

[Chairman: Mr. Pashak]

[10:01 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, I think we can call the meeting to order. I move that we call the clock 10 o'clock.

Well, we're going to be relaxed today and informal, because it's just an introductory meeting and we're not conducting the regular business of the committee.

I'd like to welcome all of the previous members back. I note that there are a number of new members that I'd like to especially welcome. Mrs. Shirley McLellan and Mr. Alex McEachern are new members to the committee, as is Mr. Taylor. I'd also like to introduce the new members to some of our committee secretaries. Ann Quinn has been the secretary of the committee over the past number of years. I think, as we all know, she probably will be leaving shortly for a bit of a recess, and Louise Empson will be filling in for her. I don't know if it's on a permanent basis yet or not, but that'll be resolved, I guess, over the next little while.

MRS. QUINN: We'll see how it goes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll see how it goes, as Ann says. And with us today, as he always is, is the Auditor General of the province of Alberta, Mr. Don Salmon.

So with that, I'd like to ask the co-chairman of our committee to take the Chair, and I'd like to make just a very, very brief report on our budget and some upcoming plans that we have in the following year. So, Mr. Moore, if you'd care to take the Chair, maybe I'll just sit over here.

[Mr. R. Moore in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, members of Public Accounts, we're into it for another session, and I'm sure it'll be interesting and lively as always. The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark seems to be in agreement. We're in agreement with the agenda that was distributed here a few days ago? Are there any additions anybody would like to make?

I take it you're all in agreement, so then we will go to the chairman's report. It's listed on the agenda in two sections: the committee budget for this year and the hosting of the 1989 national conference here in Alberta. I'm sure a lot of you have looked at that hosting of a conference and are wondering what it's all about. This is a standard procedure, that all the chairmen and vice-chairmen of Public Accounts meet once a year on a rotation basis through the provinces of Canada. Ten years ago next year Alberta had it, and it's already run around to our turn again. It's a major undertaking, and the chairman wanted to go over that with you to give you some preliminary ideas, so I would ask Mr. Pashak if he would give us an overview of all that.

MR. PASHAK: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Well, having at the moment circulated a copy of our budget, first of all, for this year, this is for your information. I guess it's my responsibility to prepare this budget and submit it to the Members' Services Committee. Actually, I submitted a budget that was somewhat larger than this to make sure that both Mr. Moore and I could travel to Halifax this year for the annual meeting of the Chairs and co-Chairs of public accounts committees. The Members' Services Committee in their wisdom decided to cut the budget back somewhat, and I'll circulate the minutes of that meeting for your information. They cut it back, by the way, by

approximately the amount of money it cost the province for me to come to Edmonton and appear before their committee. I just thought I'd insert that parenthetically into the record. I don't think the budget that we have circulated is excessive. It's a budget that permits both Mr. Moore and I to attend the Halifax conference.

In the past we've built a little larger budget than we actually thought we would require in order to cover contingencies. We've never spent the amount of budgeted money, and that money has always gone back into the Treasury. So I think what you're seeing here is a very lean budget. If any of you are interested in the copy of the Members' Services motion that dealt with this, I am prepared to circulate that as well.

Mr. Chairman, I'd just maybe like to add a word of two about the conference, and I think it is an important conference to attend. We find out what other public accounts committees do, and there is quite a range in terms of the way in which committees across the country carry on their business. The federal public accounts chairperson meets with us as well. The federal public accounts committee not only reviews past expenditures — it's a much smaller committee — they also look at current spending projects. They will bring deputy ministers before their committee and grill them quite intensively in an effort to determine whether proposed expenditures are justified or not. The Ontario public accounts committee operates in a similar fashion.

There seems to be a range in terms of the way in which public accounts committees operate. On the one end of the range you have committees in which the members work quite well together to make sure that government departments spend money in terms of the way they've been directed by their legislative authorities. In these situations usually it's not the minister that comes before the committee; it's a deputy minister or it's departmental members who've actually spent the dollars. The committee's main function in that kind of situation is to make sure that government policy as passed by the Legislature is reflected in actual expenditures.

In some cases the committees get more into a contemporary kind of politics, and they repeat in their committees exactly what seems to go on in the Legislatures. That is, cabinet ministers are brought before the committees, and members who are in opposition parties try to nail the cabinet ministers politically, and of course members of the government party try to make the cabinet ministers look good.

I think that here in Alberta, over the last two years at least, we've come down somewhere in the middle. What I have attempted to do as Chair of this committee is to at least make sure that all the questions that are presented in committee are tied back into either the Auditor General's report itself or into the public accounts documents. I think that tends to take the kind of partisan politics out of it to a considerable extent, and I would prefer, if possible, to carry on with that approach during this session.

Perhaps with that I could just pause at that part of my report and ask if any of the other members would like to make any points or direct any questions through the Chair to me.

MR. McEACHERN: Has the committee considered, then, whether anyone besides the Auditor General should appear here? Has the committee discussed the idea of bringing deputy ministers or assistant deputy ministers forward? I assume you don't bring ministers forward. Is that right?

MR. PASHAK: Well, Mr. Chairman, through the Chair, may I

deal with that? No, the Auditor General probably will be — this is yet to be approved on the agenda, under Scheduling of Guests. All right? So it's further on in today's agenda. But normally the procedure is that the Auditor General does appear before the committee for the first two meetings because it takes about that amount of time to go through his report with him. And then the committee members themselves will determine the order in which departments will be represented.

It's really up to the cabinet minister the way we conduct our business here. The cabinet minister usually appears himself — in fact, in almost every instance that I can think of, has appeared himself — and he brings with him members of his department. Sometimes it's just one or two people. Sometimes, depending on the department, he might bring as many as eight or 10 people from his department to answer members' questions.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Does that answer your question? Any other questions?

MR. BRASSARD: I'd just like to tag onto that. I think that it should be left up to the discretion of the minister himself whether he wants to appear singularly or whether he wants to bring his whole department. I think that has worked out very well, and I think it should be left at his discretion. We are calling his department up, and whether he wants to represent it, or who, should be his discretion.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, that worked well in the past. Are there any other suggestions?

MR. PASHAK: If I might comment on that, Mr. Chairman, I'm not proposing to change any of the ways in which we've conducted our business over the last two years. I think we had that debate originally. I'd suggested a number of reforms at that time, including . . . Well, there's no need, I guess, to go over the reforms I proposed at that time. But they were essentially rejected, and we've worked out a procedure that I think has worked reasonably well over the last two years. When we get to Rules of Procedure for Operation of the Committee in a moment, I'd propose that we agree to proceed as we've agreed in the past. But we're anticipating a point further on in the agenda.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Member for Stony Plain.

MR. HERON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I have to agree with our chairman that it's worked well in the past, and I see little reason for change. Therefore, I support our chairman's position.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, as our chairman said, it'll come up under item 3, and I'm sure we'll make that decision as to what procedures we'll proceed with at that time.

MR. MITCHELL: Will we be discussing it at that time?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That's right.

MR. PASHAK: One other point I should mention in terms of justifying the Chair's and the co-Chair's attendance at these annual conferences of Public Accounts Committee: we also meet with the auditors general from across the country. We have one co-session, and that's very valuable. It's particularly valuable for people on public accounts committees to know the kinds of concerns and interests of auditors general from across the

country. One of their major concerns at this point in time is what they call value-for-money audits, and you may want to ask Mr. Salmon some questions about that when he appears before us over the next two sessions. In the meantime I've received a number of copies of a publication, Value-For-Money Auditing Standards, that was issued in March 1988 by the Public Sector Accounting and Auditing Committee of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. I'm pleased to be able to mention to you that Mr. Don Salmon is now a member of that committee. I'd like to have these distributed and circulated to all members at this time.

Just to conclude my remarks on this portion of the agenda, there does seem to be a determined view at all levels of the public from one end of the country to the other that taxpayers really want to know that their tax dollars are being wisely spent and that these dollars are being spent in accordance with government policy and directives and that the taxpayer in a sense is getting the most value for this money that he provides the government through the tax system. That's the whole basis for this approach of auditors general that's embraced by this concept of value-for-money auditing standards. I would hope that committee members would have a look at this and be prepared to ask Mr. Salmon some questions about this concept.

Now, Mr. Moore has mentioned that in 1989 we have the privilege of hosting the Canadian committee of public accounts here in the city of Edmonton. We worked out a budget for that. It means that our annual budget, instead of being at the level that I've suggested here of about \$5,650, will probably be in the order of \$35,000 to \$40,000 for that one year only. It's a two and a half day conference, as I've mentioned. It's held in conjunction with a conference that's put on by the auditors general from across Canada. I think it's an important event for the province of Alberta to host, and I'd look forward to any suggestions about participation by any of the members of the committee itself. Are there any questions at all about our hosting of this conference? It'll be in July of 1989. We're going to hold our sessions right here in the Legislative Assembly.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I was just wondering, in connection with this conference, if there had been any consideration of the reduced costs of holding it in, let's say, Red Deer or Calgary? We have occasionally talked about a different location for, say, one meeting of the committee, and with this opportunity that we have to host this conference, perhaps we should look at a different location.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That's an admirable suggestion. Well, I might point out that we're just introducing the subject now. I'm sure we're going to have to set up a subcommittee of this to review it. That's an excellent suggestion to keep in mind, because Calgary and Lethbridge have similar points, and I think this should be given consideration at that time. It's an excellent suggestion. Have you any other that you'd like to make?

MR. JONSON: Well, just that I think it would be the opportunity for the functioning of this committee and certainly the whole topic of public accounts to be, shall we say, focused upon another centre in the province. Lethbridge would be a very good suggestion too.

MR. PASHAK: May I comment on that, Mr. Chairman? Well, as a member from Calgary you can probably guess that I may have wanted to have seen this conference hosted in the city of

Calgary, because it occurs roughly at about the same time that the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede is on, it's close to the mountains, and there might have been... [interjection] However, there are some problems. We do have to hold the conference in conjunction with the auditors general's conference, and they've scheduled their conference for Edmonton. So I would have had to persuade, I suppose, Mr. Salmon to move his operation down to Calgary.

A second problem is that I spent a considerable amount of time going over this conference with the Speaker, and it was the Speaker's decided opinion that it would be cost-effective for us to hold the conference here in Edmonton because we have access, for one thing, to the Legislative Assembly. We would get that free of charge, so we don't have to pay for that as a meeting hall or a meeting room or whatever. Secondly, I think a valid argument would be that we'd like to show off to other parliamentarians our Legislature and our Government House and associated facilities.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Member for Cardston.

MR. ADY: I'm sorry; the previous member covered my point.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes. I think I would be most concerned about: how much participation by the whole committee do we get? I realize that this is the chairmen of committees from across the country. For travel reasons and numbers obviously we don't bring in all the public accounts members of every committee right across the country. Any of you who have been on these conferences before, perhaps you could use your experience from last time as to how much involvement the host province was able to get for extra members of the committee beyond the chairpersons. And I would just like to put in a word to make sure you enhance that as much as possible in Edmonton when they come here.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, I could answer that. The whole committee will be involved. We're all host members of it, and when it's here in Edmonton, we'll all be involved.

MR. PASHAK: If I could just supplement that somewhat, Mr. Moore. While we're holding our sessions in the Assembly, there's nothing to prevent any member of the public from coming into the gallery and observing our sessions. The question of participation I guess would have budgetary implications. If you're going to be a member, then you would be drawing down a member's per diem and that kind of thing. If members want to go in that direction, we should maybe talk about it at some point during the year, and we'd have to add to our budget to take that into account.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: What I meant by participation: we're the host area, and the few hours each day the sessions are on — there are still all those other hours that we are involved. You're basically involved in the social activities; you're the host working, meeting with those other representatives: on that basis, not within the discussion basis — I didn't mean that — of the sessions. You can sit in the galleries like anyone else at that time, because we're on the floor here. Then you would be...

AN HON. MEMBER: There's lots of room in the Assembly.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, please.

MR. BRADLEY: Well, I think my point has been covered. What I wanted to say on the point of facilities is that we do have excellent facilities at McDougall centre in Calgary, if we did choose to hold sessions there, and they also would be available to us free of charge, I assume.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Another excellent idea. I am sure when we strike a committee, all these ideas will come into focus, and those decisions will be formulated in the months ahead. Member for Wainright.

MR. FISCHER: Yes. How many people are we expecting at this kind of a conference? Do they just send their executive, or is it all of the members of the public accounts committees across the provinces, or how many are you talking about?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Public accounts: 75 are attending. The auditors general: 60. Now, this takes in wives and Clerks and so on that come. And I might point out that the wives don't get paid for this; this is the idea. You might think that is... But a lot of members bring their wives. So that gives you an idea of the numbers involved.

MR. ADY: Isn't it true that some provinces elect to take their full committee to those conferences?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You say some provinces do? Well, that could be; that's their prerogative. They've got bigger...

MR. ADY: As I understand, but that's perhaps why the number is as high as it is.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: But they don't take part in the session. They could be there for the festivities.

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Chairman, the size of committees across the country varies from as few as five all the way up to the size of our committee, which I believe has 21 members on it. Some of the smaller committees will send their entire delegations. As you can see, it's a fairly expensive proposition for our province just to send two members to these meetings. I think a case could be made for sending some additional members to the conference so that we'd become more informed about the ways in which other committees operate. But typically, most committees would only send their Chair and co-Chair to these meetings. Two other representatives from the provincial Legislature were in attendance at our conference, but that didn't come out of our budget.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Any other questions?

[Mr. Pashak in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Moore.

Now, as to the rules of procedure for the operation of the committee.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, as you just happened to mention, Mr. Chairman, we have 20 members on this committee. I happen to be on the committee that selected them, so I'm very well aware of how many are there, and we do get a minister for a full two hours. One of the things that happened last year that I was impressed with was the broad coverage we were able to get by everyone participating. I would like to make a motion that we follow the same format, that each member be allowed one main question and two supplementary and then return to the bottom of the speaking list, if that's in order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's in order.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question. Those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone opposed? Agreed.

We should set a time and day for our meetings. We had lengthy debates over that, and the time for the last two years that's been most acceptable or manageable, I suppose, for our members has been Wednesday morning at 10 a.m.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would somebody make that in the form of a motion then? Mr. Brassard has made it a motion that we meet at 10 until 11:30.

MR. BRADLEY: Just to enter into some debate on the motion: as long as we understand there will be occasions when ministers will not be able to come due to other obligations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think that's always understood. In a moment we're going to ask for a list of the order in which we'd like to see ministers come forward, or at least we're going to deal with that question. I think it's always with the understanding that we ask ministers, and if they can't be there on that date, then we schedule them at the next available opportunity.

MR. BRADLEY: The difficulty with Wednesday being that cabinet is in session.

MR. BRASSARD: That hasn't posed a major problem in the past, at least not in the last two years.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; hearing those words of advice from Mr. Brassard, are you ready to vote on the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; are you agreed, then, that we'll meet at 10 o'clock on Wednesday mornings?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. R. MOORE: Also on procedures, Mr. Chairman, I want to support you in your method of handling the procedure; that is, holding members to the Auditor's report and public accounts report for that year. That has stopped a lot of political grandstanding, which this isn't for, and allows more time to ask

direct questions. I fully support it, and I want to see if there's a consensus of committee members that we continue on that basis, that questions must be directed to the Auditor's report and public accounts of that year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If what you're saying is put in the form of a recommendation to the Chair, I would accept that as a motion, because actually I have the authority as the chairman to run this committee as I see fit. You have the alternative, then, of getting rid of me if you don't like what it is that I'm doing. But if that's a recommendation that you'd like to make to the Chair, that we keep questions . . .

MR. R. MOORE: A recommendation or a motion, either one. I'd make it a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would entertain that.

MR. HERON: I'd like to echo the hon. Member for Lacombe's recommendation in complimenting you for the way you've kept and added a discipline to this committee over the past two years. So in supporting Mr. Moore's recommendation, I would like to encourage you to continue business as usual.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion on the motions? Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agreed.

As to the scheduling of guests, any recommendations or proposals?

MR. DOWNEY: Mr. Chairman, I have a list here. Would you like me to read it off? I have a copy for our secretary.

Following our meeting with the Auditor General, the next meeting, number one, would be with the Department of Economic Development and Trade, Hon. Larry Shaben; the next one, number two, would be Department of Advanced Education, Hon. David Russell; number three, Department of the Environment, Hon. Ken Kowalski; number four, Department of Agriculture, Hon. Peter Elzinga; number five, Attorney General, Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, Hon. Jim Horsman; number six, Department of Recreation and Parks, Hon. Norm Weiss; number seven, Provincial Treasurer, Hon. Dick Johnston; number eight, Department of Transportation and Utilities, Hon. Al Adair; number nine, Department of Technology, Research and Telecommunications, Hon. Les Young; number 10, Department of Career Development, Hon. Rick Orman; number 11, Department of Energy, Hon. Neil Webber; number 12, Solicitor General, Hon. Ken Rostad; number 13, Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, Hon. Leroy Fjordbotten; and number 14, Department of Culture, Hon. Greg Stevens.

I would so move, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; we have a motion before us. I would just like to draw to the members' attention that on the past two occasions on which we've drawn up this list, we'd worked out a procedure whereby the opposition could indicate their preferences with respect to the ministers with regard to ranking when they would appear before the committee.

MR. HERON: Would it be useful, Mr. Chairman, if this list

was circulated at this time to allow all members to perhaps glance over it quickly and, if it would assist you, to suggest some amendments to the list?

MR. CHAIRMAN: With the approval of the committee, then, could we table this motion of Mr. Downey's until the next meeting, with the intention that his motion would be circulated and people would have an opportunity to look at it and then come back with amendments at the next meeting?

MR. HERON: Well, Mr. Chairman, in making the recommendation, I wasn't proposing that we table it. I think we have an agenda item before us and that we could perhaps just take a minute or two and pass an agenda if we could.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fair enough. The secretary is having copies of the suggested list of departments to come before the committee run off. We'll circulate that, and then we can debate it at that time. Is that acceptable to the committee?

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, I don't know whether this is the appropriate time, but I would like to raise the issue which is underlined by the list just presented by the member: that it is not a complete list. It highlights the problem that this committee has confronted ever since I've sat on it: that it doesn't review every single department that spends money in this government.

While I realize that there is a budgeting problem this year because we have had a budget that will not allow us to meet between sessions, I would like to establish for the record that it is extremely important that this committee review every single department, every single source of expenditure in this government from year to year. Accountability is essential to good, effective, efficient government. From my point of view, this committee is not performing its function adequately and properly unless it reviews each and every department that spends money in this government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Your comments are noted, Mr. Mitchell.

MR. McEACHERN: I would like to echo those sentiments and perhaps add another one. For a minister to appear here once may not be enough. Somebody as important to the expenditures of this province as the Treasurer, for example, who I believe was seventh on that list, should probably be moved up and should be available for recall to the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not sure that the last two comments have been on the motion, but because we're waiting for the . . .

MR. McEACHERN: Well yes, but we're talking about the list of who we're going to ask to come before the committee. All I'm saying is that some of them should be able to be called twice or three times or whatever.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Moore.

MR. R. MOORE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to comment on the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway's statement, they are always subject to recall, like we've done in the past, but I feel that they should be the same as questions. If they're recalled, they come back on the lower end of it, and we get a chance to at least have an initial review with the other ministers.

I agree with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, and I think we're doing that, just exactly what he said. We're doing a very in-depth look. I congratulate him on that. I think he's missed a few meetings if he didn't see that during our past sessions. However, I agree; we do that and continue to do that. Talking about every minister . . . This isn't a complete list; I agree. It only goes down to number 14. I think we could add on all those other ministers in rotation. You know: 15, 16, 17, but that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: For new members on the committee perhaps I should point out that this committee itself adopted a position that's consistent with what the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark has raised. We, in fact, submitted a budget proposal that would have allowed us to meet out of session in order to make sure that we did have every department appear before us. That motion went forward to the Members' Services Committee, and it was the Members' Services Committee that refused the budget appropriation that would have allowed us to meet outside of session.

MR. DOWNEY: Well, in fairness, Mr. Chairman, there was some confusion at that time. I don't believe this present committee has adopted that position, for the record.

MR. McEACHERN: Which committee, this one or the . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Wait, wait. Through the Chair, Mr. McEachern.

MR. McEACHERN: Okay. The question is: which committee was he referring to in his last sentence, this committee or the Members' Services Committee?

MR. DOWNEY: I'm talking about this committee, Mr. Chairman. That is not the present position of this committee. [interjection]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a minute. We have a motion before us to adopt this order for ministerial representation before this committee.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, I have a serious problem in assessing this particular list. If it is that we will not review every single department, then of course the priority of the departments takes on a different significance than under a circumstance where we would be able to review every single department. We have to settle that issue. Addressing that issue, I would like to say that it is impossible for any responsible member of a public accounts committee — this one or any one in Canada — to accept a list of departments for review that is incomplete. Therefore, I feel very, very strongly that I will not be supporting this particular list or any list that does not include every last department that spends money in this government.

MR. HERON: Well, Mr. Chairman, I hope we can start this committee off on the right foot. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark as usual adds heat without shedding any light. I mean, he has the list before him. Why doesn't he suggest some changes if he has a higher priority? We haven't heard one single solution or alternative. What the hon. Member for Stettler has done is prepared a list, put it to us, with the best of intentions. It's one thing just to criticize it without offering a

solution. So perhaps we could, you know, get on with the meeting by either suggesting amendments to it or acting on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The Chair is open for amendments to this list as presented by Mr. Downey.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, I just want to say that I disagree with the member totally. The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark very specifically said he wanted all 25 departments on the list, so that's a very . . . [interjections]

MR. MITCHELL: I would like to amend this motion to include all departments of government, and I would like . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: That's out of order.

MR. MITCHELL: It is?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. MITCHELL: Why is that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because that's not germane to the motion, which is that we adopt this list. You can amend this list. How are you going to amend it?

MR. MITCHELL: I'd like to add the other nine departments to it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, all right. At the end? In any particular order?

MR. MITCHELL: No. Just add the other nine departments. It doesn't matter, because we're going to do them all, from my point of view.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, okay.

MR. McEACHERN: I'll second that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion is to amend this list by adding all of the other departments to this list.

MR. R. MOORE: I'd like to speak to the amendment here. The Member for Stettler has indicated a rotation of how he felt the priority of departments should be. I would like to suggest to the mover of this amendment, if he would agree, that we signify rather than just have a bunch of departments there and go in this rotation: starting with number 15, I would have the minister of hospitals, the Hon. Marvin Moore; number 16, the Hon. Connie Osterman, the Minister of Social Services -- I'm just looking at his list here to make sure I'm not duplicating -- the Hon. Ian Reid, the Minister of Labour. Was he on the previous list?

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. R. MOORE: The Hon. Ernie Isley, the minister of public works; and the hon. Dr. Webber, the Minister of Energy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agriculture is not on there.

MR. R. MOORE: Agriculture is covered there in number four. That's an important item, and I'm glad to see that the Member

for Stettler has him high on the priority list. The Hon. Elaine McCoy, Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs; the Hon. Dennis Anderson, Municipal Affairs; the Hon. Jim Dinning, the Minister of Community and Occupational Health; the Hon. Nancy Betkowski, the Minister of Education; the Minister of Tourism, the hon. Mr. Sparrow. I think we've covered the field now in that rotation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Executive Council: would you add that as well, Mr. Moore?

MR. R. MOORE: Executive Council? Well, if you want to put it at the bottom of the list here, yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we have an exhaustive list now, and I think that with this amendment we have all of the departments at least scheduled as possibilities for appearing before the Public Accounts Committee. I'd like to ask the mover of the motion, Mr. Mitchell, if that amendment is a friendly amendment. Does that . . .

MR. MITCHELL: Yes, I accept it as a friendly amendment. However, I would like to draw the distinction, Mr. Chairman, that right now by virtue of my amendment I am asking the committee to vote on the issue of having all departments or not having all departments on the list. Then if we would like to address the issue of priority . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, I can't accept that right now. All we're doing is a list of potential people to appear before the committee. We'd have to deal with that as a separate issue. If the session goes on that long, all of these departments would appear before the committee in the order in which it's been indicated. But that does not necessarily mean that all of these departments would appear before the committee. I want to make that very clear. We are only at this point meeting while we're in session. On the last day of session this list is terminated, no matter where we are on the list. Is that clear? I want to add that last year we had a fall sitting, so the list carried on when we came back in the fall. So if we have a fall sitting, of course we will carry on with our list.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, I want to suggest, Mr. Chairman, that if it is anticipated that we may not get all the way through the list, then we take this list away with us and have some time to study it and not adopt the order that was given. I mean, the first 14 were picked by either Mr. Downey or the cabinet or somebody. The Members' Services Committee or somebody else gave us this list and said, "This will have to do." I'm saying that the members of this committee should have the right to decide their own priorities. If we may not get through the whole of the list, then we should have the right as a committee to decide the priority. Therefore, we should be able to come back to another meeting and rearrange this list with the highest priorities at the front to make sure we get to them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, I hear the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway. I'll be prepared to entertain a motion to table this list until the next meeting. But we have before us an amendment to the motion by Mr. Downey that we have to act on first.

MR. R. MOORE: What is the amendment now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The amendment is that we add to the original list that was proposed by Mr. Downey these other departments that you have just outlined for us, Mr. Moore, and that's the amendment . . .

MR. R. MOORE: In that order, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, not in that order. There is another motion that I'm about to entertain in a moment. [interjection] Now, wait a minute. Let's go back to the main motion by Mr. Downey. I don't want to get into a procedural wrangle here, but Mr. Downey's motion, as I've had it distributed to me, says, "Departments recommended for review by the Public Accounts Committee for the subject year." So these are the departments that we're reviewing. As to order, we'll determine that later, after we deal with these departments.

MR. DOWNEY: Maybe I'm misunderstanding you. This is the order that the departments will be called, the way the list is submitted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Was that the original motion?

MR. DOWNEY: Yes, it was.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed by the committee that that was the original motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, I'm not agreeing to it, though.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's too bad. That's what the committee's agreed.

Okay; now let's vote on the amendment to the motion, which would add those other departments.

MR. MITCHELL: We have to be clear, Mr. Chairman, because I'm not voting on this order. I want to draw the distinction between the decision on order and the decision on number.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark will have an opportunity to amend the motion in a moment, in terms of order. Okay? All I am doing now is accepting the amendment to the main motion. You can always make amendments to that motion later yourself.

MR. R. MOORE: I'd like to make a subamendment to that motion: that it be in rotation as outlined.

MR. McEACHERN: See, that's what I'm . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're out of order. Just let me rule on this so that we are clear as to what is happening here. The member, Mr. Downey, has proposed a list of ministers and departments to appear before our committee. His intention is that they appear before this committee in this order. That is the main motion.

There is an amendment proposed by Mr. Moore that in the same vein we add on to this list the other departments, and he, too, has proposed an order. All I'm asking now is for you to vote on Mr. Moore's amendment.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question has been called. Those in favour of the amendment? Those opposed? The amendment is carried.

Okay; now we have an order. But the motion, which now incorporates Mr. Moore's amendment, is now open for discussion.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Chairman, I move that this committee take this list away until the next meeting, next Wednesday -- I sort of assume it will be next Wednesday -- and study it and come back with recommendations for a different order, if we feel that a different order is reasonable. I mean, Social Services might never come before this committee if we don't revise this list, and that's ridiculous. I suggest that this list was brought in, with an order implied, as a railroad job by the government committee member, and that we darn well should have a chance to revise this list and suggest some of the more important . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're out of order when you impute motives, by the way, and we will not tolerate that in this committee.

MRS. McCLELLAN: For my information and because I'm new on the committee, Mr. Pashak, I would ask your indulgence in taking up time with these questions. Is there any reason that we can't review more than one department in a sitting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: In our experience, generally speaking we don't have that much time. In fact, we usually run short of time when we have a minister and his members before us. There are usually a number on my list who would like to ask further questions that never get in.

MRS. McCLELLAN: With that, do we have any constraint on the questions, a time limit?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not really. There is no constraint on the time limit for questions, although our standard rule of operation, which was just agreed upon a couple of minutes ago, is that a member signals that they want to get on the list of questioners. They then ask a main question, and they are entitled to two supplementals. Then when they have completed those, if they still want to ask further questions, they signal the Chair and their name goes to the bottom of the list immediately.

All right; back to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. Is that a motion that you're asking, that we table this motion of Mr. Downey's till the next meeting of the committee, subject to a review of the ranking of the ministers? Are you making that as a motion?

MR. McEACHERN: I didn't make a motion, though.

MR. MITCHELL: I'll make a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right; what is your motion?

MR. MITCHELL: I move that we defer the decision on the order of the departments' appearance before this committee until next week, under the assumption that we already have the Auditor General scheduled to appear next week and it won't delay the function of the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; there is a motion to refer this matter of the ranking of departments until the meeting one week hence.

Discussion of the motion?

MR. DOWNEY: Mr. Chairman, I would have to oppose the tabling motion, in order for departments to know when they will appear and to give them ample time to prepare for their appearance. On that basis I would have to oppose the tabling motion.

MR. McEACHERN: Perhaps I could move a friendly amendment if the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark agrees. It would seem to me that we don't really want to waste a day trying to decide the priority here. What we could do is each submit our list of our top 10 to the chairman within the next couple of days, and he could come back with the compilation of that list — the ones that got the most votes for the top 10 — and we could leave it at that for now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's really quite a different motion. We have another motion to defer the matter for one week, and I'm not going to entertain that.

MR. MITCHELL: I'd like to answer Mr. Downey's concern. I think it's a legitimate concern. If we were to accept this list today, then the minimum amount of notice provided for the first department on the list is two weeks. Therefore, if we were to accept the top department at this time, the number one priority, we would sustain that minimum amount of notice for that department — they would have their two weeks — and the next department would also have its two weeks if we decided next week on the rest of the order. So I would be willing to accept an amendment that says that we will take the Department of Economic Development and Trade as the first department to appear, determine that today, but the remaining departments will be prioritized next week, still giving the second department two weeks' notice.

MR. DOWNEY: Mr. Chairman, have we not got a tabling motion on the floor?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, we do.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question on the motion to table the order till next week.

MR. MITCHELL: We have an amendment. We have to vote on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've got a motion to table this motion until next week, and actually a motion to table is really not debatable, but in terms of . . . So those in favour of tabling the motion till next week? Those opposed? The motion is defeated.

Okay; back to the question on the main motion, then, which is that these departments appear before us in the order that's been presented on this list as amended by Mr. Moore. Those in favour of that motion? Those opposed? The motion is carried.

I would like to point out that this is a motion that just enables the committee to get rolling and get functioning. It's quite conceivable that if a member felt that there was some urgency in revising the order, they could bring a motion with respect to a given department before the committee and ask for the committee's indulgence to change that order. This is not meant to handicap or thwart the legitimate process of reviewing departmental expenditures.

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to support what you said. We now have a list before us. If members wish to alter that list, they can bring forward a motion at a future time to bring someone forward in priority if they so wish.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Other Business? Hearing none, the date of the next meeting is one week hence at 10 o'clock, and the Auditor General will be in attendance. I'd suggest for the benefit of new members that they may wish to look at the Auditor General's report, and that would probably provide the most optimum basis on which to direct questions to the Auditor.

MR. R. MOORE: I move adjournment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Moore has moved adjournment. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.]