

11:03 a.m.

Wednesday, March 13, 1991

[Chairman: Mr. Ady]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'd like to call the meeting to order and welcome all the members here. We appreciate your taking time to attend this meeting. We weren't able to give you a lot of notice.

The purpose of the meeting is to approve the annual report. All of you have had a copy of it circulated to you, although it's not the final printed copy because that has yet to be done. It's necessary that we approve it before sending it to the printers, and hopefully it's acceptable to all the members of the committee.

I would just like to take a moment and express appreciation to our legislative secretary, Corinne Skura, who has done an excellent job in assisting our committee throughout the year and especially in assembling this report. Our task would be much more difficult without her input.

Now, are there any questions or discussion on the report as to its accuracy? Yes, Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Two things, Mr. Chairman. I would like to resurrect for the record the issue of minority reports. I know we've been through this before, but I feel we do the people of Alberta a disservice in not reflecting properly the range of debate and the competing ideas that were discussed, raised, moved in our lengthy committee hearings. The fact that that range, that depth, is not reflected here I think betrays the real intent of some members of this committee. I think it is inappropriate that we should not include in this report a minority report: one, where certain disagreement or other ideas need to be highlighted, and two, a list of all those motions that were moved by members and were not passed.

Specifically, I would like to raise a question about the Treasurer's response to recommendation 3 on page 20, because I think it's contradictory. The first paragraph says:

The Government will review this recommendation in light of the Foundation's mandate, to determine if private sector funding would further enhance the Foundation's effectiveness.

Then it goes on to say:

In reviewing the recommendation, it is noted that the Foundation . . .

and it answers the question. So either the first paragraph isn't required or the second paragraph isn't what it says it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, you have every right to take issue with the Treasurer's response. However, it's the responsibility of this committee to include his response, because that's part of the process. I believe that if you wish to carry it further, your opportunity would have to be in future meetings with the Provincial Treasurer in this committee or if you chose to meet with the minister – either of those two. I think it's valid for you to bring forth your concern, and it's noted. Are there any others?

Perhaps I should just deal with the issue of the minority report. I think the member is aware of the Standing Orders which preclude an opportunity for a minority report to be brought forward by a select standing committee. Those Standing Orders would have to be amended to allow it. We dealt with that last year, and so the Chair can only say that your concerns with that are noted. Okay?

MR. TAYLOR: Mine is in two parts, I guess. First, I would support my colleague. But I agree. I'm involved in another

committee now where I have trouble getting reports, so I realize there's quite a long list of precedents against minority reports.

I wanted to go on really to the Treasurer's recommendation. I don't know. I'd be interested in other opinions on the panel. This is not of a partisan nature at all. You know, all of us put in a fair amount of work. We made motions, and we listened, talked back and forth. Then to see the Treasurer blow us out of the water in the report we file doesn't seem right.

Why do we have to include the Treasurer's point? Wouldn't it have been more courteous for the Treasurer to have seen our report filed in the Legislature, the Legislature debate it, and then the Treasurer answer it? It seems so futile to put all this work in, come up with only a few recommendations, and in the bloody final report you file, there's the Treasurer saying that that's it. I don't like it. You know, it seems to me a question of a little bit of an insult to our committee and that we'd at least get it into the House before the thing was blown out of the water. So why do we have the Treasurer's recommendation in here?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the concern of the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon. I think anybody that's been on the committee and sponsored resolutions which have not been acted upon, received well, or commented upon in the report the way we would like by the Provincial Treasurer, feels this concern. But in approving the report, we're not saying that we agree with his responses. This is part of the procedure. We are noting that we followed the procedure, and this is what the Provincial Treasurer chooses to say.

MR. TAYLOR: Is it part of the procedure that this thing has to be in there? That's what I'm asking.

MR. JONSON: That's been the procedure in the preparation of the report for quite some time, as I understand it. But I think we're approving the format of the report and, insofar as our activities are concerned, that the report is accurate, and that's it. Maybe I could make one other example, and that is that we have numerous reports that go out and the comments that certain people make are duly recorded, but that doesn't mean that the people issuing the report agree with every comment or every response that appears in them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I failed to recognize Calgary-Fish Creek earlier. I recognize him now.

MR. PAYNE: Well, Mr. Chairman, when I put my hand up, it was after the remarks of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, and you have already raised properly the fact that our Standing Orders provide against minority reports.

I would remind the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark – I think his phrase was "reflecting . . . the range of debate." I agree that this standing committee report doesn't necessarily reflect the range of debate, but that's not the traditional role or purpose of these types of committee reports. That's the role and purpose of *Hansard*. If he wishes to certify to his constituents or to others the range of debate, then the *Hansard* documents will do that.

I would, however, like to offer my qualified support of his second recommendation, which is to list all the motions not passed. This isn't a categorical expression; I want to reflect on it over the summer months. But I think a case could be made for the inclusion of some very worthwhile recommendations that were made by members right around this table. I can see some

lasting value to some permanent record in the committee report of those unsuccessfully negotiated recommendations, and at some further time I will return to that subject, Mr. Chairman.

11:13

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the Member for Lacombe.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the support of the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for my second point, but I'd like to pursue further the point raised by my colleague from Westlock-Sturgeon and my own point about minority reports and really what the nature of this report becomes. I feel a truly profound frustration, and I believe that in some sense each of us as committee members should feel some embarrassment about what this represents.

As committee members we brought 50 or so recommendations. We deliberated for hour upon hour upon hour. We traveled around this province at the expense of the people of Alberta. And all we have to show for it are three passed recommendations – a profound fear of including other recommendations to demonstrate that at least some work was done and some thoughtfulness and some responsible and well-intended debate on important ideas was undertaken. Not only do we only have three recommendations passed, but before they even reach the light of day, the Treasurer, who undoubtedly has restricted the efforts of government members on this committee to promote and develop ideas, has already dispensed with them, two of them clear cut. In the third he first says that we will review it, as if to throw us this tidbit of concession that, "Hey, that's an idea; I'm going to consider it," and in the same breath, not a sentence later, he says: "Hey, I've already reviewed it. I blinked in between, and now I've got my answer."

This thing is a whitewash, and what we have done in many respects is a waste of people's time, a waste of Albertan's money. What this committee did in fact do was some good work. It raised some good ideas, and it asked some important questions. It got some answers, and it created some debate. None of that will be adequately or properly reflected in this. We should be ashamed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, the Chair has noted before that you have a right to disagree with the position the Treasurer takes on responses. However, if I could just remind the committee, our purpose here is to consider the report that's before us and its accuracy.

Without further comment I'll recognize the Member for Lacombe.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, we all believe in democracy, and I'm sure that the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark does, even though he's spouting off and saying things contrary to democracy. In this very nonpartisan group that we are, we debated these, the motions came up, and then the qualified view of the majority of this committee after full debate was that they passed three resolutions. Now, that's true democracy, and I find it very, very disturbing to hear the comments from a person I used to have respect for until the last few moments. I thought he was a man of integrity. But to come out with the statements he came out with, I just cannot fathom where he's coming from.

Anyway, I must take exception to the facts of both previous speakers, my colleagues from Calgary-Fish Creek and Edmonton-Meadowlark, in the need to again bring in all those

resolutions. We talk about a minority report so that people will know that there were other opinions. But what have we got? The group sitting here, recording it word by word: it's here in *Hansard* for the public to see as it unfolds. As we go through, we read all these various resolutions into the record. It's public knowledge; it's there. Then we come back and debate them, we come back and vote on them, and they're all read in again. Then to say we should have them in here also, I just can't agree with.

I think that's where you're getting where each one is pushing their own little deal. They lost out in the democratic process, so we'll put it in here. But they had it there. We went through the democratic process. It was voted on, and in the combined wisdom around this table – as I said before, it's a very nonpartisan group; we all know that – it came out that there were only three passed. I accept that. I lost recommendations in there. We all did. But to say that we put in resolutions and they're all going to be passed, that's a little up in the air in the realm of fantasy. We put them in there; they're debated and voted on as to their value and how they relate to the situation. It's quality, not quantity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair recognizes the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by West Yellowhead. Then I believe the Chair would entertain a motion on the annual report.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess what we're going through a bit this morning is a review of the process the committee has embarked on in the last several months. I'm not sure whether I'll be reappointed as a member of this committee next year, so I guess I'd like to just offer a couple of observations of my own as well.

The matter of minority reports. It's not a dispute, I suppose, with this committee as much as it's a dispute with the Standing Orders – and that's been pointed out – which don't allow a committee to entertain a minority report. I'm also disappointed that at the end of the process all we have been able to come up with as a committee is three recommendations, all of which appear, at least on the surface, to be discounted by the Provincial Treasurer.

The other recommendations – I think the report points out 45 of them – also represent the work and the business of the committee yet are not part of the official report of the committee. I do believe that that, in a sense by omission, is not giving a fair and total picture of what occurred within the committee review process. So I support the points that have been made already around the table: that omitting a listing of those recommendations to some extent doesn't really give the full picture of what the committee considered and dealt with.

Might I just make a couple of comments, Mr. Chairman? I appreciate generally the co-operative and gentlemanly way in which you've conducted the business of the committee, and I'd like to take this opportunity to say that for the record.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I understand some of the pressures the chairman is under in a committee. I know we had differences at times, and perhaps ruling some questions out of order from time to time I took exception to and I think would continue to in the future, but on balance I appreciate the manner in which you've conducted the work of the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Having listened closely to other members, I too appreciate your chairmanship. I know how difficult it is sometimes to chair a group that can sometimes be unruly and try to participate in their own partisan views without caring about the citizens of Alberta. But you handled it very well, and I compliment you on that.

The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek mentioned the other recommendations, the 45 recommendations that were put forth. Surely I would have to agree with him that those could easily be added to this report. However, as the Member for Lacombe brought up, *Hansard* is available to the people of Alberta if they really care to read all the words. So I guess we have to decide whether we put a multipage package together to include *Hansard* or leave the *Hansard* to be read by the people of Alberta as they so choose.

The Treasurer's views on the recommendations of the heritage trust fund committee are his views alone, and we'll have the opportunity, as the Legislature convenes, to raise questions with the Treasurer if we're not satisfied with his answers and responses to the recommendations of the Alberta heritage trust fund committee.

Mr. Chairman, I'm sure that as the committee returns we have learned a lot from each other. We've learned a lot about the heritage trust fund. Like my friend from Calgary-Mountain View, I do not know at this state whether I will return to the committee or not, but I would hope that those who are returned will take the same serious view as those who were on the committee in the last term.

11:23

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The Chair appreciates the kind remarks.

MR. GESELL: Just one point with respect to the final report. I see a similarity here between what the committee does in its discussion and debate and the final recommendation that comes forward in the report and between what the House does when they debate and the debate is recorded in *Hansard*. But what you actually receive out of that debate in the House are the Votes and Proceedings, which are the items that are actually agreed to in the democratic system. The similarity here is the same in the final report that comes forward by this committee. It lists those items that we in a democratic process have agreed to. So that tradition is definitely there, and I would ask members to keep that in mind.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
The Member for Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you. I believe this past year has been good for all of us as far as what we've done in reviewing the heritage trust fund. I would just like to make a comment on the process of this. If we don't like the process, maybe we should hold a meeting or something and discuss that a little bit at a further time.

As far as the actual report goes, I would like to move that we accept the report as presented.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. MOORE: I'll second it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Discussion on the motion? Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, thank you. I'm just wondering whether the mover would consider a bit of an amendment. On page 1 the introduction is a little misleading. The second sentence:

It must be noted that the democratic principle of decision making was followed throughout the Committee's proceedings, and that all the recommendations contained herein were voted on. That could lead one to believe that we only had three recommendations. This is grammar maybe.

MS SKURA: Yeah.

MR. TAYLOR: I think it's grammatical. The second last sentence says:

Any person wishing more detail should refer to the transcripts, which number 332 pages in length and are organized according to subject heading.

I would just like to suggest, Mr. Chairman, that even in that first sentence or the last - we're already mentioning length - we should mention that we voted on 45 resolutions.

MS SKURA: That's contained later though.

MR. TAYLOR: Does it come out later on?

MS SKURA: Yes. I'll find it for you. That comes up on page 19, second paragraph.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, I think it would be better mentioned in that introduction, and I think it would accomplish . . . Quite a lot of us are concerned. I'm just suggesting that I think with a little better grammar - first of all, "all the recommendations contained herein were voted on" could be interpreted to mean that that's all the recommendations we had. At least if I were making a quick perusal, I would assume that. I think that should be changed somewhat to "the recommendations passed are noted herein," or if you wish, "of 45 recommendations, those passed are contained herein." It's just a very short thing, but I think it accomplishes a little bit.

MRS. BLACK: "Those approved are contained herein."

MR. TAYLOR: Yeah.

MR. FISCHER: I don't have any problem with that.

MR. TAYLOR: Is that all right?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a moment. The Chair just needs to clarify something here. Ponoka-Rimbey, the member who put his hand up, is it on this point? If not, Calgary-Foothills was on the speaking list earlier. Was it on this particular point? In which case the Chair will recognize the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. JONSON: It was just, hopefully, Mr. Chairman, a constructive comment on this. The concern raised by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon is a difficult one to deal with, I think, in an amendment. But I think there would be some agreement in the committee for two things he's suggesting in terms of wording and grammar as well as maybe a lead-in with the number of recommendations. These could maybe be accepted as an

editorial matter that could be dealt with between yourself and the secretary.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I have no problem with changing it. I think more properly the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon's point could have been raised in the earlier discussion over the report. However, we can handle it in this format, and the legislative secretary will take care of it.

The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

MRS. BLACK: No. That's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yours is covered? All right.

If there's no other discussion, all those in favour of the motion? Those opposed? The motion carries.

For the information of the committee, the Chair would just like to advise that the committee has traveled to almost all projects that are funded by the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund with the exception of the facility at Prince Rupert and the Husky upgrader. The decision was made last year that we would not travel to the Husky upgrader because it was not far enough along where we could get a good understanding of its function or its construction.

The suggestions that have come in from committee members so far to the Chair are that the committee should travel to Prince Rupert this fall in preparation for our hearings and give consideration to the Husky upgrader if it's far enough along where it would be of benefit to the committee. The Chair is not asking for a motion; this is just by way of information. Certainly the Chair will be receptive to other suggestions during the spring session, and we can finalize that decision. The Chair is in the hands of the committee on the places they feel a visit would be beneficial to them in doing their work and deliberations. That's all the business that the Chair has at the present time.

I recognize the Member for Lacombe.

MR. MOORE: I move we adjourn. [interjection]

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's not debatable.

MR. TAYLOR: I know, but I wanted to make a motion under New Business before you move to adjourn. In other words, you

were on item 3. I don't think he should have introduced that.

MR. MOORE: I'll withdraw the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. The Member for Lacombe, as a courtesy, will withdraw his motion.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you.

I would like to move that the Chair check with Legislative Counsel as to whether we have to include the recommendations of the Treasurer in our final report. I am a firm believer when I read the *Rules of Order* and the introduction that this is a report for the House. It should be our report. It shouldn't have anybody else's recommendations in there. The Treasurer's recommendations could well influence the debate this engenders in the House. If you're looking at the parliamentary system, I don't think it's proper to include it in there, and what I'm hearing from the Chair is that it has to be. I'm not making a move now, but I'm making the motion that you check with Legislative Counsel whether or not it has to be included. If it has to be, it has to be; if it's optional, we can still include it. But I'd like to know whether it has to be included.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. On the motion, Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. JONSON: Well, it's not that I'm wanting to avoid motions, but it seems to me that's the kind of thing, if it's acceptable to you, Mr. Chairman, that you could simply record as taking it under advisement and pursuing it for the hon. member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's the very thought the Chair had. I have no problem with accepting that and reporting back on that point to the committee when we next meet.

MR. TAYLOR: It's all right with me. I'm happy. Okay, let's move adjournment. I want to pass something here.

MR. MOORE: I agree with you on that one, Nick.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour of adjournment? Opposed? The meeting stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11:33 a.m.]