



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Resource Stewardship

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

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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Kennedy-Glans, Donna, Calgary-Varsity (PC), Chair
Anglin, Joe, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W), Deputy Chair

Allen, Mike, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (PC)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
Bikman, Gary, Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND)
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL)
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)
Casey, Ron, Banff-Cochrane (PC)
Fenske, Jacquie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC)
Hale, Jason W., Strathmore-Brooks (W)
Johnson, Linda, Calgary-Glenmore (PC)
Khan, Stephen, St. Albert (PC)
Kubinec, Maureen, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (PC)
Lemke, Ken, Stony Plain (PC)
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)

Also in Attendance

Anderson, Rob, Airdrie (W)
Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC)
Quest, Dave, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (PC)
Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)

Support Staff

W.J. David McNeil	Clerk
Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Law Clerk/Director of Interparliamentary Relations
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Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Karen Sawchuk	Committee Clerk
Christopher Tyrell	Committee Clerk
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Liz Sim	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

6:22 p.m.

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[Ms Kennedy-Glans in the chair]

The Chair: We're going to call the meeting to order in the interest of time. I know some of you have to be back for 7:15, and we do have quorum. Thank you to everyone who has come and welcome. We've got a change in the committee. We have 18 members instead of 25. My co-chair and I are delighted that you're here.

The first matter is approving the agenda. Would somebody move the adoption of the agenda? Mr. Sandhu. All in favour of the motion that the agenda for the March 11, 2013, meeting of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship be adopted as circulated? Any objections? Carried.

The next motion is approval of the minutes from our last meeting, which was held on February 27, and the meeting minutes were posted by Mr. Tyrell. Would someone like to move that those minutes be approved? Ms Kubinec moves that the minutes of the February 27, 2013, meeting of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship be adopted as circulated. All in favour? Any objections? The motion is carried.

Now I think I will go around the room, making sure that we record everyone who is here, and I will start with my co-chair.

Mr. Anglin: Joe Anglin, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Ms Kubinec: Maureen Kubinec, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Ms Fenske: Jacquie Fenske, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms L. Johnson: Linda Johnson, Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Khan: Stephen Khan, St. Albert.

Ms Calahasen: Pearl Calahasen, Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Hale: Jason Hale, Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Webber: Len Webber, Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Barnes: Drew Barnes, Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Anderson: Rob Anderson, Airdrie.

Mr. Stier: Pat Stier, Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Bikman: Gary Bikman, Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Lemke: Ken Lemke, Stony Plain.

Mr. Sandhu: Peter Sandhu, Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Quest: Dave Quest, Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Just visiting.

Mr. Tyrell: I'm Chris Tyrell, committee clerk.

The Chair: Mr. Allen, do you want to just tell us you're here?

Mr. Allen: Mike Allen, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, everyone.

As most of you are aware, we have changes to the standing orders, and Standing Order 59.01(3) states that "no later than 3 sitting days following the Budget Address, the Legislative Policy Committees shall meet to determine a proposed schedule for consideration of the ministries' estimates that stand referred to them." So today's meeting is to review the various ministries that

this committee is responsible for reviewing, to determine and agree upon the number of hours we're comfortable with that review entailing. I just want to remind you first that our ministries now include Aboriginal Relations. So our bundle of ministries includes Environment and SRD, Transportation, Municipal Affairs, Treasury Board and Finance, Energy, and Aboriginal Relations.

For some of you who have been participating in the discussions with the House leaders – and, Mr. Anderson, you certainly have been – there has been, I believe, an agreement on the number of hours for the individual ministries that has been agreed to by the House leaders.

Is that correct, Mr. Anderson?

Mr. Anderson: No, that is not, actually. We were given a set amount of hours that the Government House Leader wanted to sit for this. We were told that the business needs to be done within 10 days, and I believe April 22 was the date given that he wants all of this done by. So we were working within the amount of hours that he gave us. Then he also said that we could do up to six hours on one ministry within that 70-hour-or-so period.

Those are the constraints we worked in. The opposition vigorously opposed that. So I want there to be no miscommunication. This was not something that was agreed to by the opposition in any way, shape, or form.

The Chair: Hello, Ms Blakeman. Welcome.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, and welcome, all of you, to my fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre.

The Chair: Our understanding from the House leaders' discussion of the number of hours that have been allocated to the various ministries that this committee is responsible for is as follows: Aboriginal Relations, two hours, which is the minimum; Municipal Affairs, five hours; Transportation, three hours; Treasury Board and Finance, six hours; Energy, six hours; Environment and SRD, six hours.

On that basis, a master schedule was prepared in consultation with the House leaders – and I respect your comments, Mr. Anderson – and that document is in front of you. The collective agreement has the red on top, and the schedule that relates to our ministries is this one, that's in chart form, that you have in front of you. It assumes, again, that the number of hours per ministry is as follows: Environment and SRD, six hours; Transportation, three hours; Municipal Affairs, five hours; Treasury Board and Finance, six hours; Energy, six hours; Aboriginal Relations, two hours.

This committee in the next half-hour has to first agree on the number of hours, if what's proposed is the right number of hours. Again, we have a minimum of two, a maximum of six.

The second thing we have to agree on is if we are comfortable with the schedule, the time that's been allotted in this master schedule for our committee to review these ministries.

The third motion that I'm going to put on the table as chair in this meeting is asking that if you participate in a meeting during budget estimates, you not be able to do so via teleconference. There are no votes during committee meetings in budget review. It is very difficult to actually have people on the phone. Last meeting we had eight people on the phone, and it was very difficult to hear and very difficult for people to participate. So what I will be asking for your consideration is that during the budget estimates that we only allow participation in person.

Those are three things for today's agenda. One, are we comfortable with the number of hours per ministry; two, are we comfortable with the schedule; and three, are we okay participating directly rather than via teleconferencing?

Let's start the conversation about the number of hours per ministry. Does anybody have any comments about that proposal?

Mr. Anderson: Well, you know, I don't want to get things off to a rough start here; nonetheless, personally I think that it's a complete embarrassment that we would even think about trying to stuff a \$40 billion budget into 10 days of work. I think that most people would look at that and say frankly: no wonder we have such a financial issue on our hands. How can you honestly go through these different ministries here, whether it be Environment and SRD, Energy, Treasury Board and Finance, Municipal Affairs, Transportation, Aboriginal Relations? All of these are huge, huge ministries, important ministries. We're doing Treasury Board, Environment and SRD, and Energy in six hours, so we're going over literally billions upon billions of dollars in six hours; Municipal Affairs in five hours. Transportation: we all know the money that's spent on Transportation; we're doing that in three hours. Three hours to examine a multibillion-dollar budget. Then Aboriginal Relations we give a whole two hours to.

6:30

Frankly, I think it's offensive to First Nations that we're spending only two hours in that ministry. I think it's offensive to our municipalities that we're only spending five hours examining the books and examining their needs. I think it's offensive to the energy industry that we're only spending six hours. I think it's offensive to the work that – we claim as a jurisdiction to care about the environment, doing something about that, yet we're going to spend a whole six hours in here debating billions and billions of dollars in allocation for that.

Madam Chair, I don't understand why, without the consent of the other opposition parties and, frankly, without the consent of many members, this has been unilaterally put on our desks today as a fait accompli – that's what it feels like – when it's very clear to me that we're not given enough time to go over these budgets properly.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

I also want to note that Mr. Bilous is here.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, and thank you to Mr. Anglin for saving my card.

The Chair: I want to comment a little bit. We've got half an hour. I think the discussion is important, and I will never suggest otherwise. We can always continue this conversation. However, the people at this table all know that we're not the people who decided the standing orders. We have 71 hours to do all the budget estimates. I believe that many of the ministries that this committee is responsible for have six hours of review. That's the maximum allotted, and compared to other years, this is actually quite positive.

I appreciate your points, Mr. Anderson. I just don't want to get into reviewing work that's already been done. I think I have a responsibility to make sure our decisions are made. I'm hearing you. It's on the record. I respect the point, but I think we need to progress the discussion.

We have some play if you would rather, you know, do one ministry one hour less and one more, but there was some thought given to this, and House leaders did participate in these conversations.

Mr. Anderson: All we did was participate, Madam Chair. We did not agree to any of this, just to be clear.

The Chair: You've been clear. That's okay.
Any other comments?

Ms Blakeman: I don't know where to start. Everything that Mr. Anderson has said is indeed correct. I talked about a guillotine. We've got a guillotine date on getting this done. Although the government likes to talk about how it's two months, March and April, it is, in fact, four weeks and actually less than that.

With respect, Madam Chair, the people here did participate in the way the standing orders are because you all voted in favour of the standing order changes that were brought before us last week.

Going forward, which is what you want to do here, I think this is manageable if two things happen: if we're provided with enough information in the budget documents to actually be able to understand what's going on without having to FOIP documents and skulk around in the hallways trying to figure out what the money stands for, which leads to point 2, that if we get clear, accurate, concise answers from the ministers, this would work. We haven't had that in the past. We've spent an awful lot of time just saying: well, what's under this vote?

In the time that I've been watching this, we've gone from more information, not excessive information but more information in the budget estimates than we get now, to now. Now there are four votes on the page, and you have no idea what programs are under that or how much the breakdown is or how many FTEs are assigned to each program. Nothing. It's just all rolled up into a very brief number of comments. This is not optimum. It's not what any of the opposition leaders would want, but this is what the government has put before us, and I can only spend so much breath saying it's wrong.

I hope that we will get clear, concise answers from the ministers and that there's enough information in the budget documents that we don't have to spend a lot of time trying to pull out what it actually represents. Beyond that, on we go.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bilous.

Mr. Bilous: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I apologize to everyone for coming in late. I was, interestingly, in the other committee room, so here's one point about having concurrent meetings simultaneously.

On behalf of the New Democrat caucus, you know, I would echo much of what Mr. Anderson said as far as the allotment of time not being negotiated. That was handed to us. The amount of time might be negotiable within a time frame. In other words, one can go up to three hours and another one down to two hours, but we're still playing within the same parameters of the game, which is a game that was set in the Assembly via standing orders, about which, I think many of the opposition MLAs would agree, they didn't have a say per se.

I just wanted to highlight that, especially for a smaller caucus, the challenge of, first of all, going through the budgets, you know, the amount of information that is in there, and then having up to two concurrent budget estimates per day puts a real strain on the smaller caucuses. Again, if the spirit is to have each of the caucuses represented in order to have different points of view so that we come up with the best way and the most efficient use of Albertans' money, then it seems like we are penalizing the smaller caucuses or taking value away from our point by saying: you've got less time or fewer resources to be able to look through the budget estimates.

The other thing is that while I'm not sure how it was decided who gets what time for which, I agree with Mr. Anderson that I'm

sure I'm going to hear from the aboriginal community about how they are offended by the fact that they get two hours and meanwhile other portfolios gain much more time.

I'm not sure if I can really propose anything other than that if we're debating \$40 billion in 71 hours, that seems a little ludicrous to me.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Anglin.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Madam Chair. I fell over my table when I saw the schedule. Not to repeat anything that's been said, I want to make just one note. The hours this government spent putting together this budget, particularly if you include the Treasury Board employees working for the ministry, I suggest would be substantial, would be significant. Now, I'm not saying that the committee should have an equal number of hours. That's not what I'm saying. But it's not unreasonable to request an adequate number and schedule it such that there are not conflicting committees. I just want to go on the record with that.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks.

I'm going to offer this comment, just in the interest of time.

Mr. Tyrell: We have new members.

The Chair: Yes, we have two new members at the table. I'll ask them to introduce themselves in a second here.

I just want to say that we cannot make certain decisions at this table, and in the interest of time – I appreciate your comments; I think they're very relevant – we're going to have to get to the motions.

I'm going to take one more comment, from Mr. Bikman. If there's a comment from the PC caucus, I will take it. Otherwise, we'll move to the motions.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you. Being new to this game, as I heard it referred to, I'm not clear what the purpose of this exercise is, not of us being here but, I mean, the whole budget estimate thing. What does the government hope to accomplish? Like, why are we doing it? Just briefly, help me understand that.

The Chair: It's an opportunity for us to scrutinize line by line the budgets that have been presented by individual ministries.

Two participants just joined us.

6:40

Mr. Hancock: Sorry. I just came to observe and be of any help if anybody had any questions for me. Other than that, I'll leave you to your deliberations.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hancock.

Mrs. Towle: I'm here to observe as well.

Ms Calahasen: You know, when I look at this calendar – and I haven't been privy to it prior. However, when I look at this and I look at the departments that are getting six hours – I'm sure that the Government House Leader would correct me – I don't recall these seven departments ever having six hours or even five hours for estimates in the time that I've been here.

There has been some movement to have other departments get more time in the past. The departments that are now getting six hours: if I had my druthers, I'd move some of the departments that are getting two hours to the six hours rather than the way it is right now; however, I think six hours is a lot of time for the various

departments. I don't ever recall having that much time to deal with one department other than a few that have been identified by the opposition. I remember the Liberals as well as the NDP having some specifics, if you recall, Laurie, in terms of when you had a specific area that you wanted to explore even further. So I think six hours and five hours is a lot of time for some of these departments. Two hours? You probably can get through them because some of them are pretty small departments. I have no qualms whatsoever about this other than maybe changing some of them.

The Chair: Unless there are other comments, I would actually suggest that a motion be made.

Mr. Anderson: Could I put a motion forward?

The Chair: No.

Are there any other comments?

Mr. Bikman: Well, I didn't feel like I got an answer. I mean, I understand the line-by-line thing. To what end? That's what I was getting at. I understand.

The Chair: It's ultimately tabled for a vote at the end of this process.

Ms L. Johnson: The question I've been asking myself is: if the budget for any department is a hundred million dollars, do we have a vote that instead of spending \$10 million on this line, it now goes five and five to that line? Is that what you're getting at?

Mr. Bikman: Yeah. When you review something, the theory would be that your opinion could make a difference. I know it doesn't, so I know it's an exercise in optics. Nevertheless, if we're going through it, theoretically, we ought to be doing it to be of use, to critique it. We can applaud it. I don't mean to criticize but to critique it. You want to find information and, hopefully, improve it. Some of us have experience in business and a business background. We're used to looking at budgets, and we're also used to sniffing out waste.

The Chair: Exactly, Mr. Bikman. And you will be able to ask those questions. If there is a better way for that money to be spent, you can certainly make that recommendation. You're able to do that. Ultimately, there is a vote on the estimates.

I'm going to ask for someone to make the following motion, that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship adopt the proposed time allotments for the 2013-2014 main estimates as six hours each for the ministries of Treasury Board and Finance, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, and Energy, five hours for Municipal Affairs, and three hours for Transportation and two hours for Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Lemke: I'll make that motion.

Mr. Anderson: I'd like to propose an amendment to that.

The Chair: Just a second, Mr. Anderson. If you could hold for a minute.

Mr. Anderson: I'm well aware I'm not a member of the committee. Obviously, Mr. Anglin would be able to do it.

The Chair: You're not a substitute on this committee.

Mr. Anderson: I can still speak to the motion, though.

The Chair: Yes, but you can't make a motion.

Mr. Anderson: I can suggest one that somebody else can make. That's just allowed.

Ms Blakeman: I'm sorry; where is it written that any MLA can't move a motion?

The Chair: You can participate, but I don't think you can move a motion. I'll ask Ms Dean for that clarification.

Ms Dean: That's correct, Madam Chair. A member who is not either substituted in or a member of this committee cannot move a motion. They can participate in the meeting, but they don't have an ability to move motions.

Mr. Anderson: Right. But I can suggest a motion that somebody else can propose if they like it, correct?

The Chair: I would rather you not do that, Mr. Anderson.

Mr. Anderson: Well, I know you'd rather me not do it, but then we could talk about a possible point of privilege for you denying that request.

The Chair: Other members of your caucus are able to make motions. I am sure of that.

Mr. Anderson: Yeah. Very good. I'd like to participate in discussion on this event. Why do we have these meetings if we're not going to have a discussion?

The Chair: We're having a discussion on the motion that's before the table.

Does anyone have comments on the motion that's before the table?

Mr. Anderson: That's my point. I'm making comments about an amendment to that motion.

The Chair: But you're not in a position make a motion yourself.

Mr. Anderson: I absolutely am in a position to talk about the motion that you just made and suggest amendments.

The Chair: Okay. Then please do talk about the motion without making another motion or a commotion.

Mr. Anderson: Absolutely. I won't make another motion or commotion. Maybe we can actually have a democratic meeting here. That would be good.

The reason that I would not support this motion and would hope that somebody would bring a motion forward to alter it is the reason stated, that the time allocated is not enough to do our work. I would note that although Ms Calahasen is correct that we have increased the time compared with recent years for a couple of these ministries to six hours, the Government House Leader has specifically denied our request to allow us to have a full hour not just in the first three-hour block but in the second three-hour block. He's done whatever he can to make sure that we have as little time as possible within that six hours to question the government, so it's very difficult, again, Madam Chair, as an opposition party to get the job done that we've been asked to do.

The Chair: Mr. Anderson, I'm going to interrupt because you are repeating yourself. I understand your point exactly, and I'm sure you've made it before.

Mr. Anderson: This is very democratic of you, Madam Chair. Very good.

The Chair: Thank you.

I am going to ask for a vote on that motion unless there are other comments.

Mr. Anglin: Do we have an amendment?

The Chair: You don't have an amendment.

Moved by Mr. Lemke that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship adopt the proposed time allotments . . .

Mr. Anglin: Are you making the amendment?

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Anglin. There was no amendment made.

Mr. Anglin: He's calling for it. That's why I'm putting it out.

The Chair: Okay. I'm responding to Ms Blakeman, and I will continue to do that, okay? Thank you.

Moved by Mr. Lemke that

the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship adopt the proposed time allotments for the 2013-2014 main estimates as six hours each for the ministries of Treasury Board and Finance, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, and Energy, five hours for Municipal Affairs and three hours for Transportation and two hours for Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Stier: Madam Chair, I'd like to make an amendment to that motion. I would like to see that the committee review these hours and look at an alternative to what the motion now reads.

The Chair: Okay. We're going to move the amendment. We're going to have a vote on the amendment.

Mr. Anglin: Can you ask if somebody wants to speak to the amendment?

The Chair: Okay. We're going to have a few minutes of discussions, folks. That's it. If it's been already said, I don't want to hear it again.

Ms Blakeman: Can you just give us the time limit, please, Madam Chair? Then we'll try and work inside it.

The Chair: It is now 12 minutes to 7, and I presume many of you will want to be out of here shortly after 7, so I would suggest that we have five minutes maximum to talk about this amendment.

Mr. Hale.

Mr. Hale: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to support this amendment. As the Energy critic, I feel that I would like more than one solid hour in the first session. I would actually like to see more than six hours. You know, it's a billion-dollar ministry, billions and billions of dollars. For me to try to get it done in one solid hour and then go back and forth . . .

The Chair: Mr. Hale, you have at maximum six hours for any ministry. You have six hours for Energy. It's split into two three-hour sessions.

Mr. Hale: Yes. But I do have to share that with the other two opposition parties and the government MLAs for questioning.

The Chair: Did you want six hours all on your own?

Mr. Hale: I could do it, yeah. I would like to see more than six hours so that the other opposition parties have more than a couple

of 20-minute blocks to ask their questions. That's what I think. You know, then you go down to another department where there are two hours. Two hours is no time.

The Chair: Mr. Hale, I think given the standing orders we would not be able to accommodate your request.

Mr. Bilous, you had a comment?

6:50

Mr. Bilous: Okay. The first is just a rhetorical question on these times. I'm not sure who set that six hours is the maximum. I imagine the response is: the House leaders. I really doubt it was decided by the opposition House leaders that that's the maximum time.

The Chair: I can answer that question for you in the interests of our time here. That was set in the standing orders, which we correctly all voted on. We've already been over that. We're now repeating ourselves.

Mr. Bilous: Great. My second point. It still needs to be pointed out that for a process that's supposed to be democratic, it's kind of ironic that it's not, but I would like to encourage the committee to consider increasing the amount of time on the Aboriginal Relations portfolio for a variety of reasons. I mean, first of all, "aboriginal" itself is defined by the three different groups, and if we look at the percentage of the population in this province who are either identified or nonidentified aboriginal people . . .

Ms Calahasen: It's 9 per cent.

Mr. Bilous: Nine per cent.

I think two hours is a slap in the face. I think that if we looked at all the ministries and the fact that it comes in last place, well, that's . . .

The Chair: I think it's related to the budget amount, Mr. Bilous. If you wish to take time and add it to Aboriginal Relations, it has to come off some other ministry. If that's people's wish, we can talk about that. We know it doesn't want to come off Energy.

Okay. All right. If not, we're going to vote on the amendment. Can you say the amendment again?

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could, perhaps, the secretary read it to us? Did you have it entered?

Mr. Tyrell: I don't have it. It's in *Hansard*.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Well, then, all I can say is that my motion was to

review the times that were allotted already and discuss them for possible amendments to those times.

The Chair: Okay. And that would be in future meetings.

Mr. Stier: That would be for this meeting here. I want to review the times now.

The Chair: We are in the process of doing that. So is that a motion?

Mr. Stier: It was a motion.

The Chair: Okay. An amendment to the motion.

Mr. Allen: I'd just speak to that. If we have a department that has six hours assigned to it and we feel we can get through with it in

four hours, we can assign two of those hours to another department. We can make that flexibility as we go.

The Chair: I don't think that's true, Mr. Allen. I would ask the clerk, and I'm getting a nod that says no. No. We have to make arrangements with the various ministries to be available, and that's been factored into this schedule.

Mr. Allen: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. On that basis, all in favour of the amendment? All opposed? It's not carried.

Let's go back to the original motion by Mr. Lemke.

Mr. Barnes: Could I propose another amendment, please?

The Chair: Yes, you may.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. I would like to make an amendment that these committees do not meet on Wednesdays, they do not meet in the morning, and they do not meet concurrently, two committee meetings at the same time.

The Chair: Okay. That is an amendment that relates to the schedule, and we're not talking about the schedule. We're going to finish the motion that was presented by Mr. Lemke on the number of hours that we're looking at, and then we'll get into the point of scheduling.

Right now we're going to vote for or against Mr. Lemke's motion. All in favour? Okay. All opposed? It's carried.

Mr. Anglin: Just on a point of order, you declared that motion out of order. Is that correct?

The Chair: The motion that was presented did not relate to the subject matter. That was the second subject matter that we're looking at, which we are looking at now.

Mr. Anglin: Okay.

The Chair: The second question. Assuming we've got the number of hours per ministry agreed, the next question is to look at the schedule. There is a schedule in front of you that's been set by the House leader in consultation with the opposition party House leaders, and we've covered that ground. The factors considered in making that schedule include attempts to make sure the mornings are clear except for Wednesday mornings, attempts to not have doubling up of committee meetings unless absolutely essential and the House leaders have paid attention to the critics and their ability to be present. We will respect that as much as possible.

The third piece is making sure that the ministers are available, and we have Thursdays that are free, so it is Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday that we'll be meeting.

If someone would like to make a motion that the proposed 2013-14 main estimates meeting schedule for the ministries of Treasury Board and Finance, Environment and SRD, Energy, Municipal Affairs, Transportation, and Aboriginal Relations, as distributed, be approved.

Mr. Allen: So moved.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Allen. Thank you.
Any discussion?

Mr. Barnes: Excuse me, if I could make my amendment now, then, please. I would make the amendment that the committee

meetings not be in the morning and the committee meetings not be concurrent with other committee meetings.

In the morning we're not going to have adequate time to prepare. Obviously, with some of the smaller caucuses and all caucuses some of us are on more than one committee. I myself am critic for two positions, so it's going to be hard to be in two places at once, and I don't think that's fair.

The Chair: An alternate motion has been put forward. If there is discussion, I have some comments based on my understanding of why we set Wednesday morning and why we were provided with one overlapping evening, which is Monday evening.

Anybody have any comments or questions?

Mr. Anglin: Even in the 10-day period Thursdays are wide open, and we could easily move a few schedules into Thursday to meet this motion and prevent overlapping and undue scheduling problems.

Mr. Anderson: Obviously, if I had a vote, I would support it. I think that it's important to realize that the concurrent meetings are just – you cannot get ready for two meetings at the same time. A lot of caucuses, especially the smaller ones, don't have the research capabilities, resources, et cetera, to do that. I think that needs to be recognized, and it's just not necessary to shove it into one.

The reason why mornings shouldn't be in there is because, again, that is a time when I think all parties and, certainly, we in the opposition spend an incredible amount of time, starting from early in the morning right up till a rush at 1:30, getting ready for the day, the question period, what happens after question period, legislation, committee work. All of that happens, that planning that you need to do as an opposition, because you're reacting to what the government has brought forward, and we have a very short time to do that. It gives us the opportunity to prepare for that. I think that as a courtesy we should try to refrain from having these meetings in the morning and have them be concurrent. I think that's a very reasonable request.

The Chair: Any other comments?

Ms Blakeman: One of the things that the opposition – I'll speak for my own and maybe the NDs – had suggested was that rather than the Wednesday morning, which is difficult for us, we would extend the Thursday afternoons. We were willing to make sure that our caucuses obeyed that and participated in it in that way.

I know that the Government House Leader felt free to schedule things in the morning between 8 and 10 because currently we already have people that participate in the Public Accounts Committee. True enough, but that is not the same number of people. Here we have different people expected to show up at that morning time, and it is difficult for us. We made overtures as to different ways to schedule this, and I'm not sure why the Government House Leader didn't take us up on it.

It's entirely up to the government as to what our schedule is, so the April 27 deadline is completely arbitrary, and it's a guillotine date. That's what the government wanted. You've got a majority, so you're going to get it, but it doesn't make it right.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any other comments?

Okay. Would we like to vote on Mr. Barnes' amended motion?

Can you read it again?

7:00

Mr. Barnes: That

the committee meetings not meet in the morning and the committee meetings not be concurrent with other committee meetings.

The Chair: Okay. The only other comment I would make on that is that that has been discussed among House leaders, and there are practical reasons why that wasn't the case.

Mr. Barnes: It seems like there was far from unanimous agreement, though.

The Chair: Okay. All in favour of the amended motion put forward by Mr. Barnes? All opposed? It's not carried.

Go back to Mr. Allen's motion. The other alternative is for this committee to delegate to myself in consultation with the vice-chair to work through the schedule. We've got five minutes here.

Do you want to repeat the motion, Mr. Allen?

Mr. Allen: I don't have it. You had read it out.

The Chair: Okay. I'll read it again. Moved by Mike Allen that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship adopt the proposed 2013-14 main estimates meeting schedule for the ministries of Treasury Board and Finance, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Energy, Municipal Affairs, Transportation, and Aboriginal Relations as distributed.

All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Okay. The last point today under other business is participation by teleconference call. We passed a motion in July last year that members could participate by teleconferencing subject to the proviso that you may require a member's attendance at a particular meeting upon passage of a motion at a previous meeting to that effect. As discussed at the beginning of this meeting, I would prefer that we have a motion requiring that a member's or a substitute's physical attendance for the duration of the estimates meeting schedule be required. If someone would like to make the following motion, I'll open the floor to discussion. Moved that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship require that committee members, substitute members, or noncommittee members wishing to participate be in attendance for the duration of the committee's 2013-14 main estimates meeting schedule.

Discussion? Ms Blakeman.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. Sorry. It's really hard for some of us to be in place for the duration of the meeting, for the complete three hours. Some of us may have to skip over to another committee, so asking us all to be here for the whole three hours is difficult to comply with. You're asking something that we're going to end up breaking whether we want to or not. I'm wondering if there's a friendly amendment or if you would like me to make an amendment. But I think that if they're going to participate actively, ask questions, then they should be here.

Frankly, I don't care if they phone in. I know lots of you have meetings elsewhere. If you want to phone in, I don't care. But to make us be present for the complete three hours, I just can't manage the – what's the word I'm looking for?

The Chair: Actually, just to be clear – I'm sorry, Ms Blakeman – the wording may not be exactly right, but the intent is that this motion be in place for the duration of the committee's 2013-14 main estimates meeting schedule. You don't have to be in every meeting for all the time allotted.

Ms Blakeman: Great. Terrific. Thank you for the clarification.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Calahasen: Just a clarification. Does that mean, then, that she has the ability to go from here to the next room if she has to?

The Chair: Yes, it does. Absolutely.

Ms Calahasen: Okay. Good.

The Chair: That's important.

Any other comments, questions?

If not, would somebody like to move this? Yes. Thank you. All in favour? Opposed? So carried.

All right. We'll be advised of the date of the main estimates meeting schedule once it's tabled in the House. The House leaders have final say on this.

If there's nothing else for your consideration, I'll ask for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Sandhu, thank you. All in favour? Objections? Carried.

Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 7:05 p.m.]

