

[Chairman: Mr. Oldring]

[2 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon, everyone. We'll call the meeting to order, please.

I want to begin by welcoming the Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Peter Elzinga. It has been customary, Mr. Minister, to extend an opportunity to you, sir, to open with some brief comments. Following that, the procedure is a question and answer process. We extend an opportunity to each of the members to ask one question initially, followed by two supplementaries. On that note, again we're pleased that you could be with us this afternoon. Perhaps you might want to introduce the members from your department that are with you and then open with some brief comments.

MR. ELZINGA: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Can I begin by indicating the delight that I feel to have this opportunity to respond to concerns or questions or inquiries that your committee might have, and also to take guidance from you as it relates to the introduction of the individuals we have with us.

I'm delighted that again we have people who've been with us before, so that in the event that I don't have the specifics, they can respond to the specific questions that are raised. I'll begin with our deputy minister, Mr. Ben McEwan, who is on my immediate right. To his right is Mr. Gary Hartman, the manager of the Irrigation Secretariat in Lethbridge. To my immediate left is Yilma Teklemariam, who is the research manager of our research division, and he reports directly to our deputy minister, Mr. Ben McEwan.

As I'm sure you folks are aware, since Shirley Cripps has been here answering questions as it relates to her responsibilities in the funding that comes from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, I will not get into any of those details. The two areas that fall directly under us are Farming for the Future and the irrigation rehabilitation and expansion program. Mr. Chairman, with your consent I'm going to deal briefly with these two components of the funding that we receive. We've also a handout I'd like to distribute to members that relates to the current status and some selected highlights of our Farming for the Future program.

Mr. Chairman and members, we feel that our Farming for the Future program is one of the most innovative and effective agricultural research programs that is in existence in any province in Canada, mainly because of the unique co-operative approach that this council takes. As you are aware, the council itself is headed by our deputy minister, and the co-operative aspect is that we have individuals from the private sector, we have producers, individuals from the academic community and both levels of government, whereby they come together to offer their suggestions as to where we should place the actual dollars. This has led to considerable tangible benefits for our farming population in Alberta whereby these benefits themselves have had a direct bearing on increasing the net farm income to our farming population. It has also had a direct bearing on the enhancement of the long-term viability of our agricultural community in Alberta, and that is so important because agriculture is our number one economic priority within this government.

Rather than going through a number of the concrete and positive results, I will leave it to you folks, in the event that you have any questions on it, to get into it. Some of them are covered in our paper. In addition to that, we've put out a number of publications, if any of you are interested in it, as it relates to where the actual research dollars are spent.

Dealing very briefly as it relates to the irrigation rehabilita-

tion and expansion program, I would like to point out to you that this was initiated in 1969 and it's been funded through the heritage fund since 1976. We've entered into the fourth year of our current five-year mandate, and since 1969 expenditures under this program have totaled some \$271 million. We recently completed an evaluation of the irrigation rehabilitation and expansion program that gives us a good picture of just how successful this program has been, and I'm sure Mr. Hartman will want to get into some of the specific details, because the economic impact has been so substantial for areas that do have irrigation districts and for individual farmers.

Mr. Chairman, with those few remarks, because I've found in my political life that we in politics can go on for quite some time and not necessarily deal with the issues that are uppermost in your minds, I will close by sharing with you that we believe these are two excellent examples as to how money should be spent as it relates to the betterment of our agricultural community.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Again I would remind the members that we're here this afternoon to deal with the irrigation rehabilitation and expansion program, Farming for the Future, and the Food Processing Development Centre. I should just point out, Mr. Minister, that a good majority of the committee had the opportunity of going on an irrigation tour earlier this fall. Mr. Hartman was kind enough to have it all organized and set up for us, and it was an excellent tour. We covered a lot of miles, and we saw a lot of irrigation and dams and headworks, and we're all experts on it now. It was a very fruitful trip and very beneficial to the members.

I would recognize the Member for Wainwright, followed by the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question would be in the irrigation rehabilitation and expansion area. You spent \$25 million last year on that. Is that an annual cost now to us with that, or is that in our upgrading, or just how do we operate with that?

MR. ELZINGA: In response to the hon. member, Mr. Chairman, let me indicate to him that these past two years it has been \$25 million; previous to that it was \$30 million. Because of our budgetary restraints we did reduce it by some \$5 million. But maybe Mr. Hartman would like to get into it in some detail if you wish a little more detail.

MR. HARTMAN: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to clarify that the \$25 million was for the construction, rehabilitation and, somewhat, for the enlargement of the existing capital works. This is a one-time, one-shot program for the irrigation districts to rebuild their infrastructure. They are not expected to ever do this again under this program. So we don't consider it an annual, ongoing program per se. It's a grant program under the heritage fund, so in the future there could well be zero dollars put in or some other kind of scheme going on.

MR. FISCHER: Okay. Thank you. You're putting that in as a permanent fixture then. Is that funded entirely by our heritage fund, or does the producer put some in?

MR. HARTMAN: The program is funded 86 percent by the Alberta government and 14 percent by the irrigation district, and the district is the farmers collectively.

MR. FISCHER: After your expansion or rehabilitation is completed, is there any operation cost to the heritage fund after that? Or is the operating cost itself all paid for by the producer?

MR. HARTMAN: No, there's no cost to the province for the operation, maintenance, administration of the irrigation districts. That's paid by the producer through his annual water rates to the district.

MR. ELZINGA: I stand to be corrected also, but I believe there is one year left in the five-year mandate under this. We will be looking for guidance as to the extension of that mandate for another five-year time period, but it's done on a five-year basis.

MR. FISCHER: Forgive me; I missed the tour down there. But are we going to then complete all of the irrigation districts at the end of our next five years?

MR. ELZINGA: That's our hope.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As part of the tour of the canals that the Chairman mentioned, we also visited the Oldman River damsite. It seemed that one of the major, if not the most important, justifications for that dam is that it would provide some stability of flow through the northern Lethbridge irrigation system and also ease and improve water allocation in the St. Mary system as well. So my first question would be: why does that expense for that dam not show up as an investment under Agriculture, under the capital projects division expenditures there, as an irrigation expense?

MR. ELZINGA: Well, mainly because there are so many other components to the construction of the dam, as has been indicated a number of times in the House, as I'm sure the hon. member is aware. Because there is a recreational component; there are components as it relates to the environment. And just recently with the change in cabinet ministers, as I'm sure the hon. member is aware also, the Premier has designated now to the minister of public works the individual responsible for the construction of dams. No longer does it fall under the jurisdiction of the Minister of the Environment.

MR. PASHAK: But I would assume that the Department of Agriculture participated at least to some degree in the decision-making with respect to the building of that dam. Did they look at other alternatives besides a storage dam like the Oldman River dam? Could a series of smaller projects have served to meet the irrigation needs of farmers in southern Alberta?

MR. ELZINGA: We did as a department work very closely in putting together some information as it relates to the actual study, as did a number of other groups. I am sure the Water Resources Commission also was involved in the study, as would be the Department of the Environment. But I would suggest to the hon. member that the specific details would more appropriately go to the Minister of the Environment, who was then responsible for it. You'll have to forgive me; I don't have that information at my fingertips, since it did not fall directly under our jurisdiction.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think it's a point well taken. The Hon. Ian Reid will be appearing in front of this committee in the not too distant future, and perhaps you might want to readdress those questions to Mr. Reid.

MR. PASHAK: Finally, I understand that if a farmer gets an assured supply of water for irrigations purposes, obviously it increases his capacity to produce crops, but it also increases the value of his land. Does the Department of Agriculture give any consideration at all to recovering for the public purse from this indirect benefit that a farmer may have achieved through the expenditure of public dollars on these large-scale projects: irrigation projects and dams, et cetera?

MR. ELZINGA: I should indicate to the hon. member, too, as it relates to the actual permits for water, that does fall under the Department of the Environment also. As it relates to the benefits that accrue, I would suggest to him that it accrues to the community as a whole. I can't deny for a moment that the land that does have irrigation would be worth more than the dry land, but there is a considerable spin-off benefit to the entire community. It's somewhat unfair — and I know that the hon. member has not practised unfairness, and I say this in a very genuine way — to isolate one program when we have many programs that are available not only to the farming sector but to our society as a whole, whether it be an offset for the business community or the energy industry or our individual farmers. But I think maybe it's just a tich unfair to isolate one when we do attempt to be as fair as possible to all sectors.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Lloydminster.

MR. CHERRY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Farming for the Future: we know what it has done and what a good job is being done. But I guess my question is: is there a relationship between the Ag. Research Institute and Farming for the Future?

MR. ELZINGA: There is a relationship, and a very close working relationship, between the two. As I indicated to hon. members, Mr. McEwan is the chairman of our council of Farming for the Future. He also does serve on our Agricultural Research Institute. There is a difference, though, in the emphasis that is placed as it relates to the activities of this to . . . The establishment of the research institute was to offer a greater role in the co-ordination of all research activities in the province, whether it be for Farming for the Future or the private sector or government involvement, whereby Farming for Future, on the other hand, is designed primarily as a government support mechanism for our research activities on a short-term basis for short-term agricultural research.

I should just give you the footnote also. Our deputy was kind enough to point it out. The research institute also oversees a number of the research priorities for Farming for the Future.

MR. CHERRY: Okay.

One other question I have: is Farming for the Future using more on-farm projects? Has that gone up?

MR. ELZINGA: I will turn to my colleagues here, but a couple of years ago we did increase the dollars that are used for the actual on-farm demonstration from \$400,000 to \$600,000 — I believe that was two years ago — so that we could make sure that

that research that is developed is applied directly to the farming population.

MR. CHERRY: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. PIQUETTE: Yes; thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to ask the Minister of Agriculture, in terms of the Food Processing Development Centre, about the funding that we've allocated in 1988 — \$9 million for the expansion of food processing and the food service industry by applying new technology to private-sector requests for assistance for developing, I guess, different packaging, different products, et cetera. Now, in view of the fact that a number of the Canadian food processing industries have come out opposing the free trade agreement, has the minister assessed the impact in terms of the development of the food processing industry in Alberta in terms of what they contend is a bad deal for them?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Chairman, I should point out to the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche that no funding from the heritage fund has gone to our food processing sector as he has indicated. I'd also like to share with him that our experts indicate to us, and it has been confirmed by experts in the U.S., that research activities are not countervailable.

MR. PIQUETTE: Well, what I'm saying here is not the fact that we're perhaps encouraging the research technology. But is the potential for the expansion of the food processing industry compromised by the free trade agreement, as alleged by a number of the food processing industries in Canada, that it's going to be forcing them to move south or to buy American farm produce to manufacture here and export to the United States but will not be helping out the Alberta farmers in terms of sale of their own products?

MR. ELZINGA: Again, I'm happy to respond to the hon. member, but I'm a bit confused as to how that relates to our heritage fund estimates, because there is no correlation. But the short answer is no.

MR. PIQUETTE: Well, I think it does relate to the fact that we're encouraging here diversification of the food processing industry by having a processing development centre to try and diversify the product. The free trade agreement — you're saying no. Now, why would these companies say it does without you setting out an argument why you're saying it would not? I mean, I think it's all interplayed here. If we're going to be spending government money, heritage trust fund money, to attempt to diversify the food processing industry, to create more jobs, et cetera, but in fact we have an agreement here which the food processing industry is saying is going to be negative in terms of job creation and expansion, are we not really spending money here perhaps in a negative fashion?

MR. ELZINGA: Well, I can give the hon. member a specific list of food companies who have indicated just the opposite. Maybe he could share with me who he is referring to, because I'm at a bit of a loss. Again I would say with due respect that I acknowledge very much the sincerity of the questions from the hon. member, but they have no correlation to the funding. You can't attempt to relate it to our food processing laboratory in

Leduc. That was funding of bygone years. Now that funding comes out of our general departmental budget estimates, not out of the heritage fund.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is also related to the food processing facility at Leduc. I wonder if the minister can share with us any success stories wherein people came there with an idea and a product was developed. I'm not necessarily thinking of big operations but operations that started small and have worked well with the Better Buy Alberta product and the influence that Better Buy Alberta has had on the food industry in Alberta.

MR. ELZINGA: I will cite the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff a couple of examples, and then I'll turn to our officials too, if they wish to add to it. We have a publication, which I will refer him to also, that cites a number of the excellent functions it has performed as it relates to the development of a variety of food products. But the one that comes to mind, which I've referred to so often, is the close relationship we have with the Seiyu department stores in Japan whereby we have an exchange with them, not directly with the food processing laboratory in Leduc but from our department, and they in turn have sent an individual here. We've relied on them for advice as to how we can prepare some shelf-ready products for our private sector. We have worked very closely with the private sector in our food processing laboratory. Westglen mills have used the food processing laboratory to develop flours.

Maybe I can turn to our officials for some other specific examples, but we'll make sure we get a number of items to the hon. member as it relates to the excellent work they are doing there.

MR. McEWAN: To supplement that, Mr. Minister, you mentioned the Seiyu exchange we have and the exports that are flowing to Japan by virtue of that close working relationship with that major department store chain in Japan. Each of their stores has large food floors. This year they're importing more than \$3 million — these are new exports since we've entered into this arrangement with Seiyu — of Alberta food products, and we're about to enter the third component; we'll have the third exchange coming here in December or January upcoming. That's very significant. They're very impressed with and would not be entering into this kind of arrangement if it wasn't for the technical expertise we have at the Leduc food processing centre. I'm convinced of that.

We have a number of examples; I don't have a list here because there weren't expenditures this year, and hence we weren't prepared to talk in detail about the food processing centre. But we've worked on the formation of an Alberta company for various food dressings — salad and other kinds of dressings — native fruit preparations, and the packaging and formulation of various juice drinks. Those are about two or three of what we consider the success stories. That centre is really just getting started. It's still in the formative area, but it has a positive track record already.

MR. HYLAND: I wonder, then, if we can talk a little bit about the operation of it. Is it set up in such a way that a group brings an idea to the experts that are there and they work on that idea

and help them? Do they just help them develop it, or is there help in trying to set up a market as well?

MR. McEWAN: Well, we do work with companies by making our facilities available to the companies to bring in their experts: their production people, their packaging people, their processing people. We have just a skeleton group, a very small number of scientists there, who facilitate and work with the individual companies who utilize the facility. But we're not in the business to do it for them; we're there to help them develop these products, processes, and packages themselves. We charge a very nominal amount for this assistance.

Now, we do not have a marketing group tied directly to the food processing facility in Leduc, but within the same sector in our department, the marketing sector, our market development people work very closely with these same Alberta food and beverage processors in developing both domestic and export markets.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, my question is to the minister. As a bit of background for the minister, one of the objectives I have during this sequence of meetings on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund is to try and determine whether during these last 12 years since 1976 that the Heritage Savings Trust Fund has been in existence — during those good times we've blustered forward and we've put into circulation in various ways in Alberta some \$12 billion. At the same time, I've been wanting to determine whether that massive expenditure in Alberta has rather alienated us, or has made the federal government or other governments in Canada look at us in Alberta and say: "You can do it on your own. We don't have to share in the funding or possibly play our part in this partnership of Canada."

I raise this question in light of agriculture. If we look specifically in your program area, as I've looked at other program areas with other ministers, we have allocated into irrigation rehabilitation and expansion, for example, some \$237 million, and you've just indicated through answers to other questions that we're allocating some \$25 million this year and in previous years some \$30 million a year for some very constructive work. Could the minister indicate in his assessment of the use of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund whether that has caused us in Alberta to lose cost-sharing programs or to lose initiatives of expenditure from the federal government in Alberta, and have we gotten our fair share from, specifically, the federal government?

MR. ELZINGA: In response to the very legitimate concerns by the Member for Little Bow, Mr. Chairman, may I share with him that as he is aware, prior to my entry into provincial politics there was some concern, especially as it related to research, that the federal government had withdrawn from some cost-sharing arrangements. Since then we have negotiated with them an agreement whereby they will not withdraw unless there is proper consultation between the two levels of government, and we're encouraged by that. We're also encouraged by their strong commitment to research activities. The former federal minister, Mr. Wise, was just in the south and opened an extension of a major research facility. We were hopeful that we could have been there for the opening also, but it was just when the tornado had struck the Camrose area, so we had to go on that tour. In addition to that, we've just involved ourselves in a research activity in the Vegreville area that's going to be broadened across the province, whereby there is equal participation of \$2 million each.

Forgive me for sidetracking a bit from our heritage fund estimates, but as it relates to Farming for the Future, we do have that co-ordination with our federal officials whereby they do serve on these various councils. When I say "various councils," they serve directly on the Farming for the Future council, which is chaired by our deputy minister, in addition to serving on our Agricultural Research Institute.

So we feel we have that interplay. At times, I will admit to the hon. member, we wish they would do a little more, but I have no criticisms, because they have been so forthcoming as it relates to their support for agriculture overall.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, a supplementary to the minister. In light of his answer and in light of the actual statistics, could the minister explain why the province of Saskatchewan has received some \$50 million in matching funds for irrigation, while at the same time Alberta hasn't received any from the same fund?

MR. ELZINGA: Maybe we could turn it over to our two officials to elaborate a bit, and then if you don't mind, hon. member, I'll supplement it. Gary.

MR. HARTMAN: Mr. Chairman, the federal government has recently committed some \$50 million to the province of Saskatchewan, along with \$50 million by the province, for new irrigation infrastructure systems. That money is being spent in part — not all of it, but in part — on four different areas around Lake Diefenbaker. The federal government in the past in Alberta made contributions through the PFRA up until about 1974, when they finally moved out and the province took over headworks. Up until that time they were building things in Alberta and were operating, in fact, one irrigation district in the Vauxhall area. That's just for clarification. I don't know, you know, all the reasons why, but it hasn't been too long ago.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Have I two supplementaries left, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: One supplementary left, and then we'll put you right back on the list again.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I'd like the minister to further explain that reason, because we in Alberta should have had the same consideration.

My final supplementary, Mr. Chairman, relates to some actual — if I could have Louise possibly pass these over to the minister and to the other members of the committee. The document that I'm providing for the committee is one page from a document I had in the Legislature the other day, and it's a report from the federal government. It's not a provincial report; it's the actual federal government report, and it's called Federal-Provincial Programs and Activities 1987-88, so it's an up-to-date document. What it shows in this document — some of the members haven't the information — is that in terms of federal/provincial agrifood development agreements, with the exception of Saskatchewan, which holds a federal/provincial subsidiary agreement on agricultural development, Alberta is not receiving its fair share of funds. The reason I raise this chart, Mr. Chairman, is that we in Alberta, I would assume, are picking up our end of the deal through the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. If you'll note in the last column, Alberta through this agreement

has received nil, and all other provinces have received sizable sums all the way from \$17.5 million to \$25 million.

So, Mr. Chairman, I raise it with the minister: are we getting our fair share, and have we as a government over these last few years, because we had the extra money, allowed other provinces and the federal government to erode our Heritage Savings Trust Fund and use it through the back door?

MR. ELZINGA: Maybe I could ask for one clarification. Where did the hon. member say he received this from?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, this comes from a report from the federal government, and what it includes in that report are all of the federal/provincial payments made through various agreements by the federal government. It's a thick book, about an inch and a quarter thick, and I can provide that for the minister. I'm sorry I didn't have it here today; I did have it last day, but I just arrived at the Legislature about 5 minutes after 2 and came directly here.

MR. ELZINGA: I would share with the hon. member that I would appreciate that book very much, because I'd have to take serious issue with the figures that are in here, and I will point to some specific agreements that we do have with the federal government as it relates to agricultural related items. Our Alberta processing and marketing agreement is a \$50 million agreement that has a strong agricultural component whereby it is cost shared by the federal and provincial governments. Our soil conservation agreement is again cost shared by the federal and provincial governments. One can look at the drought assistance.

And just to even take a step further, and I recognize it's not a specific subsidiary agreement, but also the aid that was forthcoming by way of the special grains payments. But we do have specific agreements. There is nothing that we would like better — and we are in the process of negotiating through both our Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs and our minister of economic development and ourselves some specific ERDA agreements. We do have one as it relates to the Alberta processing and marketing agreement, but I would be interested in what specific agreements he's relating to, that the hon. member has highlighted, and I thank him very kindly for forwarding that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the more disturbing aspects for me, at least, of government operation is the lack of co-ordination that I perceive sometimes exists between various government departments. I note your Farming for the Future program and the Food Processing Development Centre, which really have like a research aspect to them. I'd like to know from the minister if there have been discussions with Advanced Education. In particular I'd like to know why programs like this aren't more closely co-ordinated, perhaps even housed, in postsecondary institutions, perhaps at the University of Alberta or maybe even more appropriately in community colleges, particularly those that have a former agricultural aspect to their curricula, like Olds, Fairview: that kind of thing.

MR. ELZINGA: I thank the hon. member for raising that because it offers me the opportunity to indicate to him that we do have that co-ordination. I will give him some specific examples. As it relates to our Agricultural Research Institute, we

do have a representative serving on that board. In addition to that, we have individuals from the University of Alberta plus, I believe, the University of Saskatchewan . . .

MR. McEWAN: The western Canadian veterinary college that's at Saskatoon.

MR. ELZINGA: So we do have good interplay. I wouldn't want to mislead the hon. gentleman, though, whereby in my opinion there is never enough interplay and co-ordination. But we do have a substantial amount, and it's something that we continue to work on to assure ourselves of the proper co-ordination, recognizing that there's always room for improvement.

MR. PASHAK: I don't want to waste one of my supplementals. If I may, I think he answered the political remark that I had in my question, but I think my question also had some specifics in it with respect to: could these programs be better housed in colleges like Olds or whatever?

MR. ELZINGA: Specifically as it relates to the food processing laboratory that you raised, we found that it could perform its function very well. There is no doubt that it could probably serve it just as well in a number of localities throughout the province. I can't see why it can't serve it as well in one area as another, but we do have that close working relationship.

I should point out to the hon. member, too, that at Olds we have also the president of the college serving on our Ag. Research Institute board.

MR. PASHAK: In terms of these heritage trust fund expenditures, they're listed as investments. It shows a total investment of \$44 million for Farming for the Future, \$237 million for irrigation rehabilitation and expansion, and \$9 million for the Food Processing Development Centre. If you wished to liquidate these investments, how much money could you realize?

MR. ELZINGA: That's a tough one in that the purpose of the investments is not to liquidate but to make sure that there continues to be spin-off benefits to the community that we are serving. I'm sure the Provincial Treasurer has some estimate on it. I'm sorry, sir, I don't have that information available to me.

MR. PASHAK: A final supplementary, Mr. Chairman. In his opening remarks, the minister said that this government's number one priority is agriculture. Where is energy relative to agriculture in terms of the government's priorities?

MR. ELZINGA: Well, I can only share with the hon. member where my responsibilities lie. He'll have to ask the Minister of Energy that question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. PIQUETTE: Yes; following on the Member for Little Bow, who is indicating that there appears to be a lack of joint federal/provincial agreements, especially in relation to irrigation. During the tour I asked some of the officials accompanying us on the tour: why has the provincial government allowed the PFRA to drop the cost sharing in terms of irrigation rehabilitation and expansion, funding for headworks, et cetera, or even dam building in the province of Alberta? One of the

officials indicated to me that it's because there are just too many strings attached. If we go on our own, we control the agenda.

I followed this up by talking with some of the federal officials in relation to that and how much the province has come forward in terms of seeking 50-50 joint funding in terms of irrigation projects. They indicated to me that there has been no such request from the provincial government. I relate, for example, the department of transportation saying the same thing about highway construction, that we don't want to participate with federal agreements because of the fact that there are too many strings attached. Now, is that one of the reasons why the provincial government here has failed to come on a 50-50 type of funding program for irrigation rehabilitation, because they don't like the federal strings attached to these joint programs?

MR. ELZINGA: Well, I should share with the hon. member — and again I would have to take issue with a couple of his statements. I must share with him, and I appreciate him raising the issue, but I can't see how roads have anything to do with my heritage trust fund estimates. But since he's raised it, let me indicate to him that we do have an agreement with the federal government as it relates to the Yellowhead route, and I throw that out as one example. Also, I should share with the hon. member that the federal government has participated actively. We were there for the Bassano dam opening, to which the PFRA contributed substantially, and the Brooks aqueduct. So there are areas of federal government involvement within our irrigation network.

Mr. Hartman, though, pointed out — and if I could just underscore it and refer to him in the event that I err — that we're involved with this program in rehabilitation, whereby the Saskatchewan program, I gather, is completely new projects. There is a difference.

MR. PIQUETTE: Now, in the negotiations in terms of the western diversification funding and a lot of the charges that we have made as a provincial government, alleging that the east gets a higher share of federal funding, if we are not more aggressive in terms of making sure that when federal/provincial agreements are reached — for example, western diversification. A part of that diversification should be the expansion of our irrigation network on a cost-shared basis with the government. Did the minister raise the whole question in the negotiations for western diversification that some of that funding should be allocated towards irrigation in Alberta?

MR. ELZINGA: Yes, we have raised it. I had the opportunity just recently to meet with the new Minister of Agriculture, the Deputy Prime Minister, and we raised a number of these issues. We are also gratified that the federal government saw fit to establish a western diversification fund, which is something new, and it's in recognition of the importance of western Canada. Plus we're delighted that they selected Edmonton as its home base. But again I would say with greatest respect to the hon. member that he has to excuse me in that it has nothing to do with our estimates that are presently before us.

MR. PIQUETTE: Well, I think it has a lot to do because of the fact that we are spending heritage trust fund here basically alone, 86 percent funded by heritage trust fund, whereas I believe it would have been much more aggressive in terms of our relationship with the federal government — we could have been

going much more quickly in the rehabilitation process if we could have struck some 50-50 cost-sharing deal with the federal government to spread the cost, because it is a benefit not just to Alberta but to Canadians as a whole. I find it quite unbelievable that we have not made those kinds of agreements in the past. I think the responsibility of the government is that we've lost a lot of federal money because of that.

Now, I would reiterate: is the minister undertaking as of now to ensure that irrigation improvements and other projects will receive federal government assistance?

MR. ELZINGA: Let me repeat what I indicated to the hon. member. There has been substantial funding through PFRA of two items such as the Bassano dam and the Brooks aqueduct. That's not to say that we're not going to continue to work very actively to ensure that we do receive proper federal funding in our province.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, this is the book that I'm referring to, and I will make it available to the minister if he does return it to me. [Inaudible]

If I could follow up with regards to Saskatchewan. Their agreement, as is quoted:

Canada-Saskatchewan Subsidiary Agreement on Irrigation-Based Economic Development . . .

That's the special name for it.

The Agreement will be in effect from October 17, 1986, until March 31, 1992.

The federal government will spend up to \$50 million, and the government of Saskatchewan can spend up to \$50 million on a matching basis. It's for the purpose, I would assume, of irrigation rehabilitation and headworks reconstruction and improvements to the economic development of Saskatchewan in that area.

Now, that's the same kind of thing we've been doing with the heritage fund. Would the minister, I guess, at this point be willing to review that matter and report back to the committee as to whether it was done on a fair basis, whether we as Alberta had an opportunity to get the same kind of agreement? Even in light of the fact that we've gone ahead as Albertans and spent our own money, aren't we part of this Canadian makeup?

MR. ELZINGA: Let me begin by giving the hon. Member for Little Bow the commitment that if he's kind enough to lend me his book, I'll make sure it's returned. I'll put that on the public record so that he can come after me if I don't give it back to him.

But I should share with him that what he is referring to — and I will do further investigation, because it's just slightly different than what was handed to me as it relates to subsidiary . . .

MR. R. SPEAKER: That's another question.

MR. ELZINGA: I will happily look into it, but I should point out to the hon. member that those are new irrigation projects, whereby our projects are rehabilitation projects. I just indicated that to one of the hon. members from the New Democratic Party. But we will give the hon. member the commitment, and I will get back to him in a detailed way as to his inquiry. Happy to do so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. GOGO: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Elzinga, with regard to the irrigation upgrading in southern Alberta, I'm sure you've heard many times how impressed the committee was with its tour of 1,100 kilometres to look at what has been done not only by Environment but by your department.

I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you or Mr. McEwan or someone could explain to me. The 13 irrigation districts, which are autonomous unto their own except that they receive substantial funding from your department to upgrade the irrigation: I've had concerns raised with me from engineers and other people who traditionally did a tremendous amount of this work. These are people out of the private sector. Now the irrigation districts have built in staff, so the amount of work going to the private people is reduced dramatically, and yet the work is obviously being done, as envisioned by expenditures in your department. Have you, Mr. Minister, had complaints from anybody in the private sector that the amount of irrigation dollars in terms of engineering studies and work is not going to those people and that your department should be looking at it in view of the fact the dollars are coming from the heritage fund?

MR. ELZINGA: I thank the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West for raising that, and I'm going to ask Mr. Hartman to supplement, as Mr. Hartman is the manager of the Irrigation Secretariat. I'm sure the hon. member is aware — and I'll just put it on the record, even though I know he has a much better grasp of it than I do — that the Irrigation Council doesn't oversee, but it has an administrative role and a role in the distribution of funds to the specific irrigation districts, with which Mr. Hartman is so closely involved. But because of that concern we had a study conducted by Coopers & Lybrand, I believe it was. Their study indicated that the cost efficiencies are such that the individuals who were doing it that are presently hired by the irrigation districts, whether they be full-time staff or whatnot, were just as economical as doing it out to the private sector. I'll ask Mr. Hartman to supplement that somewhat, because he has a much better grasp than I do. But we are working with the private-sector groups to see if we can't accommodate them somehow, because we want to be very supportive and exercise their talents in furthering the irrigation districts.

MR. HARTMAN: Mr. Minister and Mr. Chairman, we have had a few complaints from the engineering groups in southern Alberta about what they consider to be the lack of work. The Coopers & Lybrand group was asked to address two of the issues raised. One is the matter of engineering work for design and construction supervision and the other the actual construction, as to the best way possible to carry out the construction. In their report to us the Coopers & Lybrand group, after reviewing the construction techniques and reviewing how the districts handled the construction methods and so on, said, in short, basically just to make sure the construction was done in the cheapest way possible. And in some cases the cheapest way possible is either through the process of asking for tenders and submitting contracts through contractors, because right now there is a good supply of contractors and they are working fairly cheaply. With respect to the engineering issue, they came out with little or no recommendation. They weren't able to put their fingers on anything really strong enough to be able to guide us very well.

We've done some of our own analysis on these issues as to what in fact did happen with the funds in the year 1986-87. Where did the funds go and how were they spent? We did our own analysis after analyzing the data and the dollars spent, and

we found that about 10 percent roughly — it's in that order — was spent by the districts with their own forces, and those were mostly in the smaller districts up in the southwest corner of the province, where they have a hard time getting contractors to come in. The rest of the dollars that were spent on construction were all spent through hired contractors, either under a contract or hired by the hour, and for the rental of machines from rental agencies or from contractors themselves.

With respect to the dollars spent on engineering, about half was spent by in-house engineers in the irrigation district offices, and the other half was spent by consulting engineers who have their own offices and infrastructure to set up.

As far as the Irrigation Council is concerned, under this program if council wants to be sure that the engineering and the construction is done in the cheapest way possible, it probably should direct that all of the engineering be done by in-house, because the engineering consulting groups tell me that they have a direct cost to them for insurance alone that is, in fact, 5 percent of the contract. Now, council doesn't intend to do that. But they have a really high overhead cost; that one factor alone causes problems. So council is watching it very closely and carefully and wants to see that the dollars invested by the government are spent in the most efficient way, and we'll do whatever we can to see that that, in fact, happens. It's council's intent to see that that happens.

MR. GOGO: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman. So, Mr. Minister, then the criticism we've heard, which I believe was in the magnitude of a reduction in engineering services of 20 to 25 percent in the past three years, is perhaps not accurate; it's more like 10 percent. I think that's what Mr. Hartman was saying.

Just moving on, Mr. Minister — and perhaps you can respond in just a moment — I understand we've spent \$350 million to \$360 million with the irrigation upgrading, with the target of another \$150 million roughly to go. I understand that's for the next two years. Could you advise the committee what new technologies have been introduced just in the past year in terms of lining canals, in terms of changes in slopes of canals? Is there anything dramatically new that perhaps Mr. Shimbashi of the Irrigation Council or Mr. Hartman didn't mention to us on the tour?

MR. ELZINGA: Maybe I should, with the consent of the hon. member, let Mr. Hartman get into that since he does work so closely with it.

MR. HARTMAN: Okay, then. With respect to the changes in amounts of engineering, the reduction in engineering activity is probably somewhere between 10 and 15 percent. We should remember that from two years ago we've had a reduction in the program from a previous \$30 million per year down to \$25 million. That's a 16.67 percent reduction in the whole program right there, and if we add a couple of extra percent for the adjustments that the irrigation districts have made in their in-house engineering, we're probably going to be somewhere in the order of 18 or 19.

With respect to new technology, every year we find improvements and ways to do things better. The latest things that are coming about are improvements in the plastics that are being used for lining canals. Today, compared to only five years ago, we have much better materials to bury in the canal banks to reduce or stop seepage. We are also getting better plastic pipes to use all the time. The plastics industry is doing a much better job

and producing larger diameter pipes at a cheaper cost than they used to, so we are making vast improvements there.

Also, we are seeing improvements in the technology of water control for instruments and machinery to control water going through structures. So if the rate of improvement we've seen in the past continues for another five or 10 years, we're going to see some great things 10 years from now in that part of the industry.

MR. GOGO: A final supplementary, Mr. Chairman. This is a policy question, Mr. Minister. You're well aware of the funding formula 86-14, 86 by the public because the public benefits to the extent of 86 percent of irrigation. There are 150 to 200 private irrigators in southwestern Alberta, and for them to hire a backhoe and clean a ditch and so on is a very expensive proposition. For many years they've been saying, "Look; how about government becoming involved, because the public is the major beneficiary of any irrigation work done." I know the minister has had overtures made by various people. Could the minister advise the committee as to where the situation is with regard to the government participating along with the private people who do their own irrigation work, and what level may be considered, whether it's trenching, whether it's cleaning ditches, whether it's actual capital investment?

MR. ELZINGA: I thank the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West. Just prior to getting to his question dealing with private irrigators, maybe I could share with him as it relates to the mandate of our present irrigation rehabilitation and expansion program. Since this program came about in 1969, we've spent somewhere in the vicinity of some \$271 million. We're in the fourth year of our present five-year mandate, whereby next year that mandate will expire. In the event that we wish to continue it, we'll have to renegotiate with the input from members such as the hon. member an additional five-year period, and then we are hopeful that the rehabilitation work will be complete. But those are areas that we assess on an ongoing basis.

As it relates to the private irrigators, we are doing some work on that. Hon. members present here, especially the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff, have played an instrumental role in putting together some recommendations. I have nothing concrete that I can report to the hon. member at this time except that we are examining it. A crucial area of that examination will be specific water supplies, and as the hon. member is aware, just recently under the hon. Member for Dunvegan, who is the chairman of the Water Resources Commission, hearings were held. We are receiving input, too, from the Department of the Environment as to whether there are sufficient water supplies. We are hopeful that something can be done in the event that that does prove hopeful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. PIQUETTE: Yes. With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the minister whether he would entertain some questions like he did last year in the hearings about ADC. I know the associate minister is directly responsible for that, but I believe that as the Minister of Agriculture you still have ultimate responsibility. Would you entertain questions along that line?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would think that having just spent two hours questioning the Associate Minister of Agriculture, it really wouldn't be appropriate for the agenda that we have in front of

us this afternoon.

Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. PIQUETTE: Well, okay, but what you're saying is that you will not permit asking questions relating to ADC?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No; I'm saying that there's a very appropriate time for asking questions related to ADC, and that was when the Associate Minister of Agriculture was here, the Hon. Shirley Cripps. We exhausted our questions at that time; there was still some time left and nobody with their hand up. I think this minister has some specific responsibilities that he's appearing in front of the committee to discuss with the committee. In fairness to that and in fairness to other committee members who have some questions that are related that I'm assuming they're going to want to ask, I think we should get on with it.

MR. PIQUETTE: Well, I haven't exhausted questions about it. I would say that there are other relevant questions which . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: By all means, the Chair would recognize the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche on the topic.

MR. PIQUETTE: Would you recognize me now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. PIQUETTE: Thank you. I'd like to ask the minister whether he is aware of some of the allegations — and I'm more or less asking the minister to look at this quite seriously in terms of perhaps loopholes which exist in our ADC lending policy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, I'm sorry. The Chair was not recognizing you to ask questions that were related to the Agricultural Development Corporation. Again, before us this afternoon we have Farming for the Future, irrigation, and the Food Processing Development Centre, and that's what we're here to discuss.

MR. PIQUETTE: Well, I guess I'll go back to Farming for the Future. But if all the other questions are exhausted, with your permission I'd like to continue with the questions on ADC today, because I think the minister does have responsibility as well for ADC. To say that we're not going to allow it . . . I believe there's not a whole big list of names of people who are trying to get on to your list of questions this afternoon. So I think . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not going to argue it any further. If you want to ask a question on the subject, please do.

MR. PIQUETTE: Okay. On the Farming for the Future program, just going through the list of the broad areas of funding, I guess, there doesn't appear to be in terms of the irrigation districts — and I was quite interested in that tour of southern Alberta. You know, with irrigation in southern Alberta we very definitely have helped the small family farm to survive. I was kind of surprised, looking at the crops farmers were growing in many of these irrigation districts, that the bulk of them were not diversified to the type of diversification of crops I had thought there was. A lot of the crops were along the line of dryland or even northern Alberta farming. So the question I have is: how much of the Farming for the Future program is directly related to the diversification of irrigation crop opportunities?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Chairman, I'm happy to report to the hon. member that we do place a specific emphasis on crop diversification. Farming for the Future has been very active in that. Some of those areas are highlighted in the handout I gave to the hon. member. We've been very involved with crop production technology. I can go through a fairly extensive list if he wishes me to take the time of the committee, but it is something I handed out to him just a few moments ago.

MR. PIQUETTE: Okay. I guess the supplementary is: how much is related to the irrigation aspect of farming? I mean, this is more or less a general statement. Is that focusing on the irrigation diversification?

MR. ELZINGA: It does place an emphasis on that. I don't have the specific figures at my fingertips as to how much is allocated to one specific area over another. What we attempt to do is have a very fair distribution not only by area of the province but also by topic consideration. Whether it be for crop production or resource conservation or livestock production technology, we try to exercise a great deal of fairness in the distribution of those funds to all sectors, whether it be in a geographical area or a commodity area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Following up on the questions relating to irrigation upgrading on the 86-14 formula, those of the Member for Lethbridge-West, part of the answer that was given was that if you're using a private engineer and not an in-house engineer, there's probably 5 percent extra cost on your insurance. My question is relating to what condition the upgrading we're providing is going to be in for the future. If somebody does something wrong, if the riprap isn't up to specs, if the design is wrong, who pays? Five percent would be a cheap price to pay to get it graded to the proper specs if there's a mistake. If there isn't a mistake, it's fine. But if there is a mistake, who pays? Us again? Or are the districts directly responsible? Because they may set the standard, and it may not be the same as the provincial standard.

MR. HARTMAN: Mr. Chairman, the question seems to relate to the quality of engineering and construction as carried out under in-house engineers, as I understand it. The quality of construction, the quality of the materials used, is under the control or direction, in general, of the Irrigation Council. The irrigation districts are responsible for the specific design, the carrying out of the construction, and the supervision of the construction. All of the construction is monitored by the Department of Agriculture, staff of the department, for the Irrigation Council. Council is generally continually aware of the quality and the standards that are being used. Council has in fact given specific directions on occasion to irrigation districts to change something or do something better with respect to their standards.

The quality of the design with respect to the engineers themselves is again under the general purview or control of the Irrigation Council with the help of the department and under the general guide of the professional engineering association of Alberta. There are certain standards of quality and conformation to be met whether you are an engineer working for the district or whether you are an engineer working for a private consultant and hired by the district to do that job.

If a problem arises in the future with respect to the work that

is done, the program will not fund that project again. They will not fund repairs to that project five or 10 or 20 years from now. Having rehabilitated the project, once it is finished, that's it. It's up to the district to do it themselves under their maintenance and general funding programs of their own in the future. So I'm not concerned about what may happen in the future at all.

MR. HYLAND: Well, that's reassuring. I guess we both know of things that have happened in design and that the engineers they've had, they have sued, and they've had to pay. This is my question: if there is a mistake with all the in-house engineering, if it's 50 percent now on the 86-14 stuff and growing year by year, pretty soon we're going to be 100 percent, and if something happens, there's nobody to come back on.

I suppose one of the long-term things that did happen out of the upgrading of the main canal and 86-14 is the export of the expertise that was developed in that by private industry in other parts of the world. I think we know of three or four companies that are exporting even now and a couple of manufacturing companies that are exporting gates and other things to other parts of the world. If it's all in-house, of course we'll lose that portion of it, or it won't continue to grow and develop new stuff. In-house they may develop new things, but my concern is that they'll keep on going the way they're going now, and it might cut down on the new ideas that are developed. It may cut down on our future chances of exporting new products.

As I said, it's still my concern that everybody can assure us, but if somebody makes a mistake in that whole group that you mentioned — the Irrigation Council, the Department of Agriculture — if there is a mistake made, there's nobody who can be sued for their expertise, and that's when that stamp is put on by an engineer. Also, coming behind that stamp is the insurance money he pays to make sure his job is top grade and stands up.

MR. HARTMAN: Mr. Chairman, I can just assure the committee perhaps that, in general, council agrees with the private sector doing a very significant amount of the work, for the reasons that have been cited. I'm sure council would not like to see the districts doing all of their own engineering work. That's not the case at all. We're resisting any move to that end, I'm sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Any further questions from any of the members on this? The Member for Vermilion-Viking.

DR. WEST: Yes. I'd like to move adjournment, but just before that, is VIDO, Veterinary Infectious Disease Organization, under this?

MR. HARTMAN: No.

DR. WEST: No. Fine, thank you. I'd like to move adjournment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, before we do that, there are a couple of housekeeping items that I want to bring up with the committee, but rather than detain the minister and the members of his department any further, I want to thank them for appearing before the committee this afternoon. As always, the answers were very helpful and very straightforward, and we do appreciate you coming and sharing that information with us.

MR. ELZINGA: My deepest thanks, too, to you, Mr. Chairman

and the members of the heritage fund committee, and I leave you with the assurance that I will follow up with the suggestions by the hon. Member for Little Bow. I believe that was the only one follow-up item we had, and I shall do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would also indicate that as a result of all the interest and the questions related to the Food Processing Development Centre, perhaps the committee will be looking at having a tour of the facility at some future date. It might be very beneficial, I'm sure.

MR. ELZINGA: It would be our honour to have you there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good. Thank you again.

I wanted to discuss with the committee members two things. One was: as we see a conclusion to our schedule in terms of people who are going to be appearing in front of the committee, it also brings us closer to the point where we need to be discussing recommendations. The chairman received the first two recommendations earlier today. I won't present them to the committee this afternoon, but I have received two. I would hope all committee members are giving that some thought at this time. Last year, as you recall, we did establish a cut-off date, and I would suggest that we look at doing the same again this year.

I have noted that our last scheduled appearance is on Thursday, October 20. We don't have any further meetings scheduled at this time, and I wonder if members would consider looking at some dates at this time as well. One possibility is October 26, which is Wednesday. We arrive back from Prince Rupert on Tuesday. If we could discuss recommendations on that day, that would be helpful. I assume we'll need at least three days to discuss all the recommendations that are going to come forward, and the next two available dates I can see would be October 31, which is Monday, and November 1, which is Tuesday.

So I put those three days on the table for discussion: October 26, October 31, and November 1, for discussion of recommendations.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I imagine there will be many comments here, but I would like to avoid November 1 if at all possible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Member for Lacombe.

MR. R. MOORE: Well, several of us are on another committee that meets on October 31, so I think that is out. But October 26 should be a good one. We're arriving back, and I think that would be an excellent one to get some preliminary go-around.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: It's just that the 26th has been a long-standing caucus date for us.

MR. PIQUETTE: You know, we've got the 1st; maybe the 2nd . . .

MR. HERON: We've always honoured the opposition caucus dates in the past.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. You know, I'm concerned about go-

ing too far when it hasn't been established if there's going to be a fall session or not. I wouldn't want to run into that if that's the case.

MR. HYLAND: How about the 2nd and 3rd?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Members' Services is meeting on the 3rd, so that's a conflict, but November 2 would be one day when we could possibly meet. Perhaps if we met November 2 and followed November 7 and 8.

MR. HYLAND: Is Members' Services meeting all day that day? That only takes two of us out of this committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They're meeting in the afternoon, and I think it would be helpful, if we're going to meet for recommendations, to meet for a full day at a time.

MR. HYLAND: Well, if we're going to be here for the 2nd and we have to waive the afternoon, at least we'd get half a day on the 3rd.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are only two of you who will be here for Members' Services on the 2nd, though, as you just pointed out. I'd rather pick three clean days, if we can. How about November 2, 7, and 8?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Might I suggest as well that the cut-off date for recommendations would be . . . I think October 26 is too soon. Can we say October 31 to the chairman, and the chairman can perhaps distribute all the recommendations that he's received by October 31 so that everybody will have them with some advance time and be able to discuss them on the 2nd, the 7th, and the 8th?

MR. GOGO: Is October 26 now out? I wanted to ask Mr. Pashak if that's an all-day caucus. I mean, is that completely out for you two?

MR. PASHAK: Excuse me. Would you ask the Member for Lethbridge-West to repeat his question? I was just distracted when he was asking it.

MR. GOGO: Well, I believe that flight is back from Prince Rupert on the night of the 25th. Is that accurate? So there'll be members around the capital. Is the 26th completely out for the New Democrats?

MR. PIQUETTE: I'm out. Barry, you're out as well in terms of caucus.

MR. GOGO: It'd be for the whole day, would it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: He's asking if you're out for the whole day or if perhaps there'd be an opportunity for a part of the day.

MR. GOGO: Being as we're all coming back here from Prince Rupert, Mr. Chairman, and members will be landing at Edmonton, could half a day be fitted in, or is it completely out of the question?

MR. PIQUETTE: Well, for myself personally, it's out. The 26th is already committed for the full day, and I believe the same thing with Barry, because we're having a caucus meeting from 9 to 4 o'clock in the afternoon. But the 2nd, 7th, and 8th are fine with me; I have no problem there.

In terms of the cutoff for recommendations, I would recommend the 1st rather than the 31st.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The concern that the Chair would have with that is being able to circulate the recommendations ahead of time so that members can read and give them some thought and be prepared to discuss them.

MR. PIQUETTE: Well, in view of the fact that we have the 7th and the 8th, even a recommendation coming as late as November 1 still has the 7th and the 8th to be circulated for those latecomers. Most of them will probably be before the 1st, but I think it still could be open.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm at the discretion of the committee, but the chairman's having a hard time discriminating for the sake of a day. Why should October 31 to November 1 make any difference? Because there are no more meetings at that point anyway. Surely, if you can have them ready for the 1st, you can have them ready for the 31st, and that would give me time to distribute them and people time to read them and hopefully be prepared. My concern is that a number of the members of this committee have a track record for leaving recommendations to the very last minute, and all of a sudden there are 20 recommendations submitted to the chairman and he's got to distribute them to all the members. All I'm asking for is 48 hours to be able to do that as opposed to 24.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So if I can review this, then, it's agreed that the cutoff date will be October 31. I would encourage members to get their recommendations in sooner than that if possible.

MR. PIQUETTE: Four-thirty p.m.?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Four-thirty p.m. is fine on October 31, and maybe submit them to Louise. Louise will be there.

Our meetings for discussion of recommendations will be Wednesday, November 2; Monday, November 7; and Tuesday, November 8. The only thing that that will leave us to establish after that is a date for voting on recommendations, and we can perhaps set that up after we've had the opportunity of discussing the recommendations themselves.

Okay. Any further items that any members need to bring forward at this time?

MR. PIQUETTE: Just a recommendation. Are we sitting on October 31 or just submitting recommendations?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just submitting recommendations. We won't be sitting that day.

MR. PASHAK: Supposing you got into a prolonged discussion with, say, especially the Provincial Treasurer. Is there a provision to call the Treasurer back at another point in time if there are questions that aren't completed?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's still a possibility. If we feel that we need to, we can certainly try to reschedule that as well.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I agree with the proposed schedule. With regard to your comment of voting on recommendations, do you envisage that to be one day and that we would be doing that the week following the 7th, 8th?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Usually it's only a half-day process. Normally we've given ourselves some time, again, between discussion of recommendations and voting. Usually it's more like a four- or five-week time period, it seems, between final discussions and voting.

MR. GOGO: So are we looking at that then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. I would hope we'd be able to have everything wrapped up before the middle of December so that we can get the report published and ready.

Any further discussion? If not, a motion to adjourn would be in order. Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

[The committee adjourned at 3:22 p.m.]

