



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Alberta's Economic Future

Monday, March 11, 2013
6:22 p.m.

Transcript No. 28-1-8

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 28th Legislature
First Session**

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC), Chair
Fox, Rodney M., Lacombe-Ponoka (W), Deputy Chair

Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)
Cao, Wayne, Calgary-Fort, (PC)
Donovan, Ian, Little Bow (W)
Dorward, David C., Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC)
Eggen, David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (AL)
Luan, Jason, Calgary-Hawkwood (PC)
McDonald, Everett, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC)
Olesen, Cathy, Sherwood Park (PC)
Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (PC)
Quadri, Sohail, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)
Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont (PC)
Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)
Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)

Also in Attendance

Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (PC)
Saskiw, Shayne, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W)

Support Staff

W.J. David McNeil	Clerk
Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Law Clerk/Director of Interparliamentary Relations
Shannon Dean	Senior Parliamentary Counsel/ Director of House Services
Philip Massolin	Manager of Research Services
Stephanie LeBlanc	Legal Research Officer
Nancy Zhang	Legislative Research Officer
Nancy Robert	Research Officer
Corinne Dacyshyn	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Karen Sawchuk	Committee Clerk
Christopher Tyrell	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications and Broadcast Services
Jeanette Dotimas	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Liz Sim	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

6:22 p.m.

Monday, March 11, 2013

[Mr. Amery in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, and welcome to all of the members and staff at this meeting this evening of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future. I would like to call this meeting to order and ask that members or those joining the committee table introduce themselves for the record. If you are substituting for another member, please indicate so.

I will start with myself. I am Moe Amery, MLA for Calgary-East and chairperson, and I'd like to welcome my deputy chair, Mr. Rod Fox.

Mr. Fox: Thank you. I'm Rod Fox. I am the MLA for Lacombe-Ponoka, the wonderful riding that it is.

Mr. Eggen: Dave Eggen. I'm the MLA for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Saskiw: Shayne Saskiw, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills MLA.

Mrs. Sarich: Good evening. Janice Sarich, MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Dorward: I'm David Dorward, MLA for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Quadri: Sohail Quadri, Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Olesen: Cathy Olesen, MLA, Sherwood Park.

Mr. McDonald: Everett McDonald, Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Rogers: George Rogers, Leduc-Beaumont.

Dr. Brown: Neil Brown, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. I was to be here for David Xiao from Edmonton-McClung, but I understand that he didn't submit his official appointment within the 24-hour prescribed time period, so I'm not an official substitute.

Mr. Donovan: Ian Donovan, MLA, Little Bow riding.

Mr. Rowe: Bruce Rowe, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cao: Wayne Cao, Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Luan: Jason Luan, Calgary-Hawkwood.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Naresh Bhardwaj, Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

Mr. Strankman: Rick Strankman, Drumheller-Stettler.

The Chair: Thank you.

I see Ms Pastoor is walking in.

Thank you all for being here. Just a few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. The microphone consoles are operated by the *Hansard* staff. Please keep cell-phones, iPhones, BlackBerrys off the table as they may interfere with the audiofeed. Audio of the committee proceedings is streamed live on the Internet and recorded by *Hansard*.

The first item on the agenda that we have here tonight is approval of the agenda. Can I have a motion?

Mr. Quadri: I move that.

The Chair: Mr. Quadri moves that the agenda for the March 11, 2013, meeting of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be adopted as circulated. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Now, the second item on the agenda is the scheduling of the main estimates. As the committee is aware, recent changes to the standing orders include an addition in Standing Order 59.01 (1) and (3), which states in part that "no later than 3 sitting days following the Budget Address, the Legislative Policy Committees shall meet to determine a proposed schedule for consideration of the ministries' estimates that stand referred to them." We are meeting today to discuss and decide on the amount of time the committee wishes to recommend for debate of each of the six ministries within our mandate.

As noted in the standing orders, the estimates of a ministry shall be considered for a minimum of two hours to a maximum of six hours. Just as a reminder this committee's mandate includes the ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development; International and Intergovernmental Relations; Enterprise and Advanced Education; Tourism, Parks and Recreation; Infrastructure; and Executive Council.

Our decision today on the allotment of time will only extend to five ministries as the standing orders also stipulate that the estimates of Executive Council shall be considered for a maximum of two hours, so that decision is in place.

Members have been provided with a draft meeting schedule that sets out both the proposed length of time as well as the date and time proposed for scheduling for each ministry within our mandate. I believe that there was some discussion amongst each caucus and House leader, so I will open the floor for discussion on the proposed schedule as distributed.

Mr. Saskiw: Well, first off, I've just got to say that I find it quite alarming that we have a schedule in place that I believe lasts 10 days to deal with a \$40 billion budget and that not at any point did the Wildrose caucus agree to this type of time frame. I think that Albertans elected us to carefully scrutinize every single different department. There's already talk about morning sessions, concurrent sessions. If you look at this, there's just been no forethought on it. Wednesday morning there are the scheduled things. There's already Public Accounts that's meeting. They've already scheduled various witnesses. We're going to have to ask those witnesses to completely reschedule. There are also instances of concurrent sessions, where MLAs are going to be expected to be in two different committees at the same time. It doesn't make much sense.

I guess that from a fundamental perspective I entirely disagree with having this narrow a time frame for doing these budget estimates, especially if you have caucuses like the NDP and the Liberals, that have smaller caucuses. How are they actually going to do a thorough job realistically with this schedule? It's absolutely a debacle of our democracy.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms Olesen: My smart question about the abbreviations: what is PMB and GBO?

The Chair: Shannon will answer that.

Ms Dean: In response to that, GBO is government bills and orders, and the other acronym is in connection with private members' public bills, I believe.

Ms Olesen: Thank you.

The Chair: Are you done, Ms Olesen?

Ms Olesen: Yes. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. David Eggen.

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm having difficulty with just how compressed this schedule is. I realize that it's up for discussion, which I appreciate, but considering the gravity of the situation and the amount of money that we are debating, I just don't like to see this idea of concurrent sessions and, you know, estimates in the morning as well, estimates getting in the way of Public Accounts – I find that a bit surprising – and just the manner in which we seem to be in such a gosh-awful hurry to run through these budget estimates.

I think that it's not just a question of our caucus being able to be in all these places, but I think the public's ability to digest and the media's ability to process this information in an intelligent and meaningful way is definitely compromised by this schedule. So I certainly don't like it, and the New Democrats are not in favour of this style of schedule, but we're up for discussion. Hopefully, we can work something out.

6:30

The Chair: Mr. Dorward.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you. First off, Public Accounts on Wednesday: it's true; we do have a schedule. Certainly, we've had to make changes in that schedule in the past for circumstances, and the witnesses who come before us are perfectly flexible with respect to when they come. In fact, in some cases they may even relish the opportunity to come two or three weeks later, which is fine.

We met twice while we weren't sitting, which is unusual for the Public Accounts Committee, so that got two of the meetings out of the way. I see we're only meeting on Wednesday morning – am I correct on that? – so the rest of the mornings are free. It's not like it's all week long.

As well, I guess I would comment that with respect to the depth of the review I think we're about the same number of hours that we were in the past. Maybe other members of our caucus could confirm that, but it's very close to the number of hours that we always have been. I think that we have more opposition members to be able to go through in totality than we used to have, so in theory there should be a more in-depth review of the numbers just because of that.

I'm in favour of the schedule as presented.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fox: I'd just like to comment on this budget estimates calendar. There are a number of places where people are required to be in two places at once. On Monday the 15th it's got me in the Service Alberta budget estimates as well as being here as a vice-chair for Enterprise and Advanced Education. There are crossovers that are happening within this calendar, and I just don't think it's prudent to force the smaller opposition caucuses to have to spread themselves out. My colleague here, Mr. Eggen: I don't know if he's got any conflicts here. I mean, we're going to run these guys ragged back and forth between meetings, and I just don't see how that's democratic or accountable. We want to make sure that the opposition has a chance to go through the budget with a fine-tooth comb to make sure that it's as good as this government says it is.

The Chair: Mr. Eggen.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. Just some clarification in regard to Mr. Dorward's comments. I was objecting to the compression. There are different ways to look at time, right? You can have the minutes, but if you're compressing it all into a short period of

time, then once again you're compromising the capacity of not only the members to be asking questions on the budget, but you're also making the whole process harder to digest in regard to the media and the public as well. So, yes, you might have the same amount of minutes, but, I mean, if you're compressing it all into a short week or 10 days, then that amounts to the same thing.

The Chair: Mr. Donovan.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree with my colleagues on this. When we debated this in the House a bit, the House leader for the government said that we'd definitely work around whether stuff like that would be attainable. Mr. Fox has pointed out one issue already where it doesn't work for him, being the critic on one and the vice-chair on another committee.

Again, I'm not sure what the rush is on this. With the Public Accounts Committee, yes, there could be some people moved around, as Mr. Dorward said, but that's his assumption; that's not a fact, whether they'd like to wait two or three weeks or not.

I mean, we're dealing with a large budget here, lots of numbers, and I'm not sure why we'd be trying to ram it through in such an untimely fashion. I think this government has told all of us that they want to be open and transparent with everything in what we're doing. I think we talked about that in the House last week when we were here, about being that, and I always like to take the government at their word. Maybe I haven't drunk the Kool-Aid, but I've been beside the pail enough that I could see where there may be some stuff we could work together on. I don't see why we'd be trying to run this through.

As far as timely fashion, I think we are lucky in our party to have 17. The third and fourth parties don't have that many people. I really don't think it's democratic to try to push them through in such a fashion. It's like we're pigs going to the slaughterhouse, and they're tagging us and pushing us through to get something done every hour. If you want good government, you need to have good opposition. I think there's good opposition in place, but I think you also have to be able to let them sit at the table and explain their sides and their thoughts on stuff.

So just on democratic process alone I would sure hope that everybody would relook at this and try to figure out how we could make this a schedule that works for everybody. I take everybody at their word. The House leader said last week that he'd be more than willing to look at this and try to figure out how to make it work for everybody. The schedule doesn't look to me like it's going to work. I'm not saying: throw the baby out with the bathwater. I think there's some stuff in it that could work. It's just some of it that I think needs to be revisited in a timely fashion for everybody. I just ask everybody around the table to look at this with an open mind. Just trying to squeeze everybody in in such an untimely fashion I don't really think is what Albertans would expect from this government and its opposition.

I'll leave it at that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donovan.

Mr. Cao.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I look at the schedule – of course, I've been through 16 budgets, I should say, and it's always a rush to completion because our fiscal year-end is April 1, right? There's always a compacted time there, and I understand that the scheduling is always a problem. I have the opinion that the meeting together of the minds is one thing, but we have to spend time and do the homework, read the materials, compose the questions, and then we go to the meetings. There is a lot of work that has to be done prior to the meeting. It's a meeting; it's not just

a place where you have to read in detail and understand and so on. You already have the questions. You already have the idea of what to ask. So I think there's some flexibility in there to have to consider.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cao.

Mr. Donovan: Just to touch on that, the member brings up some very valuable points. I, too, have been on council. It was doing budgets for 16 years municipally. It was anywhere from a \$16 million to a \$22 million budget. Never at any time did we try to pass it through in two meetings. You know, prospectively, if you were going to put everything back – I just think it's due diligence. I think everybody around the table has been elected in the process, that they're here for the ratepayers and the constituents of this province, and I think they expect things to be done in a timely fashion.

I understand also that the April 1 deadline is coming along. I hate to say it, but we were all told that we were going to be here on February 12. It was not our position to roll back to March 5 for a start. Like most things, I guess, the planning sometimes doesn't make it, and I shouldn't have to be in a panic to solve something because the timeline has been pushed back. Had we started in a timely fashion – orders have always been that it's the second week of February when we start session – we wouldn't be into this time consumption problem. I understand we can't change that now, but I'm not sure that's a legitimate reason to say that we have to cram it in by a certain date to make that work just because we didn't start sitting until a month later than we normally do.

Just some food for thought.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Donovan actually covered off what I was going to put into the discussion.

6:40

Mr. Rowe: I just want to reiterate what my colleagues have said. My main concern here is that during our constituency break we've all got a lot to do in our constituencies at that point in time. I've looked at the schedule. I lose three days because I have to be here Monday, and then I have to be here Wednesday.

The Chair: No, no. There will be no budget estimates happening in constituency weeks.

Mr. Rowe: Oh, okay. Sorry. I'm misreading this, but I still don't agree with it.

Mr. Hehr: Well, I'm a dollar short and day late to this meeting, but just a quick perusal of this agenda doesn't meet with what I think is in the best interest of our doing the work on behalf of the citizens of Alberta. In fact, on behalf of my caucus I would be doubtful that we would be able to even participate in the morning meeting. If you guys want to run it, well, that's great, but I don't know how productive that would be. I don't think this passes the test of what we're here to do, but I guess that's been said before.

Just making sure I'm on the record and following up on that point. You're the majority.

Mr. Strankman: I'm hesitant to say anything because of the overwhelming success of my private member's motion that I just made in the Chamber, but I think, to echo what Mr. Hehr just said, we're dealing with situations here where there are billions of dollars at stake, so I don't think we should be flippant with our time to evaluate this. I would suggest that we should extend our time to discuss this matter and examine these budgets seriously.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Eggen.

Mr. Eggen: Sorry. This is my last comment for sure, okay? Just a couple of things. This idea that our deadline is on April 1: I mean, we are still debating up till April 22, right? It's not like we fall off a cliff on April 1. It's almost two and a half weeks more of budget debate after that, so that doesn't seem like much of an excuse.

With regard to these Public Accounts it seems like we're losing a whole bunch of them, right? There's not even a place where we can reschedule them, quite frankly. It seems like the morning one just happens to be on the day, the 20th, when there is a Public Accounts. It hasn't been moved around. An important part of what we do here in the Legislature is Public Accounts, so using this budget estimate thing as a way to block Wednesday mornings: you know, I just don't like that either.

That's it. I'm done now. Thanks.

The Chair: Dr. Brown.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to make one observation, and that is that one of the criticisms that the opposition has made for many years was that when we gave equal time to all of these ministries, we didn't recognize the fact that a ministry like Health, which takes up close to 45 per cent of our budget, was given the same time as the tiny ministries that only had a very small budget. You must admit that there have been some concessions, then. The fact that you've got seven ministries there now that have a full six hours certainly is progress. I mean, it's a move forward.

The Chair: Any other discussion?

Mr. Donovan: Just a point, again, to anybody that was on municipal councils. I mean, we took just over two months from the time we first brought a budget to our table before we passed it. I'd like to just pull on people that have that background also to look at the idea there. I know some counties and MDs, some people around this table who had larger budgets than we did in our county, and I know they were taking well over a month to two months to deliberate on that. That was, you know, anywhere from probably \$20 million to \$40 million. When you start adding billions, I think it's just due diligence.

Those are just my thoughts.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Well, I have identified here at least three issues. The time allocated for each department: my understanding is that there has been discussion with the opposition, and for the departments that we are dealing with within the mandate of this committee I think there was no dispute at all about allocating two hours for each department except for Enterprise and Advanced Education's three hours. Do we have a problem with that?

Mr. Saskiw: Yeah. There was no disagreement with respect to the hours allocated.

The Chair: There was no disagreement there. That's fine.

The second one is the overlapping of members on two committees at the same time, as in the situation of Mr. Fox here. You know, I think that when we reduced the numbers on these committees from 25 to 18, that freed up a lot of members so that they can participate on other committees without having to run from one to the other. I mean, I know you're the critic on the other committee, but I am sure you can have somebody substitute for you.

The third item that I picked up is Public Accounts. Standing Order 59.01(11) clearly says:

During the period that main estimates stand referred to the Legislative Policy Committees, such period commencing the first day that estimates are scheduled for consideration and ending when the final vote in Committee of Supply occurs, these Committees shall not meet to consider any other matter nor shall any other committee of the Assembly meet during this period, unless otherwise ordered by the Assembly.

So I don't think Public Accounts should meet, according to the standing orders, while we are doing budget estimates.

The other thing is, I mean, scheduling is a nightmare. Really, scheduling is a nightmare, having to have all, you know, the ministers, and we're having the Premier appearing before this committee. I mean, we have to accommodate their schedules.

Mr. Donovan, you kept referring to the town council or . . .

Mr. Donovan: County council.

The Chair: . . . county council.

I respect what they're doing, but I don't think there are four different political parties that you have to get to a table at the same time. I don't think we can compare this operation to the county council that you refer to.

So if there is no more discussion . . .

Mr. Donovan: I would like to have a little more discussion.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Saskiw: Just in response to those comments, it's exceptionally important in the morning sessions not just that there was Public Accounts but also that opposition parties have to get prepared throughout the day. What we're doing here is doing budget estimates on a \$40 billion budget over a series of 10 days. If you can honestly go to your constituents and honestly go to Albertans saying that this is the appropriate level of due diligence to have on this type of budget, then I suggest you do that.

You know, we have a legislative session. It's scheduled until the first week of June, so I don't see why we're trying to jam-pack everything into a 10-day period. Don't have morning estimates so that opposition parties can properly prepare themselves throughout the day. Just extend the budget estimates a week later or perhaps longer to ensure that the appropriate level of due diligence is there.

6:50

The Chair: Shayne, as I said earlier, scheduling is a nightmare, and we have to respect the ministers' schedules. They have commitments, the Premier has commitments, and they have to deal with it. In this session we have more than the estimates to do. Actually, I don't think we're having any fewer hours this year than the years previous to debate the estimates. Now we are, I think, adjourning the business of the House at 3 o'clock, right? So instead of preparing all morning and all day for the evening, we can prepare all evening for the next morning. I mean, I can't see the problem there.

Mr. Dorward.

Mr. Dorward: Actually, Mrs. Sarich had her hand up first, Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Mrs. Sarich.

Mrs. Sarich: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd just like to point out that, as I look at the estimates calendar, the reference to the morning seems to, if I'm reading this correctly, fall on the Wednesday. For example, the first scheduled morning would be

on March 20. Then there are the two constituency weeks, and as I look at the calendar for April, the next morning right after the constituency break is on April 10, followed by the 17th, and then it is finished.

Mr. Dorward: It goes to the 22nd.

Mrs. Sarich: Yeah. It goes to the 22nd.

I'm just referring to the schedule of the morning time frame because there was reference to having these scheduled in the morning. It seems to me that, you know, the dedication of the morning time with the 8 o'clock start is three out of the whole schedule. That's all I'd like to say. It's three times. [interjection] Well, there was a point raised about, you know, the frequency of mornings. It's three times, the morning schedule. It seems reasonable. It's only three.

Thank you.

The Chair: It's 50 per cent is what she's saying, 50 per cent of our meetings. I mean, it takes into consideration the schedules for the other committees, the other ministers, the other chairs, and all these things.

Mr. Dorward.

Mr. Dorward: Yeah. It's along a similar line. I heard the words "jamming through." I heard – did I hear 10 days? I'm not sure if I heard that. I mean, we're talking a budget that was tabled on March 7. I got it the same time as everybody else. All the MLAs got the budget at the very same time on March 7. We're talking about doing a debate through to April 22. Have I got the dates wrong? You know, I mean, we're not talking about jamming anything through, quite frankly.

That's a lot of time for myself to digest all that information and get through it. It's going to take some time; I totally agree. But during that time we have the resources of the ministry to sit before us. I don't think it's jamming through anything to go till April 22. I think if we did it – I just don't see compression in those dates. How many weeks is that? I don't know. Well, now, we don't examine for the two weeks – I understand that – but we certainly can be prepared and get ready for the examinations that we're able to do there.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dorward.

Mr. Luan.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a great discussion. The part I'm sort of taking in is that, you know, we talk about beginning March 7 and ending April 22. We talk about: the total amount of hours we put in is no less than what we had before. We talk about accommodating different parties and rotating. We talk about having only three out of all the 10 as mornings. There is quite a variety of considerations in the way I look at it. How I want to end is that I'm certainly not a fan of drag-along meetings for hours to measure your outcome. I'm a fan of the opposite. You know, we do our homework. We ask pertinent questions, meaningful questions. We use the best time and work together, deliver the best, rather than drag it along.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Luan.

Mr. Donovan.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you. Just to Mr. Dorward: yes, you are an accountant, so you can process the numbers very good, and I do appreciate the skills you have in life.

Mr. Chairman, the comments about municipalities and stuff: when I was on a municipality, there were nine different councillors. I can tell you that sometimes it was probably easier just to have four different parties in a room, and then you kind of knew where everybody was at. I think anybody that's been around councils has seen that before. I know there are some colleagues around the table that have.

So it goes back to due diligence. I know the accountant we have in the room figured out that there are two weeks in there where we're not sitting, which was good to see, that that's a block where we're not having meetings. I guess I just sit back and go to the whole point of, I think, when municipalities – granted they didn't have Education and Health and all those things to deal with and different committees, but I think there were quite fruitful and well-thought-out conversations. I think most of the people that sit on those municipal boards might take exception to the idea that it's maybe not quite as complex as this issue is. There are lots of complexities to different counties and MDs and towns and villages and everything else on how they pass a budget.

I think it's the due diligence part. That's what I keep stressing. The two weeks in between – I get Mr. Dorward's comment that we got it March 7; everybody got it. I'd hate to suggest that there might have been a little sneak-a-peek on the other side, but – hey – that's part of winning and losing, and I understand how that could all work.

An Hon. Member: No. That's not right.

Mr. Donovan: Okay. Well, I retract that. My bad. Sorry.

Mr. Dorward: I sit on Treasury Board, and even I didn't see it.

Mr. Donovan: No? Well, I guess you didn't get your vote in on it, then.

The point is that it's from March 7 to April 22 with a two-week break in there. It's kind of a false bill of goods that, you know, we have two months to deal with it. We really, truly don't.

I guess I can beat the dead horse, but I think I'll dismount.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donovan.

Mr. Fox.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to point out that not only are there issues with scheduling – and I do appreciate that it is difficult – but the opposition MLAs are just as busy as the government side. I mean, it's not one sided. You're out there running a ministry. Well, we're out there chasing you, and we don't have the resources that you have in your ministry. We have to do a lot of that legwork ourselves. When you are running concurrent meetings the way that they are scheduled here, it doesn't give the focus onto one area at a time. You are splitting the media focus. You're splitting the opposition focus. You're splitting the public's focus on the budget.

You know, I just don't think it's correct to have two of these running at the same time so that people have to focus on one or the other. It should be that you are focused on that particular ministry at that particular time so that the general public, the taxpayers, can focus in on it as well. It would be very difficult listening online like people are listening to this meeting today. I mean, they have a choice. It's either this one or the meeting going on next door in regard to the resource committee.

This just doesn't seem to be very transparent. I mean, you ran on government transparency, so here we are as opposition asking for government transparency not for us but for the taxpayers, for Albertans.

The Chair: Mr. Fox, I sympathize with what you've said about the overlapping, where you have to be in two places at the same time. But as you talk about transparency, I think we are being more transparent than ever before. I think we have agreed to the time slots and the time requirements that you have requested. As Mr. Dorward said, the budget has been brought down on the 7th, and we're taking until April 22.

I mean, it's not easy preparing the schedules and pleasing everybody. Do you think we are pleased with it? No. I think each one of us is equally displeased with this.

Now, we have a lot of things to do. We have three more things to do, actually. I would like to put the motion to a vote.

Mr. Bhardwaj: I can make the motion.

The Chair: Okay. Moved by Naresh Bhardwaj that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future adopt the proposed time allotments for the 2013-2014 main estimates as two hours each for the ministries of International and Intergovernmental Relations; Infrastructure; Tourism, Parks and Recreation; and Agriculture and Rural Development, and three hours for Enterprise and Advanced Education.

All in favour?

7:00

Mr. Donovan: Is there a recording process in this?

An Hon. Member: You can ask for a recorded vote.

Mr. Donovan: I'd like it recorded.

The Chair: Yeah. It's recorded. It's in *Hansard*.

Mr. Donovan: Okay. Just want to make sure. I'm new at this. It's not like those uncomplex county ones.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Chair, to be clear, are we approving the scheduling on the calendar as well?

The Chair: That's the second motion.

Mr. Fox: Okay.

The Chair: We're approving the time slots.

All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Now we have a second motion. I would like a member to move this motion that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future adopt the proposed 2013-2014 main estimates meeting schedule for the ministries of Executive Council; International and Intergovernmental Relations; Infrastructure; Tourism, Parks and Recreation; Agriculture and Rural Development; and Enterprise and Advanced Education as distributed.

Mr. Luan.

Go ahead.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think in your statement you said "2013-14"?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mrs. Sarich: Yes. Okay.

The Chair: All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Would you like a recorded vote?

Mr. Donovan: I wouldn't mind. That's what I'd aim towards. I'm not here just to rock the boat every time.

The Chair: Okay. Let's have a recorded vote.

Mr. Fox: Against.

Mr. Eggen: I'm voting against as well.

An Hon. Member: Yes or no.

Mr. Eggen: No.

Mrs. Sarich: Support.

Mr. Dorward: Yes.

Mr. Quadri: Yes.

Ms Olesen: Support.

Mr. McDonald: In favour.

Mr. Rogers: Aye.

Ms Pastoor: Support.

Mr. Strankman: Negative.

Mr. Donovan: I'm against.

Mr. Rowe: Nay.

Mr. Cao: Aye.

Mr. Luan: Support.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Yes.

Mr. Hehr: Against.

The Chair: All righty.

Now the proposed schedule will be submitted for consideration by the Government House Leader, who will then co-ordinate the final meeting schedules for the three legislative policy committees.

We have the other business, ladies and gentlemen. I have one item for discussion under other business related to members participating in meetings via teleconferencing. At its July 24, 2012, meeting the committee passed a motion permitting members to participate in meetings via teleconferencing for the duration of

the 28th Legislature subject to the proviso that the committee may require members' attendance at a particular meeting upon passage of a motion at a previous meeting to that effect.

I would recommend that the committee consider a motion requiring a member's or a substitute member's physical attendance for the duration of the main estimates meeting schedule of this committee. If a member would make the motion, I will open the floor for discussion.

Mr. Bhardwaj: I'll make the motion.

The Chair: Okay. I'll read the motion. Moved by Mr. Bhardwaj that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future require that committee members, substitute members, or noncommittee members wishing to participate be in attendance for the duration of the committee's 2013-2014 main estimates meeting schedule. Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? Carried. Any other items for discussion?

Mr. Fox: I do have one item. I'd just like to have it on the record as to whether or not noncommittee members who are not the critic of the portfolio can use the blocked time for the critic to question the minister or allocate that time to a noncommittee member.

The Chair: Yes, they can.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions, suggestions, or anything?

Mr. Cao: Well, Mr. Chair, we have made a motion. We have approved the calendar here. I just want to have it be recorded that for all the sessions, even if they're concurrent, we have enough critics from all the parties scheduled.

The Chair: That's too late. We've already voted on this, Mr. Cao.

Mr. Cao: No, no. I'm just mentioning it for the record.

The Chair: Thank you, but we already voted on this, Mr. Cao. Thank you very much.

If there is no other business to discuss, I'd entertain a motion to adjourn. Mr. Donovan. All in favour? Meeting adjourned. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 7:07 p.m.]

