

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Wednesday, April 13, 1983

Chairman: Mr. Martin

10 a.m.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to get started, because I know we're all busy. I hope this meeting today will be a quick one, just for organizational purposes, to set the framework of what we're going to do in the next few weeks. Before I get started, I would like to introduce the Auditor General, Mr. D.W. Rogers, and his staff. I'm going to have him introduce his staff to the members of the Public Accounts.

MR. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my right is Neil Henkelman, assistant Auditor General, and on my left is Mr. Michael Morgan, who is principal in the office.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Today, I thought we would follow very closely what's been done in the past because, frankly, as a new chairman, I wouldn't have any other choice. I'm looking at the minutes of what they did. They established ground rules, and I'd like to see, if it's agreeable to people, that we do the same things. The tradition in the past for the meetings has been every Wednesday morning from here on, between the hours of 10 and 11:30. Is that agreeable to the committee? If not, some other alternatives then? Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

In the past, the practice has been to allow one question and two supplementaries. I would ask if that's agreeable to this group.

MR. WEISS: A question first, Mr. Chairman. Is that a question and two supplementaries from one individual member, or two supplementaries from any member?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I understand it would be from one individual member.

MR. WEISS: And there would be further supplementaries from other members?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Correct. Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next, the tradition started that there would be an opposition member as chairman but there would be a government member as vice-chairman of Public Accounts. Mr. Pahl, I believe you have some word on that.

MR. PAHL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It would be the government side's recommendation that Mr. Ron Moore be named vice-chairman.

MR. MARTIN: Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I might just call on Mr. Rogers. We're not going to go into this new book as he did the last day. Maybe you want to tell us, especially some of the new members, about the new book entitled, Improving

Accountability, Canadian Public Accounts Committees and Legislative Auditors, so that they could refer to it in their own time.

MR. ROGERS: Yes, Mr. Chairman. This was a study prepared by the Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation, and surveys the situation as it relates to public accounts committees and legislative auditors right across the country. We have supplies of these books still in our office. We'd be very happy to get a copy for members who do not have the study. Perhaps anyone who is interested could leave a message with the chairman. If he relayed those to me, I would bring them to the next meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A show of hands of the people who would be interested in obtaining this booklet.

MR. PAHL: Mr. Rogers, I thought that report had been dealt with. Were you intending it as a guide for new members?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Pahl, it was my idea that people just have this booklet as a guide for their own use. You're right; we wouldn't go into it, because we did do that thoroughly. Could we have hands up, those people who would like that booklet?

MR. ROGERS: Everybody is not here, so we could get about a dozen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe even 15 to bring to the next meeting.

MR. ROGERS: I'll see that they're brought to the next meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The next thing I would propose for the next meeting or two, depending on what Public Accounts wants, is to bring Mr. Rogers to discuss his most recent report, the Auditor General's report. I propose that we do that between 10 and 11:30 at the next meeting, on April 20. That's next Wednesday. This is what we'd go into to begin with. Would that be agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're moving along rather quickly here. Are there any other matters?

MR. PAHL: Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether Mr. Rogers might want to do this in his opening remarks or suggest someone else who might go into a general overview of the functions of the Public Accounts Committee and how they have operated in the past. I think it would certainly be a helpful refresher for me, whether he would like to do it or perhaps someone from Treasury could overview it. I wonder if there might be an indication from Mr. Rogers how he thinks we could profitably handle that.

MR. ROGERS: Mr. Chairman, if the committee wishes, I would be very happy to handle that. I guess I've attended every Public Accounts Committee -- all but perhaps one or two -- meeting since the beginning of 1973. So, yes, I'd be very happy to share any thoughts I have on the duties of Public Accounts committees.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The request has been that we go over the whole role to begin with so especially new members would have an idea. Would it be agreed that we do that the first session?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. PAHL: Mr. Chairman, I think it may not take the whole, but before Mr. Rogers jumps into his report it might be helpful to have a 10- or 15-minute perspective on the role of the committee. That was the nature of my suggestion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, my understanding would be that we'd do this right at the start and as much conversation or questions people have. After that, for the remaining time, go into the report, if that's agreeable.

MR. ROGERS: Mr. Chairman, in those remarks perhaps I could also talk a little about the office of the Auditor General so there's an understanding of my place in the scheme of things.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would be valuable. Is there any other business people would like to bring up before we adjourn this organizational meeting?

MR. WEISS: A question, Mr. Chairman. Would it not be appropriate for members to bring suggestions or recommendations to that particular meeting on what members we'd wish to call before the committee in the future, so they'd have advance time and preparation?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Certainly. You're saying that members might have suggestions about meetings, and they could bring them to me for the next meeting. Certainly. Any other business?

Would somebody like to move adjournment?

MR. GOGO: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I take it that it's agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for appearing. We'll see you next week.

*The meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.*