

2:01 p.m.

Wednesday, January 25, 1995

[Chairman: Mr. Dunford]

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. We will call the committee to order at 2:01, and we will then proceed until 4:01 or to whenever the questions have expired and all of the recommendations are read into the record, whichever comes first, in which case we will adjourn.

I would like to welcome the Hon. Gary Mar, the Minister of Community Development, and ask that he introduce his guests and then give us a brief opening statement. We will then enter into questioning and will begin with the loyal opposition and then to a government member. Then we'll just alternate back and forth, Mr. Minister, until all questions are exhausted or you're exhausted or we're exhausted.

With that, if you'd like to proceed, sir, we'd appreciate it.

MR. MAR: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. At the outset I'll introduce to you the people to my immediate left: Julian Nowicki, the deputy minister of the department, and also from my department Margie Facey-Crowther.

My ministry is involved with one program that receives funding from the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, and that's phase 2 of the capital development of the urban parks program. Eleven cities – Calgary, Airdrie, Wetaskiwin, Camrose, Leduc, Spruce Grove, St. Albert, Fort Saskatchewan, Fort McMurray, Edmonton, and Strathcona county including Sherwood Park – are included in phase 2. Phase 1 of the program, which was in place from 1980 to 1986, included the cities of Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Lloydminster, and Grande Prairie.

Urban parks provide a very significant improvement to the quality of life for residents and visitors to these cities. In addition to the recreational opportunities and natural amenities, urban parks also attract tourists and make these cities more desirable places for businesses to locate. Forty point three million dollars have been invested in the first five years of the program for land acquisition, planning and design, and capital development projects. The program is in its sixth year.

You may recall in the 1994 budget that we announced the termination of this program effective in 1996-97. In order to ensure that legal liabilities and safety factors were considered, \$9 million is being allocated over the remainder of the program to complete projects currently under way. Of that amount, \$4 million has been spent for 1994-95. In 1995-96 spending will be reduced to \$3 million, and in the final year, 1996-97, we will spend \$2 million. These changes will have reduced the program duration from 10 years to eight years and anticipated spending from \$82.2 million to \$49.1 million.

My department staff completed meetings in early March of 1994 with representatives of the remaining nine cities to determine each city's priorities for development. In 1994-95 \$3,876,976 has been disbursed in grants as follows: \$325,000 to Airdrie, \$159,100 to Camrose, \$1 million to Fort McMurray, \$311,722 to Fort Saskatchewan, \$185,074 to Leduc, \$606,303 to St. Albert, \$170,727 to Spruce Grove, \$1 million to Strathcona county, and \$119,050 to Wetaskiwin. The remainder of \$123,024 is used for administrative support. This reduced program will still allow the cities who had begun to complete their parks and provide long-term facilities and amenities to enhance the quality of life for both present and future generations of their residents of Alberta.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Before we proceed with the questions, Mr. Minister, one of our members has to leave shortly for another

meeting and wants the opportunity to read his recommendations into the record.

Denis Herard, I'll ask you to do that, and if there are any other members that wish to do it as well, I'll ask for it at this time.

MR. HERARD: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity, and I apologize to the minister for sort of interfering, you know, when you're on a roll. I'll be very brief.

Be it resolved that Executive Council consider the re-establishment of the water management system improvement program with appropriate funding to complete urgent irrigation rehabilitation projects that were not funded by the previous capital projects division program.

The second recommendation is:

Be it resolved that all salaries and benefits funded by the Alberta heritage savings trust fund adhere to the same fiscal restraint policies that apply to all government departments.

Those are all my resolutions, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Bonnie Laing, I saw your hand.

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I beg your indulgence, Mr. Minister. I would like to move that

the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act be discontinued and that the review of these accounts be part of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts mandate and that the Alberta heritage savings trust fund portion be given a designated time allotment at the time the appropriate minister appears before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other members want to read theirs in? Okay, Danny.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: We've got a few of them to read in, so are we going to read all of ours in?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I was trying to accommodate the minister as best I could in that . . .

MR. DALLA-LONGA: He's got to leave as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, he can't leave till we're done with him, but if we were done with him, then we could spend the rest of the time reading recommendations in. So if you're going to be here to hear his remarks and then to provide questions, maybe you could wait till after we're all finished that process.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: I'm going to be leaving as well, so I'll read mine at least anyway. How's that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Well, go ahead and read yours in then.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Thank you for your indulgence. I move that

the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act be designated to enter into negotiations with Vencap Equities Alberta Ltd. relative to concluding an agreement respecting early repayment of the heritage savings trust fund loan.

My second recommendation. I move that

the negotiations relative to the repayment of the loan ensure to the fullest extent possible that the original mandate of Vencap in diversifying the Alberta economy be respected and maintained.

My third and final recommendation. I move that

the negotiations relative to repayment of the loan require that Vencap retain its head office in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Now questions from the committee. Lance White.

MR. WHITE: Mr. Minister, as I've heard you say many times before, parks are a crucial investment in urban landscape for the people that reside in those closed communities and particularly those that are in a socioeconomic position as to not be able to leave the confines of a city on a regular basis. With that in mind, how is it that this particular program has become a lower priority in government spending, particularly out of the heritage savings trust fund, which is supposedly the area where investments in the future are made?

MR. MAR: Well, there has already been a great deal of money, historically, spent on urban parks. I think if you were to ask people in the cities where both phase 1 and phase 2 parks have been put in, they would tell you that they are very, very good parks and that they are wonderful amenities to have in the city. At a time when we're looking at all areas of government, although there is a clear benefit to the amenities provided by parks, they cannot be immune from an examination of cutting expenditures.

The other serious consideration that I think has to be given on this point is to the operating costs of such facilities. Of course, the heritage savings trust fund provides the capital for these parks, but it would be a serious burden upon municipalities and the provincial government. If there were a further expansion of park facilities, there would be a greater burden upon those municipalities from an operating point of view as well.

The amount of money that has been spent in capital on parks out of the program's total is about \$135.7 million to date.

2:11

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Minister. As the program progressed the smaller urban centres were able to put forward their applications much earlier because the master plan was less involved and required much less public input. The two major cities, of course, had a problem in putting that together and getting their funds and getting simply the magnitude of the funds and the expenditures spread over time. In truncating this program, when the decision made was to truncate it, that in fact left the two major cities with less funds per capita and, in your words, with more need of these kinds of spaces. How is it that you're able to rationalize to all Albertans that these select Albertans were in fact, for lack of a better term, short changed?

MR. MAR: Well, out of the phase 2 urban parks capital program the city of Calgary was originally allocated \$15 million, and the city of Edmonton was also allocated \$15 million. The amount that each of those municipalities will end up drawing upon is a total of 20 percent in the case of Calgary and 36 percent in the case of Edmonton. So they weren't completely shut out from the original allocations that they were given.

The other point to make on that is that there were completions of other urban parks in those two cities. In 1983 Fish Creek provincial park in Calgary was completed at a total cost of just over \$45 million, and in the city of Edmonton the Capital City recreation park, which was completed in 1978, had a total expenditure of just over \$42 million.

MR. WHITE: That being fully understood, Mr. Minister, what I was saying is that of supposedly those in need, those in urban

centres, the residents of Edmonton and Calgary, the two major centres, in fact received I think in the order of about one-fifth of the funds on a per capita basis. Presumably the need would be higher in the large urban centres, and that's really what I was asking about: the inequity. Will it in fact be addressed sometime in the future with perhaps another park in northeast Calgary, or northwest Calgary perhaps because of the location of Fish Creek, or will there be something in northeast Edmonton or southeast Edmonton, you know, a project to fill this inequity?

MR. MAR: Not in the foreseeable future, but at some point down the road that would certainly be something that could be examined.

MR. HAVELOCK: The member may be interested to know that there's a 40-acre park in northeast Calgary called Prairie Winds which was just been put in place about six or seven years ago.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks for that, Jon.

MR. HAVELOCK: I'm just here to help.

MR. MAR: Out of the \$135.7 million that I referred to earlier, which will be the total capital to completion for urban parks, \$95.5 million of that was spent on programs in the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good. Thanks for that clarification. Heather Forsyth.

MRS. FORSYTH: Well, I like Fish Creek.

AN HON. MEMBER: And it likes you too.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you.

Mr. Minister, what I'd like to ask you is: has any economic benefit analysis ever been done for the urban parks program?

MR. MAR: A preliminary analysis was done using the demand economic impact model developed for Economic Development and Tourism, and that was completed this year. The analysis looked at the impact of the \$13.88 million spent in the '92-93 year on urban park development across the province. The highlights of the analysis include: 237 person-years of annual full-time employment; a sales volume, including direct, indirect, and induced expenditures, totaling \$25.8 million, which is a multiplier of 1.83 on the Alberta heritage savings trust fund budget amount; and a total of \$1.5 million in provincial taxes and \$600,000 in municipal taxes generated as a result of sales and income induced by this program.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you. How will the budget cutbacks affect the program and the cities' development schedules?

MR. MAR: Well, each urban municipality is on its own schedule as far as how far along it is in its project. What the result of the changes or the termination of the program will be is that it will allow for the completion of projects that are currently under way but not an undertaking of any new ones.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you. I may have something after.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Mike Percy.

DR. PERCY: I'll pass.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Howard Sapers.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, a couple of questions, and I hope that the chair will continue to be lenient in recognizing the thread between the main question and the supplemental.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In other words, you want me to pay attention and listen closely. Is that the point?

MR. SAPERS: No. Actually, maybe you'd like to go for coffee.

Mr. Minister, a question about the public consultation. I know that there was extensive public consultation during the whole urban parks development process, and there were consultations around the priorities. Cities were involved in meeting with their own communities and their own citizens and trying to decide which were the highest priority projects. The initial discussions, of course, were based on the assumption that the program would continue for two years beyond the date which we now know it is in fact going to take place. So there are priorities that have not been met, and in the minds of some people there are obligations in fact which have not been met because the province has canceled the program two years early. I'm wondering whether or not you have done or whether you contemplate doing some public consultations around those unmet priorities regarding the sense that in the minds of many people there is an unmet obligation at this point on behalf of the provincial government because expectations were created.

MR. MAR: Well, I don't know if it would be fair to say that an expectation creates an obligation per se, but there certainly has been discussion with the municipal governments involved and my department officials on what priorities might be and what types of projects can be completed to make these parks safe and usable places. For example, in the county of Strathcona there was a large hole in the ground that was part of their park development, and it had to be completed in order to make the park safe. So those are the types of criteria that we've applied to determine which projects should be carried through, that being what projects were necessary to complete in order to make the parks safe and usable.

MR. SAPERS: So you're doing no more public consultation around urban parks and the unmet priorities that were identified at the outset of the program.

MR. MAR: No.

MR. SAPERS: You mentioned that you've had discussions with municipalities. Have you also had discussions with the Department of Municipal Affairs regarding the downloading to the municipalities in fact of the cost of now maintaining or even continuing to develop these projects, particularly in light of the government's chosen path, which is to lump together all payments to municipalities into a single discretionary grant?

MR. MAR: Well, I have spoken with the Minister of Municipal Affairs on the subject of unconditional grants. There are some grants that my department is responsible for that do make sense to roll into the unconditional grants that are given to municipalities, and some do not. In my view the grants with respect to the operating dollars for urban parks did fit within the scheme of unconditional grants to municipalities.

2:21

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

MR. SAPERS: My second supplemental.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. I've got you marked. You've had three.

MR. SAPERS: That was just for clarification of the minister's answer, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. We'll get back to you.  
Danny Dalla-Longa.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have several constituents, well, actually hundreds of constituents that are concerned about the development of Edworthy park and the associated commercial developments that might be going through there and stuff. Could the minister update us on what the status of that park is and what his involvement is in that park, if in fact his department has any involvement with that?

MR. MAR: None. My department doesn't have any involvement with that park.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Okay. Thank you. I have no other questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.  
Ken Nicol.

DR. NICOL: I'll pass.

MR. WHITE: Mr. Minister, many previous studies have said and economic development authority models all would say that parks and park spaces in urban centres in particular but not limited to urban centres create a great deal of economic spin-offs, not directly and not in isolation. In your department's experience – granted it wasn't your personal experience because you weren't minister at the time – through the municipal recreation/tourism areas grants, they were, as I understand, rated an economic development too. With all of that in mind and with your statements – and I believe that you and I believe them – that these parks are an investment, how is it that the Alberta heritage savings trust fund management cannot see their way clear to adding more parks? Is there some rationale? Is it purely bottom line? If you apply the same rules of downsizing to your department as to any other department, then this is considerably greater than just downsizing. This is stop.

MR. MAR: Well, the impact of the spending of Alberta heritage savings trust fund moneys for more capital would necessarily have an impact on GRF because, as you are aware, the amount of money that goes towards operating costs comes from GRF. I think that the priority must be towards ensuring that we can preserve and maintain the parks that we currently have before we, in your words, invest in more projects.

MR. WHITE: So there aren't indicators . . .

MR. SAPERS: Be careful; this is a supplemental now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is a supplemental.

MR. WHITE: Yeah. That's okay. I'm good with that.

I've lost my train of thought here. Thank you very much, chappies. Yeah. It was one from this side too; wasn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. You can get back to me, if you like.

MR. WHITE: No. It's gone now; it's lost. He answered most of them anyway. Thank you kindly, Mr. Minister.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Howard Sapers.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Getting back to the discussion about your conversations with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I would hope that the conversations were broader than between ministers. I was wondering whether or not you could perhaps provide the committee with a list of the municipalities who were contacted or who provided feedback to you when the program was canceled and if you could give the committee some indication of the tone of the responses from the municipalities regarding the cancellation of the program.

MR. MAR: Maybe what I'll do is defer that question to my deputy minister.

MR. NOWICKI: We met with all the cities in phase 2 that are involved, and as the minister said earlier, we had in-depth discussions with them in terms of projects that were nearing completion that will require completion. Through the consultations we reached satisfactory conclusions with every municipality involved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary.

MR. SAPERS: Okay. I understand that you've reached an agreement with the municipalities involved, but really they had no choice other than to reach an agreement, because in fact the decision was made prior to consultation with the municipalities that the program would be canceled. The discussions, as I understand your answer, were really around the quickest and least expensive way to satisfy those projects which the minister has characterized as projects that perhaps were prioritized because of safety concerns or other liability issues. My question is: could you inform the committee about the nature of the response from the municipalities? I want to get back to this issue of the fact that there were some long-term plans put into place and that those plans are now going to be entirely the responsibility of the municipal governments or they won't be acted on at all. I would appreciate knowing what the municipal governments who were involved in phase 2 think about that and what they have communicated to the government about that.

MR. MAR: I think the program is a little more complicated than I'm about to describe, but in essence what would happen would be that a municipal government would put together an urban parks master plan and be able to access the urban parks program in order to plan and prepare the overall master plan for their particular municipality. After their plan was completed, they could then make application to access the fund for particular projects that fell within their master plan. Now, the master plan was simply that: a plan for the overall development of urban parks in the municipality. But the individual capital projects within that plan took place over a period of time, so there would be applications on an annual basis for money to complete certain phases of their master plan. So if you're referring to the expectation that everything in the

master plan would necessarily be approved for capital, then that would not be a correct assumption, that they would expect everything in their master plan to be approved.

MR. SAPERS: Given that one of our responsibilities on this committee is to make recommendations regarding the use of the fund, I'm wondering if you could advise us as to whether or not you believe that the best way to meet the urban parks priorities of municipal governments around the province is through funding as part of an unconditional grant from Municipal Affairs or through targeted or earmarked funding from your department specifically set aside for that purpose.

MR. MAR: Well, I'm not sure, Mr. Chairman, if that's something that's within the ambit of the committee in the sense that we're not talking about heritage savings trust fund dollars. We are talking about GRF dollars when you're talking about the operating grants, be they conditional or unconditional and be they from Municipal Affairs or Community Development.

MR. WHITE: I have in fact regained my composure from the rude interruptions from prior questions. The questions relate to whether in fact the department will be measuring the economic development and tourism impact and therefore the quality of life on the citizenry of Albertans by the location of parks in urban centres. There are many models. It's not an exhaustive study, but it has been done.

MR. MAR: That was the question that was asked by Heather Forsyth. It's an interesting point, because I think everybody understands intuitively the value of parks and the contribution that they make to quality of life. One only needs to ask someone: why do you live where you live? Often people will say: well, the quality of life in this particular community is good. That is made up of things like amenities, like parks. I think it's very positive that we're now starting to quantify and put quantitative arguments to support what we understand intuitively or with qualitative arguments.

2:31

MR. WHITE: There is no formal measurement then?

MR. MAR: There is. As I was referring to in the answer to the question provided by Heather Forsyth, there has been that type of economic analysis done.

MR. WHITE: Those studies in fact are available so that one could peruse them?

MR. MAR: Yeah, that would be available.

MR. WHITE: Terrific. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On that question, then, in terms of the process, it would be normal procedure to supply that report or directive, whatever it is, through the chair. We will accept the responsibility, then, for distributing it to the committee members.

MR. MAR: I'll undertake to provide that to the chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Anything further? All right. Well, there are no further questions. Mr. Minister, thank you very much for your candidness and openness and co-operation. Certainly you're welcome to stay

and listen to recommendations or you're free to get back to work on your busy schedule.

MR. MAR: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Lance, would you like to read your recommendations in?

MR. SAPERS: I had one more question, but I'll ask you later.

MR. WHITE: Moved that the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act be consulted on any decision undertaken by the Investment Committee to dispose of assets contained within the Alberta investment division.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Do you have more?

MR. WHITE: One more. Moved by myself that subsequent annual reports of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund seriously consider greater use of pictorial displays such as bar graphs, line graphs, and tables to present long-term performance trends of the fund in order to communicate this information more effectively to Albertans.

That is it, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.  
Dr. Percy.

DR. PERCY: I would move, Mr. Chairman, that the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Investment Committee give consideration to seeking greater input from private-sector investment managers located in Alberta, with the objective of achieving a more favourable return on investments commensurate with an assessment of the risk involved.

I would also like to read the recommendations of Dr. Massey, who is unable to be here. Then I'll shift to mine. I'll just go in order. Moved by Dr. Percy on behalf of Dr. Massey that subsequent annual reports of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund provide a more detailed schedule of the annual administrative expenses incurred by the fund, with a breakdown of salaries and benefits, communications, consulting fees, investment management fees, and any other payment categories connected to the administration expenses incurred by the fund.

I would also move on behalf of Dr. Massey that subsequent annual reports of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund contain an economic outlook statement which provides readers with projections for key economic variables which impact upon fund performance.

On behalf of myself I would move that the Investment Committee be required to prepare an investment manual which sets out definitive policies and procedures for investments or classes of investments within the fund and establishes performance objectives for investment and classes of investments in relation to comparable private-sector investment benchmarks, indices, or standards.

Again on behalf of Dr. Massey I would move that the annual expenditures currently made through the capital projects division of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund be made in future years through the general revenue fund exclusively.

Then, finally, I move that if a decision is made to retain the heritage fund as an income generating or income stabilization fund, a portion of income earned during the fiscal year be retained to offset the impact of inflation on the fund principal and maintain its value over time.

I also move that available assets within the cash and marketable securities division of the Alberta heritage fund be applied towards the accelerated redemp-

tion of high-cost term debt in order to reduce annual debt servicing costs.

Finally, I move that

if a decision is made to retain the heritage fund as an income generating or income stabilization fund, the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act be amended to allow for a targeted threshold of investment in foreign equities through an assessment of risk and the use of international benchmarks designed to produce a higher market rate of return for the fund.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think, sir, you may have one on your document, number 8, that has not been read in.

DR. PERCY: That I skipped over? Okay. Thank you. Finally, I move that

the annual report of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund provide a detailed explanation of the assumptions underlying the determination of the market values prepared by the department of Treasury for provincial Crown corporations: the Alberta Agricultural Development Corporation, the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and the Alberta Opportunity Company.

I don't think I've missed any by Dr. Massey.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Howard Sapers.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have three recommendations at this point. I move that

the department of Treasury be required to prepare a three-year business plan on the specific goals, objectives, actions, and results to be achieved by the Alberta heritage savings trust fund.

I further move that

the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act be designated to assess whether investment managers have achieved performance targets and benchmarks identified in the three-year business plan by requiring that investment managers appear before the committee to account for fund performance on an annual basis.

Finally, this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, I move that the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act encourage the Minister of Health to investigate the cause and incidence of chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia through the use of funding available for research from the heritage savings trust fund.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fibromyalgia?

MR. SAPERS: It is a disease which mimics other syndromes which causes chronic fatigue, chronic aching of the joints.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, I see. Thank you for that clarification.  
Dr. Nicol.

DR. NICOL: I would like to move that

subsequent annual reports of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund contain an annual independent assessment by designated investment dealers on the market value of Alberta heritage savings trust fund financial assets as a means to evaluate the liquidity and marketability of investments or classes of investments.

Second, I would like to move that

subsequent annual reports of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund provide a more detailed explanation of variances between actual and projected performance benchmarks and targets and express the impact of these variances in monetary terms as recommended by the Auditor General of Alberta.

Also, I would like to move that

the office of the Auditor General be required to certify the reliability, appropriateness, and accuracy of the performance measures and data

contained within the annual report of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to move that the Department of Energy be required to prepare a report evaluating the benefits of the southwest Alberta renewable energy initiative, SWAREI, and include projected feasibility scenarios with respect to program power allocation as a component of the Alberta integrated system, AIS.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much. Now, just to refresh all of our memories, we're scheduled back here, then, next Tuesday, the 31st of January, from 10 until noon and then 2 until, I guess, whenever to debate the recommendations.

Mike Percy.

DR. PERCY: It is feasible – isn't it? – that we can in fact vote upon the recommendations that day should debate be exhausted, or are we constitutionally locked into . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't know if we're constitutionally locked, but the practice of this committee, which we have discussed and will carry forward, is that as soon as the debate is over on Tuesday, we will adjourn at whatever time that might be, and then we'll reconvene at 10 o'clock on Wednesday, February 1. Then we just do the recorded vote on each without any discussion.

Okay. Any further clarifications, questions? Lance.

MR. WHITE: I'm sorry; I was occupied at the moment. Vencap? When are we to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: They were at one time scheduled to appear. They then turned down our invitation and will not be in front of us this year.

MR. WHITE: They have that option; do they?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have no subpoena.

2:41

MR. SAPERS: You can take away my supplemental questions and you can't control . . . What kind of power is that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We work under the salesmanship and marketability of your chair.

MR. HAVELOCK: Seriously, Mr. Chairman, why did they turn down the invitation?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I can only tell you what I know, and what I know is that they declined to appear this year. They said: thank you very much for the invitation, but we're not coming. Initially our invitation had been accepted and it had been scheduled, but there was a concern expressed at the time. That's why in some early schedules, as I recall it, there was kind of a TBA, like, to be announced, and then we were able to get it to January 24.

MR. HAVELOCK: They only had a two-month window to try and carve out two hours of their time, so I can understand how they couldn't make it. That's very facetious. Thank you.

MR. WHITE: It was merely to answer to the people in a public forum.

MR. HAVELOCK: That's okay; they'll answer to the *Calgary Herald* tomorrow. We'll get on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Howard.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm wondering whether or not on behalf of the committee you could write them asking whether or not they would entertain and agree to at least responding in writing to written questions, if they continue to make themselves unavailable in person.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; we'll be glad to do that. I'm accepting that, yes, the chair would be willing to do that. If that is the consensus of this group, then fair enough. If it isn't the consensus, then I guess I'd ask somebody to make a recommendation that we do that and we can debate it then next week.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Chairman, I'd be happy to phrase that as a motion, and if you would accept a seconder and call a vote from the members present . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we don't vote on things. If everybody nods their head and asks me to go ahead and do that, I'll just simply go ahead and do that. Not everybody's nodding their head.

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Chairman, could I suggest, if you're going to do that, that I would like a written response as to why they would not appear before the committee and reasons therefore.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. That question, then, will be part of the document that I'll send forward to their chief executive officer. Okay? Anything else?

MR. WHITE: Adjourn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A motion for adjournment: Lance White. All in favour? Carried. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 2:45 p.m.]