

8:32 a.m.

[Mr. White in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: The meeting is now called to order. You have an agenda that was circulated to you prior to the meeting. Might we have a motion to accept the agenda?

DR. PANNU: I so move.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed?

AN HON. MEMBER: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Come on, folks. I hear one agreed.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Might we have approval of the minutes as they were circulated from the March 3 committee meeting? Moe Amery. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Carried.

Now I have a motion, I recall from the minutes here, that was moved last week, so it is now the property of the committee. Do we have a speaker for the motion? I have a speaker for the motion. Ms Olsen, please.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The motion moved by my colleague, just to refresh everybody's memory, was that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be given the authority to conduct a follow-up review of the Auditor General's investigation of the government's involvement in Alberta Treasury Branch's refinancing of West Edmonton Mall, including the ability to call witnesses and subpoena relevant documents.

I think, Mr. Chairman, that what this comes out of is that there have been precedents set here where in past investigations of different institutions -- and we'll use NovAtel as the example -- the Auditor General's report received some scrutiny from the Public Accounts Committee. I believe that was an appropriate thing to do given the enormous consequences that particular investigation had on this province. That particular request for review was accepted and brought into this committee for review.

We are now requesting a review of the West Edmonton Mall refinancing. That, in fact, is very similar in my view, and the concern I have is the need for this committee to review the public accounts of that transaction between the Treasury Branches and West Edmonton Mall. We know that the Auditor General in fact had reviewed those documents in the past. We would like the ability to scrutinize those much more closely than maybe we did in this particular venue.

The issues that come into play now are in fact new news, and there is more relevant information that needs to be reviewed by the Public Accounts Committee. It's not simply a matter of reviewing what was done in the past; it's a matter of reviewing the entire process and where the accountability and responsibility lie. The particular report that the Auditor General was asked to put together was done, I believe, under the act in 17(2). It was requested by a member of cabinet to the Auditor General. That report should in fact now be available for review and scrutiny in this committee. Given that, I would also like to see the ability to call the witnesses and subpoena the relevant documents. There is in my view no end of information that should be shared with this committee and in fact in

a broader context.

So I would support this motion and urge members of this committee to support the motion. It's not stepping outside the bounds and responsibilities of this committee. I would like to see some discussion and debate and certainly some support, for anybody who is deciding they're not going to vote in favour of this motion and the sort of logic behind that, because I think this is an opportunity to do that. So with that, Mr. Chairman, I'll cede the floor to others.

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Chairman, I look at the argument being presented, and with all due respect to the hon. member, let me read the motion as it was moved at the last meeting. It says that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be given the authority to conduct a follow-up review of the Auditor General's investigation of the government's involvement in Alberta Treasury Branch's refinancing of West Edmonton Mall, including the ability to call witnesses and subpoena relevant documents.

My understanding is that that was ruled out of order and subsequently another motion was moved by the hon. member, and I'm just trying to find where that motion is.

So I think the argument that was just presented is in regard to a motion that was ruled out of order. I believe now that the mover of the motion is in the House, and you may want to ask him to put forward his argument since this was already ruled out of order. The motion for which the argument has been presented was already moved ruled out of order; right?

THE CHAIRMAN: No. That motion was ruled out of order. There was a subsequent motion given without notice that was accepted and read into the record, and you'll find it on page 14.99. It's a different motion.

MR. SHARIFF: The point I'm making is that the arguments just heard were in regard to a previous motion which was asking for the calling of witnesses and subpoenaing documents.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, arguments could be made however one wants to make an argument. If they're not relevant, then you and the committee that are looking to be influenced by the arguments would discard those. The chair can't be held responsible for the arguments that are made and perhaps the member made arguments in error, but the chair can't correct those.

If you have more to say on the matter -- otherwise we have other speakers, Mr. Shariff.

MR. SHARIFF: Well, if you want, there are a number of speakers here who would like to speak against the motion, including myself. I just wanted a clarification on what I've just argued. You certainly have made a ruling and I'll respect that, that the motion is crisscrossing the two meetings that we've previously had. So if you want to have arguments for the motion, I have a number of people who want to speak against the motion, and we will allow members to speak.

THE CHAIRMAN: Right. We have a speaking order. From you, it's Dr. Pannu and then Mr. Ducharme and then the mover of the motion.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, good morning. I have a similar concern. I thought my colleague from Edmonton-Norwood perhaps by error referred to the motion that you had ruled out of order. A new motion replaced the motion that was ruled out of order. That motion is the one Mr. Shariff read to you, and that is the motion, I guess, that is under discussion now.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the motion that is under discussion -- just

for the record I'll read it into the record from the minutes that were delivered. It's moved by Mr. Sapers that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts conduct a follow-up review of the Auditor General's investigation of the government's involvement in Alberta Treasury Branches refinancing of West Edmonton Mall.

DR. PANNU: I'm satisfied with your reading of it now.

8:42

THE CHAIRMAN: That's the motion.

DR. PANNU: The confusion has cleared, I think, so I guess we can start discussion. If I may continue then?

THE CHAIRMAN: We were starting discussion of the motion.

DR. PANNU: Okay. The motion that's before us, Mr. Chairman, is in order, I take it. I assume it's in order. I think it's a motion I would want to support unequivocally. I think it is within the purview of the powers of this committee to conduct a follow-up review of the Auditor General's investigation of the government's involvement in Alberta Treasury Branches refinancing of West Edmonton Mall. What this motion no longer says is that the committee has the right to subpoena witnesses, which, I think, was an objection you sustained as a reasonable one, and I have no problem with it. All I want to say is that the people of Alberta expect this Assembly and this committee, an important committee, to accept and in fact acknowledge their responsibility to undertake this task.

There are lots of questions that my constituents continue to ask me. As a matter of fact, several of them over the last week called my office and urged me not to ignore the outstanding issues and that as MLA from Edmonton-Strathcona I have a public duty to pursue the questions that have not been addressed. I think this motion would allow me the opportunity, allow this committee the opportunity, and allow the House the opportunity to pursue appropriate answers to outstanding questions, so I support the motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Dr. Pannu.

Mr. Ducharme, followed by Mr. Sapers.

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I'm rather disappointed with the motion coming forward. To me it implies that the work in the Auditor General's review in this matter is inadequate, and I find that not only insulting to the Auditor General and his department but insulting to all the members of this Public Accounts Committee. I think it's nothing more than a witch-hunt. When there's a reference to a follow-up review, is the mover of the motion insinuating that the Auditor General's review was biased and incomplete? I, for one, have all the confidence in the Auditor's work in the review, and I personally will not allow myself to be embarrassed in questioning the ethics of that department. I, unlike the other Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, have not received any phone calls to my office on this matter. The concerns I'm hearing on the street are: "The investigation has been complete. We are happy with the findings. Let's get on with governing this province." Therefore, I will not be supporting this motion.

MR. SAPERS: My apologies to the committee for being tardy.

Obviously I'm going to speak in favour of the motion. It's my motion. I have to begin my comments, though, in part reacting to what we've just heard. Maybe I'm the only one that gets phone calls, but I get lots of them. I get lots of letters, I get lots of brown envelopes, I get lots of people stopping me on the street, I get lots of

discussion in my office about what's gone on with West Edmonton Mall and the government's involvement in the Auditor General's report. If the hon. member feels embarrassed by being a member of this committee, then I guess he has to account for that. I don't feel embarrassed being on this committee or asking for information about this committee.

The Auditor General is a legislative officer who has conducted himself with integrity, and I've never questioned that. What I have questioned is the role that he and his colleagues have been put into by the government. When the government in its rather clever way decided that they would hand off this hot potato to the Auditor General and then after the fact construe it as a 17(2) special report, I believe it put the Auditor General into a real dilemma. I think the Auditor General's silence since the tabling of his report is evidence of the dilemma he faces. So this is not a question about the Auditor General's integrity or competence. It is a question about the government's responsibility for a mess, a mess we have not gotten to the bottom of yet.

On the point of whether or not this motion is within or outside the jurisdiction of this committee, let me direct members of the committee to *Beauchesne 759* where we are advised about the types of committees that may be constructed and their responsibilities. In paragraph (2) it reads:

Standing committees are appointed under the Standing Orders to examine and report on the general conduct of activities by government departments and agencies, and to consider and report on the Estimates. They may, however, be ordered to conduct such investigations or inquiries as the House may direct. These committees exist throughout a Parliament.

In *Beauchesne 760* we are told:

Committees are regarded as creatures of the House. The Standing Orders of the House of Commons apply to committees, so far as they may be applicable, with certain exceptions. These are contained in Standing Order 116.

Then *Beauchesne 760* goes on to talk about some procedural considerations.

If I can then refer members to our very own Standing Orders, in Standing Order 18(1) we are advised which motions are debatable and are told that "motions which are debatable include every motion," and then there's a whole list. There are very few exceptions listed in paragraph 2. Then, of course, we're all familiar with Standing Order 50.

I could also go on to quote *Erskine May* in the section on the role of committees and the parliamentary tradition of committees being able to set their own direction as long as they do not violate a specific stricture imposed on them by either a standing order or a direction from the whole parliamentary Assembly.

So there is no debate on whether or not we have the jurisdiction to pursue this. We do. There is also, of course, precedent for this with the motion on *NovAtel* which came from the Assembly and directed Public Accounts to conduct the review. I hope we have laid that to rest, and I would hope hon. members would provide some substance to their argument that this is beyond our jurisdiction, if they have some, instead of just thundering and pounding on the table.

The difficulty I have with the report on the West Edmonton Mall refinancing is that it is in fact incomplete. That's not a knock against the work of the Auditor General. In fact, we're advised early on in the report that it's incomplete. We're advised that some of the major players didn't provide input to the report. The builders of the mall didn't respond to the request for information; the former acting superintendent of the Alberta Treasury Branches didn't comply. There are court cases that got in the way of that. The Auditor General, as thorough a job as he and his staff could do, do not have the power to subpoena witnesses or documents. They could not

force or compel people to be more complete than they chose to be. They could not force or compel people to provide any information if they chose not to. This is not my conclusion. The Auditor General reached that conclusion in his own report.

In fact, there's a comment in the report -- and I'm paraphrasing -- that indicates that there may be very different findings coming out of a court of law, that proceedings in court would follow a different path. Therefore, a different conclusion may be reached.

Now, when it comes to the conclusion of the report, let me say this: the Auditor General's report -- and the Premier has made this observation in the Assembly on several occasions -- concluded that he could find no direct evidence of direct government inappropriate behaviour. Now, the words, I believe, were chosen carefully by the Auditor General. The Auditor General did not state in an equivocal fashion that there was no evidence; he said that he could not find any. And he said that he could not find this direct link between the evidence presented to him and inappropriate government action.

Now, I think that that in and of itself should pique the curiosity of anybody who is concerned about accountability in this matter. The fact that there is no evidence found to date does not mean that no evidence will not be found. If we really do want to get to the bottom of this instead of just trying to sweep it under the rug, then I think we would want to see whether or not we could prove the statement true that there is no evidence.

8:52

Another difficulty I have is that when I sit on this committee or when I debate budget estimates or when I go back to my own constituency and answer questions from taxpayers who trust me to do the right thing and act in the public good, they expect I would have all the information. They would expect I would be able to answer their questions completely and honestly, and they would expect that if I didn't have all the information and wasn't able to provide those answers, I would make it my business to get the information and find a way to provide those answers.

Well, when it comes to the government's involvement in West Edmonton Mall refinancing, I can't do that. I can't do that because I have had no ability, as the Auditor General and his staff have had no ability, to cross-examine. I have not been able to test a statement against other facts. I have not been able to sit down and line up all the statutory declarations that the Auditor General received, line them up and see whether or not there is consistency and continuity. I haven't been able to review the documents the Auditor General has reviewed. I have not been able to ensure that the documents I have are the same documents the Auditor General has. Even though I have forwarded all the material I have to the office of the Auditor General, there is no cross-checking. There is no way of knowing that the material that's been presented elsewhere is exactly the same material, that it's complete, that it's unedited, that it's uncensored.

The fact is that we have various versions of events presented to the Auditor General. We have various versions of the truth being argued in courts in this province. What we have had a lack of is the ability to try to reconcile all the differences and all the inconsistencies, and they're there. They're there.

What this motion does is follow a long-standing parliamentary tradition of a standing committee of the House making it its business to get to the bottom of the matter to determine the truth. It doesn't ask for anything greater than that, but I can't imagine anything more important than that.

So I would hope this committee will put aside its partisan differences, stop using words like witch-hunt to describe an examination that would lead us to a truthful conclusion and support this motion so that we can in fact get on with the business at hand, which is being accountable to the taxpayers who have trusted us in these roles.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have Mr. Amery. The chair has been moving for those presumed for the motion and those against the motion. We have no further speakers for the motion, so unless you want to repeat, we have Mr. Amery, Mr. Stevens, and Mrs. O'Neill.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think you're right. I'm against this motion. I don't believe this motion is necessary to conduct a review of the Auditor General's investigation. I honestly don't know why this member is pursuing this matter in this fashion. We already have a report submitted by the Auditor General, and this report was based on a lot of statutory declarations. A lot of information was submitted to him by a lot of people involved in this whole matter.

Mr. Chairman, there are a lot of lawsuits and counterlawsuits pending. A lot of people will be examined and cross-examined, and I have faith in our justice system. I'm sure the truth will prevail. The hon. member said last time in his opening statement that he is pursuing the truth and nothing but the truth. I believe that in the pending court cases the truth will come out. A lot of people will be put on the stand and will be examined and cross-examined, and they will be telling the truth.

However, he also said that he has to answer the calls from his constituents. As the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake said, I have not received a single phone call in my constituency office on this matter. As a matter of fact, I was listening to a very popular talk show here in Edmonton right after the release of the Auditor General's report, and 14 out of 15 people, 14 out of 15 Edmontonians said: we are satisfied with the Auditor General's findings, and there is no need to pursue the matter any further. I wonder if the hon. member is saying he has no faith in the court and has no faith in the Auditor General's report. I hope this is not so.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I'm against this motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Before we go to Mr. Stevens, I must remind the members that we're governed by the Standing Orders here, so 23(h), (i), (j) and all that still apply. We must be careful not to impute motives to one another and just deal with the facts. I know Mr. Stevens has the experience to do that. Thank you.

Mr. Stevens.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When I look at the Auditor General's report, what I see is a very comprehensive document. We have the Auditor General and his staff that have incredible expertise in the area, and I'm sure the Auditor General sought out whatever additional expertise he needed in order to conduct this review. As I understand it, the documents that were presented to the Auditor General for review included all relevant documents from this government. They included all statutory declarations that were asked for and provided. Those who were asked for and did not provide could not be compelled. Those admittedly are main players in the piece, but they have lawyers, and I'm sure their lawyers, as a result of considering the request, decided it was not appropriate for them to participate in this. So in sum, I see the Auditor General's report as being one provided by an independent body that was thorough and which came to conclusions that are clear.

I recall that the hon. member who made this motion we are now considering made a similar motion last year, which was defeated. I also recall that this hon. member is finance critic for the loyal opposition, so he has a specific vested interest in this matter beyond that as simply a member of this committee.

I listened to the hon. member when he was speaking about this matter and said that he wanted to review matters. It's not clear to me what he would propose we review that the Auditor General has not already. From my perspective, if he is suggesting that we review what the Auditor General reviewed, then I would suggest the Auditor General is independent, does have the expertise, and has formulated those opinions.

The hon. member indicated that the report concluded there is no evidence to date, which is not to say there is not any evidence whatsoever. That particular comment reminds me of the parable of the fisherman and the two sons. The fisherman suggested to his sons one morning that they go fishing and that it was necessary to get some worms. The fisherman said to his sons: "Let me give you some advice, sons. Worms are found in wet places." Now, the one son went forward and came upon a piece of land which had both dry and wet areas. He chose to take his father's advice and went to the area that was wet and started digging. Lo and behold, his father was correct, and soon he had his bucket full of worms. The other son also went out and found a piece of property that had both wet and dry areas. However, he did not follow the advice of his father and went to the far end, the dry end, and started digging, thinking that worms perhaps would be found anywhere and that there was something. But after a couple of hours, lo and behold, no worms. Now, it seems to be that Mr. Sapers is correct in his statement that no evidence to date does not mean there is no evidence, but like the prodigal son in the parable, you can spend a lot of wasted time, a lot of wasted energy looking for something in places where it's not likely to be found, especially in this case where the Auditor General, from my perspective, has sought out statutory declarations from the appropriate parties, has gathered the evidence together in a documentary sense, and has used expert eyes to review it and expert opinion to conclude his report. I find it interesting that the hon. member who has made the motion feels that his eyes will add something to this piece.

I also find it interesting that the hon. member disagrees with the comment that this is a witch-hunt. I don't think it's a witch-hunt, Mr. Chairman. I would like to suggest it's a Howard-hunt.

Thank you.

9:02

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. O'Neill, followed by Mr. Hlady, and then Mr. Sapers to close.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to speak against this motion.

With respect to the comment that was made by Mr. Sapers questioning whether it was within our jurisdiction or not, I would state that it is within our jurisdiction to debate the motion. But I do not believe it is within our jurisdiction to conduct a follow-up review of the Auditor General's investigation of the government's involvement in Alberta Treasury Branch refinancing of West Edmonton Mall.

It's unclear exactly what this motion does ask for. Is he asking that we as a committee review the Auditor General's report or that we conduct a follow-up review? I sense from the statements made by Mr. Sapers that he is suggesting the latter. In suggesting the latter, it is evident to me as I listen to him that he's arguing out of his own position, a position he has stated over and over and over again, that he thinks he knows something all of the other good investigative minds and report-writing people in the Auditor General's office have missed.

Consequently, I think this motion should be defeated because the intention that has been expressed by Mr. Sapers is that he also wants to be an investigator and a judge all at once. In wanting to do that, as I read it into this motion, if that is what the interpretation is there,

then I feel it is not within our purview to do it and therefore speak against this motion.

MS OLSEN: Well, I guess it doesn't surprise me to hear some of the personal comments that are being slagged at my colleague, and he can defend himself. It seems to be something that's getting to be a habit with this particular caucus. However, I believe this is a follow-up report. I believe that we need to ask questions on the Auditor General's report, that it can be done in this Legislature, it can be done under the auspices of the Public Accounts Committee, that there is room for that. There are many, many questions I would like to ask the Auditor General about the report for clarification, for understanding. There hasn't been the opportunity to do that. There is silence.

I believe what I hear right now is more of a protectionist mentality than a group of people that in fact want to look at their role and responsibilities on this Public Accounts Committee. This is not a witch-hunt. This is not a Howard-hunt. This is not an opposition member wanting to be an investigator or a judge. This is a responsibility that this Public Accounts Committee can undertake and that may put to rest some questions of the Auditor General's report. Every other aspect of the Auditor General's report can be scrutinized in this Assembly, and there's absolutely no reason why the existing report as it stands, in the form that it stands cannot come under that same kind of scrutiny.

So I would suggest that maybe a broader, less narrow perspective be applied to this motion. As I've said before, I support this motion, and I hope we can move out of the personal and on to the realities that this is an incomplete report, as indicated by the Auditor General himself.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Hlady, followed by Mr. Shariff and Mr. Lougheed.

MR. HLADY: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, will have to speak against this motion. I find it interesting as we hear the supporters of the motion speaking, and I don't really find any buy-in for what they're trying to represent here. There is under way right now a criminal investigation, and that's a big part of what's happening here. And what is our level of duty? What's the level of duty of the Auditor General? I think he's met his levels that he's supposed to be doing. He's done the investigations at the level where it was demanded by the public for his purpose and his role. I don't think we would be expanding in any way other than possibly conflicting with the other investigations that are going on at this time. It would be wrong for us to get in the way of those investigations, and I think there is the potential for that if we are going to follow the recommendations of this motion by the member.

I guess it's the role of opposition that the member tries to portray. I'm disappointed when I hear this kind of thing come forward, because I think when you get into the position of being opposition for the prime purpose of being opposition, at the same time not taking into scrutiny the fact that you have an operating business that has a very high level of respect in the public today and demands to be kept in that sort of light -- the kinds of things he would be attacking and bringing down in the public eye is not right. I think it's the wrong approach. I think ATB is trying to be successful, trying to move forward, and the reason this has other investigations going on right now is because they want to be as clean and above-board as possible. That's why they're dealing with these things. So I think it's unfortunate because this motion shows a lack of respect for that particular business and the need for that business to be seen as doing the best they can in the investigations that are going on.

I think the Auditor General has done an exemplary job in checking for whatever its role could be and what it has achieved in examining the things that needed to be examined. I also believe that the Auditor General is much better prepared than we would be, and I don't see a purpose for us going on through another examination. I don't think we could review nearly in the depth that the Auditor General has the ability to and has done. So I, too, will have to vote against this motion.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Shariff.

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The mover of the motion has been an Opposition House Leader and did make reference to how this House organizes itself under the Standing Orders. If the Standing Orders are to be followed, we have under section 50 -- and I'll read this once again. I know I've read it many times into the record: "Public accounts, when tabled, stand referred to the Public Accounts Committee." The Auditor General's report technically is a report that has already been tabled in the House; therefore I believe the hon. member is within his rights to request this committee to review the report. However, he in his arguments has gone back to make reference to NovAtel.

9:12

I just want to remind the members once again how the NovAtel review happened under the Public Accounts Committee. There was a Standing Order 40 made in the House, and there was unanimous consent that led to the Public Accounts Committee reviewing the matters pertaining to NovAtel. I suggest that this member has the opportunity to bring forward a Standing Order 40 in the House, and certainly if we do get unanimous consent, that will be an opportunity for us to debate it. I'd be more than happy to look at that matter at that time and review it under such direction.

At this point in time, as you are aware, we do have an agenda which is quite exhaustive for bringing the various ministries before this committee. Even if this motion were to pass, I do not believe we would be able to debate it or bring the review forward in this session. So if the hon. member feels there is urgency, I highly recommend his bringing forward a Standing Order 40.

I also want to go back to the arguments that have been made with regards to the report being incomplete. I think the Auditor General had a mandate. The Auditor General and his team put a lot of resources into conducting this review and put forward a report that most Albertans are satisfied with. There are some who would prefer this to be an inquisition, but quite frankly most Albertans are satisfied that the report is complete, in the sense that there is no concern in Albertans' minds, and they would like to put this to rest. Albertans would also like to see the criminal investigation that's going on take its due course. I believe most Albertans do not want us to do anything that would stand in the way of the criminal investigation that's going on.

This hon. member initially wanted to expand the role of this committee, and I'm glad he withdrew that motion, or at least that motion was defeated or ruled out of order. Now he's brought forward another motion, this being a third one, I believe, on a very similar issue. What it has done, unfortunately, is taken some very important time away from the agenda item that we had today. I would have really, really liked to have sat down with the Minister of Family and Social Services and the minister responsible for children's services to deal with the matters of that ministry. More than 50 percent of today's time has already been taken up on this motion, so I hope this hon. member and others will in the future consider how our time is being utilized as Public Accounts Committee members. Now, I'm not suggesting that nobody should bring

forward a motion, but I suggest that when we bring forward a motion, we keep our thoughts to what we are bringing forward and allow time to debate it, and at times that is going to encroach upon time we have set aside for various ministries.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I certainly believe that at this point in time I am satisfied with the Auditor General's report. I do not see a need for us to do a follow-up review. I believe the criminal investigation will bring out some additional findings. And if any one of us in this committee feels very strongly that this committee needs to debate this matter, then I encourage them to bring forward a Standing Order 40 in the House. If we do get a direction from the Legislature, then certainly we will take that matter up at that point in time.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will not be supporting this motion. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: I must remind members that they are able to withdraw their names from the list if they so wish.

Mr. Lougheed, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Sapers to close.

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. SAPERS: Excuse me.

THE CHAIRMAN: A point of order?

MR. SAPERS: Yes. I would like to engage in the debate, not necessarily speak to close. I'll obviously reserve my time to close debate on my motion as well, but there have been several statements made which I believe I should have the opportunity to enter into debate on. Perhaps then other members may choose or not choose to respond.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, if you're the last speaker, then that closes the debate, but if there are other speakers . . .

MR. SAPERS: Well, you just indicated: to close debate.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. What you're saying is that you want to be entered in as for and against, for and against, for and against. Is that what you want to do?

MR. SAPERS: It's not my intent to respond after every government member speaks against the motion. My intent is to be able to exercise my right to speak as many times as I choose during debate on this motion, not simply to close debate.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's true. Okay. So you are on the list after Mr. Lougheed and before Mr. Johnson then.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you.

MR. HLADY: Mr. Chairman, we can come back again after as well.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, yeah, after as well. Of course. It's not limited to once each.

MR. HLADY: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Mr. Lougheed, followed by Mr. Sapers and Mr. Johnson.

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I listened quite carefully to the discussion as advanced by the member who proposed this motion. One of the terms about which his argument turned, I believe, went along the lines of: the Auditor General's report stated

that no direct evidence was found; that was not to say that there was no evidence but that it just wasn't found. In fact, when I considered whether to support this motion or not, I was not able to find any adequate arguments to convince me to support it. I guess I would say that that does not mean that there are none; I just have not heard any. In fact it appears that this member would like to usurp the role of the courts and talks in terms of calling witnesses and cross-examining, skills that I think are better left to the people who are considering this case or several cases that are before the courts at this time.

I would therefore recommend that this motion be defeated.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Lougheed.

Mr. Sapers, any arguments?

MR. SAPERS: Thank you. There is another story that I think I should tell for the benefit of Calgary-Glenmore, since he's telling us parables. It's a story out of law school, and based on the intervention by Mr. Stevens, I'm sure it's a lesson that he learned well. It goes something like this: when the facts are with you, argue the facts; when the facts are against you, pound the table and scream like hell.

It doesn't surprise me that the debate has degenerated into name-calling and personal attacks and bombast instead of relying on the merits of what's before us. I guess that's okay, because this is all on the record and Albertans will judge for themselves whether they have been well served by this debate or not. I don't have any difficulty at all being a single individual standing alone asking for the truth. If it turns out that I'm like that holdout juror who doesn't want to convict because they have a nagging doubt, that's fine with me.

Yes, Calgary-McCall, justice and democracy do take time. If we have to reschedule the minister of social services, I guess we'll just have to do that. That doesn't bother me either.

The arguments that we have the report, the report's come to a conclusion, and we should just accept it I find very troubling. If I follow Mr. Stevens' logic correctly, then I take it that as a senior member of the bar in this province he would never ever enter an appeal, that he would never find that a judgment or a ruling should be questioned, that the answer produced in the first inquiry is the answer that we should all be satisfied with, and that we should just close our eyes to the possibility that there was some fact yet undiscovered. I find that interesting, and I'll have to check and see the nature of the appeals, or not, that he's engaged in. I also would take from his argument that he believes that no innocent man has ever been convicted, that no mistake has ever been made. I find that very interesting coming from such a senior practitioner of law.

9:22

The notion that we had the report and we should be satisfied with it is contrary to the entire purpose of this committee. Calgary-McCall read Standing Order 50 into the record yet again, which compels us to, once tabled, review the work of the Auditor General. For goodness' sake, how can you argue out of one side of your mouth that we should rely on Standing Order 50 and out of the other side of your mouth say, "Oh yeah, but when we get a report, we should never question it"? That's the purpose of this committee.

MR. SHARIFF: Point of order.

THE CHAIRMAN: Point of order, Mr. Shariff.

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Chairman, I never made that statement or never alluded to that. In fact, I went on to say . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: No, no. If your point of order is that the member has misinterpreted your statement . . .

MR. SHARIFF: Yes, he has misinterpreted it. Standing Order 23(h), (i), (j).

THE CHAIRMAN: That is not a point of order. That is a point of argument perhaps. I can put you on the list, but you can't argue a point of order on the basis of a misinterpretation of another member.

MR. SHARIFF: He's misquoting me.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Chairman, I will withdraw any attribution to Calgary-McCall if he feels that he's been misquoted, but I will of course check *Hansard*.

The general tone of the argument from government supporters in this committee so far has been in part that we shouldn't question the report, that it is somehow inappropriate to do that. The point I'm making is that that is absurd. What we do in this committee is review the work of the Auditor General amongst others. So that is not an argument that I think carries much weight.

Another contradiction that I find in the arguments, a very troubling contradiction and I think was probably most pointed in the remarks from Calgary-Mountain View, is that on the one hand we're being told that the report has been done, that any subsequent review of that report is a witch-hunt, that there has been a finding of no wrongdoing so everything must be okay. Yet at the same time, if I can paraphrase -- and perhaps I'll offend the recall of Calgary-Mountain View as well. The argument there in part was -- I believe he used the words "attacking and bringing down." Well, Mr. Chairman, if there's nothing wrong, if there's no wrongdoing to be found, how could a simple review of the facts be an attack in bringing down this commercial entity known as the ATB? It seems to me that he doth protest too much. What is it that perhaps they know that the rest of us don't about the role of the government in this particular scandal? For them to be so sensitive as to say that a further review would be an attack and would bring down this financial institution: very curious indeed.

By the same token, we're being told that there's nothing wrong, that there's no wrongdoing, that there's no problem. Yet Calgary-East and others are using the argument that there are criminal investigations under way, that there are civil suits proceeding through the courts. Well, Mr. Chairman, if there is nothing wrong and the argument is that there are no more questions to ask, then how can they argue that we should wait for the criminal proceedings, that we should wait for the criminal charges, that we should wait for the civil suits to proceed through court? These are huge contradictions and gaps in logic which I do not understand, and perhaps they'll be able to fill in those gaps. If we truly believe that there's nothing wrong, then there can be no fear in asking the question.

Mr. Chairman, the truth, as they say, is out there, and the truth may or may not be found through civil proceedings in court. Calgary-East says that I question the integrity of our justice system. I believe maybe I'm inviting another point of order. I used to make my living working in the justice system. I've been involved in that system for longer than I've been involved in politics. I've worked pretty hard to improve that system to make it accessible and understandable to people, and I do take offence at any suggestion that I am in some way questioning the effectiveness and integrity of our system of justice. I would hope that those members would rethink those remarks and try to build their argument around some facts instead of just their own fears.

The fact is that we have no way of knowing whether or not these matters before the civil courts will ever proceed to conclusion

through the civil courts. There is pressure for out-of-court settlement, and we all know that one of the things that happens in an out-of-court settlement is usually an agreement of secrecy. So if these matters conclude with a secret out-of-court settlement, we'll be no closer to the truth than we are today.

Thank you.

MR. SHARIFF: Do I get a chance to clarify my point, Mr. Chairman?

THE CHAIRMAN: No. Really, there is no point of order. If you want on the speaking list, you have to let me know, because we have an extensive speaking list today. We have Mr. Johnson, then Mr. Stevens. Mr. Johnson, please.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are a couple of points that I would like to make after listening to the debate thus far. First of all, as I read the motion, the word that jumps out at me is "investigation." It seems to me that we're putting too much emphasis here upon process and procedure. I'm not sure if that's the important thing. I think the important thing here is the report itself, and I'm not sure what we're going to accomplish by going back and perhaps questioning who the Auditor General talked to and the process itself. The point has been already made that the Auditor General has a competent staff, and I don't think we need to go back and actually look at the process itself and the procedure. That's what I get out of this word "investigation."

I also would like to agree with my colleague that any further investigations by the courts will obviously reveal additional conclusions, and for that reason I don't think it's necessary that we conduct our own review of the report.

My colleagues have spoken about the independence of the Auditor General's investigation. I'm satisfied that the report itself is complete, and maybe we should be spending our time investigating the report itself rather than investigating the investigation and how the investigation actually took place.

So I speak against the motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. In order to keep the order for and against, Dr. Pannu wanted to speak, then Mr. Stevens, and then Mr. Shariff after that. Dr. Pannu, please.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have been listening to the arguments of my hon. colleagues for the last hour. I want to put on record my responses to some of the concerns that have been expressed, but first I want to also put on record my own reaction, which I made public at the time that the Auditor General's report was released, and I've asked to respond to it.

One of the difficulties that the Auditor General ran into as he was conducting this extremely important examination of events in order to prepare his report: he acknowledged and recognized as he went through the process that his hands were tied. He had no powers to compel witnesses to come before him, to lay before him evidence and information that he might have considered absolutely essential for him to be able to do his job effectively. So he says, as a result, that his conclusions would remain tentative, that the report would remain incomplete. He acknowledges that.

My reaction when I saw that was that perhaps it would have been appropriate for the AG then to say: "I can't do my job. If I don't have these powers, then I stop right here. I have been called upon to do this extremely important task. It's a public controversy. It has been hanging over our heads for very long, and I've been asked to clear the confusion and to come up with absolutely sound conclu-

sions. Since I cannot compel witnesses, my job cannot be done."

Given that I made that remark, I have continued to feel, therefore, that we need a different mechanism that will allow the members of this Assembly, the members of this committee to pursue questions without the constraints under which the Auditor General tried to do as good a job as he possibly could. I have no doubt that he did his very best in order to conduct his inquiry. So there is a compelling set of circumstances, duly noted by the Auditor General in his own report, which placed the responsibility on this committee as the committee of this House to proceed if we pass this motion -- and I hope we do -- to pursue further the inquiry that he set out to do.

9:32

The second observation that I want to make has to do with the use of the word "witch-hunt." I am concerned because it in a sense derails the nature of the debate. It imputes not only motives but motives that are dishonourable. I think this is an inappropriate attempt at imputing motives. Public accountability is not a witch-hunt. It will be the substance of the work of this committee which will determine whether or not this committee engaged in a witch-hunt. We cannot prejudge the work of this committee. I as a member of the committee want to state categorically that I am voting for this motion, not to engage in a witch-hunt.

I occupy an elected office, as all of my colleagues on this side of the Chamber do, and in that capacity we are obliged to ask sometimes the most difficult of questions, even when those questions have to do with a decision made by our closest friends. We must put public interest above our personal loyalties and political loyalties and pursue certain questions regardless so that the public accountability duty we have is pursued without any qualifications and so that the process we use in order to engage in this investigation is transparent, is there for the public to see, whether we conduct ourselves honourably or whether we conduct ourselves merely in order to blemish or blame some colleagues, regardless of the substance.

So I hope that we don't use the word "witch-hunt." We may have other reservations about it, but let's not accuse those who support the motion as wanting to engage in a witch-hunt.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Dr. Pannu.
Mr. Stevens, Ms Olsen, and Mr. Shariff.

MR. STEVENS: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. At the outset I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for the kind description of my reputation within the profession from which I came. It's always nice to hear those kinds of words spoken, whether they be here or elsewhere, but I would like to say thank you to him for that.

The issue is not whether the hon. member or others cannot review this matter or that they cannot critique it. Obviously they can in their own way. To use the words of the hon. member, the issue is whether or not the report should come to this committee for review or appeal.

I do have some experience with appeals. I spent some time in the courts as a civil litigation lawyer, and I can tell you that fundamental to the decision relative to whether to appeal or not is the exercise of judgment. The question becomes whether or not there is some merit in the appeal and whether the cost of the appeal is worth the potential outcome. I've spoken to that in my first comments here today in part, but I do want to say this about the issue of judgment and the issue of public accountability. When I think of public accountability, I think first and foremost of the residents of my constituency of Calgary-Glenmore.

I have talked to a number of people about the Auditor General's report, and those people to whom I have spoken have expressed

satisfaction. I can say that I have not heard one person, not one person, say to me that they are dissatisfied. To my knowledge I have not received a phone call or a letter that says that they are dissatisfied. I can be assured in representing that I have not received one comment to my knowledge from anybody in my constituency that says: appeal; review this matter.

So on the issue of public accountability I would like to make it clear that from the input that I have received from Albertans, particularly Albertans in my constituency, there is no need at this time to pursue this matter further.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Stevens.

Ms Olsen, followed by Mr. Shariff.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make a couple of comments. First of all, I want to make it very clear that in no way is this motion questioning the ability or the integrity of the staff in the Auditor General's office at all. The Auditor General's office, in my view, was put in a very precarious position when they had to deal with this issue. I think that position was outlined very well by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

I would like to say to the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose that we may or may not see conclusions in a court. They may or may not say anything, and they may or may not surround any of the issues related to the Auditor General's report. The issues in court will be different from the issues here. Given that and given that the Auditor General has stated that his hands in fact were tied and that the report is limited given the constraints he's had, then I think in all fairness -- we're not asking to necessarily find fault. We want an investigation of the facts that exist and to ask some questions.

We know that if in fact this had gone to a public inquiry, there would not have been a finding of guilt. There would have been a finding of the facts and some recommendations put forward in order to prevent this type of thing from happening again, but it would have also allowed a different venue to get different people into an environment where they would in fact have to publicly disclose comments and testimony. There's nothing wrong with that. I feel very strongly that if the Conservative caucus feels that, you know, this is an event we're trying to pursue for the sake of bringing down the government, I think that's wrong. I think this is a broader context. This is about accountability. In my view -- I've said it before, and I'll say it again -- if there's nothing to hide, then why wouldn't we proceed? Why would we not ask the questions?

I think this is an appropriate use of time. Everything is an appropriate use of time. Looking at the public accounts of social services is absolutely appropriate. Having this debate is appropriate. That's what we're here to do as elected officials.

9:42

I guess the other aspect of it is that I find difficulty in the logic that we would accept the report as it is and not scrutinize it because of the good work of the Auditor General's department. Then I would suggest: why should we scrutinize any department because of the good work of the Auditor General's department? I would suggest to you that this is not about the integrity of the work of the Auditor General's department. It's a follow-up to a report that has been publicly put forward, and the ability for us to pursue it from an accountability perspective is something that we should be doing and not be afraid to do. We should never be afraid to ask for accountability in any form as an elected official, and in fact that's part of our job.

Thank you.

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Chairman, I'd just take a couple of minutes

basically to make sure that a clarification is made for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora. The motion that he has put forward is in order; that has been ruled in order. At no point in time have I suggested that we should not be reviewing the matters that are tabled in the House. I just want for the record and for the other members to be aware that under the Auditor General Act, section 26, a report of the Auditor General can be brought forward, and it is in order.

What I have been suggesting to the hon. member is basically this. This committee is going to vote on this motion. If it is accepted, it will certainly go at the bottom of the list given that we have approved an agenda for the next few weeks or few months. However, if there's an urgency to the matter he is bringing forward, I encourage him to bring forward a Standing Order 40. That is all within his right as a member.

I just wanted that clarification to be made, that he is within his right to bring forward such a motion. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: I must inform the committee of the hour and that I asked that the Minister of Family and Social Services and the minister without portfolio return to their offices to do their good work. It is a little embarrassing that we were not able to get to them today, but the committee had to do what the committee had to do, so we'll have to reschedule. The vice-chairman and I will speak to the members privately to see what should be done with this particular ministry.

In that all members are done and we now do have some time, I would like to ask if the vice-chairman could assume the chair so that this member can have a go at this particular item as a member of the committee. I'd appreciate that. I'm passing the chair here.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Is Mr. Sapers next?

MR. WHITE: He wants to close.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Do you want to speak, or do you want to close debate?

MR. SAPERS: I'll let other colleagues speak.

MS OLSEN: I just want to clarify something. I am in no way embarrassed at all that we didn't get to the issue of the public accounts for social services. I feel this is an important issue, and in no way is this something we shouldn't have done. For the record, I don't feel that this committee should feel embarrassed. You know, we can extend our apologies for not getting to the social services minister, but I feel this was a very important issue we had to debate.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. White.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As a Member of this Legislative Assembly one looks upon one's job and takes it rather seriously, and I think Dr. Pannu said it rather well in that a member in the opposition is charged with the responsibility of reviewing all that comes before this House. That is the Westminster model of parliament that we have inherited, and in fact that is our job. So to chastise one and view the job as a personal crusade is in error, and I take a little exception to the view that there's some kind of crusade by Mr. Sapers or anyone else to get at the truth when in fact it is our job.

Secondly, I won't review the matter on whether it's in order or not, but I can review for you some of the experiences of other Public Accounts Committees in the Westminster system. They range from

a low of agenda -- if you can say a low -- or the minimal agenda that this committee operates under, the system we operate under here and the rules, that we only review that which is put before us in the Auditor General's report and only review in session. That's the minimum that is done in other jurisdictions. We recognize that the high would be, I suspect, Western Australia and other parts of Australia, that have an all-party committee that is actually an in-depth investigative committee. The Auditor General there is one of the players but not the sole player. There's actually a staff that goes along with the Public Accounts Committee, and the Public Accounts Committee does in fact review accounts. It does not review ministers proper. It does not review a minister's current work. It reviews the administration of a minister's political arm previous. So it's definitely within the system.

To move to the substance of this particular matter, the fundamental question asked of the review of the Auditor General under section 18, I believe, of the act was: was there political involvement? I take from Dr. Pannu's arguments that his opinion is the same as my personal opinion: that this is a question that is beyond a reasonable expectation of an officer of the Legislature to answer. Political involvement is well beyond the realm you would expect an employee to make comment on, and that alone certainly would raise the question with the Auditor General: whether this is in this jurisdiction and whether this is a question I should be answering. He obviously answered it in the way that he felt just.

Now, leaving that aside for a moment, the central issue here centred on a meeting of a number of persons that are itemized in the report less than 200 metres from where we sit on this floor. It centred on a meeting in a Premier's office with a senior bureaucrat. Recognize that I've personally been around bureaucrats for quite a while, not just bureaucrats in the public sector but in the private sector also. It seems one character trait is to make as few decisions as possible that can be attributed to you because perhaps those would be in error, and there's more downside in an error than there is upside in making a proper decision. So one of the things a successful bureaucrat does is either push the decision upstairs or away downstairs.

9:52

Now, what the government wishes the population to believe is that in that meeting a senior bureaucrat that survived 35 years in a bureaucracy, acting in a temporary role, would come to the Premier's office, recognizing that this was still at that time a department directly reporting through the hierarchy of government, through the minister to the Premier -- he comes to that meeting, and his recollection by accounts public is that he was told. Others say he wasn't told. But we are led to believe that he needed to be told exactly what the Premier wanted and what was expected of him. Then he went out, left that meeting without instructions, and made the biggest decision of his entire life, the biggest decision by far in the history of the Alberta Treasury Branches, and he made that decision without further consultation and without the knowledge of his immediate superior for a matter of three years. Now, I find that a little difficult to believe, and I for one would like to pursue this matter and ask those questions the Auditor General could not.

Therefore, if I were to sit in this seat while the vote was taken, this member would wish to support the motion. I thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Hlady, and if there's no other speaker, then to close, Mr. Sapers.

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I found it quite interesting as I heard the Member for Edmonton-Norwood speaking here at the end, and the Member for Edmonton-Glenora suggesting that as government members we would certainly have a certain position and

that we wouldn't want to see any further debate and see the openness. I guess it comes back to, as I had mentioned earlier, a respect for the organizations and at what level you can go to deal with things. I think you want to go into the depth that's needed to find out what has happened.

The opposition at the same time suggests that we would be politically motivated, and I guess I see it a little bit as the pot calling the kettle black. It's quite funny that they would come after us for being politically motivated, saying that the whole purpose and the whole reason for the hour and a half we have now spent discussing and debating a motion is because they feel it's absolutely necessary to keep chasing something that has been dealt with and is continuing to be dealt with at a criminal level in other places. Further discussion we want to go into and the depth they want to go into could interfere with those particular investigations as they go on.

So I think it's important to realize that there is political motivation on both sides, Mr. Chairman, and that's the whole purpose of this. I get a little disappointed when I hear one side coming after that and not admitting to it on their own behalf.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Hlady.

While I have the chair, I hope I can remind members that we are sitting in our personal capacities on this committee and we will carry out our responsibilities as individual members. With that I'll call upon Mr. Sapers to close debate.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Calgary-Mountain View, I suppose, at the heart of it is absolutely right. This is all about politics, and that's what the question is. It's about political interference with the Alberta Treasury Branches, political interference with West Edmonton Mall, political interference when we were told there wasn't any, and in fact even an admission of political interference by the Premier. The question is now whether it was appropriate or inappropriate. So to that extent I'll agree with Calgary-Mountain View.

I'm curious about the arguments about how many phone calls we've received and how many little cards and letters we've been sent, and the assertions that none have been received and claims by others that several have been received. Calgary-East mentioned an informal poll he took while he was listening to a radio talk show, and I think he said it was 14 to 1.

MR. AMERY: Yes, 14 out of 15.

MR. SAPERS: You know, the *Edmonton Examiner* ran a poll right after the release of the Auditor General's report, and I think it was about 3 to 1. There were certainly more than 15 respondents. There were hundreds of respondents. It was more than 3 to 1. Somewhere between 75 and 80 percent of respondents in that poll said they didn't think the Auditor General's report was the last word. They didn't believe it was the ultimate conclusion. So there's all kinds of informal evidence out there that at least people are talking about this issue. Maybe they're not calling their local Calgary Conservative MLA, but they're phoning in to the local radio show to talk about it. I'm comforted to hear that they're talking to somebody about it.

In any case, you know, it's a bit of a spurious argument. I have not received a single phone call, and I would challenge any member of this Assembly to put on record that they have received a single phone call requesting that the Legislative Assembly immediately pass legislation to create black stock on tobacco products. Yet we are dealing with a bill before the House right now that creates a category of black stock. I would bet there hasn't been a single phone call received saying we should immediately convene the

Committee on Public Accounts and review last year's public accounts. I don't think anybody's received such a phone call. Yet here we are as a standing committee. It's by standing order that we exist.

So this is the definition of a spurious argument. I mean, first of all, the claims that because we haven't received phone calls -- those claims can't be validated. Second of all, they don't make any difference. It does not make any difference to the outcome, because the essential question here isn't whether or not we are flooded in our offices with cards and letters and phone calls. The essential question is: do we think we have all the information? And in fact we've been elected to some extent to take leadership, not just to follow.

So what we really should be pursuing is whether or not we as the members of this committee are satisfied. It's like the burden of proof in a criminal case, you know. In a criminal case it's beyond a reasonable doubt. In a civil proceeding it's on the balance of probabilities. So either way you want to measure it out, are we satisfied, either on the balance of things or beyond a reasonable doubt, that every question has been answered, that every bit of information has been brought forward? I would argue that it would fail on both those tests, and that would suggest that we have more work to do as a committee.

I'm not satisfied with the argument that goes that things only become a problem if you get caught. That is a tone I hear or a thread I see throughout many arguments from the Conservative members: that we should leave well enough alone; because nobody's been caught yet, we can't say it's a problem.

So I would conclude, Mr. Chairman, by saying to my colleagues on the committee that whether or not we refer this matter for the review the motion calls for, we all know that this is not the end of the story. This is not the end of the issue, whether it be the proceedings of a criminal investigation or civil court actions or other. And I would just feel so much better as an elected member in being able to say, "We stood up; we took the initiative and did the right thing," rather than having to say, "Well, you know, we had an opportunity and failed." So I would ask my colleagues to support this motion.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Sapers.

The committee has before us a motion moved by Mr. Sapers. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All those opposed, please say nay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The motion is defeated.

The next meeting will be held next Wednesday, March 17, at 8:30 in the morning. The minister before us will be the Hon. Ty Lund, Minister of Environmental Protection.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Move to adjourn.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We have a motion to adjourn. All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed? The meeting is adjourned until next Wednesday, 8:30 in the morning.

Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 10:02 a.m.]