

10:05 a.m.

[Mr. Hutton in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning.

HON. MEMBERS: Good morning.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you all. This is a meeting of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund to discuss our public meeting, and first of all I'd like to do introductions.

[Mr. Bonner, Ms Carlson, Ms Chance, Mrs. Dacyshyn, Mr. Hutton, Mr. Knight, Mr. Lougheed, Mr. Marz, Mr. Orcheson, Mr. Vanderburg, and Mr. Waring introduced themselves]

THE CHAIRMAN: I would now ask to have approval of the agenda that was passed out.

MR. LOUGHEED: So moved.

THE CHAIRMAN: All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Okay.

Now we move to approval of the minutes of the June 13 meeting. I'm sure you've all read them.

MR. MARZ: I would move.

THE CHAIRMAN: All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

We'll move to the fourth item, which is the public meeting, and the first part of that is the proposed date and location. The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne – did I get it right, George?

MR. VANDERBURG: You got it right.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

He's agreed to host it

on November 7, 2001, at the Forest Interpretive Centre in Whitecourt. The address is 3002 - 33rd Street. It would take place between 7 and 9 p.m.

Does anybody have a problem with it? Then that's when the public meeting will take place. Could I have somebody move that?

MR. VANDERBURG: So moved.

THE CHAIRMAN: All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Now we can move on to the next item: Public Communications – Budget Implications. I got a call from the director, Gordon. He's unable to attend this morning, but we have a very capable person to address communications. Do you want to walk through this, or shall we talk about the budget implications first?

MS CHANCE: Go ahead.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. As a committee we've got a \$41,000 budget at the present time for advertising. We're seeing that we would like to have a little more activity with regards to public meetings and people being aware of the fund. I think it is a good time, as we agreed at the last meeting, that we have an opportunity to discuss the heritage savings trust fund with all Albertans.

The suggestion was to look at an increase in budget, and we talked with public affairs and the Department of Revenue about doing a cost sharing. It's not going to work. We can't do it, so it's suggested that we ask the Legislature to increase the budget to \$100,000 in next year's budget.

MR. MARZ: If I can comment on that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Absolutely.

MR. MARZ: In light of the economic downturn in North America and feeling the effects of that ourselves in Canada and in Alberta as far as next year's costs and revenues go, I wonder if it's wise to ask for an increase this year. Maybe we could use the public meeting and try to use the Future Summit to get the word out about the heritage savings trust fund a little bit more rather than increasing the budget this year. I think we've all got to be prudent in our spending practices this year till we find out how our revenues are going to perform. I know it's a small amount, but I think every department has to be careful. That's all I'm going to say.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MS CARLSON: I was expecting to see some detail in terms of how the \$100,000 would be spent.

THE CHAIRMAN: We're going to get to that. I just was laying out that this is what we'd be looking at. Elaine is going to just do a presentation. Would you care to do that now?

MS CHANCE: Sure. For the 1999 year \$100,000 was spent on advertising, and that was cost shared between the Public Affairs Bureau and the department of Treasury at the time, along with the committee. The \$100,000 was spent on a full-page ad that ran in every daily and weekly newspaper in Alberta. We spent approximately \$38,000 last year, and that enabled us to do about a quarter-page ad in all the daily and weekly papers in Alberta as well as just advertising in the communities surrounding the public meeting.

So for \$100,000 you can do a number of different things. You can either do a much bigger ad, which will catch people's attention, or you can do smaller ads that you can run more than once. A benefit to that is that if someone misses the ad one day, it can show up again in another week or on another day.

At the last meeting the committee had discussed really going out there and promoting the heritage fund and getting the information out there. Newspapers are a very reliable source for Albertans, especially in smaller communities. They read their weekly newspapers, and that's where they get a lot of their government information.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just a point of clarification with regards to Richard's comment. Please understand that if we at this committee level chose to request \$100,000 in the 2002-2003 budget, it would still have to go to Members' Services and be accepted or rejected as a budgetary item. At the last meeting we were looking to have a

little more exposure. Just so we're clear on the process that we would have to go through from this committee to the other committee.

MR. VANDERBURG: Well, I want to follow up on Richard's comments. I do realize that we need to tell Albertans the story on the trust fund.

I was driving early this morning into Edmonton and hearing the updates on the market. We're at \$2 for the natural gas price, you know, where we budgeted \$5.03. I'm not prepared at this time to go and ask for any increase. I think it's not the responsible thing to do at this time.

I would be prepared to talk about how we can get a better bang for our existing buck in advertising. Maybe there are Alberta business publications or, like in the case of the north, a northwest business magazine or other publications that go throughout Alberta, where we could get a better bang for our buck.

So at this time I do support you, Richard. I, too, would like to have Albertans know the story of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, but I'm not prepared to go to Treasury at this time and ask for that increase. I don't think it's the responsible thing to do.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MS CARLSON: I still don't see a value assessment here on what kind of bang we're getting for the buck.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think that if you move to 4(d) – is that right, Elaine?

MS CARLSON: Well, you know what? I'm looking at that, and it's fine to roll out a communication strategy regardless of whether we're spending \$40,000 or \$100,000, but I want to see value for that. What does that mean? How many more Albertans are we going to see actually understand the fund or hear about it? You can't just throw money at the situation. We need to know that we're getting some value for those dollars, that more people are actually hearing the message. I don't see any piggybacking kind of plan here in terms of what George was talking about: joint advertising or rolling out an information booth at conventions or anything like that, which is much cheaper. All I hear us talking about are daily newspapers again, which we know for a fact were very ineffective. The last time that we spent \$100,000 doing this we had, like, three people come to meetings. So before I would be even willing to entertain any kind of an increase in the budget, I would expect to see an assessment done of the increased exposure we're going to get for the extra dollars spent. Without that, I'm never going to approve an increase in the budget.

10:15

MR. MARZ: From a rural perspective, Mr. Chairman, I believe that the MLA columns, news releases that we send out on this provide a lot of information to constituents. I say that based on the feedback I get from them at public functions, raising the issues that they saw in their local papers. It was pointed out, I think, that in rural Alberta the weeklies, especially, are the main source of government information.

I don't know if we can equate people coming to a public meeting with a measurement of how well the message is getting out. People get the message. That doesn't mean that they want to go to a public meeting. Perhaps they feel they've had their questions answered, and as busy as Albertans are, driving the economy, they don't seem to be finding time to go to a lot of public meetings. At least I find that in my constituency. I don't think attendance at a public meeting is a measurement of the success of a program.

MR. LOUGHEED: I'd concur with Richard's comments and the ones made earlier about the benefits of articles and such in the weeklies in the rural areas. As far as the dailies go in the large urban areas, I'm not so sure how effective those ads have been either.

We have talked about some other mechanisms to get the word out, one of them being good bullet points and so on that can be used for speeches to your local Rotary clubs and things like that, that all MLAs could be out there doing. I don't know that we've ever had developed for us those bullet points with graphs, something handed out, you know, of decent size that you could put up, say, in a speech situation to your local Rotary club or Lions or any of these groups. They always want to have speakers in. It would give all 83 MLAs across the province something to go out and talk about to these groups, which they are often asked to do. I think that if you want some immediacy and really a taste of folks in those circumstances, that's the place to get it.

I don't think the distribution through the newspapers and so on has been very effective. It is fairly broad reaching, but it would be just as effective from a free standpoint with the articles, the interviews, and so on.

MS CARLSON: I don't disagree with what Rob is saying. I think what he's talking about there is a communication strategy, and that's really what we're wanting here, not just a marketing budget. I think that we need to think about that in conjunction with a number of other kinds of ways of getting the message out.

No doubt what Richard said about counting bodies at a town hall meeting isn't perhaps the most effective measure, but it's the only one we've been taking so far in this committee over the years. So we need to think about how we are measuring success. We all know that \$100,000 was not effective, if you remember what it was like for us at the doors when people asked about the heritage savings trust fund. They still don't get it at all. So if that's our only measure, then we need to increase the kinds of measures we do. I don't disagree that there's a communication strategy that's required that doesn't necessarily involve a lot of cost.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mel.

MR. KNIGHT: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. With respect to budgetary constraints, I would certainly have to agree with the comments that have been made. I'm thinking about other ways that we can perhaps get a message out. The CBC's public affairs, that you can book, I believe are about three and a half minutes. That might be an opportunity for the chairman or some other member. I know that the broadcast, at least certainly in our part of the world, is widely listened to. That might be a way.

THE CHAIRMAN: If I may at this point then. If I'm hearing the consensus here correctly, everybody's talking about fiscal restraint. I, too, agree that we have to look at that. What I think we're talking about, then, is the weighting of our marketing tools and message and the way we're going to message. In reading the material that was provided in the communications plan, all of those things are there. It's the degree of weight and the cost put to them.

Would that be a fair comment, Elaine?

MS CHANCE: Yeah. There are other aspects to this communications plan, other than advertising, such as MLA columns and targeted media interviews. We could certainly look into that CBC one that you've just mentioned. Those things don't have costs generally. So I think that when we're talking about increasing the communications budget, advertising is the biggest cost.

THE CHAIRMAN: If I may, I guess what I have to do as chairman is deal with the communications plan from the last meeting and the dollars attached to it. I would ask somebody to move that the heritage savings trust fund budget estimate presented to the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services be approved as presented at \$148,000.

Could somebody move that?

MR. VANDERBURG: So moved.

THE CHAIRMAN: All in favour? All opposed? Defeated.

Now we move to dealing with \$41,000 within the budgetary side. I think the next step, then, is to look at these within those budget parameters and Rob's comments with regards to graphs and charts for 83 members that could perhaps be utilized in columns and the like. Is that something that you could go back to? Is that a fair comment?

MS CARLSON: I don't think you need it for 83 members. I think you need it accessible.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's what I'm just saying, that this is accessible to all Members of the Legislative Assembly, should they require it.

MS CARLSON: Yes, and perhaps we could come up with two or three other kinds of ideas that could be presented to the committee at some point in terms of piggybacking. There are lots of different venues. You mentioned the Future Summit. I mean, you could set up a display table. There are lots of places where that could happen. We could do it here at the Leg. for the visitors that come in. I think we need to be smarter about how we get this message out. There are lots of trade shows in rural areas where we could roll something out, not that we have to man but perhaps that economic development officers could incorporate. So I think we need to start being smart about how we get this message rolled out.

MR. MARZ: Mr. Chairman, I don't see any place where we've used attendance at public meetings as a measurement of how well our communications were doing. I'm not sure if that's a measurement at all. If it is, perhaps we should have a review of how we measure our success as a board.

In addition to Mel's comments on the CBC's public affairs, I was wondering if you could maybe talk to one of the radio talk show hosts in the morning, Rutherford, or that type of venue to see if there would be an interest there. I think that's a daily habit that a lot of Albertans have developed, tuning in to that, whether they're driving down the road or having the radio on in their workplace, listening to this. I think that would be great exposure to get some message across in addition to what Mr. Knight said.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Richard.

MR. VANDERBURG: I think you'll see some things at the interpretive centre in Whitecourt when you're up in November, little self-guided tours. It costs very little money to have a backdrop. You push a button and a video starts. You get a self-guided tour through maybe the Alberta heritage savings trust fund at very little cost and very effective. You know, a backdrop is in a suitcase and a screen is set up. So those kinds of communications I'd like to see us maybe think about.

I think the member is right. You know, Rutherford, CBC – we all have circles. If you look at the provincial local radio labs – I'm sure

that if you as a chair set aside one day and made contact with all those circles, they would love to have you on for a few minutes and talk, at no cost, just time. All of us were elected here. We know all kinds of marketing strategies, and we have all kinds of tools. I think we should use those.

10:25

THE CHAIRMAN: If I may at this point. We were discussing an increase in budget on this item, and we voted it down. The next item was to talk about *Hansard*. I'd like to jump the budget and move to Draft Advertisement, Brochure and Other Public Relations Material so that Ms Chance can maybe explain – on hearing the comments from the committee with a slight shift now, if you could address the advertising brochures and public relations material.

MS CHANCE: Okay. I think everyone was given draft materials in their binders. What everyone should have is a draft MLA column, a public service announcement – there's no cost for this as well – and two draft advertisements. One would go to all the papers in Alberta, and the other one is to advertise the public meeting, so it would just go to the communities surrounding the public meeting. There's also a news release and a draft brochure. The brochure is something that there isn't a lot of cost for either because it can be distributed by MLAs and at the public meeting.

Also part of the communications plan is something like a special event or a photo op or a news conference before the public meeting. That was done last year, and it generated a lot of interest before the public meeting. There isn't usually any cost for that unless you have some kinds of props.

Another part of the communications plan is the targeted media interviews, which the chair might be interested in, and also revamping the heritage savings trust fund web site. There is information on there, but I think it could be laid out easier for users to find the information, and I think we could put even more information on there for Albertans who go to the web site.

So those are all the things that I have in the draft communications plan.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's great, Elaine. If you wouldn't mind taking this back to Gordon with regards to what the committee did – well, you'll receive minutes – with regards to perhaps looking at the other PSAs and going on Rutherford and everything, and bringing that back to us or having direct contact with me with regards to that.

Now, I don't know if we do it through Corinne . . .

MRS. DACYSHYN: Yes. I'll circulate it to all members.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. VANDERBURG: Just a point on the web site. Do we track the hits of how many people actually open it up?

MS CHANCE: I don't know if we do, but we can.

MR. VANDERBURG: It's another useful tool.

MS CHANCE: Sure. Yeah. Absolutely.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Any other comments on the communications part?

MR. BONNER: Is there also a way in there that we can track the

number of visits as opposed to the number of hits? It's certainly more accurate in determining how many people have actually looked at the material rather than just clicking onto it.

MS CHANCE: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Before we proceed to item (c), Peter and Laurence, would you like to give us a little message on what we do at the public meeting?

MR. WARING: We can just tag team it. Peter did some last year, and he can maybe give us some reaction in terms of how that went.

Historically we've usually prepared a formal presentation, and that presentation has been broken into two parts: one which discusses an overview framework of the fund, history of the fund, and the policy and objectives and then a second part which gets into the implementation of the investment policy, performance, and some of the investment policy that's done on a strategy level. The first part has been done by committee members in the sense of providing the overall framework as to how the fund works. The second part has been usually done by someone from IMD, the investment management division, given that it's in some ways a little bit more technical. Then there's usually a question-and-answer period in which the questions will be either directed at the committee members or the staff person.

That's what we've done in the past. We can continue to do that, or if you want to do something different, we can certainly do something different. The material is always done well in advance. I believe you have plenty of opportunity to review the slides and plenty of opportunity to review the draft commentary. It's usually broken into chunks so that if each member of the committee that's there wants to speak, they can, or one person can do it. Really, I guess, our perspective at this point is to just get an idea if there's a specific focus or message.

I think, Peter, last year you went with one member and talked to the media.

MR. ORCHESON: Yeah. That's right. Rob and I had a chance to meet with some people in the media, sort of local newspapers in his riding. This was the first meeting that I attended, so I can't speak to previous meetings, but it seemed that this meeting was better attended, at least from what I heard. You know, a good question-and-answer period. We pretty much filled the room, as I remember, and I think it was a good discussion. Maybe it was that media prep that got the people to the room.

MR. WARING: I think most of the questions that we've gotten are fairly predictable. There are a lot of questions that people have that come back time and time again, and those were generally well prepared for. We find that we have to go back through the history at some point in the meeting just to address those issues.

MR. ORCHESON: I think overall, as well, there are still a lot of people that don't know that the heritage fund even exists. We need to get the message out there that it's there. It's hard to be interested in something that you don't know is there.

MR. WARING: Has everyone had a chance to look at the material we put together last year? Was it included in the material?

MRS. DACYSHYN: Yes, it was.

MR. WARING: Any reaction from people that are new to the committee in terms of the content and quality?

THE CHAIRMAN: As chair, are there any questions of our friends? Yes, Debby.

MS CARLSON: I'll just make a comment. I think the information is always well put together and well laid out. It's always nice to have people from the department there to answer the technical questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just to follow up with regards to the comments with the up-to-date information, it will be circulated to the members prior to the meeting, but we are not having another meeting prior to the public meeting. Just so that you know we will circulate that information.

MR. WARING: So just working backwards from that November 7, about what time in terms of turnaround and all of that? Because we would provide the material to you through to the committee.

THE CHAIRMAN: I always look at 24 hours. If it hits their desk, they have an opportunity to respond and provide their input. We really are in a tight time frame. If you snooze, you lose.

MR. MARZ: For those of us who have constituency offices that rely on courier service, that may be a couple of days, and not being in your constituency office every day or your office here every day, as a rural MLA, because you are attending various functions, 24 hours is not a lot of time to get information and to be able to respond in many cases.

10:35

MRS. DACYSHYN: I don't know if this helps you or not, but I would try to track you down, find out where you are first, and then I would use the fax machine. I think that Diane did that last year, and it seemed to work quite well. So I would always phone ahead to try to find out from your assistants where you are at any given time, particularly so that we can get some approval on the ads.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Corinne.

Before we move on to the *Hansard* item, I hope the room is big enough, George, to handle the number of people that will be attending this meeting. I just wanted to let you know that at previous heritage trust fund public meetings we've had at least one of the opposition members attending, and I would encourage all members to be at the meeting. I'm certain George will be there.

MR. VANDERBURG: I wanted a chance to invite you all to come up a little bit earlier in the day, and I'll either get you to one of the state-of-the-art mills or we'll go on a helicopter tour and see some forests that have been replanted. Come to Whitecourt and I'll show you a little bit of the community and some of the things you may be interested in. Or maybe the trust fund committee would like to have lunch with the local chamber or the council. Those things are really easy to do. While we're doing this, I'd like to have the opportunity to showcase my constituency a little bit to my colleagues. So I would invite you if that's possible, and I would set that up, I imagine, with you.

MRS. DACYSHYN: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sure we'd all welcome any invitation, George, that you might put forward. Thank you.

I'd then move to item (c), *Hansard* Transcript of Public Meeting. What's the cost of this, Corinne?

MRS. DACYSHYN: Actually, there is no cost to our committee budget because this is a standing committee. It comes under the *Hansard* office budget, so there's actually no cost to the committee. My understanding is that in the past there were no *Hansard* transcripts because it was felt by the members, I guess, that the public wouldn't be so forthcoming in their discussions if they felt they were being recorded. That's the past reason, I understand. There is no cost to this committee. *Hansard* pays the travel costs and the cost of producing the transcript, and I do believe that last year an unofficial transcript was produced. Basically I think a tape recorder was placed in the centre of the room, and I don't think that worked very well. It was very hard to hear.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think we owe it to Albertans to have a permanent record of these meetings.

MR. LOUGHEED: Certainly some of the meetings were transcribed by *Hansard*. Grant MacEwan for sure was. I remember that one.

MS CARLSON: The year prior was. Yes, definitely.

MR. LOUGHEED: Which one?

MS CARLSON: All those ones in the year prior were.

MR. LOUGHEED: Last year wasn't.

MS CARLSON: Prior to last year.

THE CHAIRMAN: The consensus is that we would go to the Grant MacEwan model, then,
go back to having *Hansard* recording the meeting.
Could somebody put a motion for that? Rob moved. All agreed?
Opposed? Carried.

No other business?

The date of the next meeting. This is post public meeting; correct? When would we like to do that?

MRS. DACYSHYN: At the call of the chair.

THE CHAIRMAN: At the call of the chair?

MR. MARZ: I would move that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Richard moves at the call of the chair. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Thank you very much for your time.

MR. MARZ: I qualify that, Mr. Chairman, by saying with reasonable notice, because we do have a lot of bookings. Three days is . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: So noted. This usually takes place in January.
Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

MS CARLSON: One more point, just in terms of other business. We'll be talking about the issue of whom the heritage savings trust fund invests in at the next meeting; right?

THE CHAIRMAN: This was a special meeting dealing with the public meeting. If any member of this committee wishes to bring forward an agenda item, it certainly will be included in the next agenda.

A motion to adjourn? Rob. In favour? Have a nice day.

[The committee adjourned at 10:41 a.m.]

