirty seconds.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I don't think I could get it out in 30 seconds. Thank you for your presentation.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much for your presentation.

ONTARIO HOME CARE ASSOCIATION

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Our next presenter is the Ontario Home Care Association. Welcome. If you could please introduce yourself and your status. We'll start with a five-minute presentation; I'll just say “a minute” when you're close to the end. Then we'll start the rotation with the Liberals. Please go ahead.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: Thank you. My name is Sue VanderBent. I'm representing the Ontario Home Care Association today.

The role of family caregivers is very important in society as the population ages and more people with chronic diseases or conditions related to aging choose to receive care at home. Family caregiving responsibilities are onerous in our society, and they can typically interfere with the life course of a family. Often, families are too upset and distressed to go to work, and they have to reduce their contributions in other areas.

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In Ontario today, the publicly funded home care system looks after 600,000 people a year, and that number is growing. All of those individuals have family members who surround them. In my role as CEO of Ontario Home Care Association, I can tell you that everybody has a story about looking after someone they love.

The Ontario Home Care Association supports Bill 21, and we think it's an important step in acknowledging the importance of family caregivers. In that spirit, we offer three recommendations that we hope would strengthen the bill:

One, we think it's very important to increase the investment in home care, the publicly funded system, in

order to better support family members, who provide the majority of care—and they really do provide the majority of care—in the home. In the formal system, we come in and out to do something—give a bath, change a wound dressing—but for the most part, it is the family that is there, looking after someone.

In that light, some specific actions that we would suggest are an acceptable funding formula that informs Ontarians as to the amount of home care that they're entitled to through a publicly funded system, and looking at establishing home-based respite programs in order to minimize the disruption on a family.

The second recommendation we have is to enable the family contribution through the establishment of financial levers, such as establishing savings vehicles that can incent Ontarians to set aside funds to meet their needs for care at home as they age. The fact is, we know that about 150,000 Ontarians are already purchasing about 20 million hours of care a year, and this is happening mostly because they are topping up the publicly funded system. We certainly believe we have to continue to accelerate our investment in the publicly funded system, but depending on how society moves forward, we simply have to help people take a look at how they might also be able to save for that likelihood.

The last one is to improve access to support by providing more flexible leaves. In terms of this particular bill, we've heard some of these comments before from my colleagues: allow more flexibility in the leave period; allow working caregivers to accrue unused time; clarify the definition of a serious medical condition; increase the eligibility to those with chronic and/or episodic conditions, such as Alzheimer's, HIV, COPD; perhaps look at functional need as opposed to a clear diagnostic need; and expand the definition of a qualified practitioner who can determine eligibility for family caregiver leave.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank you for taking time to look at this bill and to enhance the role of family caregivers. In Ontario, the home care system could not operate without family caregivers. While it is a personal and a familial relationship that we have, it can also be a very difficult time, and we believe that compassionate, caring employers will want to support their staff to be able to look after their loved ones. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Dhillon.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much for appearing before the committee. Do you know of any examples—well, obviously, there must be many—but do you know about caregivers who may wish that they had more time to bridge the gap between the personal emergency leave—which I understand is 10 days, to take care of a loved one, especially when the situation is that it appears death may be imminent?

Ms. Sue VanderBent: Yes.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: For family caregivers who provide care to a sick loved one, how does it impact them in terms of stress and other things in their daily lives? Could you give us some indication of that?

Ms. Sue VanderBent: I think when one is faced with that kind of situation, it crowds out every other interest that you have. You can't really concentrate on much else but looking after that loved one, especially in a situation where someone is dying.

We know that Ontarians do provide the majority of care for their loved ones who are in the process of dying. That's why this leave is very important. The only thing is, we don't die on a schedule. We can be very, very ill; we can get a little better. The dying process is not necessarily a process that goes from A to B and simply happens. It can be a long-term process or not as short as we would think, because of the technologies that we have, because of the medications that we have. It's a unique situation and something that every family goes through differently.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Are there any further questions? Thank you very much.

Next is—I want to say "Taras." Sorry.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: As long as I can call you Donna, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Absolutely. Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ms. VanderBent, for your submission. A couple of quick questions: I'd like to ask every delegation here today about what their thoughts are on building in some more flexibility in terms of the leave. What are your thoughts on that, briefly?

Ms. Sue VanderBent: As I said, half a day sometimes, to a working mom, can be really helpful. If you have to take somebody to an appointment, if you have to accompany someone to the hospital, if you have to meet someone in the ER, half a day is very precious. I would think that that kind of flexibility—if I had a whole week but I only needed half a day, I might very well want to just use that half a day. I think people do have loyalties all over the place: to children, to their work and to lots of places. I think that flexibility would really help those of us who do caregiving.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We were concerned, when the bill was originally tabled, that although it addresses a gap in the Employment Standards Act, it won't necessarily have the grand amount of take-up that it potentially could have if those flexibility mechanisms were built in, if some financial support for folks who were looking to take leave was built in, whether as a stand-alone, as the province might submit, or whether it be attached to employment insurance benefits. What do you think the take-up ratio will be with the bill as it stands right now?

Ms. Sue VanderBent: I think an employee-employer relationship is a personal relationship. My sense is that we know when our employees or their families are in trouble. It's human nature to want to help one another. I think the take-up could be very good if employers and employees understand what is available and understand that there are discussions happening at the federal level to supplement income. I think that would also be supportive.

I think that time, in and of itself, is part of your contribution. As an employer, it would be very helpful to give your employee that, because probably, as other people have said, they aren't concentrating on work anyway. There's a real human issue in terms of the employer-employee relationship and their understanding of one another and their needs.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You mentioned a financial savings vehicle that could be developed. Do you have any examples of where that exists anywhere in Canada or in any jurisdictions?

Ms. Sue VanderBent: Not in Canada, but certainly we have registered educational savings plans, and we have those types of savings plan so that we can start to—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So, something like that?

Ms. Sue VanderBent: I have little children now. I want to save for their education. The reason we say this is because, too often, people just get into this situation. We really have to be honest about what it is society is affording and can afford and will afford in the future.

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Representing the Ontario Home Care Association, I can tell you that we are very grateful for all the increased investment by the government, but it's very, very hard to take money out of existing health care organizations or stop money and grow another one because of the sunk costs—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): One minute.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: —because hospitals are looking after people and long-term-care people are looking after people. So what exactly do we do? And we know that the home care system is not a publicly insured service; it's publicly provided. So we know we do depend on the contributions of families.

We think it's important to start to help people think about that future eventuality.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And outside of this bill, New Democrats, during the last budget session, proposed that the government ensure that there's a five-day home care guarantee for all residents of Ontario after they are assessed. Do you see us moving closer to a five-day sort of threshold?

Ms. Sue VanderBent: Yes. The issue is that we want to give more people home care, and we want to make sure that they're not on a waiting list for home care.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Very good. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Ms. Scott?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you. Oh, you can't leave— one more. I won't keep you long.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: I thought you were telling me to leave.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I won't keep you long.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: Sorry.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's okay. Thank you for being here with us today.

I think that what you were just speaking about, with the setting money aside and the investments—that's mainly federal, I would take.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: I know.

Ms. Laurie Scott: That's okay, as long as you're talking to them, too. You make a very good point, and I've certainly been in the situation where I've been a major caregiver, and it's very hard and taxing on families. There's no question that we have to take a different approach and try to be more flexible.

When you talk, and I don't know if you know this, about employers, in general, do you think—I know a lot of employers that, of course, are compassionate. They have good employees; they would like to keep them and to have that flexibility. But what percentage, if you know, roughly, would you give to that type of employer as opposed to those that aren't as flexible with employees in certain caregiving situations? Do you have any idea? I just wonder what it is.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: I'm really not sure. I would hesitate to—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Because most of the employers that I know of are pretty flexible, and everybody tries to accommodate pretty well.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: And there's expectation that we accommodate workers on lots of issues related to their own health and the health of others. As I think was said before, we all could face some illness or disability.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Absolutely.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: We are not immune from that problem ourselves.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay, that's fine.

The definition that we were going to bring up again about serious medical conditions—do you have any thoughts on that? A little bit more of—

Ms. Sue VanderBent: Well, one of the things that we were talking about was, is it something like HIV or COPD—you know, congestive obstructive lung disease—which are long-term kinds of illness, or perhaps more functional needs like the March of Dimes were talking about? If you have a lot of functional problems but you don't necessarily have a clinical diagnosis that would lend itself to being called a serious medical condition, it might be something to look at that might strengthen the bill so that someone who is looking after someone with some serious functional deficits could be just as needy as someone who has HIV.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay. So "functional" seems to be a word that's a theme that might be coming through.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: Yes. And I think that there are functional arrays of criteria that you could look at.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay. So then my other question is about determining eligibility and the list of who can and who can't. At the moment, it's obviously doctor-driven. The Alzheimer Society mentioned a few more professionals. Do you want to add anything more to their list? Do you want me to include registered nurses, social workers, home care case managers and disability case

managers? I mentioned nurse practitioners. Are there any more you would like to add, or—

Ms. Sue VanderBent: I think regulated health professionals report to a college, so the taxpayer and the public would feel that they were accountable. And you may want to think about whether or not those people have some sort of—I wouldn't necessarily want to say "training," but definitely criteria that they use to establish the status. You give them guidelines to work within, and you might want to have someone who is—I wouldn't call it "certified," but perhaps has some more parameters about how they would be able to do that. You might have one person who could do that kind of work. You put a little bit of a boundary around it, which is, I think, what you're asking: What kind of a boundary would you put around it that would make it a little more accountable to society, to say that this person had some training and the decision they are making was done within a framework of decisions around whether or not this could be considered a serious medical or functional condition?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: That's helpful.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes. I just go back to my one case of advanced dementia, in which they couldn't get palliative care at home because the doctors wouldn't take that step. As an employer, you don't want everybody able to write the notes.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: That's right.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's kind of trying to find that middle ground, is what we were asking.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: And you want the right person making that decision and you want similar decisions being made so you're not having decisions being made in one area that are very, very broad and in another area where they're very narrow. We'd really like to, I think, make it province-wide.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much for your presentation.

ONTARIO CAREGIVER COALITION

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Our next presenter is the Ontario Caregiver Coalition. If you could please introduce yourselves and give us your area of responsibility, and then we'll start with the NDP for the first rotation: Mr. Natyshak. Please go ahead.

Mr. Caphan Lieu: Thank you, and good afternoon. My name is Caphan Lieu. I'm the coordinator of public affairs for the Parkinson Society of Ontario. Joining me today is John Parkhurst. He is the chair of the board of the Parkinson Society, Central and Northern Ontario. As well, he is a caregiver to his wife, Margot, who has been living with Parkinson's for 23 years.

As member representatives of the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, we would like to thank the committee for providing us the opportunity to address you all today.

The Ontario Caregiver Coalition is a group of diverse organizations that work collaboratively to advance the interests of caregivers in the province. Membership

includes those from health charities, unions, academia, home care and community support agencies and, of course, informal and family caregivers.

The OCC commends the government for the reintroduction of the caregiver leave act under Bill 21 this past March. We recognize that the goal of this act is to help caregivers maintain their current job status while providing care to someone with a serious medical condition, allowing for unpaid time off work for up to eight weeks. We're also pleased to see the inclusion of leave of up to 37 weeks to care for a critically ill child.

In order to enhance the ability of this act to assist caregivers, we would like to see changes made to the following four areas:

The first is the term for "serious medical condition." The legislation currently allows for leave in the event of a serious medical condition. The OCC recommends expanding and defining this term, which will not only assist caregivers to know if they qualify for leave, but also qualified health practitioners providing a medical certificate.

The second area is the issue of full-week periods. The legislation still reads, "An employee may take a leave under this section only in periods of entire weeks." The OCC recommends that the government consider allowing more flexibility in the leave period. It would be ideal for caregivers to bank unused days instead of having to forfeit days when they do not require a full week.

The third is the cost of medical certificates. The OCC recommends adding an amendment to waive the costs of securing a medical certificate. Our caregivers tell us that the cost is \$50, and for many, this cost is prohibitive. Without the ability to afford a medical certificate, caregivers in most need will not be able to benefit from the job protection this bill affords.

Last is the definition of "qualified health practitioner." Currently, only those qualified to practise medicine can provide a medical certificate, which is required for caregivers to qualify for leave. The OCC recommends expanding the definition of "qualified health practitioner" to include representatives from regulated bodies who are part of the circle of support, including and not limited to employee assistance program social workers, home care case managers, disability case managers, and nurse practitioners. This will reduce the need to have the ill person travel to a doctor's office, and they can instead be assessed in the home. As a result, the likelihood of adverse health events, which can happen due to the stress of travel, will also be reduced.

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The Ontario Caregiver Coalition recognizes the important role caregivers play in supporting our health care system. Given all that caregivers do, we believe that, at minimum, the government should protect their jobs and support legislation that is reflective of their needs, allowing caregivers to focus on what matters most, which is providing care to their loved ones.

I'll now pass it over to John for some of his remarks.

Mr. John Parkhurst: My wife, Margot, has had Parkinson's for 23 years. Through that period of time, my

daughter and I have been her primary caregivers. My daughter is now on her own. Parkinson's is a long-term illness. My daughter does not remember a time when my wife didn't have Parkinson's.

In my role with the Parkinson Society as a volunteer and as chair, I've met a lot of people with Parkinson's in dealing with this. One of the issues always is the future, and in that is, "Will I lose my job because of the care I have to give for a loved one?"

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): You have one minute, sir.

Mr. John Parkhurst: Last fall, my wife fell and broke her pelvic bone and was in hospital for four weeks. In that period of time, she was going to be discharged. There was no rehab, or there "might" have been a rehab. She would have just come home and we would have been pretty much left on our own to cope. As it was, she had rehab, and even then she was still pretty much not fully independent at that time. The act could have saved my job if I had had an employer that wasn't reasonable.

Parkinson's is not an easy disease. Medications change. The fact is that they can stop working at any time. If you have a movement disorder specialist who can help you, and you can get him on the phone, a lot of times you can resolve these issues very quickly. If you don't have that kind of support, it may be weeks or months before you get in to see somebody.

When medication stops working, people can be frozen. They can be not moving, or the tremors can be so bad that they can't take care of themselves. There are other concerns. Falls, and ending up in hospital because of that, are a major concern. My people don't do well in hospital. Medications aren't regulated right. They're just out of their own element.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Chair, Ms. Sattler.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): I'm sorry. Ms. Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very, very much for your presentation, and especially, John, for sharing your personal story. I think that's really helpful to really understand the impact of this legislation.

I had a couple of questions. The Alzheimer Society presentation—Alzheimer's is also a neurological disorder—talked about potentially using a diagnosis of a condition and incorporating that into the act, given the unevenness of how the condition presents.

Mr. John Parkhurst: Right.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Is that something that you feel would be helpful?

Mr. John Parkhurst: It may be, but it may be more that—I heard that a year term was thrown out by somebody earlier. Eight weeks in a year, or in an incident, was the judgment of that. We're dealing with 23 years at this point. If my wife was still in the workforce, we would be looking at a longer period of time. Yes, I guess it would be okay, but I think if you set it as a year—40 days in a one-year period of time—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Sorry, set what as a year?

Mr. John Parkhurst: In the act, it talked about an occurrence or a serious illness. Is that one unit of time that you're dealing with, or are you dealing with a longer-term illness? For a longer-term illness like Parkinson's, 40 days over a 20-year period might not be enough time.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Right; I see.

I also had a question about the qualified health practitioners and potentially opening up the legislation to enable more medical professionals to sign the certificate.

Mr. John Parkhurst: We're very much in favour of licensed, governed health care professionals in the thing. We would very much like to see that regulated.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Would there be any concern about the consistency of the signing of the certificates if you have a range of health professionals who are—

Mr. John Parkhurst: I think in some ways, if you have a movement disorder specialist, which usually, for me, is 200 kilometres away, getting him or her to sign that is a little bit of trouble. Bringing in the family doctor, who may not be immediately involved in that—it's somebody who isn't really attuned. But if you have somebody who's in the house doing health care, or a social worker who's working on that, who has intimate knowledge of the case, you're probably going to get a better reading of how serious it is.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. And then the medical certificates: Have you heard from people who are involved in your organizations that this has presented a barrier to them?

Mr. John Parkhurst: Most people with Parkinson's have had their income limited. They've had their work life reduced. They're on fixed incomes. They're on reduced—

Interjection.

Mr. John Parkhurst: Yes. So it is a hardship. They're on limited fixed incomes most of the time.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. Did you have any—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: How much time?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): You have a minute and 30 seconds.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: First of all, thank you for sharing your story with us about the care you deliver to your wife. That's a beautiful story, actually. In our family, my brother was injured in a mountain biking accident seven years ago. He's a quadriplegic. We all practically moved out there to provide support for him during the first part of his injury, six months. Now my mom has left Ontario to give care to her sister, who's going through cancer treatment.

Families everywhere in this province are facing those same challenges. I think that building this bill with some financial supports built into it, through employment insurance or otherwise, would help the take-up of this bill tremendously. People could then feel secure, knowing that they can leave their job and have some financial stability built into it. Your thoughts on that?

Mr. John Parkhurst: We would love to see that happen, but as a basis and a starting point, we'd really

like job security at this point. When you were talking about—we'd love the flexibility too, because as you've stated, you get families that work together, and somebody may not need a week; they may need a couple of days to build their team at some point—how best to do that.

In my case, my daughter works shift work, so we could work things out. The flexibility is good. But if it could incorporate it with financial support, we would love to see that happen.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you, sir. Ms. Scott.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you very much for appearing here today and sharing personal stories. I think that always helps make the message hit home for people.

Most of us have some caregiving experience; there's no question. Unfortunately, yours probably happened at a younger age, with your wife and—

Mr. John Parkhurst: At 41.

Ms. Laurie Scott: That's a little bit younger than most of us. Mine's mostly elder care. So I appreciate that fact, because it pertains to the bill in the sense of more encompassing caregiver action out there.

I think a lot of your messages and requests sound similar, which is good. That helps us to try to make some improvements with the bill. The cost of \$50: How do we know that maybe—I don't know if you guys have thought of this; I'm just throwing this out. You don't have to have the answer. But when we get other health care practitioners, qualified health care practitioners, have you ever come across the fact that they—

Mr. John Parkhurst: They charge?

Ms. Laurie Scott: That they might charge or might think of charging for asking? The doctors do that now because it's time, right? Everyone has a poverty of time in a certain way. But have you thought that that might occur?

Mr. John Parkhurst: I would expect that if the bill asked to have the fees waived, that would eliminate that opportunity for them to bill for that. But I have not heard of agencies billing for—that documents that they're giving care.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay. My other thing is, we're all saying the cost is \$50, so I assume there's a list of services and how much they can charge for them. I just didn't know if—

Mr. John Parkhurst: I think it varies from doctor to doctor and relationship sometimes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay. I'm just trying to get around that as one possibility.

Some of this that was discussed today I think you might see in regulation. It should probably be more professional people within the system who make some these recommendations, but I do appreciate them being brought forward because I think it gives a lot of valuable advice. I think we all agree about the banking of time and the flexibility that needs to occur with that.

The definition of "serious medical condition": Do you think that it actually should be listed?

Mr. John Parkhurst: I think it should be more defined, because—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Like Parkinson's, COPD—

Mr. John Parkhurst: Yes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: That's going to be a long list.

Mr. John Parkhurst: Well, it could be more that it was encompassing, kind of, conditions. You wouldn't necessarily have to name all of them, but basically, what a serious medical condition is.

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Ms. Laurie Scott: So in your situation, if you don't mind me using the example of Parkinson's—

Mr. John Parkhurst: Sure.

Ms. Laurie Scott: A lot was brought out about functionality, so you could relate to that with Parkinson's—no question. Activities of daily life and caring for yourself are impacted with that functionality. It's just going to be a very long list, I think, and I don't know if we can make an amendment that actually encompasses everything that might need to be encompassed in it. If you were just changing it and we brought in the word "functionality"—what else would you like to see that we could actually do without listing?

Mr. John Parkhurst: It could be "critical." It could also be referring to accidents as a short-term critical issue that outlines the need to take time off and how that would qualify. Did I explain that well enough?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes.

Mr. John Parkhurst: Sometimes it's episodic, where you have a crisis and you have to do something. With people with Parkinson's, one of the issues that people living with Parkinson's have is that they do really well for a while and then they go downhill. What happens is that when they haven't used a service like home care for a while, they drop off their books. Then they have to do intake again to get back on the rolls to get support. Because you're doing so well, you can end up, when you need support, not having it. That's one of the issues that people with Parkinson's have, because they do have very good periods of time, and then things go down, and then they come back. When they need help, a lot of times it's not there, and you can't bring that in because you have to bring the system in and the system has forgotten about you since the last time you needed it.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay. If we could just do "serious," "functional" and—we could do "episodic situations," right?

Mr. John Parkhurst: Yes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Because Parkinson's is a perfect example of that. Thank you for pointing that out; there are times when you need more help than not with a certain disease, when it decides to be more acute than at other times.

Okay. I think that's great. Thank you for that feedback. I really appreciate that. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Mr. John Parkhurst: Thank you very much.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay. That's good. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much. Mr. Dhillon?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you, gentlemen, for appearing before the committee today. Mr. Parkhurst, with respect to your experience with your wife, did you have to take time off from your work? Did you find it a struggle to balance your work and your personal family situation? How much do you think this bill does to bridge that gap?

Mr. John Parkhurst: I always had smaller companies that I was working for at that time, so we had fairly good relationships, but I could have been in danger of losing my job because of the nature of the smaller companies I was working with. Part of the reason is that I tailored my employment so that it fit better with my wife's condition, which, again, hampered my earning abilities, but to take care of my wife, we moved that way. I moved into fields that made it easier to do that care. I'm not sure I answered your question right.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: That's fine. Again, thank you for sharing your personal story about the struggle that you and your family are going through. I believe my colleague has a question.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Again, thank you for coming and for sharing that personal story. I just had a question around the \$50, because it has come up quite a few times. The way I understand it, it's the cost that the physician or the—what's the phrase?—medical practitioner is going to charge to say, "Yes, this person's relative is very, very sick." I'm just trying to understand what your solution to that is, because that is something—if I go to a chiropractor or somebody to get my records, sometimes they will charge me as well, and the government really doesn't have much of a role there if my doctor chooses to charge me \$2 or whatever to photocopy my test results. I'm just trying to understand. It's not that I'm not sympathetic; I'm trying to understand what the proposed solution would be.

Mr. John Parkhurst: Maybe even limiting it to a lesser figure, I think, for some people would be a better option, so that it's not so much of a heavy fee. Or, if you expand it to other professionals—with the home care or the social worker—you may not get a bill to do that, and they may have just as much information as, or more than, the family practitioner. Expanding the role of who can sign can help alleviate the billing on that.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I guess the challenge we face is balancing and making it affordable and easy for families, but also ensuring there's no abuse, that people don't unfairly abuse the system. It's trying to find that sweet spot. So it's not that we're not sympathetic, but we're just trying to figure out the best way.

Mr. John Parkhurst: I think most people who are taking care of a spouse or a family member with a critical illness are so under stress in the system. Trying to take them at home—my experience has been that they're not trying to work the system and get away with something. They're just trying to have enough money to stay in their house, to keep their loved one at home. They're already

on a limited income. They've already had stresses of where they need a job. If they're, in fact, off work without pay to take care of a loved one, \$50 that they don't have is another burden. It can throw them into issues where they can't stay in their house; they have to look at other places to go. It's just one more thing that is on the camel's back.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Are there any further questions?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: No, Chair, that's fine.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much for your presentations.

Mr. John Parkhurst: Thank you very much for having us.

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Our next presenter is the Canadian Cancer Society. If you would introduce yourself, please, and state your position. You have five minutes for a presentation. I'll give you a heads-up at one minute to go.

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: Great; thank you. Dear Chair and committee members, my name is Joanne Di Nardo. I am senior manager of public issues at the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario division. I'm here to talk about the importance and the need for improved family caregiver benefits.

The Canadian Cancer Society believes that family caregivers should have prompt and easy access to the support and services they need when caring for a loved one. The society and its volunteers have been advocating on this important issue at the provincial and the federal levels for years.

In 2007, there were 2.7 million caregivers over the age of 45 in Canada. Caregivers are of great value in a family unit and to the government, who is lessened of that burden when a family member steps in to take it on. It's very important for caregivers to be present at all treatments and appointments for their loved ones. Between 2002 and 2007, the number of family caregivers over the age of 45 increased by 30%. This is an increase of approximately 670,000 people.

We know how important it is for a patient going through a cancer journey to have a family member and caregiver present for all the appointments and treatments. It is very difficult for a patient to absorb the information provided at appointments, including instructions for treatments and how to manage care.

A family caregiver loses approximately 23% of their workable hours, and 23% of family caregivers miss one or more months of work. Up to 85% of all palliative care in Canada is provided by family caregivers, and the financial impact of caregiving is significant. A caregiver's out-of-pocket expenses are more than \$1,000 a month.

Cancer is more than a health issue. It is also a complex social issue that leaves families grappling with caregiving responsibilities for seriously ill family members. The

physical, emotional and financial burden on caregivers is a veritable strain on many families.

Because of an aging and growing population, more people are being treated for a longer period of time, with the majority of family caregivers being women, and that's at 77%.

Some 89% of Canadians fear that unpaid caregiving will have a negative impact on their overall financial situation. This cannot be ignored. Bill 21, if passed, would allow families to concentrate on supporting their loved ones instead of worrying about a potential job loss. While the society would like to see this legislation evolve into a paid leave supported by the federal government, we are pleased with this bill and look forward to its passage. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much for your presentation. We're going to start with Ms. Scott.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you very much for being here today. We've had a lot of suggestions. You've probably heard about the definition of a serious medical condition. Do you have any comments that you want to make? We have the time.

1520

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: Yes. It's a very thorough definition. We don't have any additions to that. We like what we see in the bill. We do think, of course, there are always things. If there are conditions missing, we would support that, and from a cancer perspective, of course we would expect that it covers those going through cancer treatment.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay. So there are no specific requests and changes of the legislation that you see coming forward?

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: No.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay. That's fair enough. We've had a lot today, and you've heard them. But I appreciate what the Canadian Cancer Society does. I would say that most—I don't know—people needing care at home—how many do you think would be connected with a cancer diagnosis? I know that's a pretty broad question. Do you have any figures?

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: I don't know the number, but if we look at it from a survivor's standpoint, we definitely have increased numbers of survivorship. So if we look at children's cancers, for instance, we have about 1,300 children that would be diagnosed in Canada with cancer, and 82% of them would be surviving. But there's always that need for a caregiver to be present through all those appointments, and with those children at home, even post-cancer treatment, so during their survivorship. I don't have numbers in front of me. I might be able to get you those numbers.

Interruption.

Ms. Laurie Scott: That's okay. They're just flashing a vote up on the screen behind. Don't worry; it's okay. I appreciate—

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It should be deferred, but just give the bell ringing a few more minutes.

Thank you for appearing here today. Thank you for recognizing the need for caregivers to exist within the family members and the need for change in legislation. I appreciate that you came down today and were a witness to our committee.

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: Thank you.

The Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Are there any additional questions?

Ms. Laurie Scott: No. We're good. Thank you again.

The Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much, and if we could, Mr. Dhillon.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much for appearing before the committee. How much do you think this bill will help with the struggles of a caregiver and an ill loved one with respect to their personal and business and employment situations?

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: We definitely think that it will have a positive impact on one's decision to take time off to care for someone who's going through a cancer experience. As I said in the presentation, we have been advocating for this to have improved caregiver leave for Ontarians and Canadians. What would definitely improve the bill would be a paid leave. If this was supported financially for those who needed to take the time off—a job-protected leave is a true benefit, but a paid leave would be even more ideal because we often know that it's more than eight weeks that one needs when going through cancer treatments because there are so many different treatment methods out there. Some of those treatments are at home, some are in hospital, and some require multiple levels.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: What does the inclusion of care-taking for family members with a serious medical illness mean to your organization?

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: For us, that would be one with cancer, who has been diagnosed with cancer. That would cover them.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Any other questions? Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much for your presentation. Now we have either Ms. Sattler or Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Ms. Sattler?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for your presentation. As a researcher, I really enjoyed the statistics that you used in your statement.

I'm interested in the 30% increase in the number of caregivers over age 45 in that period from 2002 to 2007, which is a dramatic increase. Is the research showing that that is expected to accelerate even more—the increasing number of caregivers?

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: It seems to show that it's trending that way, that we're seeing an increased number of caregivers. In terms of incidences of cancer, each cancer is different, so in some cases, we'll see greater incidences of certain cancers and lesser incidences of others. But also we have to look at those who continue to require care at home even post-cancer treatment. They're still requiring that assistance until they are able to be

okay on their own without a caregiver present. But we have seen that it's trending up, yes.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: And is that statistic just for cancer?

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: No, it's for all caregiving. It encompasses all caregiving. I can probably look for more information if you would like more in terms of how—estimated for the future as well.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Oh yes, I would be interested in the future projections. The statistic around the number of women who are involved as caregivers, 77%—has that been pretty consistent throughout the years, or are you seeing increasing incidence there as well?

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: We are seeing that to stay around the same. It seems to be the norm.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: And another question about another statistic you had in there: 23% of caregivers miss one or more months of work. Now, this legislation is proposing to provide up to eight weeks, which would be two months. Does that seem sufficient to you, given the numbers that you've quoted here?

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: More is always better, but we understand where we're coming from, from the perspective of taxpayers in the province, and hoping that there would be maybe even a financial benefit coming from the federal government. It is fine with us. We do not have a challenge with that, but it still would pose some challenges to some families that do require more time away from work than just eight weeks or two months. But it is a challenging issue to contend with.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. Did you have questions?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: How much time, Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): You have two minutes and 11 seconds.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Two minutes. Thank you for your submission. The concept of banking unused days to be used at a later date: What are your thoughts on that?

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: That is something, actually, we have requested in the past on our advocacy to government around this issue. So we have asked that it not be in one lump sum and that people be able to break it up. So that is a benefit.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: In our perspective, it seems like a low-hanging fruit here in terms of strengthening the bill. We hope that that's one amendment that we can come to some consensus around, because it does seem as though it would make the bill a little bit more functional.

I mentioned earlier that my mom is right now in Vernon, British Columbia, providing care to her sister. And her sister, my aunt Patti, who's going through cancer treatment, is certainly doing better because her sister is there with her. That level of care just surpasses what someone else could give—that intimacy and knowledge and, I guess, connection. I don't know if this bill talks about the ability for Ontario residents to leave for other jurisdictions for family members that are sick in Manitoba, Quebec or anywhere else in the country. What are your thoughts on that? Should it be applicable for anyone who seeks to give care to any other family member in the country?

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: We'd definitely look at some sort of system of equality. So the same as what we expect when it comes to drug treatments in this province and across the country—we would expect the same for caregiving. We understand the jurisdictional challenges with that, but if we could see a system in the future, whether that's short-term future or long-term future, we would see that as a benefit because borders are less and less important these days when it comes to caregiving.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And the Canadian Cancer Society—are you actively lobbying the federal government for their direct involvement in this piece of policy?

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: We are, through our national office, yes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And what are your thoughts on their response or openness to—

Ms. Joanne Di Nardo: We haven't really had a clear response.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So, all the more reason for our government to play a larger role in that. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much for your presentation. This concludes all of our guests and presentations at this point.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Now we will entertain motions.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Chair. I move that the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses, 2013—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Excuse me, Ms. Damerla: Do you have copies, please?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, I do.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Please go ahead.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'll just wait for it to be circulated.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): No, you can go ahead.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I move that the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses, 2013:

(1) One day of public hearings during the committee's regularly scheduled meeting time on Monday, November 18, 2013;

(2) One day of clause-by-clause consideration during the committee's regularly scheduled meeting time on Wednesday, November 20, 2013;

(3) Advertisement on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the committee's website and Canada NewsWire;

(4) Witness presentations scheduled as the requests are received, on a first-come, first-served basis;

(5) Witness presentations scheduled in 20-minute time slots, with presenters provided up to five minutes for their presentation, followed by up to 15 minutes for ques-

tions from committee members, divided equally between caucuses;

(6) A deadline for written submissions be set for 5 p.m. Monday, November 18, 2013; and

(7) A deadline for filing amendments with the Clerk of the Committee be set for 4 p.m. on Tuesday, November 19, 2013.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much. Any comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: A five-minute recess, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): A five-minute recess has been called. We'll have a five-minute recess.

The committee recessed from 1530 to 1535.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Ladies and gentlemen, the five-minute recess is up. Thank you.

Do we have any comments on the motion as read by Ms. Damerla?

Interjection.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Pardon me?

Interjection.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): No comments? Any comments?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Chair, I'd just like to make a comment.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Yes, Ms. Damerla?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd just like it to be on the record that this is a bill about helping small business and that we really want to get moving on this, because if we want this to come into effect on January 1, 2014, we need to get it passed before the end of this session. That's the reason we have called for it now. We need to get the bill passed through committee and third reading before the end of this legislative session so that it can go into effect January 1, 2014, for small business. I just wanted to say that. That's the rationale for bringing it forward.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much. Any further questions? Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I appreciate the emphasis that the member puts on the need to push this bill forward to support small businesses, and I'm hopeful that the House leaders will work expediently to deal with the issue of the timing of the committee business on this bill. That's where I think it will happen.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): We'll put the motion to a vote.

All those in favour of the motion?

All those opposed to the motion?

Thank you very much. The motion fails.

Do we have another motion? Ms. Scott.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I move that, pursuant to standing order 111(a), the Standing Committee on General Government immediately initiate a study and review of the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games and the Pan/Parapan American Games Secretariat, as it relates to the mandate, management, organization or operations of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, with particu-

lar emphasis on financial issues, budgets and expenses of the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games and the Pan/Parapan American Games Secretariat, in an effort to determine whether or not the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport effectively exercised their role into the oversight of the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much. We have a motion on the floor. Any comment? Ms. Damerla.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Chair, I'd like a five-minute recess.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): A five-minute recess is called.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Actually, make that 10.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Five is better.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I know, but we might need that time. I mean, this is so new. This is not routine. This is just—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): So we'll have a 10-minute recess? Is that correct? Yes, go ahead. Ten minutes.

The committee recessed from 1538 to 1548.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): The recess time is up, and we have a motion in front of us. Do we have any discussion of the motion in front of us?

Interjections.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Excuse me. We have a motion in front us. It has been read; it's on the table. Any comments? Ms. Damerla.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to just clarify: When we speak, we get 20 minutes to each party or how does this work? If I speak to the motion, how much time do I have?

Mr. Michael Harris: How much time do you want?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): There is no—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Okay, all right. I will be tabling an amendment but first I have some comments. I'll be tabling an amendment to the motion that's been proposed by MPP Scott.

Chair, I just want to begin by saying how disappointed I am to see this motion, because I see that both MPP Jackson and MPP Harris are here and they well know that very similar requests were made through estimates. So this just seems like a total waste of time. I don't see the purpose of it. Very similar requests have already been made through the estimates committee and agreed to. I don't know what one can tell one's constituents. "What did you do this week?" "Oh, we asked for very similar stuff all over again from the public servants." This is not what we were elected for. It is indeed very, very disappointing, Chair, that we are at this point where we are asking for very similar things over and over again. I'm not sure what the intent is other than to not get the work done, to not move the people's agenda forward.

We could be using this time listening to auto insurance hearings, as members opposite from the third party have requested. We could be working on Bill 105. Instead, we are playing politics, and that is indeed very, very frustrat-

ing. It's particularly frustrating because I see MPPs who were part of the estimates. They had their full chance to ask the bureaucrats all the questions they wanted. They've made some requests for additional information that will be provided to them. So it's a little baffling why this is being done; or perhaps it's not that baffling and it's just politics as usual by the loyal opposition.

I am struggling. I'm thinking, what am I going to go back and tell my constituents on Friday? "What did you do all week?" "Oh, we were at committee." "And what did you do at committee?" "Oh, we did the same things that we did three weeks ago." "Why did you do that?" "Well, I don't know." It doesn't make sense.

For a party that keeps talking about saving the taxpayer a dollar, this really is a blatant example of a complete waste of everybody's time. I mean, we're done with estimates. We've provided—and we will be providing you—all of the information that has been requested. Really, this committee should be going ahead with Bill 105—very important business, helping our small business—so that we can create jobs for people who need jobs here in Ontario.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: A point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): I have a point of order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: With all due respect to the member from the government, she's not really speaking to this particular motion, per se. All she's doing is just rehashing what has gone on in estimates. We do have a reason why we're doing this. It's because we didn't get any answers in estimates. For her to keep going on about the swan song with her constituents—I think the point has been made. I would move the motion. Call the question, please.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much for your point of order. The speaker has an opportunity to speak for up to 20 minutes, but it must be to the motion.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Chair, I am speaking to the motion. I'm trying to explain why we don't agree with the motion. That's what I'm doing. I think it's to the point because I'm trying to say why we don't agree with your motion and why we will not be supporting it in the way it is. That's what I'm trying to do, MPP Nicholls, so please let me do that.

As I was saying, and to respond to MPP Nicholls, I think it would be an unfair characterization to say that the Ontario public service officials did not respond. They responded to every question that was asked by the third party as well as the loyal opposition in this committee right here. In fact, we went above and beyond. And then there was a request made for additional information that will be provided. I believe that deadline has not been approached yet. So why don't we first look at the request that was made in estimates and see what you get? Why would you put in a parallel request at the same time? That is troubling and that's why we are not able to support it, because it's a waste of taxpayer money. You just asked for the exact same thing in estimates. You

haven't even seen what we are going to give you, so how is this any different? That's the frustrating part.

Why can't we instead be working on Bill 105? Why couldn't we be working on auto insurance? Those are important issues, issues about which questions were raised even today in the Legislature by the third party. We'd love to just get on with auto insurance. We'd love to just get on with Bill 105. Instead, here we are playing political games. Here we are asking for very similar information. I'm sure members opposite will try to make the case of nuanced difference, but, in general, you're asking for financial information around the Pan/Parapan Games. That's exactly what was done in estimates; that's what is going to be provided in estimates. There was even a late show that MPP Jackson asked for on this issue and he apparently didn't show up in time.

All I'm saying is that we have been doing, on this side, on the government side, everything we can to provide you with all the information you need. In fact, with respect to the late show, it's often the parliamentary assistant who does the late show, but in this case the minister insisted on showing up himself because he wanted to be there, to take responsibility. That is a good example of showing how co-operative this ministry and this government have been on the Pan/Parapan Games.

Again, it's very, very unfortunate that we've come to this pass. This could have been something that ought to have been at least discussed at the House leader's office before bringing it—just bringing it like this suggests nothing but politics, nothing but cheap political point scoring.

I'm just trying to understand the point of this. The request has already been made through another channel. The deadline for that has not—I mean, had the deadline for that come and gone and the government hadn't responded, perhaps—and even then, perhaps the real way to be doing it is to go back to that committee and ask for more information, but not to open another channel and another information on the same issue. That really is problematic for us and that's one of the reasons we will not be able to support it. The timing, as well, is not good—

Mr. Michael Harris: Point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Point of order, please. Yes?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd just remind the member that the motion clearly states here that we want to initiate a study and review. This motion doesn't indicate a call for any documents, papers or things. Perhaps you want to go over this motion again. It is different, in fact, from the comments you were making with regard to the estimates. We're asking for the committee to be struck to initiate a study and review of the Pan/Parapan American Games. It's not asking for any papers or otherwise—just to remind the member speaking to the motion that that's what it states.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much, Mr. Harris. Ms. Damerla?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Chair, could you tell me how much time I have left?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): You have about 11 minutes.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Keep going.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I need your help, yes. A few points of order are good, because it helps me respond, so thank you. Please keep them going.

I'd like to actually comment on what MPP Harris brought up. I referenced that and I said I am sure that the members opposite will bring up nuanced differences about how this is different, but I'm going to the intent. What are you going to study? Numbers. I'm sure you're not going to be doing a field study to South America to look at the way they did it over there. I'm going to guess that your study is going to be focused here on Ontario and on the budget. In fact, I think the motion does refer to that.

The point is, yes, it's been phrased a little differently, but a request has already been made to estimates. Why don't we wait? Why don't we see what comes out of it? Perhaps it will satisfy you; perhaps it will not. If it does not satisfy you, then let's look at other options. Why is this being done? What good is going to come out of this? How does this help make the Pan/Parapan Am Games a success? How does this help Ontario create new jobs, which is what we really need to be doing right now? How does this help us reduce auto insurance rates? How does this help us move with caregiver leave? These are the questions we ought to be asking ourselves.

The fundamental question we have to ask ourselves is, what did we get elected to do? We got elected to make Ontario a better place to live in. If that means holding the government to account, absolutely. That's what the democratic process is. That is the way it is set up, and the loyal opposition has a very important role. It is not that we begrudge the loyal opposition access to information or holding the government to account; that, absolutely, we believe is the job, but the objection we have is the duplication of work. The objection we have here is that we are going to drag the same bureaucrats who were brought to estimates—over and over again, by the way, because of the political gamesmanship that took place back then at that estimates, when there were entire days where the minister, the deputy minister and senior staff were just sitting waiting, because questions could not be asked because the opposition was playing political games. That aside, we've already wasted so much of their time, and now we're going to waste the taxpayers' money again. Who's going to be watching for the taxpayers' money if you're going to be dragging this out like this?

I really wish that, at this point, instead of talking about this, we were right about now doing a subcommittee meeting on Bill 105. We could have accomplished so much. We could have set up who the witnesses were going to be, who was going to come and how we were going to move forward with Bill 105, which would eventually lead to creating more jobs right here in Ontario—which, I believe all three parties agree, is our number one priority. If there's one thing we need to do in

Ontario, it is to create jobs, not to create paperwork, not to create duplication of work and not to waste taxpayer dollars.

It's deeply disappointing. As a newly elected MPP—it's been just about two years—I was hoping that we'd learn to make a minority government work, but what I've really seen is a—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Excuse me, Ms. Damerla. You need to speak to the motion, please.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Chair. I will try. Sorry if I got carried away in my disappointment, but the disappointment does stem from the wording of the proposed motion. I don't know that they can be divorced from each other, or separated. To speak to that motion is to speak about the fact that this is not what we were elected to do. This motion really is problematic.

I'm just going to take another look at it—"it relates to the mandate, management, organization or operations of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, with particular emphasis on financial issues, budgets and expenses of the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games." I don't know how this is different from the request that was made in estimates. The "emphasis on financial issues, budgets and expenses"—you've asked us questions in question period. You've asked for two late shows. You've asked for a ton of information through estimates, which is being compiled as we speak.

How does this help? At least if it helped you get more oversight, I could understand. It doesn't, because this is a parallel process that you are starting. It's just politics, and I wish we could stop the politics. I wish we could just get on with the business of governing Ontario in the best interests of Ontarians everywhere.

I'd love to get a dollar figure for what it's going to cost this government to bring out and create all of the documents that were asked for in estimates and then, one more time, to do it for this committee in this particular fashion. I'd love to know that dollar figure, and I'd love to see what your constituents, the constituents of MPP Harris, the constituents of MPP Nicholls, the constituents of MPP Scott, the constituents of MPP Jackson would have to say. Well, they have not proposed this motion, so I'm not going to bring them in; I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt. I'm just going to give them the benefit of the doubt, because they have not brought this motion forward, and I want to be fair.

1600

What would you say to your constituents, to the waste, to the duplication? This is just a waste of money. This is just not—

Mr. Michael Harris: What do you say to yours about the power plants?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm sorry?

Mr. Michael Harris: What do you tell your constituents—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Well, you'll get your turn, MPP Harris. You will get your 20 minutes, and I hope you will use every last second of it. We would be more

than happy for you, and I won't even do a point of order. You can talk about gas plants, if that's what you want to talk about. We'll let you talk about whatever it is that you please.

But at this point, one good or one bad doesn't condone another good or another bad, so to bring up another example and say, "What about this?" or "What about that?" is not the point. The point is that this motion is redundant. If I had to summarize the whole situation, it would be "politics as usual." This motion is redundant. It's a total waste of time.

Chair, could you give me some idea of how much time I have left so I can—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Yes. You have four minutes and 20 seconds.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you—four minutes and 20 seconds.

Chair, as I was mentioning, I've looked at this motion every which way. I've read it three times; I've read it upwards, sideways, seven ways to Sunday, and I still can't figure out what is new about this, what is different about this. But more importantly, it's not about the wording, whether it's a committee meeting we're asking—as opposed to all the correspondence. What does this get you that the request through estimates does not?

There is a process in place. There is a process in place for the opposition to hold the government to account, and that is through estimates; that is through question period. It is not to use a standing committee like this, the standing committee on government business, which should be studying bills in front of the Legislature. This is not the use that this standing committee was created for: to do a study of something that is in front of estimates right now.

I really am concerned about this trend where multiple committees are used for the same thing. The only reason I can think of is politics, finger-pointing and a needless waste of taxpayer money. That, Chair, gives us all pause.

This is not a good time for politicians. This is a time when the public is quite disappointed with us, and we need to do better. This sort of behaviour, this sort of playing politics, this sort of wasting of government money really doesn't do much to enhance our status with our constituents.

When I talk to my constituents, I always say, "Don't paint all politicians with the same brush." There might be one or two bad apples, but for the most part, regardless of which party, 99% of all politicians mean well, work hard and are there to do a job which they believe in. But when—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We're talking about the 1%.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, and we don't want to be that 1%. We want to be the 99%, and sometimes, gamesmanship like this makes me wonder. I mean, if I was an ordinary Ontarian and I was told a similar request—

Mr. Michael Harris: Are you not an ordinary Ontarian?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I am an ordinary Ontarian, but I'm just saying a non-elected ordinary Ontarian. Thank you for bringing that up.

As an ordinary Ontarian, I can tell you that if I were to tell my constituents that the loyal opposition had asked for some information through estimates, and then, without letting that process unfold in due course, had now asked for very similar information from the government all over again, through another committee, which was not created to do that business, they would be scratching their heads. They would be very, very disappointed.

I know the loyal opposition is trying—and the operative word here is "trying"—to create this grand image that somehow they can look after the taxpayer dollar well. I can tell you that when I tell my constituents, "This is what's going on," I can assure you that the few Tories left in my riding will also go, "Okay, well, this is not what I believe is saving taxpayer dollars."

I really feel that this is not a good thing. It's a dangerous thing to do, it doesn't help anybody, and certainly it is not helping us save taxpayer dollars.

So I just wanted to really emphasize that this motion is a waste of time. This motion is a duplication of effort. This motion is a waste of taxpayer dollars and, most importantly, this motion isn't going to do anything to help us make the games a success.

I read the press release by MPP Jackson, and he says very proudly, "I would like these games to be a success." How does this help make the games a success when you ask for the same information, or very similar information, in duplicate? How does that help? Instead, you should be out there promoting Ontario—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much, Ms. Damerla.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Our next speaker is Mr. Nicholls.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate MPP Damerla's declaration of independence speech, but unfortunately it truly didn't address the motion that's in hand, with all due respect.

It's different. This motion is actually different. We're not calling for documents per se, okay? We're bringing forth this motion because, in estimates—I was a member of that, as were MPP Harris and MPP Rod Jackson—we did not get the answers that we were seeking during our time with the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sports.

I'm actually somewhat concerned at the fact that for a government that's apparently, supposedly, committed to openness and transparency, it's almost appalling that they would in fact refuse to support the motion that we brought forward. When we look at this motion and we break it down: "initiate a study and review of the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games"—and then other key words—"with particular emphasis on financial issues, budgets and expenses."

MPP Jackson has done a remarkable job of exposing a lot of things that have fallen through the cracks. I won't point fingers at individuals, but obviously we have another committee involved. Sometimes the direct oversight from the ministry can go a little bit sideways because of the complexity of things. For that reason,

again, we are looking and calling for a simple study that would in fact review as well all the financial issues, the budget and the expenses of the games.

Truly, to my honourable colleagues across on the government side, if you really have nothing to hide—and I don't want that to sound demeaning—then, come on, let's get this motion passed so that we can in fact get answers to the questions that we have and so that things can be clarified. So, based on that, Chair, again, I call the question.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): I think there should be some more debate on this issue, probably. We haven't heard from all parties.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Sorry, Chair. I didn't hear because we were just—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Well, I have a speakers' list, but I'm just going to confer.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Chair, I just want to clarify that there's an amendment I want to table before anything goes to a vote.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): I actually think that there should be an opportunity for debate on this issue and that everybody who wishes to speak should have an opportunity to speak. At that point, we will look to the closure. But I think it's fair to allow everyone an opportunity to speak. You have an amendment.

I have a list here. Mr. Harris. Is there anyone else that wishes to speak? Mr. Dhillon, okay.

Yes?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm just asking because I do not know the answer: Do we have a vote to say if we want to call the vote, or is it just a ruling by the Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): It's a decision that actually comes out of the standing orders. People have the opportunity to speak for 20 minutes. Once the Chair is satisfied that there has been reasonable debate, then you can call for the vote.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay, so you can't have the vote before the Chair says there has been reasonable debate.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): We have Mr. Harris.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'll just be quick because my colleague Rick Nicholls summed it up, for the most part. Again, this is really a study and review of the 2015 Pan and Parapan Games. I think our constituents would be well served with the questions that we ask. I think there are a lot of questions that still remain unanswered. I'll be supporting this motion. Thank you.

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The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much, Mr. Harris. Mr. Dhillon?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much, Chair. Just as my colleague from Mississauga East–Cooksville stated, this is nothing but playing politics. You know, Chair, two of the most pressing issues in my riding deal with auto insurance and temp agencies, and I think we could be using our time to address those issues.

I believe in the House there have been many questions about the Pan Am Games—even today, I believe there was a question—and Minister Chan is addressing all the concerns that are being raised by the opposition and the third party. This motion appears to be nothing but politics, as obviously this will waste a lot of valuable time and, needless to say, a lot of money. Again as my colleague stated, I'd really like to find out what that dollar figure would be.

The opposition and the third party lately have been speaking about the gas plants and about the billion-dollar number. Very rarely do we hear about the fiascos that they've created, which are far, far more than the billion dollars. For example, the 407 was sold at a ridiculously low amount of money—

Mr. Michael Harris: Chair, point of order. Clearly the—

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm trying. I'm trying. You're interrupting me.

I remember that. And going back to the gas plants, it's as if they had nothing to do with the cancellation of gas plants. During the election, I can remember my opponents, as I'm sure would my colleagues from Ottawa and from Mississauga East–Cooksville—the other side was on the airwaves every day: “Elect us. Elect us. We'll cancel them.”

Ms. Dipika Damerla: “Done, done, done.”

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Who said that?

I find that to be just totally hypocritical, because the damage done to Ontario's books is far more than a billion dollars, and they make it seem as if a billion dollars just went out the window. That's just not the case.

Mr. Michael Harris: You're right; a billion—

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Well, you know what? The 407, and it's not just selling the 407; it's giving that golden deal that they can do whatever they want after. They can raise the amount of money charged; they can just basically have a free ride with the hard-working taxpayers of this great province of Ontario.

I'd like to go back to talk about the auto insurance issue—it's such a huge issue—and the temp agencies issue. I rarely hear especially the official opposition talk about this and against this, because, frankly, a lot of those big business people are their friends and they want to keep them happy. I remember in 2007, I believe it was, when I brought the temp agencies bill forward and I got very little co-operation. It was a private member's bill, if I can recall—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Mr. Dhillon, just to remind you that you have to speak to the motion on the floor, sir.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Well, I am trying. I'm trying, Chair.

Mr. Michael Harris: You can do better than that. Come on, you're better than this. You've been around here long enough.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: You know, all what I'm talking about relates to jobs, and I'm very—

Interjection.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: The Pan Am Games will create a lot of jobs. In all seriousness, joking aside, what you guys

are doing is creating an issue out of this wonderful opportunity we have to bring the Pan Am Games to our great province and showcase our wonderful province and our country to the world.

It looks like pretty much the same thing as what your friend at the municipal level is doing to the city of Toronto. I see very, very striking similarities between this.

In all seriousness, it really pains me that we have this wonderful once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have such a wonderful event—my kids are looking forward to it, and hopefully it will be a great experience not just for my children but all of our children to see this event and hopefully volunteer and meet so many wonderful people from so many different countries in one place. That opportunity doesn't come every day. I'm looking forward to my kids volunteering if they're allowed to and if they meet the criteria, as are so many of my friends and my neighbours and, in fact, all Ontarians.

What this bill does is it puts a negative light on such a great event that's going to be happening. Frankly, for the opposition to be looking for perfection—they should look at their own history if they want to do that.

Our government is regularly meeting with the team led by the Honourable David Peterson. They are just absolutely thrilled. They're putting in a lot of long hours and effort, and have assured us and assured anybody who wants to have a conversation about this that the Pan Am Games will be done on target and on budget. I have total faith in Mr. Peterson and his team.

It's just unfortunate that the opposition has chosen this cheap tactic to taint such a wonderful event that I'm so proud of being part of in our great province of Ontario. This is bad. Honestly, no joking, joking aside and everything else aside, this is a wonderful opportunity.

When I look in the lens of my constituents, I speak to them, as most of us do, usually on the Fridays, and I talk about it; they're excited. For the average person, with the challenges that families face, this is one of those things where at least people just say, "Okay, I'm looking forward to this, even though this will be an extra expense for me in terms of coming down for the parking and for the tickets etc." This is something that people automatically mentally budget for, in their minds, well ahead of time.

It's very disappointing when we shed this negative light on this wonderful event and want to play a game. What does it come back to? It comes back to politics. I just don't understand. That's how low the thinking of the opposition has become, when there are other issues—for example, Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act—that we could be debating.

Again, talk about hypocrisy. They cry about jobs, jobs, jobs, and we're working every day on this issue. I can tell you, our government is—

Mr. Rod Jackson: Point of order, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Point of order.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Clearly, the member is not speaking to the motion—

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's about—

Mr. Rod Jackson: They don't want to get business done here. Unless they're talking to the motion—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you. The point is well taken. Mr. Dhillon, please continue, but I also remind you that in the standing committee as well as in the House, we use parliamentary language.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My apologies, and I withdraw if I have said anything that is unparliamentary. I did not mean to say that, but you can't resist going into that arena, because of all the negativity in this. I'm sorry if my emotions have led me to say something that's unparliamentary.

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I feel very strongly about this. We're trying. We have a lot of people who don't have jobs, and this is one of the ways, the Pan Am Games, which will leave a long legacy of good-paying jobs that will help our communities, as well as the benefits of some incredible infrastructure.

As a matter of fact, with respect to the Pan Am Games, when I did have a briefing, along with some of my colleagues, a lot of the venues are ahead of target. That is just incredible. I can go on and on and on. I'm just in awe when I look at some of the buildings and how this will reshape the landscape here in Ontario, especially southern Ontario, where we've gone through an incredible recession.

We should all, collectively, from all parties, be looking forward to such an event instead of playing this low-ball politics. It just disgusts me that we would be doing this.

I believe we have an amendment, and my colleague would be reading that into the record, if that's okay with you, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): No, not at this time. You have another three minutes, and then I have a speaking order.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Okay. Well, you know, I just can go on for another three hours, because this is not a good example of how we can set an example of working together. This is not what my constituents are telling me as to what I should be doing here.

Again, we should go ahead with Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. As a matter of fact, with respect to supporting small businesses, we had a lot of politics played when we introduced the HST—again, a bunch of hypocrisy by the opposition. They were on record for supporting the HST, but when we brought it online, they had some very, very negative commentary. The leader of the official opposition, Tim Hudak, was on record—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Point of order.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: —as supporting this economic measure, which—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Mr. Dhillon, there's a point of order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the fact that—the member isn't speaking to the actual motion put before us. He's skating, and right now he has probably got a breakaway and he's halfway to Kingston on that frozen pond, he's skating so much.

One of the things you might be aware of, too, is the fact that by filibustering the way that the government is doing right now, you're actually delaying your clause-by-clause on Bill 21.

Just as a point of order—and again, I want to emphasize that all we're asking for is to initiate a study and a review of the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games as it pertains specifically to the financial issues, the budgets and expenses.

I know you talk about jobs and all these things. That's motherhood and apple pie, and we get that; we understand that. We're looking at financial issues, budgets and expenses. Therefore, I would ask that the member speak specifically to those specific issues. Thank you, sir.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much for that point of order.

You now have two minutes and 30 seconds, Mr. Dhillon.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thirty seconds?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Two minutes and 30 seconds.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Chair, that's fine. I'm—

Mr. John Fraser: I think we have to go around. There are more speakers.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Yes. Chair, thank you for the opportunity.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much. Our next speaker is Mr. Jackson.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you, Chair. Look, I think we're at the point now where we're past—the “move along, nothing to see here” sort of mentality needs to stop. If you really are interested in getting to the business of the people, then we'll just pass this motion one way or another and see what happens.

It is totally different, as MPP Nicholls pointed out, than the estimates committee. This would give us an opportunity to talk to a much broader range of people, some of them who maybe aren't even in the minister's office. It gives us a much broader range of getting to the bottom of what's happening. We did not get even close to getting an answer from the minister, whether it was in question period or whether it was in estimates. This will give us an opportunity to try to do that, and I would recommend, if you have nothing to hide as a government, that you will gladly have a study of this and put an end to it once and for all.

If you had just answered all the questions to this in the first place, and if we got the answers, simple answers like what the Pan Am Games are really going to cost us—we know, and I think everybody has admitted, that they're not \$1.4 billion. It's going to be much more than that. That's fine. Let's just get to the bottom of it. Let's get a real answer on what these are going to cost us, because up to this point it's been a pay-as-you-go sort of stan-

dard: “We don't have a budget on this. We don't have a budget on security or transportation, but it's a very complicated project, so we're still working it out.” We know that it's already midway through that. This will allow us to get right to the bottom of it.

You know what? You need to answer all of the questions. This gives us an opportunity, again, to hold you to it. I think that, if you have nothing to hide, you'll gladly pass this motion and we can get on with the business of the people and give them what they really want, which is the transparency and accountability that you seem to talk about all the time but never deliver.

Again, we'd like to call the question.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you, Mr. Jackson. Ms. Damerla, you have an amendment?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes. Thank you, Chair. I would like to amend the motion that was tabled by MPP Scott.

I move that the word “immediately” be removed and replaced with “upon completion of public hearings and clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 105”.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Do you have a copy available?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, I do.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): We have an amendment on the floor. Any speakers to the amendment? Ms. Damerla.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Chair. It's a simple but very reasonable amendment. “Immediately”? I mean, it makes no sense to do it immediately. We have business in front of this committee right now, which is the completion of public hearings and clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 105.

Before I get to that, I do take exception, Chair, to MPP Nicholls saying that jobs are just motherhood and apple pie. It's not. It's people's lives. If I told somebody who didn't have a job and was looking for a job, “Oh, that's just motherhood and apple pie,” I think they would be most upset. Bill 105 is about creating jobs. It's not motherhood and apple pie; it's the meat and potatoes of making this economy work and doing our jobs as MPPs.

I'd also like to address MPP Jackson saying that we don't answer questions. We can answer questions, if only the loyal opposition would show up.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Ms. Damerla, you need to speak to the amendment on the floor, please.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Chair, but I did have to rebut the statements that were made in connection with the motion.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Rebut it another time. You need to speak to the amendment.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Okay. I do want to say that we have nothing to hide—absolutely nothing to hide. We're happy to work with all parties to move the agenda forward.

Anyway, I'm just going to come back to why we are proposing that we replace “immediately” with “upon completion of public hearings and clause-by-clause con-

sideration of Bill 105.” That’s because Bill 105 is probably one of the most important things we can do here in Ontario: help our small businesses. I heard many of you speak in the Legislature. I heard many of you speak out in the Legislature in support of helping small business. If you’re really, really serious about it, let’s put Bill 105 ahead of politics.

That’s why we are suggesting—personally, we don’t think we need to do this. Estimates is the place to do it, but we’re trying to be co-operative, trying to work with you, so what we are saying is, let’s do it after we finish Bill 105. We have to complete Bill 105 before we break for Christmas so that we can get it in place by January 1, 2014. That’s what the Ministry of Finance is committing to small business, so that small business can be ready in the calendar year and the taxation year that will end on March 31, 2014. In order to enable small business to be able to use this tax break that we are giving them, we have to bring it into effect on January 1, 2014.

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In order for us to bring that into effect on January 1, 2014, we need to get this bill passed before we break for Christmas, so let’s do the math. If we want to finish public hearings and clause-by-clause on Bill 105, as well as get auto insurance done, if we work backwards and see how many days of committee work we have, well, we’ve got to get on with this. So let’s finish this, and after that we can come back to this. The Pan Am/Parapan Am Games are not until 2015. They’re not going away anywhere. Meanwhile, small business is hurting right now as we speak. We need to help them. This can wait until 2015. The estimates process is already ongoing. Let’s give it a chance; let’s give it a fair chance. There’s nothing to hide—absolutely nothing to hide. We’re happy to work and co-operate and give you all of the information, but at this point there is a clock, and that clock is January 1, 2014. In order for us to get that done, we have to give Bill 105 priority.

This is a bill about helping small business, and I’m sure many, if not all of us, have small businesses in our riding, and all of these small businesses want this bill passed. It’s part of the budget, the 2013 budget that MPP Natyshak—I know MPP Sattler wasn’t there, but MPP Natyshak certainly voted in favour of this 2013 budget, which announced this reform. So MPP Natyshak, you voted in favour of Bill 105 indirectly by voting in favour of the budget. We voted for the budget, so let’s get it done. Let’s get Bill 105 done. These reforms are part of the budget; the reforms that are part of Bill 105 were laid out in our 2013 budget.

Just to refresh everybody’s memory, what does Bill 105 do? Businesses with annual payrolls of under \$5 million will be exempt from paying the EHT on the first \$450,000 of their payroll each year. Now, think about it. You’re a small business. You’re waiting for this to come into effect. You’re hoping it’s going to come into effect on January 1, 2014, and the only thing that’s going to stop those small businesses from getting a break is the politics that are being played out here. That’s the only

thing. Think about that. That’s what you’re carrying on your shoulders today. What you’re carrying on your shoulders today is the small business person who’s waiting for this to come into effect on January 1, 2014, but if we don’t do this work here in committee right now, it’s not going to happen. And what are you going to say to your small businesses?

This is serious stuff. Let’s not play games—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Talk some more about House leaders. I was—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Keep going, MPP Scott. I’m happy to share my time with you.

My point, folks, is that this is serious. If we really want to give the small businesses in our ridings that break on January 1, 2014, we have to get this bill passed before Christmas. To get it passed before Christmas—think about how many working weeks we have left: probably six working weeks to get this through committee, do public hearings, do clause-by-clause and then get third reading and the debate done.

You have to ask yourself, if you went to your constituents and said, “What would you rather have us work?”—I wish you guys would do a poll. Go to your constituents and say, “On the one hand, we have something in estimates that is holding the government to account, asking for information on the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games. On the other hand, we can work to a deadline and finish work on Bill 105 so that on January 1, 2014, you guys can start getting this tax break.” What do you think they would pick for you to work on—these politics, or real work?

I really think that maybe I’m going to do that poll tonight on my Facebook, on my website, and ask folks, “What would you like MPP Harris to be working on? Would you like him to be working on duplicating work?”

Mr. Michael Harris: Send us the link.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, I will, absolutely. “Would you like MPP Harris to be wasting taxpayers’ money and wasting the time of Ontario bureaucrats, asking for needless and redundant information that has, for the most part, already been asked for in some other form or fashion? Or would you want him working on giving you that tax break?” I would love that same question to be asked of MPP Nicholls, MPP Scott, MPP Jackson. In fact, I think you should do it tonight. Technology allows us to do it, so that the next time we meet here, we can all agree and do work on Bill 105. I mean, it’s as simple as that. We have two choices here as elected MPPs: Play politics and waste time on just dragging things out and somehow making—I don’t know. It’s already in estimates; we wasted so much time on it. Or actually do something that satisfies you so that when you go to sleep at night, you can say, “You know what? I was part of that. I was part of the people who worked on that bill that gave these people a tax break.” Something you can tell your grandchildren down the road: “You know the break that small businesses get in Ontario on their health premiums? Guess what? I was part of that, and I was part of that because I refused to play politics.”

This really, Chair, to me, is a matter of priorities. You know, the opposition is training to be in government, but

if you can't get your priorities right, I'm sorry, you're not ready to govern. You've completely failed that test—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Are you speaking to your motion?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, I am. I'm talking about why we need to do this—

Interjection.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Let me finish. I believe I'm speaking perfectly to the amendment because my amendment says we should do this after the completion of public hearings and clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 105, and I'm speaking to why we are prioritizing this way. All along, Chair, I believe I have been speaking to the motion, because I've been talking about why we are picking this as a priority, and I'm suggesting why you may want to consider picking this as a priority as well, over just politics and wasting time. Bill 105 is about creating jobs, and what you're suggesting is really about killing jobs. It's a very clear, clear choice that you have in front of you: You want to waste taxpayer money and kill jobs or you want to help the small business guy save a penny or two, save him taxes, and help her create jobs. It's the same choice that the third party has. What would you rather be working on: creating jobs or—this is just politics. I have over here the entire estimates, the entire transcript of the estimates. I would urge you—

Interjection.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Okay, my colleague says it's his. Thank you for lending it to me. I'm just saying, read through it. I would urge MPP Natyshak and MPP Sattler to read through it because they were not part of the estimates. MPP Jackson and MPP Harris know very well what it was, and they're still doing it. I'm going to give MPP Natyshak and MPP Sattler the benefit of the doubt that they don't know what was asked at estimates. Perhaps they are thinking that there is some value here, and I'm saying, please do your homework before you vote on this proposed motion. I hope you will consider our amendment seriously, because it's about prioritizing. That's all it is. It's not about hiding anything. The Pan/Parapan Games are not going away anywhere; they are still two years away. The estimates on it are not going away anywhere. The budgets on it are not going away anywhere. Surely it can wait six weeks. That's what we're asking for at this point.

Chair, could you give me some idea how much time I have?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): You have another five minutes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Excellent. Thank you, Chair.

I'm struggling to think as to what objection anybody could have to replacing "immediately" with "upon completion of public hearings and clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 105."

Let's finish that. We're not even saying "third reading vote," because we know that's not committee business. Let's just finish the committee portion of Bill 105. Should the third party be serious, really serious, about auto insurance as opposed to just posturing, if they were really serious, right about now they would be saying,

"What about auto insurance?" You would be asking that question. "Why can't we be doing hearings on auto insurance? Why are we duplicating"—

Interjection.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: No, you're not, because unless you vote with us—and I'm happy to propose an amendment that says "after auto insurance" as well, and if you want to propose that, we are happy to do that. In fact, I think we ought to, because everybody—especially the third party—has been talking forever and ever about auto insurance. Well, let's do something about it. Why are we wasting committee time doing other stuff—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Ms. Damerla, I'm going to remind you to speak to your amendment to the motion, please.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Chair. I am speaking. I was just suggesting an amendment. It's through dialogue that one can refine amendments, so the idea of adding auto insurance came to me and I thought we'd just talk about it. I was hoping it would be within the purview of allowed debate on the issue, and that I'm still speaking to it.

I believe that Bill 105 is very, very important. I'm happy to share, if any of you have forgotten, what Bill 105 is about. It's about helping small businesses. We believe more than 60,000 businesses in Ontario will see a reduction in their taxes, thanks to these reforms. I mean, this is something that I hear: reducing taxes for small business. That's something I hear the Conservatives talk about all the time; that's something I hear the NDP talk about all the time.

Well, now we have a chance to reduce taxes for small business, and what do I see? I see it being pushed out, being put at the end of the agenda and, instead, politics coming in front of it.

How are your constituents going to take you seriously? Why would they believe you when you say, "We want to reduce taxes for small business"? Because when you had the opportunity, you chose not to. It's as simple as that; it's black and white.

You have a choice: You can work on reducing taxes for small business, or you can play politics and waste taxpayer dollars asking for information that has already been asked for during study after study. There are so many ways out here to hold the government accountable that have not exhausted or used. That will tell your voters, your constituents, that all you want to do is politics and gamesmanship, and they will be very disappointed, as I am.

I'm really, really hoping we can all agree to vote on this amendment that we have brought forward. We are not saying no to what you're asking for. All we are saying is, "Let's prioritize." Let's put Bill 105—let's put the small businesses of Ontario in front of politics. Let's see what estimates comes out with.

Perhaps you will be completely satisfied with all of the answers that come out of all of the correspondence you've asked for through estimates. Anything that has the words "Ministry of Tourism"—which would be every

single email, because every staffer signs off saying, “MPP Liaison, Ministry of Tourism.” Anyway, that’s a whole different issue.

You’re going to get every email, and more, that you will never be able to read. You’re never going to get through that, never mind through this. So instead of wasting everybody’s time, I urge, I implore, I beg all of you to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much.

Any other speakers to the amendment? Ms. Scott.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I just want to state that Bill 105, that supports—let me see; what is the title of the bill? It doesn’t matter; it’s just here. Anyway, the House leaders can decide among themselves. We all voted in support of it today, so this isn’t an amendment that we support. We feel that Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, can be discussed at House leaders’. I will not be supporting this amendment. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much.

I’m sorry, I have Mr. Fraser. To the amendment, Mr. Fraser, please.

Mr. John Fraser: Thanks very much.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Chair, just a point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): A point of order. Yes, Mr. Natyshak?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We’re debating the amendment right now—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): We’re just debating the amendment.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And Mr. Fraser will have up to how long?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Twenty minutes, to the amendment.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And after he speaks, then the anticipation is what?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): To see if there are any additional speakers to the amendment.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. Can I call a 20-minute recess on this amendment to discuss with our House leader?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Certainly. Twenty minutes.

The committee recessed from 1644 to 1704.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): The recess is over. We have an amendment on the floor, an amendment to the motion. Do I have any further speakers to the amendment?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Yes, a point of order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Chair, I’d like to call for a five-minute recess, please.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): A five-minute recess?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): All right, that’s in order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Five minutes. It is now 5:04, and so in five minutes, it’ll be 5:09.

The committee recessed from 1704 to 1708.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): The five-minute recess is up. Are there any further comments on the amendment to the main motion? Mr. Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I’m happy to say that I’m going to support the amendment.

I do want to say that we just had a conversation across the table about how we got things done in business. We have some business in front of the committee, and this issue has been discussed at estimates. There’s a request before estimates. We have Bill 105, which we all voted unanimously on this morning. It’s not a complicated bill; it’s a simple bill. It’s something we should get done. The way the original motion is worded, it makes me call into question whether Bill 21 is going to be affected by this. As well, the members opposite called for a further study and review of auto insurance rates, which is a priority for them.

What we’re seeing is that this thing that we’ve already studied at another committee is so important that we have to bring it back and change all the committee’s business because of that.

From my perspective, if you’ve got an order and a precedence of things that you want to do, I understand that the House leaders can work things out amongst themselves, but we’re a committee here. I respect the opposition’s—I’ve been there before, to hold the government to account. But that doesn’t mean that we take time away from those things that are going to immediately affect the lives of Ontarians. We had Bill 21—we had four people presenting here today; it’s an important bill; Bill 105, something we all agreed on today; auto insurance rates, a priority; we want to put all that aside.

I just want to be on the record saying that I support this amendment. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Thank you very much. Any further comments on the amendment to the motion? Seeing none, I will put the amendment on the floor.

All those in favour of the amendment? All those opposed? The amendment has failed.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I have another amendment.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Do you have a copy?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): Point of order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: In order of precedence, or in order of standing—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): I’m sorry?

Mr. Michael Harris: We have to vote on the general motion.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes. The question was called by the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex on the original motion, and then you had indicated that you'd like to hear debate from the members of the committee. We did that, and then there was a subsequent amendment to the motion. We heard some language on that, then we voted on that. Do we not revert back to the original call of the question?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): The question was never called on the main motion.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, it was.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): At the beginning it was.

Interjection: He called it.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): That's correct; Mr. Nicholls did call, but we determined that

there had to be sufficient debate on the main motion, and I'm taking my cue from the Clerk that the word "sufficient" should be broadly interpreted in terms of "sufficient." Then, an amendment was put forward. We've had the debate on the amendment. No further debate, so the amendment has failed, and now we're going to entertain another amendment.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Chair, I'm actually going to withdraw the amendment.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield): So you're going to withdraw the amendment, so we're back to the main motion. Is there any further debate on the main motion?

All those in favour of the main motion? All those opposed? The main motion passes.

This committee is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1713.

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