

[Chairman: Mr. Pashak]

[10:06 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to order, and I'd like the record to show that the reason for the delay had to do with the fact that the previous committee, the Private Bills Committee, carried on beyond their allotted time.

I'd like to move an item up on the agenda to deal with that situation. I have a request from the Private Bills Committee that they switch times with us. It would mean that we would meet at 8:30 in the morning and go till 10 o'clock. Is it agreed that we could discuss that matter right now? Mr. Moore.

MR. R. MOORE: Yes, I think we should discuss it, because the Chairman is here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed that we discuss the matter, that we change the agenda to permit that?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; is there any discussion then? Mr. Moore.

MR. R. MOORE: I would say that we meet from 9 to 10 in the morning. We'll switch with them, and they can go from 9:30 . . . We'll do our hour and a half. We'll go from 8:30 to 10. [interjection] Okay; that's an hour and a half.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does anybody have any objection to that?

MR. HERON: Well, Mr. Chairman, (a) does it meet with the acceptance of the ministers who are scheduled to appear before us; (b) is that an acceptable time for everybody? Are we able to, for example, make cancellations of prearranged breakfast meetings for the 18th and the 25th?

MR. CHAIRMAN: My sense is that we'd have to check that out, that if somebody did want to make a motion to the effect that we change our time, it would have to be contingent on being able to make adjustments with respect to the scheduling of other ministers.

MR. HERON: Mr. Chairman, I would far rather explore the alternative of meeting half an hour later, in this building; for example, shortening up the time or perhaps extending it to noon, if we could. Meeting 10:30 to, say, noon or 11:30 and, for those two meetings, that we just shorten up our question period.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let me just check, first of all, with the Chair of the Private Bills Committee. Would that . . .

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Chairman, that would help too. It just happens that for next week and the following week we have two subjects that are going to be very time consuming, and it would help a lot if we could have the extra half hour.

MR. McEACHERN: It would be acceptable to meet from 10:30 to 12 but not to just 11:30 as usual. Last time we only got in once, even in an hour and a half, let alone . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe we should check by way of a show of hands then. Is there anybody who would object to us res-

cheduling our meetings, if it's possible in terms of commitments by cabinet ministers, to 10:30 to 12 o'clock on the next two Wednesdays? Is that acceptable to everybody? Is there anyone who disagrees with that? Mr. Moore?

MR. R. MOORE: Yes. You asked if I disagree. Yes, I do. I was waiting to vote for the no on it. I think we all have set deals after 11:30. Most of us have commitments for that period between then and when the House goes in. I would rather we consider the other end.

MS LAING: How many have . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, let's do it by way of a show of hands. How many have commitments, first of all, prior to 10 o'clock in the mornings? How many have commitments between 11:30 and 12 o'clock?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Chairman, it's difficult without checking our calendars just to say that. We often do have meetings with groups from 11:30 to 1:30, and I would hate to say that I would agree to that without the opportunity to check that out. It'd be unfair to other committees I'm working with.

MR. PAYNE: I'll put on my health and social services caucus committee chairman's hat now. The 11:30 to 1:30 interval on a Wednesday is a good interval for us. For example, we are meeting today during that interval, so my clear preference would be for the earlier start, 8 o'clock, 8:30.

MR. MUSGROVE: We quite often have agricultural caucus from 11:30 till 1, and so . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: So that alternative is clearly ruled as an impossibility.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Chairman, I don't want to impinge any further on your . . . Apparently, it looks very difficult for this committee to adjust itself for the next couple of weeks, so I'll withdraw my application.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

All right. The minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, May 4 have been circulated. Are there any errors or omissions? Is there a motion to adopt the minutes, then, as circulated? Moved by Mr. Shrake. Those in favour? Agreed? Motion carried.

Well, the Auditor General, Mr. Don Salmon, is with us again, and he is accompanied by an assistant Auditor General who is responsible for the audit for Advanced Education; that's Mr. Andrew Wingate.

Today we would like to welcome the Minister of Advanced Education — and, by the way, my MLA — Mr. David Russell. Mr. Russell, I'd invite you to introduce your guests, and if you'd care to make an opening statement, you'd be very welcome to do so.

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's nice to see my constituents here seeing how I spend my working hours.

On my right is deputy minister Mrs. Lynne Duncan. Working our way down, to my left is Jean Sprague, who is the acting director of program services for the Students Finance Board. Next to Jean is Peter Schmidt, the executive director of depart-

ment services, and my executive assistant, Tom McLaren.

Just by way of brief explanation, our main chunks of expenditure in the department are, of course, vote 1, the Departmental Support Services, which are modest compared to most other line departments of government. Our biggest spending block of money is by way of direct transfer grants to the autonomous postsecondary institutions throughout the province, and that includes capital as well as operating. The third main expenditure item is Financial Assistance to Students through student loans and grants through the Students Finance Board.

If you look at the public accounts for '86-87, our department accounts in volume 2, I think you'll see that because of the nature of the department we can do some fairly close budgeting. We came within three-quarters of 1 percent of our estimates that were placed in front of the Legislature. We ended up with a surplus of \$7 million out of approved expenditures of \$951 million for that year.

I suppose an interesting sideline members may be interested in is the funds that are being put into the matching incentive and endowment fund, which is quite a spectacular success story in Canada and generating contributions from the private sector at a much more accelerated rate than we had ever anticipated. So that doesn't really show up to a great degree in the public accounts we're studying -- the first chapter is there -- but it's certainly a runaway success story.

That gives you a kind of overview, Mr. Chairman, of where that \$951 million went.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does that conclude your statement?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes, thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right; then we're open for questions for the minister.

Now, I'd just like to read through my list, because I know I missed some people, and I'll add their names. I have Mr. McEachern, Mr. Payne, Mr. Ady, Mr. Musgrove, Ms Laing, Mr. Downey, Mr. Heron, Mrs. McClellan, Mr. Alger, and Mr. Jonson.

So, Mr. McEachern.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The first question I would like to ask is about the right of colleges and technical institutions to invest surplus cash in the provincial Consolidated Cash Investment Trust Fund.

I think if you look back at what's gone on in the last few years, the colleges and technical institutes have been sort of forced to invest in banks, trust companies, credit unions, that sort of thing. Considering the trouble some of them got into with the CCB collapse, and the recent Principal collapse has a potential of having caught some of them investing in that, sort of like hospital district 106 did, I wonder: is the minister pushing on the Treasurer to allow colleges and institutions to invest their surplus cash in the Consolidated Cash Investment Trust Fund or not?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Chairman, yes, the matter is under discussion. It was considered for draft amending legislation during the last legislative term, and I expect it'll be reviewed again this year. Whether or not it will come in this spring session I don't know.

MR. McEACHERN: The second question is somewhat related

but sort of from a different angle. Quite a few of the institutions -- for instance, colleges and technical institutes had a \$26 million surplus, and the universities and the Banff Centre had a \$59 million surplus in the year we're discussing. I'm wondering, are those surpluses big enough that the minister could perhaps ask the institutions if they're not sitting on dollars that they very well should be spending? After all, the provincial government does give them these grants to provide education to people. I guess I'm wondering if some of them are at the point where the minister would be concerned that, in fact, the dollars are being withheld and not being used to provide education to people who might want it.

MR. RUSSELL: Well, you raise a very good point. It's one which I've reminded the boards of during these last two years of fiscal restraint, because there is money out there in the system that has built up over the years, and different boards for different reasons have set aside or established special reserve funds if they're able to accumulate surpluses. That's one of the things we did consider, as a matter of fact, when we were establishing the level of operating grants in the last two current budgets -- this and last year's -- the amount of those funds that are available.

You can understand why the boards would be reluctant to use them for ongoing, daily operating expenses, because they're trying to establish special uses for that money. We've had instances where a college board, for example, has been able to renovate existing instructional space or add to it without going through the capital account of the department budget because they've managed to establish those reserves. So we are challenging the boards now that have reserves to bring them out and use them.

MR. McEACHERN: Could it be that some of the boards feel they have to build up this little bit of a surplus to give themselves some stability because they are worried about the provincial government doing things like they did last year, where they cut back 3 percent? Could it be that the boards are sort of saying that they live in an uncertain world because they're not sure what the provincial government is going to give them year by year, and therefore they feel they need to sort of stack some dollars aside to help themselves control their own destiny and provide the stability they think they need?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question would be better put to the board members themselves, but if the minister cares to speculate on that, that's fine.

MR. RUSSELL: Well, I could speculate. Probably a little bit of that is involved. Various boards have from time to time said that they would like a commitment of five-year funding or whatever so that it gives them some guarantee of where they might be going. That's very difficult to do just because of the nature of government and elections and the way the Legislature works. And also the way the enrollment changes at the institutions -- we do track that with money.

I had an interesting policy develop in my previous portfolio of Hospitals and Medical Care, in that I told the boards that our theory was the same with respect to deficits or surpluses. They got to keep both of them. There's a tremendous incentive in that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Payne.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question also may be considered a supplemental to the questions from Mr. McEachern.

In the Auditor General's '86-87 report on page 23, he observed that the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology has not decided how to account for a significant amount of unexpended conditional grant funding received from the department.

Apparently SAIT has notified the department that's holding these unexpected grant dollars, but the department has neither requested their return nor released them for other purposes. I'm traditionally uneasy about limbo dollars in government, and I can understand why the Auditor General was prompted in his recommendation 6 to recommend that the institute of technology in Calgary, along with the department

determine the final disposition of [these] unexpended conditional grant funds that it holds in respect of programs that are complete or inactive.

My question to the minister is: has that recommendation been acted on either by the department or by SAIT?

MR. RUSSELL: I'm going to let Mrs. Duncan expand, because naturally we do react and try and respond to all the observations or recommendations in the Auditor General's report.

The nature of the funds or grants to these institutions just by this example is often hard to track down when a new program perhaps is developed because of conditions in the economy. They get permission to initiate it and the funds go in. Then perhaps something happens. Conditions change, they don't go ahead to the extent they had planned on, and there are surplus funds. It's important, as was pointed out, that these funds be accurately tracked whether they're put into reserves or unexpended or tried to be transferred into another program that has a pressing need at the time.

But I'll stop there and let Mrs. Duncan explain what she's now doing with SAIT as a result of that recommendation.

MRS. DUNCAN: The Auditor has made a similar comment with respect to three institutions: SAIT, Westerra, and Grant MacEwan. We are working with all three to come to a mutually agreeable disposition of those unexpended conditional moneys.

MR. PAYNE: I've actually got several other questions, but I don't think I can persuade you that they are genuine supplements to my first. So could I get back on the list at the first opportunity?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Certainly, but do you want to put two of those questions right now?

MR. PAYNE: Well, they aren't related to this question, but yes. [interjection] Well, you're beastly decent; I appreciate that.

Well, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to get back to vote 1. I'm not that often interested in Departmental Support Services, but in this instance it was the only vote in which spending level actually decreased. I wonder if the minister could tell the committee this morning how he achieved these reductions in Departmental Support Service spending.

MR. RUSSELL: I don't believe it was through any magic talent I have, but I'll let Mrs. Duncan explain why that is there.

MRS. DUNCAN: I'm not sure I have an explanation. I wasn't around in those days. I notice that it's in General Administra-

tion, and I would have to assume it was just a matter of saving on purchases of supplies and so on.

MR. PAYNE: I appreciate it's probably difficult for you to comment on the minutiae or the detail, but perhaps the minister could respond to a question. Did these cuts in any way have a negative impact on the delivery of services to students in postsecondary institutions? I mean, I'm all for, obviously -- I'm sure all the members of the committee are anxious to achieve savings where that's possible, providing they don't impact on the delivery of departmental programs and services to students.

MR. RUSSELL: I can give a general comment. I don't believe it did impact on the services to students. The nature of the grants themselves, which is the bulk of our money, of course, was not affected by that savings in vote 1. We do run the adult vocational centres as a branch of the department under that, as a function of the department, so that's really the only direct connection we have with any of the institutions. The rest: we just write a cheque and it's gone.

There was a period -- and I'm not sure whether it touched this fiscal year or not -- when we had budgeted for four ADMs in the department, and we're getting by with three and have since solidified that at three due to department reorganization. So all the stuff that goes along with four divisions instead of three was there.

We've had a policy in effect in the department for a couple of years now with respect to strong conditions attached to hosting and travel expenses, but that would not account for the figure that's shown there.

MRS. DUNCAN: If I could just add to my answer, with a little prompting here. I'm reminded that that was the year that in the last quarter the Provincial Treasurer put a freeze on expenditures and set a target for each individual department to meet. I would suspect that a large part of that unexpended moneys relates to that program, which focused on travel and hosting and fixed asset acquisition and the like.

MR. PAYNE: Well, final supplementary, then, Mr. Chairman. Is it possible that the minister and his officials would be able to achieve similar economies this year without the spending deterrent of a missive from the Provincial Treasurer?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I try to keep the questions to the public accounts for that year, but if you choose to answer that question, that's fine.

MR. RUSSELL: It's in there. That vote has decreased for each of the last two years.

MR. PAYNE: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ady.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question relates to volume 2, page 2.3, vote 2, assistance to higher education institutions. I note that \$889,551 was transferred from grants to purchase of fixed assets. Firstly, could the minister explain the reason for this transfer of that amount of money?

MR. RUSSELL: I'll get Mrs. Duncan or Mr. Schmidt to give you the details.

Just by way of broad policy we are, as you know, permitted to move funds within a vote, like within vote 2 or within vote 1. We can't transfer funds from one vote to another, but we can move them within. This is often done by Treasury Board minutes. If there's a need somewhere and we don't have the money and there's a surplus sitting there for whatever reason, we can move it. Now, here it looks like there was surplus, probably based on enrollment — I'm just guessing — that we could take out of grants to some particular institution and purchase assets in another one. Peter, do you have the details of that?

MR. SCHMIDT: The fund that became available in the universities, Mr. Chairman, was a reduced funding that year to the University of Lethbridge from the original estimate due to their accumulated surpluses. They were requested to fund their current year's budgets out of accumulated surpluses at that time, and the funds were redirected to fixed asset categories amongst the other institutions.

MR. ADY: Okay; you answered my second question that I had pertaining to what happened to the funds, and so I guess we can gather also that no institution was hurt by this transfer. It was strictly a surplus of funds, and you just moved to handle it.

MR. SCHMIDT: That's correct, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Musgrove.

MR. MUSGROVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is on volume 2, page 2.4, and it has to do with vote 2.3. Just using the Camrose Lutheran College as an example — now, it was kind of my understanding that those private colleges got most of their funding from other than government, but I see there's a fairly large expenditure in Camrose. Could the minister tell me whether or not they do get most of their funding from other than government? If so, what was this money used for?

MR. RUSSELL: They do get grants, by way of operating support only, from the government, and it's a fraction of what goes to the public institutions. We don't give them anything for capital. A great piece of their funding comes from private donations, generally church sources — these are religiously oriented colleges — and through their higher tuition fees. So whereas tuition at the University of Alberta might be \$950, tuition at the private colleges ranges upwards towards \$6,000 a year. So students tend to pay more of their own costs.

Can anybody here tell me what the exact percentage by way of operating grant is? Because it's built up historically. It was set at one time and has simply moved up by the minus 3 or the plus 1.5 percent that's built into the budget for the public institutions. Peter, do you know?

MR. SCHMIDT: I'm sorry; I don't have that information.

MRS. DUNCAN: It's of the order of about 20 percent, I think, of what the public institutions get. [interjection] We don't fund per student, but if you . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, if you'd just wait your turn. You should wait until you're recognized at least. I think it's only polite to other members of the committee.

Mr. Musgrove, do you have a further supplemental?

MR. MUSGROVE: Yes. I believe that three of these private colleges now have degree-granting status, and obviously their financial needs will have increased because they have degree-granting status. Are there any plans to review the adequacy of funding for these colleges to help them out with that?

MR. RUSSELL: Well, that's when they do get their funds, when they have an affiliation with one of the established universities and they've met the requirements through the — we have what we call an accreditation board. That board decides at what point they can become a degree-granting institution, and then the funds flow.

MR. MUSGROVE: Well, final supplementary, Mr. Chairman. What's the cost to the taxpayer of this new degree program which is being accredited? Are they cost-effective?

MR. RUSSELL: Well, I could look in the estimates for this year and find out the amount of grant that went to each. In fact, it's in here. If you look, you'll see for those institutions what the transfer was. It's not a significant amount of money. You were asking about Camrose. It was \$2.25 million for that year, but the contribution by the Lutheran Church mainly and their supporters and by the students through their significantly higher tuition fees I think makes it a good bargain. They're an important part of that total system.

MS LAING: I'd like to ask a couple of questions in regard to the Auditor General's report, page 10, in which he has recommended that the department take more initiative in co-ordinating courses and, I guess, looking at the needs and what kinds of courses are being offered already. I'm wondering why the department has, according to this report, consistently refused to take on that kind of mandate.

MR. RUSSELL: Well, we haven't refused, and I'm glad you raised that issue, Ms. Laing, because it's something I'm working on during my tenure as minister very vigorously. We've given the term "rationalization" to it. I don't like those big words, but I believe there is more co-ordination needed over the total system. It's been very difficult to achieve it on a voluntary basis through these autonomous boards. We put out a position to the field that we intended to see this happen and, as a result of that, have convened two annual forums. The second one was held just a month ago in Government House, where we get the presidents of each institution plus the chairmen of the boards of all institutions in a room together and ask them to search for this logic, if I can use that term, in the programs of services which they supply.

There are several ways of looking at this. We're trying to cut out what we call unnecessary duplication or overlap. There are some areas in the province that are served in an overlapping way by two or several institutions. We try and look at non-productive, competitive courses that are offered by more than one institution and see if it wouldn't be better if just one institution did it well instead of two institutions both trying to do it well. So that's the nature of what we're looking at. Of course the debate rages over an institution voluntarily giving up a program and saying, "Why should we, because you'll take the money away to support that program." The reverse side of the coin is that when they come to us to put in a new program, they always have a price tag attached to it and say, "We'll do this if you'll support it." We think it's fair that if we do provide the

funds when we approve a new program, if a program is then dropped, those funds should come back. Where we are now is working with the institutions to try and provide some kind of financial incentive for them to rationalize their services and programs, get some kind of financial reward for doing that, yet return part of those funds to the department so they can be diverted elsewhere. It's a very important issue, and we're working on it.

MS LAING: Thank you.

The other question I would ask about then is: I see again from the Auditor General's report that some of the public colleges as well as Westerra seem to have a lack of control over expense claims and accounts. I'm wondering if you've made an effort to tighten that up. It would seem they're seeing a fair amount of public dollars going to who knows what purpose.

MR. RUSSELL: You're right, and that's an observation that caused us some difficulty. You mentioned Westerra particularly. I believe you know that I did use an unusual part of the department legislation which permitted me to dismiss that board, and we brought in a trustee in place of the board. The president of the institute was replaced, and we are taking strong moves to overcome that situation that was there.

MS LAING: Okay. I guess I see it when I go through the public accounts in regard to the other public colleges over and over again. Control of employees' expense claims is not in accordance with college policy. That's Alberta College of Art. Do you have any incentives for them to clean up their lack of control?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes, we do. Again, it's the nature of the system. I go back to the fact that they're autonomous boards. The members are appointed by cabinet. They're really doing voluntary community work. I don't believe there's any great per diem or any great benefit. Really they act as policymaking boards and work closely with a chief executive officer. Now, from time to time I get things pointed out to me that somebody is abusing their expense account or expenditures aren't being handled in the proper way. That's why the audit function is there.

I mentioned Westerra. We moved very dramatically there. At Fairview we had a voluntary action by that board itself to undertake those internal corrections. There's some evidence that there may be a small problem at Keyano, and we did have a problem at the Alberta College of Art when they went through a kind of double-layered troublesome time. They went through a new period of autonomy; I think they're just in their third year of that now. So they had a brand new board, not much in the way of chief executive staff, had an acting president, and the comments you're referring to are a result of that. But we try and keep a pretty strong eye on it and a pretty firm hand involved when we know that's happening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Downey.

MR. DOWNEY: Yes, Mr. Chairman. My questions relate to page 2.4, volume 2, my first question with regard to vote 2.1.4, Special Purpose Grants. I wonder if the minister could explain just what those grants are, how much they are, and who gets them.

MR. RUSSELL: Okay, that's pretty detailed. Mr. Schmidt just handed me his list of them. I'll let him refer to them instead of me reading his list. They're just what the term says, Mr. Downey.

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Chairman, it's an extensive list. It goes on four or five pages. I can give it to you in categories.

MR. DOWNEY: Perhaps, without going into the list, I could clarify that a bit. Are these special applications outside of the regular block funding programs for special situations? Is that my understanding of it?

MR. SCHMIDT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would it help Mr. Downey if you gave a couple of examples? Would that . . .

MR. SCHMIDT: The Canadian Institute of Resources Law, a general operating grant of \$141,000; \$65,000, St. Stephen's College, for a general operating grant for their '86-87 operations; Western College of Veterinary Medicine, \$1.118 million, cost of training 277 Alberta students at the University of Saskatchewan per an interprovincial agreement that was signed that year.

MR. RUSSELL: I should interject there, because two of the big grants, one to Saskatchewan and one to Guelph, Ontario, cover the costs of Alberta students going either for optometry or veterinary medicine to an institution outside the province, and we're guaranteed a quota of students because we pay that grant to those institutions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary, Mr. Downey.

MR. DOWNEY: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Why was that category overspent some \$300,000?

MR. RUSSELL: Which line are you looking at, Mr. Downey?

MR. DOWNEY: 2.1.4.

MR. RUSSELL: Yeah, I have the two figures now.

MRS. DUNCAN: I don't have the specific answer to that, but Special Purpose Grants is a place where the minister responds to special needs. Some of it is ongoing agreements such as the veterinary agreement that was just mentioned; some of it is ad hoc funding. When we have postsecondary education related groups who are putting on conferences and so on in a particular year and they approach us for special funding, it is out of that particular element that we provide the funding. I would just have to assume that that year there were more demands on that particular element than we had originally budgeted money for, and there were some surpluses elsewhere and we were able to make use of them. But it's not like budgeting for the postsecondary institutional operating grants where at the beginning of the year you know precisely what you're going to spend. A lot of it is ad hoc funding in the sense of responding to particular needs in midyear.

MR. DOWNEY: Going back to Mr. Schmidt's earlier comments there, a couple of the examples he gave this committee

were with regard to operating grants, as I understood him to say. Two specific ones you mentioned, \$141,000 and \$65,000, I believe. Why would those not be part of a regular budget element? Why would they be under a special purpose grant? Do you recall the two examples you gave?

MR. SCHMIDT: I recall the examples, but I do not have the information as to what the background of that specific grant was. Sometimes they are to deal with a particular new program initiative. Some of the other categories are one-time capital grants as well as one-time operating grants. But on those examples, I'm sorry, I don't have the background information as to what the specifics are.

MR. RUSSELL: I can give you a little bit of the background. There's a long list of these grants that are disbursed by way of regulation under the Act. The grants regulations are similar in pretty well all departments of government. One that comes to my mind is The Niagara Institute, a kind of think tank that is interprovincially based and supported, and Alberta has traditionally or historically supported an institution like that through a special purpose grant from the Department of Advanced Education. There is an institute at the U of A — I believe it's based at the U of A — that deals specifically with developing legislation with respect to energy and resources. That's very important to Alberta. It's carried out through a department, the department of law at the U of A, so we support that by way of a special purpose grant. But I'll have to get you the information as to why it was overspent that year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Heron.

MR. HERON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore brought up the topic of Westerra, and since Westerra is in my constituency, I would like to discuss it and make certain things a matter of record. At the outset, Westerra is alive and well and doing exceptionally good considering some of the major structural changes it's gone through. At the outset, Mr. Minister, in responding to Ms Laing, you mentioned such words as "unnecessary duplication" or "overlap." You said that you were prepared to rationalize, and flexibility came into it. I would like to congratulate you on the bold and brave decisions that were necessary to change the direction of Westerra, and while those numbers are not fully reflected in public accounts, most certainly significant changes have occurred and the full-time equivalent cost per students is going down. Enrollment's going. So partly in response to Ms. Laing's questions, I would like to say that I'm very, very pleased to say that Westerra is meeting the community and Alberta needs.

Mr. Minister, under similar circumstances, is it reasonable to suspect that similar action could be taken with other institutions elsewhere in Alberta?

MR. RUSSELL: I'm not sure that the major surgery, if I can use that term, that was carried out at Westerra is necessary for other institutions. Westerra was unique, if members recall, because it was conceived and born as a totally new institute of technology in the boom days when, particularly in the field of the trades apprentices, we couldn't provide training spaces or instruction fast enough. And of course in those days the indications were that that trend was going to continue. So to start a new institution from scratch is of course quite a major undertak-

ing. That one just got started — the site selected, the land purchased, one temporary building erected on the site — and then we all remember the crash that occurred and the pressing need for Westerra vanished.

The moves we took responded to the concerns of the Provincial Auditor but I think also responded to the needs of the community in that they wanted their own autonomous institution, and that's been maintained. We did not blend or merge it with another institution, and the autonomous corporate entity of Westerra institute is being held on the shelf by a trustee until the need comes to appoint a board again. In the meantime, they've responded very well. They've gone out in the community, designed programs to meet the needs of existing businesses, proposed new ones, and are doing quite well. Their enrollment went up this year, and I think we're going to see the thing through.

Now, I don't see the need to do such a major thing with other better and longer established institutions.

MR. HERON: Well, thank you, Mr. Minister, for being so candid. Certainly it is a matter of record in our local papers and others that new administration, new management, deemed previous travel, hosting, and entertainment as excessive. I suppose in looking at public accounts you could be technically correct if those items of expenditure were at all times approved by an autonomous board. However, I think you've sent out a clear message to Westerra and especially others that you're not going to tolerate things that move outside the area of common sense in dealing with this, and certainly the message is very strong in my constituency.

But more importantly, Mr. Chairman, to the minister. He has mentioned the advisory committee, a volunteer advisory committee which is working very, very well to meet the needs of the institution and give direction to the new, much smaller and more efficient management team. Is he prepared to commit to such an arrangement for a reasonable period of time to allow them to work out the best community-driven alternatives?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes; I don't see any change in the status quo for Westerra in the immediate future.

MR. HERON: Well, certainly, Mr. Minister, that will be good news to the general populace out there.

There's one area that again our public accounts will not reflect, and that is the amount of flexibility you have allowed. I'm thinking now of flexibility for the community to determine what courses best meet their educational needs; in other words, a market-driven system which meets the shifting educational requirements. Is the minister prepared to see technical institutions move into the area of university equivalent or transfer programs if there's overwhelming ground support for such a shift in emphasis?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, hon. member, we're now getting into the realm of policy, and we're getting quite removed from the accounts themselves.

MR. HERON: Mr. Chairman, I respect your interjection here, but I've noticed that in the past when you're looking at public accounts, clearly you're looking at an absolute number of dollars. I'm looking at that absolute number of dollars, realizing that there are certain shifts in there. If the minister could just briefly — and I won't take up much time of the committee —

relate to me the shift in direction of current dollars which may affect future programs, I would sure appreciate it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's up to the discretion of the minister whether . . . In a way it's a policy issue, I would think. But I'll leave it up to the minister's discretion whether he wants to answer the question or not.

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I recognize the time. I think the comments I made on rationalization earlier in the meeting probably answer most of your concerns.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before I recognize the next member, I'd just like to say I do think I gave the hon. member, Mr. Heron, some latitude in the scope of his questions. I think it's reasonable to do that when we have an issue that so directly affects one's own constituents. I'd hoped that the committee would permit me to grant others the same latitude should the situation come up in their cases.

MR. HERON: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make it known that I do appreciate the latitude you offered, and I certainly don't want to create a precedent or any abuse of the rules. I appreciate the way you chair the Public Accounts, and I just take your comments on notice.

MRS. McCLELLAN: My question is in volume 2, page 2.5, vote 3.0.4. It has to deal with student finance. At the outset I want to say that I certainly think we have a fine program of student finance in this province. But on specific vote 3.0.4, Remissions of Loans, I notice that the department estimated \$39 million would be expended in that area and \$32.8 million was actually expended. My question is: in this amount of over \$6 million, are these unexpended funds the result of fewer claims being submitted than initially forecast?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes, and I'll let Ms Sprague respond to that in detail in a moment. But that's an important part of our student loan program. When the students finish, they've got six months afterwards when they can consolidate their outstanding loans and then arrange for a repayment program, and they qualify for very substantial remissions. Because this is on a rolling basis — students are in the institutions for several years — you can see that it's a tough thing to estimate accurately and depends upon the applications from the students themselves for the remission and also to meet those qualifications. But, Jean, why don't you go ahead.

MS SPRAGUE: Mr. Chairman, during that fiscal year the board implemented a more stringent remission policy with respect to students who withdraw before the completion of their term. So that accounts for the surplus in that account — that coupled with an increase in the rate of withdrawal of students.

MRS. McCLELLAN: In supplement, then, you would say that it wasn't particularly because your board is behind in processing those claims.

MS SPRAGUE: No.

MRS. McCLELLAN: No? Okay; thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Was there a further question, then?

MRS. McCLELLAN: No; it would be on another matter, and I'd better not stretch your leniency. I'll take another turn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Later? There's an extra supplementary. With the concurrence of the committee, may Ms Laing use the supplementary on this particular subject?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MS LAING: I wonder if you could elaborate on the nature of those changes, the changes in the remission guidelines.

MS SPRAGUE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. In previous years when students applied for remission, if they had withdrawn from studies, they were permitted to have a portion of remission. But the board adopted a more stringent policy during 1986 to cancel remission benefits for students for the period they have applied for and then if they have withdrawn and discontinued their studies during that period.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Alger.

MR. ALGER: Mr. Chairman, thank you. To the minister. I think you may have touched on this, Mr. Minister, in your opening remarks, but on page 2.6 in volume 2, the Payments from Government of Canada have been reduced quite a bit, by \$6 million. This is in support of postsecondary institutions. I wonder if you would describe to me the result of this federal policy and if there's any explanation for anything that isn't already obvious, and that is that they're badly burdened with debt in the first place. But maybe there's another reason for the big decrease in their funding.

MR. RUSSELL: Well, Mrs. Duncan is going to provide the details of that. She's calling upon her past history in our Treasury Department. But those transfer funds that, you know, all the provinces get each year cover three things. We get a global amount and it covers hospital services, health care, and postsecondary education, and I believe they're frozen at the proportions that have been historic. So this shows our share of that transfer. Now, Lynne, do you want to go into detail about the drop?

MRS. DUNCAN: Well, you've actually hit on part of the reason. In that year the federal government took some expenditure restraint of their own, and whereas these grants combine with tax points, it gets quite complicated. But essentially it used to grow at the rate of growth in the economy. In that particular year they reduced the rate of growth by deducting it by two points. So it's a block of funds that grows at the rate of growth in the economy less two percentage points. That's the dollar impact of that change.

MR. ALGER: Good. Mr. Chairman, a supplementary. In the same section there was an increase of \$3 million for Vocational Training, Disabled Persons. I'm sure all of us are tickled to death with that. But I wonder what details of the programs are supported by this funding. Could anybody get into that a little bit?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes. Go ahead, Peter.

MR. SCHMIDT: The very minimal amount reflected in 1986 is

a result of a three-year retroactive adjustment that was made to the agreement with the federal government that went back to the previous three years. The whole adjustment was reflected in that particular year. Back then, in 1987, we were back to a normal year, plus there was an increased expansion in the eligible salaries and related travel costs of the people involved in the training of certain courses. For example, I believe the numbers where they increased the eligible salaries we could claim from 27 positions to about 53 positions.

MR. ALGER: I see.

MR. SCHMIDT: It was those kinds of expansions as well as additional work in the transitional vocational progress for handicapped training in the colleges and technical institutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you have a final supplementary?

MR. ALGER: Yes. I hope they work that into some of my senior citizens' vocational training after a while.

My final would be that there's a real high percentage of increase in funding for citizenship instruction, another thing that I think is very worthy. I wonder if the minister would describe this program and explain that it's a huge increase, about 300 percent actually.

MRS. DUNCAN: That's largely an increase for English as a Second Language programming, which in the main takes place at our vocational centres, AVC Calgary and AVC Edmonton.

MR. ALGER: For our new citizens, I presume.

MRS. DUNCAN: Yes.

MR. ALGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jonson.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. It's my understanding that with these accounts we're in the middle of a three-year program on international education. Perhaps it's my failing, but I've not been able to locate a vote number for that particular program and its expenditure. So perhaps the minister could provide that when he responds. The question, though, is: what is the amount of our commitment to this program?

MR. RUSSELL: Outside of the normal facilities and access to the system that are given to foreign students, and in addition to the special programs many institutions have developed within their own structures, as a department we have \$400,000 specifically for international education projects. That involves exchange scholarships, exchange teaching programs, and I guess the third thing is sort of visiting experts. By that I mean doctors practising who would come to each other's countries and practise. It's primarily aimed at our twin provinces in three Pacific Rim countries: Kangwon in Korea, Heilongjiang in China, and Hokkaido in Japan. Where's that \$400,000?

MR. SCHMIDT: If I may, it's another category within that special purpose grants category that I have this long list of here. The specific amount that you could categorize for international education in the year in question is \$288,670 for those types of projects.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before I recognize the member for a supplementary, would it be possible, first of all, to have that list of special grants circulated?

MR. RUSSELL: No problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would that be useful at all to members of the committee? Because there's been a number of questions on that. Apparently there's some indication they'd like to see that.
Mr. Jonson.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to go on to a different question, if I might.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fair enough. I think that you're really entitled to three questions, and I don't think it matters which section of the Auditor General's report you draw those from.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, in the accounts there are a number of areas where the matter of adult literacy is being funded. I wonder if the minister could provide a figure as to what our total commitment is in that area?

MR. RUSSELL: The global figure — I was just checking with Mrs. Duncan — is in the range of \$30 million for the whole package of programs that are aimed at dealing with the adult literacy problem.

MR. JONSON: Just a supplementary off that, Mr. Chairman. How many students, roughly, would we be serving with that commitment of money?

MR. RUSSELL: Gee, Halvar, I have no way of knowing.

MR. JONSON: I just mentioned, Mr. Chairman, because this is an area of major concern in the province, yet I think it has to be clear that there is a major commitment there right now. I'd like if perhaps sometime in the future I could find out that information.

MR. RUSSELL: Yeah, but it's hard without doing some research to answer that question, because these students would be distributed among a number of institutions and through a number of different programs. Something we haven't talked about yet this morning is the educational consortia, which is kind of an exciting concept where services are brokered and taken out, primarily to the smaller and rural communities throughout Alberta. Then we have the distance learning programs by Athabasca University, the adult extension programs, and particularly the special academic upgrading programs at the community vocational centres and the adult vocational centres. So we'd have to put those all together and see. It's a package of upgrading, and certainly it deals with that illiteracy challenge.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. McEachern.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to go back to a couple of questions raised earlier and ask for some elaboration. The Auditor General pointed out that the auditing procedures in a number of the advanced educational institutions are unacceptable and in many cases, of course, acceptable. But even there there's still the problem of the consistency from college to college or institution to institution, which makes it very

difficult to get a handle on what's really happening with our educational institutions in this province. I'm wondering why the provincial government seems to have rejected his idea that there should be some central guidelines.

I know you say these are autonomous boards, but surely they would be susceptible if the provincial government told them, "Look, you must conform to a certain specific type of accounting procedures"; you know, generally accepted accounting procedures or something like that. So if the Treasurer and the minister took a strong stand and said, "Look, there will be these kinds of procedures in place so that we have some consistency," would that not make sense?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes, of course it would make sense. The fact that the Provincial Auditor audits these institutions' books in itself, I think, would get a very strong message across. I've been as frustrated as anyone in just getting basic information. Questions such as "What is your enrollment this year?" most institutions can't answer or have slightly different ways of measuring that. In all cases there's usually a good and logical-sounding reason why they count things the way they do.

But I agree with respect to the accounting and audit process. You would think it would be fairly simple to standardize it, and the Auditor General's report, of course, is taken back to those institutions, and we try and correct it as a department. The autonomy thing isn't overriding, but it does come into it in a very strong way. If you exert too much control, they say: "Well, what's left for us to do? Why don't you just run us?"

MR. McEACHERN: But on page 11 of the report, it does say here that the Auditor General has not felt that he had a good response in the past, and he's saying, "Accordingly, I have not repeated my recommendation in a way that seeks a formal response." So it's sort of like saying he's given up, and I would hope that that would not happen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is not a debate, hon. member.

MR. McEACHERN: Anyway, the second question I would like to ask, then, and this may be a way of getting at some of this co-ordination and rationalization you were talking about: why are the colleges and other institutions not expected to indicate some evidence of having analyzed the needs for and the reasons for starting new courses, or why are they still continuing courses that are already in place, and why are they canceling courses when they apply for funding? I don't mean that the minister would take a heavy hand on it, but if you required that kind of information from them, it would help you in your rationalization process.

MR. RUSSELL: It's, in my view, a very good question because it gets right down to the heart: what is this system for? It's easy to identify the traditional roles of established postsecondary institutions. Universities have the professional faculties and centres of research, the community colleges have certain programs, but over the years and more particularly very recently, there's been a very volatile change in what's happening. And it's due to societal changes. We believe that the philosophy of autonomy is that the people out there in the local community know better and can handle better their immediate geographic problems and challenges in a better way than a centralized bureaucracy in the capital can. That's the basic philosophy of autonomy.

But when we look at the things that are happening: the swings in the economy and whether people drop into the system or out of the system depending on whether or not they're able to get work, the surge in immigration, the move of the native community off the reserves and into the urban centres, primarily Edmonton, the advances in technology, the explosion in computer communications and what it's done to professional and inside office jobs. I'm amazed, really, that the institutions are keeping up the way they can.

My visit to the Cromdale campus of Grant MacEwan College here in Edmonton really surprised me, because I would have thought if somebody hadn't told me that I was in an agency run by the Department of Social Services. And it was a postsecondary institution I was in. I visited a class of native women being taught how to shop in a supermarket. They'd no idea how to do that. That relates a bit to a question earlier on illiteracy. I went through six classrooms of English as a Second Language. I went into another classroom where special help was being given to students who all had severe physical handicaps. So there is an exciting and expanding role being laid on the institutions, and it's no wonder that there is duplication or redundancy developed in some cases. But all in all, I think the system is doing quite well in responding to some pretty volatile conditions out there.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes, well, I don't think anyone was suggesting you shouldn't have that kind of flexibility. It just was more the accountability of having rationalized why to the department so that the department could be accountable to the taxpayers who, of course, fund most of the projects.

My last question, really, is: has the minister had any role in talking to the Treasurer and the Auditor General in deciding in what way the finances of these semi-independent institutions could have their books added to or audited with the overall consolidated statement of the province in a meaningful way? It seems to me that's still a problem. We are putting out a lot of grants to postsecondary educational institutions and then not considering them part of the consolidated picture of the province.

MR. RUSSELL: I don't quite understand that question. I thought the present audit was meaningful.

MR. McEACHERN: Perhaps the Auditor General could explain. But the consolidated picture of the province does not take into account the money spent by postsecondary educational institutions, because they are semiautonomous bodies and the government doesn't control it. That doesn't seem to me to give the people of Alberta a clear sense of what's really happening with our dollars in a global sense.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that clear, Mr. Minister?

MR. RUSSELL: Mrs. Duncan says that's probably best answered by the Treasurer, and I think it is. But I don't know; it's a good question. I don't have any feelings on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The answer to the question is that this is probably best dealt with by the Treasurer, as I understand it, and the Auditor General. So perhaps if the Treasurer ever appears before the committee, we'll put that question to him.

Mr. Ady.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question relates to some items on pages 2.4 and 2.5 of volume 2. It relates to a number of estimates relating to so-called service elements or operating service elements for various educational institutes, which were unexpended in all cases. For instance, the operating Service Element for universities was estimated at \$5,153,143. That's on page 2.5, vote 2.6.1. Yet none of these funds was used. What are service elements, what's their purpose, and why aren't they being utilized? Is that three supplementaries? I hope not.

MR. RUSSELL: Peter, do you want to answer that?

MR. SCHMIDT: The element labeled Service Element is used to build into the budget items that have not been specifically, at the time the estimates were developed, allocated to specific institutions. If you'll notice, you're right in that there is no expenditure reflected opposite that line, but subsequently, for each of the listed colleges, technical institutions, the amount estimated and the amount expended in almost every case, I think with the exception of one, exceeds the amount that was voted. That is why, for example, in the Service Element we build into the budgets the estimates for supplementary enrollment growth at the various institutions, funds for various fixed asset projects, special common information projects that are being developed. Those are subsequently allocated to a specific institution and then paid out of and reflected opposite that particular institution.

MR. ADY: Thank you.

MR. SCHMIDT: Maybe just as a further explanation to get the impact of whether the funds are expended, if I may. On page 2.2 where it summarizes the total amount, for example: for 2.2 on vote reference 2.6, Universities - Operating, a \$401 million estimate which includes the \$5 million-plus for the special element. The total was expended. Likewise for public colleges: only \$681,190 was unexpended.

MR. ADY: Okay. He sort of covered my supplementaries at the same time, so that's fine. Thank you.

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Chairman, I have some questions on page 2.5 in volume 2 regarding the Grant MacEwan College. Now, I understand that because of the enrollment pressures the downtown campus was opened, and I have to assume that was a leased space primarily for administration. Could the minister tell us if this was indeed the case and whether the necessary funds for the alterations for administration came out of 2.5 or 2.8, the capital fund of board-governed institutions?

MR. RUSSELL: The Grant MacEwan College is kind of unique because it has four locations in the city of Edmonton. The main campus, if I can call it that, is in a rented high-rise office tower down here on 107th Street, and their main administration plus the majority of their students attend that campus. They have branch locations out in Jasper Place, in northeast Edmonton at Cromdale, and down in Mill Woods. The vote you see here covers all of those four locations. There is a unique situation with respect to Grant MacEwan College in that leased space, because included in their budget is the rent on that leased office building. Nowhere else do we require institutions to pay rent. So they were kind of being penalized, and when Dr. Dupré did the study for me on equity to see if all of the institutions were

being treated fairly, he pointed that out, and we corrected that in last year's budget.

But the details of the extra \$500,000 I'll have to refer to Peter.

MR. MUSGROVE: Just one supplementary. On page 19 of the Auditor General's report, recommendation 5 urges the college and the department to co-operate in determining the disposition of some \$200,000 in unexpended conditional grants. Could the minister inform us what exactly the department's position is on this matter?

MR. RUSSELL: Mrs. Duncan is dealing with those recommendations, so I'll let her respond to that, and then Peter can elaborate on the details of that roughly half a million.

MRS. DUNCAN: This is essentially the same question that was asked earlier with regards to Westerra, I believe. We're in the process of negotiating the allocation of those conditional moneys that have been unexpended.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you finished, Mr. Musgrove?

MR. MUSGROVE: Yes, I am.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we're rapidly drawing close to the hour, and I understand that there is some business that members would like to conduct under Other Business. So with the concurrence of the committee, I'd like to move on to Other Business.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There appears to be concurrence.

I'd like to thank the Minister of Advanced Education, the Hon. David Russell, for being here with us today and for bringing members of his department with him. I think that I can say on behalf of all members of the committee that we found it a particularly productive session. I think there were a lot of excellent questions and very thoughtful answers provided.

MR. RUSSELL: We enjoyed being here. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Now, under Other Business then, may I just distribute this information that the Auditor General provided from the last day regarding reconciliation?

Mr. Moore, you were about to . . .

MR. R. MOORE: This morning we had the Private Bills chairman in here. I don't think we came to any real direct conclusion on them, but I'd like to make a motion so that we can give you direction on how we feel. I move that we do exchange times with them for the next two weeks only, subject to those ministers who are coming before us agreeing so that they can change their times. Then you can negotiate with him.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think we need to have the motion put a little more clearly first, if that's all right, hon. member, because I don't get quite the time change that you're proposing.

MR. R. MOORE: I move that we exchange the time of appearing from 10 to 11:30, to 8:30 to 10 o'clock. We exchange with the Private Bills Committee, just switch our time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next two weeks only, subject to ministerial . . .

MR. R. MOORE: The two ministers who are involved -- if they agree to come.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. We have a motion before us then. I think it's clear. Is there any debate on it?

Mr. Heron.

MR. HERON: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm in one of those positions where I've booked in meetings. I'd like to accommodate all but not at the expense of not being able to be here myself. So for that reason I would have to ask for flexibility of this committee to look at one of the other alternatives, because I simply can't support just on this short notice switching time conditional on the minister. I think that my schedule's been set for some time for two breakfast meetings on those days.

MS LAING: With all due respect, possibly the Private Bills Committee could meet earlier, because I think all of us see some conflict in changing our times. We've committed ourselves around this regular time, so I'm wondering if the private members' Bills committee couldn't meet at 8, or half an hour earlier.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I sense that other members seem to be agreeing with that suggestion. Are you ready to vote on the motion as presented by . . .

MR. McEACHERN: Could I ask you a question?

MR. CHAIRMAN: A question?

MR. McEACHERN: It was never made clear why the other committee wanted to meet . . . Are their meetings going too long and we're interfering with them? Is that the problem?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think I can speak for the other committee. They often bring guests in from other communities. They're here for that morning, and people who are coming in with special concerns often really wish to have a chance to elaborate on those concerns. They really need more time than they're able to fit into an hour and a half meeting, and it's individually very expensive for witnesses to come back at a later point in time.

I think I noticed Mr. Downey indicating that he wanted to comment.

MR. DOWNEY: If I understand the intent of this motion, Mr. Chairman, it is to switch times for the next two weeks with the Private Bills, or . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's correct, provided that the ministers would be able to meet with us at those times.

MR. DOWNEY: Then it isn't a solution for the Private Bills Committee to meet half an hour earlier?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that suggestion has been proposed by Ms Laing, and it I think Mrs. McClellan seemed to agree that that would be a preferred way for them to deal with their problem.

MR. DOWNEY: Mr. Chairman, it makes no difference to me. I'm agreeable.

MR. BRASSARD: I do think, Mr. Chairman, that there have been some difficult Bills. They anticipate a couple of difficult Bills coming forward, and they really could use the flexibility of an extra half hour. I really do support it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ady.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too sit on both committees, and I think that this is going to be pretty disruptive to do this to people who don't sit on both committees. It would seem to me that the easier way is for Private Bills to move their starting time up 15 minutes or half an hour in the morning and deal with it that way.

MR. McEACHERN: I guess if we don't decide to move, it becomes their problem. I guess another suggestion they might consider is meeting elsewhere.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we've looked at that, but there are problems with *Hansard*.

In any event, are we ready for a vote on the question? Those in favour of Mr. Moore's motion, which would be to switch times for the next two dates, subject to ministerial ability to attend the hearings? Those opposed? Motion is defeated.

I will take it upon myself to speak to the Chair of the Private Bills Committee and see if we can negotiate something. There is another item of business that we have to deal with quickly, and I think we can deal with it quickly. That is that the Hon. Jim Horsman was scheduled for June 1. He is not able to make it on that date, and we're waiting on a letter from him as to what other dates it would be possible for him to be here. What's the pleasure of the committee? Would it be just to take the next minister and move him up in line, or what?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. R. MOORE: Just switch five and six in their rotation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. McEachern.

MR. McEACHERN: My suggestion would be to find somebody else from the other group of nine to move in. On two grounds: one is that the other ministers have had this list and are probably already anticipating when they'll be called, so you're disrupting a whole number of people; and there are some other people who would be very worth while to have before the committee. I'm thinking of the Social Services minister, for example, who is not on the first 14. So I would move that we move Social Services up into that slot if she could come.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now there's a motion to move Social Services into the slot that we've set aside for Mr. Horsman, which would be June 1, subject to her being able to come, of course. Any debate?

Mr. Ady.

MR. ADY: Could I speak to the motion, Mr. Chairman? I feel that the committee set priorities of the first 14, so it's only reasonable that we should just move them up if it's possible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We could theoretically be flexible here, but you're speaking against the motion.

Mr. Moore.

MR. R. MOORE: I think that we have them set. The ministers are announced. It's just a matter of two ministers switching places, the five and six spots.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we haven't contacted any ministers beyond the Hon. Peter Elzinga, who's scheduled for the week before, but in any event is there any further discussion on the amendment?

Mr. Brassard.

MR. BRASSARD: Just a very short question of clarification then, Mr. Chairman. We're not talking about shifting the whole remaining agenda forward one day; we're just going to switch places with one specific minister. Am I right? Is that what I understand?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, no. I think it would ultimately mean that everybody else would be moved down one week. But we haven't contacted them because we'd be inserting -- or up a week, whichever way you want to look at it -- the Minister of Social Services into the lineup ahead of some other people.

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Chairman, then I would have to reiterate what was said. I thought we were going to accommodate Mr. Horsman by changing with the next in line, not shifting a list...

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's generally what we would do, okay? But we're waiting on a letter. But there's another motion on the floor to alter that, and three members now of the committee

have spoken out against that.

Mr. Ady.

MR. ADY: I'd just like to offer as a suggestion that when you do get the letter from Mr. Horsman telling what week he can come, he just exchange places with that minister.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's already been provided for. That's what I think I just indicated that I would do.

All right, are you ready for the question on the motion? Those in favour? Those opposed? The motion is defeated. Okay; I think the direction to the Chair is clear on this.

Mr. Moore, I would entertain a motion from you.

MR. R. MOORE: A suggestion, Mr. Chairman. Last week there was a number of members who wanted the Hon. Larry Shaben to come back. I think that's an excellent idea, and we'll add his name to the bottom of the list and have him come back at that time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess that's assuming we're going to be sitting straight through till the end of December, which is a possibility. Very good.

In any event, the meeting for next week at this point will be at its usual time, 10 o'clock here in the Chamber. Our guest will be the Hon. Ken Kowalski. Mr. Moore, would you care to move your usual motion?

MR. R. MOORE: Adjournment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A move that we adjourn. There is concurrence, obviously. The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11:36 a.m.]