

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[5:57 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll declare the meeting officially open. There was a request at the end of the last meeting. We do have a motion to deal with. Notice of motion was given. There was a request given that we review the statistics as to the number of mail requests and telephone requests for hearings in constituencies. Bob, if you'd hand that out now, please.

MR. PRITCHARD: Yeah.

MR. DAY: Do female requests not count?

MR. PRITCHARD: Pardon me?

MR. DAY: We're reviewing the mail requests.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question for clarification. Are these the constituencies listed in your motion, Pam?

MS BARRETT: No, there should be one more. Which one was it? Oh, no; there it is. Rocky Mountain House. Yeah.

MR. BRUSEKER: Before we get to Pam's motion, could I just ask: what is quorum for this committee?

MS BARRETT: For decision-making, all of us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All of us.

MR. BRUSEKER: My question deals more with the hearings process.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is none, because everything is recorded and will be part of our library of factual information when we sit down to write the report.

MR. BRUSEKER: The reason I asked the question is that I'm wondering about – and I'm just sort of throwing the idea out right now – the feasibility of splitting into two subcommittees, as it were, to speed up the hearings process so that we can then get back here and do what is the primary task, which is ultimately to start deliberating.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, why don't we first of all have Bob quickly review this material with us and then go right to Pam's motion?

MS BARRETT: I'm not sure we should go to my motion first. I think we need to go back to Stockwell's reference first, which was when I asked the question, "How long do you see us doing public hearings?" He suggested a deadline. I think we need to deal with that first and then deal with my motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But your motion supersedes his.

MS BARRETT: Does it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, your motion says that we do it and we do it now.

MS BARRETT: No, the motion says, "if" the committee decides.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Can we deal with these first? Then let's have the motion read so we know what we're dealing with, and then decide whether to go to Frank's point or right into the motion.

MS BARRETT: All right; sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And the time frame for tonight's meeting: now, I was under the understanding that we had till 7:30 tonight. That's not true? Are there any members who have to leave before 7:30?

MS BARRETT: I want to if I possibly can, but this is more important.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. All right. Bob, review the material with us first. Everyone will keep in mind Pam's comment, and we'll try to be brief.

MR. PRITCHARD: On the sheet you've got in front of you are the constituencies that have contacted this office, either by mail or by telephone, and I've written in the name of the respective MLA and also totaled the number of requests for each area.

I should mention that Wainwright is another one we'd want to consider if you're thinking about hearings, because we postponed it. That has nothing to do with these numbers, but it's another one we have to get to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bob, Wainwright is a given. We made a commitment to go; we were unable to. We're dealing with any and all others.

MR. PRITCHARD: Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go through the list for the record, please, Bob.

MR. PRITCHARD: Sure. Basically, from the constituency of Bow Valley we have one mail request and nine telephone requests, for a total of 10. Dunvegan: seven in the mail and two by telephone, for a total of nine. Drumheller: one by mail and seven by telephone, for a total of eight. Rocky Mountain House: 17 telephone requests, for a total of 17. St. Albert: two by mail and seven by telephone, for a total of nine. Stettler: 11 by mail and nine by telephone, for a total of 20. Westlock-Sturgeon: one by mail and six by telephone, for a total of seven. Wetaskiwin-Leduc: one by mail and four by telephone, for a total of five. And Whitecourt: 10 by telephone, for a total of 10. That's a total of 24 mail requests and 71 telephone requests, for a grand total of 95 requests.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions of Bob on the statistics?

Okay. Could we now go back and have Pam's motion reread to determine whether or not we deal with it now or with Frank's point?

MS BARRETT: Do you have a copy?

MR. PRITCHARD: There it is.

MS BARRETT: Okay, I'll just quote from the March 7 transcript. The motion is culled from here. I'll read the direct quote.

So I'd like to go on record with notice of a motion that if the committee determines that the hearings in the ridings of Bow Valley, Dunvegan, Drumheller, St. Albert, Stettler, Wainwright, Westlock-Sturgeon, Whitecourt, and Rocky Mountain House are to be considered, members of this committee be directed to take time out of the House sitting to conduct those hearings in as timely a fashion as possible and that the hearings conclude no later than Wednesday, March 21, and that that constitutes the final set of hearings, period, so that on March 22, which is a Thursday, we can get down to the business we were mandated to do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good. Then it's clear that our first task is to determine whether or not we're going to hold additional hearings and whether this is the right list. If it is, then we decide the how. Committee members comfortable with that?

MS BARRETT: Fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right; let's first, then, go right to the list we have. Is there anyone uncomfortable with the list?

MR. BRUSEKER: Can I just ask one question in regard to Wainwright?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go right ahead.

MR. BRUSEKER: Do we have any indication as to what kind of number we might anticipate in Wainwright?

MR. PRITCHARD: My recollection is that there were about eight or nine.

MR. DAY: Further to that, Mr. Chairman, when I was in conversation with the mayor on that particular day that we had to cancel, he didn't allude to any numbers but he certainly alluded to the fact that he was going to have to get on the phone and get it on the radio as quickly as possible because of the distance. He knew at least of several, a number of individuals, that were going to be traveling there. So I would say eight or nine would probably be a minimum.

MR. PRITCHARD: I think also I was referring to presenters, because we had a list from earlier hearings.

MR. SIGURDSON: These requests that have come in: has this been the number of requests that have come in since last fall?

MR. PRITCHARD: In total, some of them were back. Of course, we went to some of the places - I guess Donnelly we keep talking about, for example. But some of them we've gone to; we honoured the requests.

MR. SIGURDSON: So, for example, Drumheller: the people that requested a public hearing in Drumheller may have traveled to Hanna or Vulcan; there is no real way of knowing. Or is there a way of knowing? Did we get the names of these folk that phoned in?

MR. PRITCHARD: Unfortunately, with a lot of them we don't have the names, so there is no way of telling.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can you give us any indication of how many requests there've been in the last couple of weeks?

MR. PRITCHARD: Out of the 95, probably 30 to 35.

MR. SIGURDSON: From one locale more than another?

MR. PRITCHARD: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't remember Rocky Mountain House being on the list a month ago.

MR. PRITCHARD: That's true. Those probably did all come in within the last month. I'd have to say 30 to 35, perhaps up to 40.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion on the number of communities?

MR. DAY: Are the requests still coming in, or has it tapered off?

MR. PRITCHARD: They're still coming in. As a matter of fact, some of the them, I think, are expressing even more concern because they're worried that the process is over, from our letter saying that the hearing process was over in February. So I think they're getting concerned that they may have been left out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, am I right, Bob, that none of these are constituencies we've been to?

MR. PRITCHARD: We haven't been in any of these.

MR. CHAIRMAN: These are all constituencies we have not been into?

MR. PRITCHARD: That's correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If the committee agrees to a list, whether it's this list or a list, I would hope there'd be a second motion that it's cut off at that point so that this doesn't keep going on and on.

MS BARRETT: That is what this says.

MR. DAY: The list doesn't grow any bigger than this?

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I just raised the - I guess it's in sympathy with your point that you've got to draw a line someplace.

MS BARRETT: No, you're right: "that that constitutes the final set of hearings, period."

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess if an argument's being made by people in Bow Valley or in Whitecourt - and both are constituencies that fall below the line if you're looking at the straight population formula - and there's a concern, and the people in those areas want to be heard, once having been in Bow Valley, then I'm assuming you'd meet the request. We wouldn't be going back to Chinook again . . .

MS BARRETT: Correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . or to Vermilion-Viking again or to St. Paul again.

MS BARRETT: Well, my motion, Bob, is written in a funny way. It should have a semicolon after March 21. It says that that constitutes the final set of hearings, period, so that on March 22, which is a Thursday, we can get down to the business . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: But your motion begs the question. We have to first decide whether or not this is the list, and if it is, it's an all-inclusive list. I'm not trying to push anyone; I'm just trying to . . .

MS BARRETT: No, I see what you're saying.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?

MS BARRETT: I have a question. Bob, when people phone in – I know you can't do this when they write in – do you ever ask them if they've considered writing to this committee? We've always said that we would accept written submissions.

MR. PRITCHARD: Yes, I always suggest that. As a matter of fact, even people that have written in, we've also written them a letter and suggested they could write in. But most people, if they're interested in coming to a hearing, want to come and present. You know, they say: "I would have written if I wanted to write. I want to come and talk to the committee."

MR. CHAIRMAN: In fact, I've had a couple of people angry that Bob's letter and his response on the telephone was as it was. Where the request was, "Here's a list of neighbouring communities where we'll be holding hearings; can you please come?", a couple of people have expressed their displeasure that they've been directed to other areas.

MR. DAY: So do we have a response, then, if there's another area? Bob, you said there've been more requests. If there's another area developing, are you suggesting then, Pam, that we just say to these people in the new area, not listed here, that that's too bad?

MS BARRETT: Yes, of course. I mean, you cannot have this process go on forever. In fact, last time we met, on March 7, it was argued by a couple of people, including Pat, that of course we understand the process can't go on forever, but we do have these requests. Her argument was that we must at least accommodate these but, she argued, no further. I believe you said the same thing. In fact, to paraphrase you, you said that it is not your assumption that these hearings would go on ad infinitum, that this would constitute the final list to be considered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think the one advantage in this list is that with the exception of Macleod, Taber-Warner, and Cypress we would then have covered every constituency that has a population that falls below the minus 25 percent figure. My constituents – and I think the same is true with Cypress-Redcliff and Macleod constituents – have either attended the forums in Lethbridge, Vulcan, or Medicine Hat or have mailed in their submission since. I'm not aware of any requests in that area. Are there, Bob?

MR. PRITCHARD: No.

MRS. BLACK: And on that point, Mr. Chairman, I think it's important that that message is relayed, that we have in fact gone and talked to the people, particularly the ridings that are below the 25 percent and below the variance that was in the one case.

Now, as much as I hate to admit it, when people have requested that we go . . . I look at, you know – what have we got? – 17 from Rocky Mountain House. I do feel very strongly that we have to follow through with the process of public hearings. Far be it for me to say that I'm thoroughly enjoying being on the road, because, like all of you, it does become rather tiresome. But I do feel that we have an obligation there, and I feel quite strongly about that, Bob. These people have taken the time to phone or write in, and if one person has done it, there are probably 10 more that they're going to bring along as their friends.

The one thing we've said at many of our meetings is that we have gained something new at every hearing, and I think it's important that these people have that opportunity. Now, how we work out the mechanics of it is something else, but I think we have to hear these people. They've taken the interest, and they've come forward. Certainly, you know, I agree that somewhere along the line it has to stop. But if you can say all those ridings that fall below: we have at least made the effort to contact all of those ridings, and we have not neglected them. I think that's an important message to get out there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm wondering if there's any way that – while I would like to have everybody have the opportunity to have their input, I too am concerned about time. I'm looking at the list, and I wonder if there is any way that there would be any agreement to start perhaps eliminating some of these spots. I'm looking at what's left over. For example, St. Albert. The mayor of St. Albert and a number of people from St. Albert made it into the Edmonton hearing. It is a constituency that goes well above the suggested variance, and I would hope that's one constituency we wouldn't have to visit. Wetaskiwin-Leduc: very close to Edmonton, another constituency that has, again, a population that's well within the suggested numbers. Westlock-Sturgeon: you know, we're an hour outside of the city for some of these folk, and presentations were made. In fact, with Westlock-Sturgeon we had hearings in neighbouring constituencies, Barrhead and Waskatenau and Edmonton.

So I just wonder if there's any way we can go through a process of elimination and then look at what's left. I would argue that we go through a process on that. Those are the three that I would see eliminating, and argue about the others.

MR. DAY: I agree with the basic intent of this motion. I guess we can speak to that in more detail. But I do have a sensitivity – that's why I asked the question – to calls still coming in. I know we can't continue ad infinitum on this, but I came here to the meeting actually prepared to argue for those calls that are still coming in; in fact, increasing the list if anything. But being a man of reason, I've listened to the remarks made by Pam here. It may surprise her, but I am wont to do that from time to time. I gave consideration to her remarks on a situation I felt particularly strongly about at the last meeting, and I've tempered my intent of direction somewhat.

On this one I'm willing to listen to those arguments about not extending it more, but if we're going to argue that we should take some off, frankly I would argue that we add some. I'm concerned about the calls yet coming in. I think there's an observation that we need to make. When we look at this and it says, "requests" – let's say 10 for Bow Valley, for instance – I don't know if you folks had this happening, but in Red Deer I had a number of people who would contact me and say, "Has a request been made for a meeting in Red Deer?" I'd say, "Yes." So they wouldn't phone Bob, or write. There's greater numbers than this behind each one of these, so I would be very sensitive to any suggestion of deletion of these folks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Mike, then Frank.

MR. CARDINAL: Just a quick comment. We have a good democratic system in Alberta. I don't see why we can't delay the process a bit longer and hear a few more of the rural Albertans. When you have nine areas asking for additional hearings, I really don't see what the big rush is to have to complete this project immediately. I think we should hear out Albertans and let them have input on how the constituencies will be established in the future and not disappoint the people. Let's leave it at that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Mike.

Frank, and then Pam.

MR. BRUSEKER: I have to agree with Pat and Stock, and Mike to a certain extent, that we should allow people to have input here. But I like Pam's motion from the standpoint that it has an end point, a sunset point or whatever you want to call it.

With respect to the three that Tom mentioned – St. Albert, Westlock-Sturgeon, and Wetaskiwin-Leduc – I'm wondering if it might not be feasible, for example, to pick one of our evening meetings, either Thursday of this week or Monday of next. If Bob Pritchard can contact those individuals and say, "We will have a hearing here in Edmonton; can you come here?" that might facilitate the process. Because as Tom pointed out, I don't think any of those people are really terribly far away from Edmonton. It would give them an opportunity to come in. We could hold the meeting somewhere – presumably right here in the Legislature, either the in Annex or the Legislature proper – and get to those people. I would like these people to have the opportunity to have their input, but I also think we discussed quite seriously last time the fact that we have to get our report tabled this sitting. I don't think we can afford the luxury of adding more onto the list.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The first issue to deal with is re the list. Is it a complete list? Should it be lengthened? Should it be shortened? Once we deal with that, then we go on to Pam's motion.

Pam, you're next on the list.

MS BARRETT: Okay. To respond to Mike, the reason we need to do this relatively soon is because, first of all, we would be disobeying a motion approved by all members of the Assembly if we do not make our report in the first sitting – that is, the spring sitting – of this session of the Legislature. Secondly, the amendment to the Act has a sunset clause, and thirdly, as I thought I made clear before but maybe not in your presence, there was a real spirit of co-operation in proceeding

with the amending Bill and the motion that were sponsored by Jim Horsman, and I think we need to uphold that spirit. So those are basically the reasons. We're bound to, in fact.

I would also speak to Frank and Tom. We don't have to cut anybody out here. I mean, I'm willing to go the extra mile too, but why not consider combining meetings so the people in the neighbouring communities of Wetaskiwin, Leduc, Stettler, and . . . Sorry. Stettler? Oh, yeah. "Come on in for an evening from Stettler." St. Albert and Westlock-Sturgeon: perhaps they would be willing to come in to a joint meeting. Now, on the other hand, the numbers might tell us that that would be difficult, so if logic . . .

MR. CARDINAL: I'd have to disagree with you, Pam, on that. I don't think we're bound to anything in specific so that we can't make changes. If more Albertans have input in this important process, then we should make sure the opportunity is there to do it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our first issue – and we've not required motions in the past to set hearings; it's been by consensus. Do we have consensus with the – what are there? – nine constituencies on the list?

MR. PRITCHARD: There are nine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And that's in addition to Wainwright?

MR. PRITCHARD: That's right.

MS BARRETT: I would say yes, as long as we don't do any more.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, could we work it more on where we could feasibly bring a St. Albert and a Westlock together in an evening? Could we see if we could possibly do that? And if it worked out that there weren't that many presentations . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The only reason I'm reluctant to talk about that now is that that's the how, and Pam's motion deals with the how. I'm trying to deal with the numbers.

Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Could I then make a motion and say that . . .

MRS. BLACK: We have a motion, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: . . . the motion we have before us is considered the list in total, because I don't think Pam's motion addressed that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, it doesn't.

MS BARRETT: My motion is not formally on the floor. I read it out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As notice of a motion.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, I read it out as notice. So we could deal with Frank's.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Frank is putting a motion on the

floor.

MR. BRUSEKER: Do you want me to read the names? Can I make a motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do it for the record.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. That the constituencies to be considered for hearings are Bow Valley, Dunvegan, Drumheller, Rocky Mountain House, St. Albert, Stettler, Westlock-Sturgeon, Wetaskiwin-Leduc, Whitecourt, and also Wainwright, and that that be the total list of constituencies to have further hearings.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'm posing a question. What happens if a request comes in from Macleod or Cypress-Redcliff? Now, I earlier used those two constituencies plus my own as an example. I think, if I'm not mistaken, Bob, they're the only three remaining constituencies that fall under the minus 25 percent where we would not, then, have had a hearing. Is that right?

MR. PRITCHARD: I think that's accurate.

MS BARRETT: Which ones were they again, Bob?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Macleod, Taber-Warner, and Cypress-Redcliff.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, I feel that if we get requests through telephone or mail to have a hearing in those ridings that are looking at some real problems, we are obligated to go and have a hearing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just for clarification, do you mean a constituency that we have not yet been in or a constituency that you're suggesting we might revisit?

MRS. BLACK: I think either. I think if there's that much concern that people have actually taken the time to place a call or send a letter, then we are obligated to work it out so that we hear that. I'm sure that, you know, we'll see this thing wrap up fairly quickly, but I don't want to be locked into a position where we don't go and hear the people, period.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mike, and then Tom.

MR. CARDINAL: I think we should deal with . . .

MS BARRETT: That's a change of tune from your last meeting.

MRS. BLACK: No, it isn't.

MS BARRETT: You bet it is. I'll find the transcripts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead, Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: We should possibly deal with the motion that's on the floor, listing. I do have a motion that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, yes. The motion on the floor lists the 10 constituencies, the nine on the page plus Wainwright, and also indicates that that's it; there won't be any further hearings.

That's the motion. That's the essence of it, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Correct. We would still accept written submissions; that's always implicit, I think. But we would not go to those other constituencies.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are we ready for a question, or do you want a quick coffee break?

MS BARRETT: Sure.

MR. CARDINAL: It's okay.

MRS. BLACK: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question's been called. All in favour of the motion? Opposed to the motion? That motion passed four to two.

MR. CARDINAL: Now I have a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

MR. CARDINAL: My motion that I want to read is:

Be it resolved that as additional public hearings are necessary in the constituencies of Bow Valley, Dunvegan, Drumheller, Rocky Mountain House, St. Albert, Stettler, Westlock-Sturgeon, Wetaskiwin-Leduc, and Whitecourt, as well as Wainwright, where an earlier postponement occurred, and as House responsibilities of the committee members cannot be set aside until the spring sitting is completed, the chairman will table a report and request an extension of time to deliver the final report in conjunction with this committee's request for a fall sitting of the Second Session of the 22nd Legislature.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; discussion on the motion. Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I think the Government House Leader was pretty clear when he introduced the motion and enabling legislation, and I want to again read his remarks into the record. He said this on August 16, 1989:

Now, we could have gone forward and appointed a commission under the existing legislation, but our advice is, and it will be shared with the committee in due course . . .

That's this committee.

. . . that the current structure of the commission under our present legislation would not withstand a Charter challenge. Therefore, that creates a problem for creating a new commission based upon the current legislation. And to deal with that issue, we have therefore asked the committee to review the whole issue. That's why we need the time in order to carry out this work, but there is a time limit on it and there's a sunset clause. So if the committee does not complete its work, it does not recommend any changes, then the government must create a commission based on the current legislation as a result of the sunset clause built into the amendment now before the Assembly.

Now, he said that it would be important to bring this report back this spring session. If we decide to go back to a motion – I suppose inside the Assembly – then we're going to have an argument there.

MR. CARDINAL: Sure; that's understandable.

MR. SIGURDSON: But I don't think, with the number of meetings we've got, that we can't take time away from the House to go and listen to these folk and get on with the work

of writing the report and getting it in this spring session and thereby, I believe, living up to the commitment made by the Government House Leader when he made those remarks last August.

MS BARRETT: I cannot for the life of me understand why anybody would move a motion that extends to the fall sitting the need, as approved by this committee just a moment ago, to conduct nine further public hearings. Could the mover possibly explain this?

MR. CARDINAL: As a person who has been involved in this, and I know as a government member, time definitely is limited as to how much we can get away from the office, during the week for sure. I still maintain that the locations listed are not the only locations.

MS BARRETT: We just passed a motion to that effect, toots.

MR. CARDINAL: Just let me finish. The locations listed are not the only locations wanting hearings. I know the system well enough to know also that if there are another 40 people that request hearings, we can make another motion to hear another 40 before the fall sitting. There's nothing to stop us from doing that. If we can't do stuff like that, then what are we here for? Surely nothing is written in rock that we can't change to accommodate people.

MS BARRETT: Well, if I can have the floor again, I would suggest to you that six and a half months is ample time to get this job done. What you have said does not constitute an explanation of why we can't do the public hearings to which we have now agreed following the approval of Frank's motion, a grand total of nine new public hearings. Correct? Why couldn't that be done in the course of a couple of weeks, particularly considering that it is anticipated that the House will rise on April 11 and not resume until April 23? I mean, even if we could not get them done this week and next, and I'm not convinced that we couldn't.

Finally, I must say that the motion, I believe, violates in the worst possible way an all-party agreement prior to the introduction of either the Bill or the motion. Under no circumstances would the New Democrat caucus have ever endorsed this Bill or the motion had it been understood that the agreement to report in the spring sitting of this Legislature was not to be upheld.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam, when we began our work as a committee, we sat down and identified communities we felt we should visit so that the hearing process could be given an opportunity to function, and we've added to that list. I hope there's nothing implied in your remarks to suggest that we as a committee have been dragging our feet over time.

MS BARRETT: No, of course not. What I'm suggesting is that with the motion offered in good faith, I believe, by Frank, subsequent to last week's discussion, to go to these other nine locations, surely to heaven some reasonable compromise could be made from the side that this member, the mover of the motion, is representing. And if there's any indication that it won't be, then I'm afraid I'll have to break quorum and leave, because that is a real violation of what was agreed to last August.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just to address Mike's motion here. I'm wondering, Mr. Chairman, if that motion might not be out of order. I believe Tom has described it very well. There is a sunset clause, and this motion seems to go directly against that. I'm wondering if the motion is in order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The mandate of the committee ends at the end of the first sitting. In my view, the motion is not out of order, in that it requests that a decision be made so that we report back to the House.

With regard to quorum, we're now debating the motion. Quite frankly, I don't believe a member can get up and leave while we're debating a motion and then say that we don't have a quorum. Otherwise, the committee would be completely paralysed. The intent of the motion, which you put forward yourself, Pam, as I recall, was to ensure that if six of the seven members came to a meeting, the six of the seven members would not make a decision in isolation of the seventh person. But once a motion is put on the table, surely the motion is going to be debated out. Eventually it may be withdrawn; it may be voted on.

MS BARRETT: I don't think the rules of order do provide for that. I've seen people leave the House during consideration of a motion that is ultimately voted on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's a rule that we made. That is not a rule in *Beauchesne* or in *Erskine May*.

MS BARRETT: No; we are under the same rules.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That a unanimous vote is required? That's a rule we made for ourselves as a committee.

MS BARRETT: Yes. But there is nothing in rules of order that prevents one person from leaving during consideration of a motion. I saw Stockwell do it last week.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No; my point is that on the rule we adopted, the intent of the motion, as I recall – but we can go back and check *Hansard* – was to ensure that a matter would not be raised, debated, and dealt with while one or more members were not at the meeting. But once a motion is put forward – and we're in the middle of debate now – I do not believe it is proper for a member to say, "Well, I may leave."

MS BARRETT: You may not like it, but I think it's proper. I think that people have not given due consideration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I don't think it is.

MR. BRUSEKER: Could I just conclude my comments then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead. I thought you had, Frank; sorry.

MR. BRUSEKER: No problem.

In that case, Mr. Chairman, I would speak against the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fair enough.

MR. DAY: Against which motion? I'm sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mike's motion is on the floor.

MR. BRUSEKER: Against Mike's motion to continue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mike's motion is on the floor.

MR. BRUSEKER: I would speak against the motion. The reason I speak against the motion is that I believe our mandate, first and foremost, is to be able to table that report.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is our mandate.

MR. BRUSEKER: And I think it's abundantly clear from what Tom has read from *Hansard*, and so I can't support this motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At the request of Pam at the end of the last meeting, we did hold the issue because she wanted an opportunity to speak with the Government House Leader. I know she's had a series of discussions with him. Stock and I have also met with him, and it may be appropriate to deal with that issue now because we are indirectly bringing the Government House Leader into the debate.

MS BARRETT: You bet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

MS BARRETT: The Government House Leader and I sat on the terrace outside the members' lobby last summer and discussed this several times before the introduction of the Bill. We also discussed it with the Liberal House leader.

There was agreement that on the condition that this committee report – and not beg leave to have the time extended but actually make its recommendations to the House during the spring sitting of this Legislature – we would support both the amending legislation and the motion. Otherwise, we would have called for certain amendments to the legislation itself at that point. The Government House Leader was well aware of that. Myself and the Liberal House leader were very clear in our terminology. It is those discussions to which I believe the minister referred when he introduced and moved, even for second reading, the amending legislation. It is my contention that the motion before us now is a violation not only of the second last component of the motion that strikes this committee, I believe, but also the spirit of both the motion and the amending legislation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam, can we deal with your discussions with the Government House Leader today? Because that's why we tabled the matter last week.

MS BARRETT: The Government House Leader acknowledges that the committee is required to report by the end of the first sitting of this Legislature.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And that's all he said? Because in his report . . .

MS BARRETT: Well, I don't have permission to quote from his notes, but that is what he said.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I can't . . .

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, just on that point. I'll address my remarks on that very point. I think what the member has said

over here is that there isn't going to be a report.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But we're on another key issue, and we can't allow it to hang out there in that particular way. I asked the Government House Leader if he had indeed met with you, Pam. He indicated he had. He went on to tell me that it was his view and that he communicated to you that he did not feel he should be involved in our committee's deliberations.

MS BARRETT: Oh, correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. So the committee is not bound by – or he is not interfering with or becoming involved in our discussions as a committee.

MS BARRETT: Most certainly not. But he did offer the legal opinion, I guess, as the Government House Leader, as the sponsor of both the motion that struck this committee and the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As to the intent of last summer.

MS BARRETT: Correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. No one anticipated the number of requests for public hearings at that time.

MS BARRETT: Oh, well, if that's the case, then why don't we just amend the stupid motion and carry on for the next three years until a court challenge is launched? Go ahead.

MR. SIGURDSON: There were two points I wanted to make. One is that I think what's probably an even more important paragraph to read at this point would be again from the Government House Leader, and that is the previous paragraph from his conclusion:

The time frame that we are establishing is this: the select special committee established as a result of the vote yesterday will be required to report to the first sitting of the next session.

We are now in that session.

And if they do that and bring forward a resolution as to a new type of legislation or amendments to the current legislation which must be then put into place, it will be incumbent upon the government to bring that legislation before a fall sitting, or a spring sitting if the work were done soon enough, but no later than the end of the second session. It must be done or it will be necessary to appoint a commission under the current legislation. Now, I think that's a very important statement. In all of the meetings that we have attended, we have talked about the possibility of a Charter challenge and how, whatever we do, we want to make sure that our recommendations and the subsequent redrawing of boundaries would withstand a Charter challenge. I think the Government House Leader has been rather clear in saying that if we don't bring something back this spring session, there will be appointed a commission to establish boundaries under the existing legislation, and the existing legislation says 42-41.

Now, the question I have, Mr. Chairman, because quite frankly I'm worried about time lines, is: what would happen if a member of the committee were to take ill and not be able to deliberate? Would we then have to go through the entire process because one member didn't hear input from all Albertans?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we dealt with that issue in a way in our last meeting when we discussed what our position would be relative to comments made by one member of the committee. But let's get back to the point, shall we? The point is on the motion.

MR. SIGURDSON: The point is that I'm very much opposed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I understand. Anything else, Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: That's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. First Stock and then Pat. Anyone else?

MR. DAY: Well, first, just on the issue of doing these while we're in session. From the point of view of government caucus Whip, I see that as physically impossible. I would fight, kick, and scream against that, just because of what we've got on our government plate. I know what I'm expecting of members who are also on this committee. It would be absolutely impossible to do this.

MS BARRETT: Use a subcommittee. We've used them before.

MR. DAY: When we were out at a number of places, I think Hanna being one, and for reasons beyond the control of a lot of our members . . . I think that at one of the Hanna meetings was it not only two or three members there?

MR. PRITCHARD: At Donnelly there were only two.

MR. DAY: Or a couple of different places.

I frankly had very negative feedback on that, the fact of, "Do you people care or not?" That was an unfair comment because I know the members of the committee have worked very hard to try and be at the meetings. But going to a subcommittee, breaking this committee down in size, doesn't answer or address the problem. This is literally a physical impossibility for us to do during this session.

We talk about our mandate. Our mandate as elected people is to reach out and listen to people. The federal government is finding out what happens when you don't listen to people. They have become totally unmoving, and people are not impressed with that immovability. They're saying: "We've got some concerns. We didn't elect you to become cemented into things that hurt people."

We have people saying to us, "We want to talk to you." We have people who are facing what they see could be devastating changes in their life, in actually a way of life, and for us to say that we can't entertain this motion, that we are so bound by good intention, by a time constraint, I think is to deny the very reason we are elected. We are here to represent people, and we are here to be appealed to by people.

We have seen an increase in attendance in the meetings since they began. I was bragging when the meeting was in Red Deer, saying, "Hey, we set the record": more people there than anywhere. The next night, I think in Hanna, there were even more people. I drove, along with a number of others, through 30 below weather and a blizzard to get to Viking. There were more people in Viking. This is increasing as we move.

I voted against this number because I personally wanted to see this list increased. I know there are members on this committee

from my own party that didn't agree with me on that. That's fine; I'll accept, obviously, the decision of this committee. I already feel uncomfortable having cut the list off, but that's the decision of the committee. I have no choice but to live with it.

Also, not wanting to raise a sore point, but there was another issue in terms of what we dealt with at our last meeting, and people already questioning our sincerity. So these increasing numbers, our mandate to hear from people – it doesn't have to go ad infinitum; we can put a date on it.

As far as a Charter challenge, I can't in my wildest imaginings see – never mind the Supreme Court judge – even at the appellate level, a magistrate saying that because this committee wanted to go an extra two or three months to meet the demands of people, he or she would allow a Charter challenge. I don't think there's a judge in the world – I don't think the meanest, nastiest judge on the worst day of their life would say that we are somehow robbing citizens by extending the deadline to hear people. That would be ridiculous. We have shown good intent all the way along, and I believe we're continuing to do so. It's commonplace to see the work of committees extended; it is commonplace as they hit extenuating circumstances. It shows that they're human beings admitting they've come up against things they didn't anticipate and they're going to change. Why? To meet the concerns and the hearts, the appeals of people, so we don't have people beating down our doors saying that we're not listening to them.

As far as the comments in *Hansard* by the Deputy Premier, I believe we're in a position where we need to look at the spirit of the comments and not the letter. I am for passing this motion, letting it go into the House, and then letting the Deputy Premier and others express the spirit of the intent of this whole process. If he were to convince me that this has to die on March 21, this interrogation process, and that was the spirit, that's what he wanted all along, I'd have something to think about. But until that happens, I am for this motion for all the reasons enunciated, and I'm for seeing it go into the Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat, Frank, Tom, and then Pam.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, I think Stock's made some really valid points, but I think, even more importantly, our committee's already been up for question, and that is something I would rather see us do.

We have agreed now to, well, possibly nine additional hearings. In the time frame we have, when I look at, you know, that we've dedicated two days a week to committee work, I think we're backing ourselves into a corner somewhat by not passing this motion, from the standpoint that if we're going to go and potentially do nine hearings, when are we going to write the report? Now, if the House sits, say, till June or whenever, we're going to be on a time frame here. Are we going to put in some shoddy report?

I'd rather see us go back into the House. Surely to goodness – we're from all parties here – we can go back to our caucuses and say, "Look, if you're going to have a decent report from the information we've gathered, we're going to need a little more time." Now, what difference does it make if it's a couple of months when we're talking about peoples' lives here? We're talking about the people of Alberta. I just don't see what the big to-do is about having it for a couple of extra months when we're talking about a report of this nature. This thing is going to be something that's going to be giving directions and guidelines to a commission down the road. I take it very seriously.

I don't take this lightly. I really think we have to sit back and say, "Who are we really representing here?" We're representing everybody from all of these constituencies.

Let's forget about this party nonsense for right now. We've been charged with a job to do, and if we have to have nine more hearings and we've got to prepare a report, let's prepare something that's decent. And surely to goodness . . .

MS BARRETT: What's the party nonsense?

MRS. BLACK: Well, whether we want to do this or we want to that, or our party wants to do this or whether we had meetings. I don't know about your meetings that you've had as House leaders; I'm not party to that. I have no idea what went on, what's transpired between the various House leaders. To me that's irrelevant, as a member of this committee. I'm here to do a job, and I still don't see what the difference a couple of months makes here or there, to anybody.

MS BARRETT: Try a year.

MRS. BLACK: Why a year? If we've agreed in Mike's motion to recommend a fall sitting, surely to goodness we can live with that. If we go into the House and say, "Look, we've had so much input from people that we're going to need another couple of months to put the thing together," I don't see what the big problem is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Frank, and then Tom, followed by Pam.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just a quick summation. I agree we have to hear from people, but we've extended the process. We've added more time on. It's been well publicized around the province: TV ads, radio ads. In the motion I made that said we limit the hearings to this, I said it's implicit that if anyone wants to write in, we'll accept written submissions. But I firmly believe that we have to restrict ourselves to these – I guess 10, actually, that I've listed – and not extend the time frame. So I don't support Mike's motion to extend it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I just wanted to try and clear up one thing. Stock had said that there was going to be a Charter challenge based on a time delay. It's not a Charter challenge based on a time delay. The Charter challenge would be based on the existing legislation which is what the Government House Leader says that we would be dealing with if this committee didn't report this spring session.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just for clarification. Are you suggesting, Tom, that if the motion's passed and if we make a request, the response of the Government House Leader will be to ignore our request completely and go ahead and strike a boundaries commission based on the last legislation?

MR. SIGURDSON: Oh, I'm not suggesting that at all. I'm just saying that his remarks said that we had a sunset clause.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. But, to be clear, though, you're not . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay, to be clear. He said that there was a sunset clause, so any Charter challenge would be not on the time delay but rather on the existing legislation.

Now, we've . . .

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, on that point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. DAY: The balance on that point is: Meredith of B.C. made it very clear that as long as the government was showing good intent to move in this direction, no challenge would stand, and when you're talking about two months, that's exactly what I'm talking about. But anyway that's something that if it goes to court, I guess we'll find out then.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah. I don't propose to play lawyer here. I know that we've gone out and listened intently and that at the wrap-up of every session I've attended, the Chair has said that we've heard something different or something new.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And we have.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I guess it's a matter of degree. We're getting to a point now where I believe that we're hearing an awful lot of the stuff that is repetitive and redundant, and it's consuming a great deal of time. The presentation, the manner in which presentations are being made, might be. But for the most part – and I would be prepared to go through the public record, the *Hansard* transcripts, and try and fish out actually how many new suggestions we've had recently. That's not to say that there haven't been some, but they're getting farther and farther between.

MR. DAY: It's a matter of opinion with respect to that.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, sure it is a matter of opinion, but I would hazard the guess that my opinion would be shared by a great many people. If we're going to accommodate the folk that have written in and telephoned in, let's get on with it. Let's do it this session. Let's take the time away, and we can do it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Pam.

MS BARRETT: Well, I don't understand the sudden aversion to having a subcommittee undertake these hearings. To the best of my knowledge the two people who are most bound to the Assembly while it sits would be myself as the Opposition House Leader, and Stockwell as the government Whip. Now, perhaps I'm wrong, but maybe I should just ask: Pat, Mike, Frank, Tom, and Bob, are you bound here? Can you not go out for a few days of hearings while the House sits?

MR. DAY: I won't let them. They know that.

MS BARRETT: Well, that's a real convenient form of logic. Talk about dictators or what.

MR. DAY: No, it's talking about doing the work we are mandated to do as the government.

MS BARRETT: Uh huh.

MR. DAY: We discussed that as colleagues, and we . . .

MS BARRETT: And it would fall apart if you had three government members absent for a couple of days? What would happen if three of them got the flu for a few days? Would we call the House off? Would we adjourn business?

MR. DAY: Obviously we couldn't. But, Pam, when we conduct our business, we look at the amount of work on our various agendas long before this process, and then we make agreements as members, as equals.

MS BARRETT: Well, I accuse you, then, of a most incredible amount of duplicity. This is brand new to me. It was never suggested before. In the second place, aside from your little edicts, which I believe . . . Never mind. Aside from those particular edicts about the power you might exercise as Whip, it occurs to me that this is the first time I've ever heard this argument, which seems to me to suggest some sort of fabrication. In the second instance, I've not heard a single argument as to why it is we cannot entertain submissions in writing and announce all over the world, if you want, a certain deadline; i.e., March 21.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam, for the record, last Wednesday at least one member spoke of extending the hearing process into the summer. Possibly others did, but I do recall at least one member made that point. So it isn't something coming new tonight.

MS BARRETT: No. The argument that four or five members of the Assembly out of a total of 83 couldn't be freed for a few days to go and have public hearings on this matter to get the subject wrapped up is brand new tonight.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ten hearings is what we're talking about.

MS BARRETT: That's right; 10 hearings.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The last point and then stop.

MS BARRETT: And finally . . .

MR. DAY: Pam, like if you . . . No. Sorry; go ahead.

MS BARRETT: I'll have to come back to the "finally" because you interrupted and I lost my train of thought.

MR. DAY: Talking about edicts and things like that – I can appreciate you not understanding how a government has to work. We as government members sit down and have extensive discussions on our individual workloads, and then amongst ourselves as equals we make decisions on who's going to be where and when, so that we can all be effective. We make those decisions. I don't tell Mike or Pat they can do this or they can't do that, but after the discussion process of sorting out in the months ahead and through a session where everybody's going to be and how they're going to fulfill their roles, then we come to an agreement. We say: "I said I'd be there. I'll be there. I will not let you down." And then . . .

MS BARRETT: Thank you. Thank you for that information, but it seems to me preposterous . . .

MR. DAY: And I'm not finished yet.

MS BARRETT: You were the one who interrupted me.

MR. DAY: No. You let me speak.

MS BARRETT: It seems to me preposterous that you couldn't allow three government members to make a motion . . .

MR. DAY: Then it's said to me as government caucus Whip, "Now, Stock, we've all agreed with this, so we're going to give you the nasty little job of if somebody's not going to be there or it looks like not, you've got to remind them they agreed that they were going to be there." That's part of my function with my colleagues. They give me that responsibility.

There's a certain quorum that has to be met in this building across here. We have to always make sure there are enough government members there for that reason alone. If the opposition were to leave the House, we wouldn't even have a quorum in the House, if there's not a certain number of members. We've been elected, all of us, to serve here in this Assembly for a certain period of time of the year, and we have to be there. If we open it up, even if we could, which I would . . . I'm just one vote in our caucus. Around the caucus table if I get outvoted on this, that I don't have to require members to be there, then I'd get outvoted. Frankly, I'd probably resign as Whip, too, because I'd say, "Well, what do you want me to do?"

The other point is that all the groups, the commissions, and the committees that could be working while the House is in session, they don't work, and I, frankly, don't want to be part of any precedent that would say to the public: "There's something more important when the Legislature is on than being in the Legislature. So any of you groups there, you want public hearings and stuff, sure, just come on, and we'll divvy it up. We did it for electoral boundaries. We'll do it here; we'll do it there." That would break down the whole process for which we're elected to serve a certain time and period of the year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.
Pam.

MS BARRETT: Well, in response to the last comment, I have never heard such a preposterous argument in my life. If a government that enjoys a majority of 59 members can't function with the absence of three government members, then you've got serious problems, I should suggest, and I'd be pleased to work with you privately to help you work out those organizational and structural problems.

MR. DAY: There are five of us, unless I count wrong.

MS BARRETT: No. I was assuming that you couldn't go . . .

MR. DAY: Or four.

MS BARRETT: . . . and then I count three government members aside from you, dear.

Finally, the comment I wanted to make is that . . .

MR. DAY: "Dear" and "toots": this is getting quite amicable.

MS BARRETT: . . . the assumption here is that the delay

would only be a matter of a few months. That assumption is completely erroneous. The delay will constitute one full year by the time the commission is struck. That violates the agreement.

MRS. BLACK: You're losing me there. You keep saying that. Why do you keep saying that? I don't understand what you're saying.

MS BARRETT: Because if you put off the report until the fall sitting, if we get a fall sitting – and there's no guarantee of that – then the commission is struck; it can't report until the spring sitting. I submit to you that there are a lot of other Albertans who would also like to know the new electoral boundaries as soon as possible and have a constitutional right to do so. So I would close my argument with those observations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Frank. Be brief please, then we'll try to wrap up and bring it to a vote.

MR. BRUSEKER: No thanks, but Tom wanted to talk.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: There is in the federal House of Commons the age-old tradition of pairing, and we see that we could easily pair members here to get on with this work during the spring session. It shouldn't be too tough. Also, I know it would be a sacrifice for some members, but there are evenings and mornings, and we have had morning meetings of this committee throughout the province. I don't see why it would be any different to have a morning meeting a number of times if that would accommodate the folk. We've never worried about having morning meetings before, other than for a Friday, which is the only day we meet in the morning in the Assembly. There's no reason why we couldn't have morning meetings and Wednesday nights as well that are free.

MRS. BLACK: But, Tom, on that point, how are you going to get to Dunvegan . . .

MS BARRETT: It's called chartering a flight, the way you did before.

MRS. BLACK: . . . in the morning?

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, with respect, we could go up on a Wednesday evening and have a meeting on a Thursday morning and be back in time for session. This is important work.

MRS. BLACK: I realize that. I'm saying: what's the big deal about a couple of months?

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I tend to agree with Pam that it's not just a couple of months, and I entered this process believing we would have our report in this spring session.

MRS. BLACK: As we all did.

MR. SIGURDSON: As we all did. Now, I'm trying to show ways that we can get on with the work and still be in the House for House duty. I think evenings and mornings are available to us, and there is the age-old tradition of pairing members off so they can go out and conduct the hearings.

MS BARRETT: Let's call the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, go ahead, Stock.

MR. DAY: Just a couple of points, then we'll close. I'm pleased to hear that opposition members have the luxury of open mornings and open evenings. If you want to see for yourself, there's our evening and morning schedule from Monday to Friday. Mike is the chairman of at least one committee that I'm thinking of right now. You have no idea of the number of groups that come to him just for health and social services caucus committee alone. He's the chairman. Pat's a chairman.

MRS. BLACK: Of two.

MR. DAY: What you're asking . . .

MS BARRETT: Is a little co-ordination.

MR. DAY: A little co-ordination? You're asking us to go to a number of committee members all through the House and say, "I'm not going to be here," and they're going to say, "Isn't it nice that you can go. Now I double my load. I tell some of my constituents I won't be there. I tell this committee they can't come and see us." Our workload in the session in terms of meeting with the public, frankly, starts at 7:30 in the morning and finishes sometime after 11 whether we're sitting or not.

I'll close with this, Mr. Chairman. The editor of my daily newspaper in Red Deer at the close of every session writes a column and talks about which members missed one day in the sitting, and the whole town knows. It might have been a perfectly good reason. There are times when we are away, even now. Now, it might not be a big deal in Edmonton, but in Red Deer and in many rural areas where people care, they say, "Listen, when the Legislature is in session, I want you there absolutely as much as possible." Our newspaper puts it right across the headlines, who was there and who wasn't. Now, for all those reasons, what you are asking is horrendous.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I've been known to ask horrendous things of many people. You're not being picked upon. Now, I would hazard a guess that unless the editor of your newspaper attends session, he must take his attendance record from the Sergeant-at-Arms. If you've got a reasonable excuse, if you attend citizenship court or whatever you attend . . .

MR. DAY: No, he wouldn't write that. He just says you were there or you weren't.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah. Well, how does your editor get the information? From the Sergeant-at-Arms.

MR. DAY: I don't know. One time he said I'd missed a sitting and I didn't. I was there. Perfect attendance.

MS BARRETT: Maybe Tom will have to write a letter for you.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'll tell you, if he says you missed three or four times, I'm going to write him and say: "Stock was with me. He's my buddy. We were on business. This comes from an opposition MLA, and you don't get that very often."

MR. DAY: I throw out the newspaper thing as a side issue.

MR. SIGURDSON: I know you do. Okay. But I'm just trying to answer it. I can well appreciate the time you've got to spend in your various committees. All of us have commitments, whether it's in the morning or in the evening. Gosh, this committee has taken a great deal of time away from the work I do as a constituency MLA. I'm falling further and further behind. I want to get on with this, I want to clear it up, but I want to clear it up this session. I guess that's where the point of departure is. I want to clear it up this session. I want to get the report into the spring session.

MR. DAY: I say we pass Mike's motion and let the House decide.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Regarding the timing, there are two key issues that seem to be emerging. One is a fear by at least two of the members of the committee that any delay in meeting our mandated time line would result in at least a year's delay in the final outcome, in the appointment of a commission. I've heard others express a view that it would be two to three months at most. Now, I'm merely trying to capture the concerns that are expressed over the time lines. Is there anything else a member feels needs to be put on the table before we call for the question? Ready for the question?

MS BARRETT: Sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour of the motion? Let's have the motion read again, please?

MR. CARDINAL: Okay.

Be it resolved that as additional public hearings are necessary in the constituencies of Bow Valley, Dunvegan, Drumheller, Rocky Mountain House, St. Albert, Stettler, Westlock-Sturgeon, Wetaskiwin-Leduc, and Whitecourt, as well as Wainwright, where an earlier postponement occurred, and as House responsibilities of the committee members cannot be set aside until the spring sitting is completed, the chairman will table a report and request an extension of time to deliver the final report in conjunction with this committee's request for a fall sitting of the Second Session of the 22nd Legislature.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour of the motion? Opposed to the motion? It's a tie, 3 to 3. The chairman must vote. The chairman votes in favour of the motion. Good show.

MS BARRETT: You ought to be ashamed of yourselves.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The report: could I suggest the next meeting of the committee occur a week from today, Monday evening?

MS BARRETT: What for? There will be no business to conduct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, there is business to conduct.

MS BARRETT: I don't think so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we're working on matters that will be in the preamble in the report. So let's meet again next Monday evening, 5:45, and go over it.

MR. BRUSEKER: When would this motion be put before the House?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it's the will of the committee. I would like the opportunity to share with you the draft first and then get it in. I think it should go in as soon as possible so the various House leaders have a chance to meet and discuss it and decide how they wish to address the issue with three caucuses.

MR. BRUSEKER: Now that this motion has been passed, is it then your intent that we put in abeyance these hearings and immediately begin discussion of a draft report?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. The motion dictated that we would hold our hearings after the House rises.

MR. BRUSEKER: So presumably July, for example.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or June. I presume what Bob can do is identify the communities and have a game plan so that if the House rises in the first week of June, we're ready to go, say, the third and fourth weeks of June: something that will trigger so that as the House business is winding down, Bob can begin gearing up for those hearings, get that part of it done. But in the meantime, there are still some things we can do as a committee in terms of the . . . I think it's a meeting you missed, Frank, when we discussed the preamble, some of the historical background we want to address and things that would go into the report.

MRS. BLACK: Well, Mr. Chairman, can we start gathering some of the statistical information together? We could start categorizing things we have.

MR. PRITCHARD: We'll have a demonstration of how we're going to collect the stuff out of the written submissions, and we can review that. I thought I sent a thing down to your office. I did a handout, sort of a very rough thing, of what the report might look at and the different components, except for the actual report part and the recommendations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just off the top of my head – and I'd like your input – in terms of the report that goes to the House, really an interim report, in addition to requesting the fall sitting so we can have the additional hearings, I thought we would cover the number of hearings we've had to date, the number of written briefs that have been submitted to us, the number of briefs we've heard at the hearings, and that kind of thing. Anything you'd like to see added to it?

MR. BRUSEKER: On this point, Mr. Chairman, I think that in order to be absolutely clear, I would suggest an emergent motion under Standing Order 30 be brought before the House to table this motion. If the intent of the original Bill passed in August of 1989 is, as Tom suggests, that there would be no extension, then I think it invalidates this. I would suggest that Mike's motion, having been passed, should be tabled in the Legislature immediately – I would like to see it tomorrow – and we have an emergency debate to discuss this, whether or not we actually get the time lines.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, Frank. The mandate of this committee is to report during the first sitting. We would be reporting.

MR. BRUSEKER: But we are asking for an extension of the time under this motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's correct, and the Assembly might turn us down. But what I'm saying is that our mandate is to report to the Assembly. Now, the Assembly can then take us down another road entirely. That's out of our hands. But our responsibility as a committee is to report to the Assembly. Now we've passed a motion 4 to 3 giving direction to myself as chairman as to how I must report to the Assembly. What I would like to do is get back to all members of the committee with what would be in that report. We also need to consult with Michael Ritter re the time lines, whether it needs to be tomorrow, whether it's incumbent upon myself as chairman to report to the Assembly at the absolute earliest opportunity. If it is not and we have some time, it would be nice to wait until next Monday evening when we meet again, and we can review the report and then have it submitted. But we need to check with Parliamentary Counsel.

Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you. Well, I would hope the motion . . . I don't think we've got any progress. We've had hearings, but we haven't had any progress in terms of our deliberations. We haven't had deliberations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because we very deliberately chose not to.

MR. SIGURDSON: We very deliberately chose not to. So I would suggest that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, I think we've had progress. We haven't . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: We've had procedure. Well, I'm not going to get hung up on semantics, but I do worry about the impression I was left with last August. I believe, therefore, that it's vitally important that just the motion, as it was presented to this committee, go the Assembly as soon as possible, because if there is debate and instructions come back that we continue with our work, I would think we'd better get on with our work as soon as possible. If the Government House Leader and the Assembly turn around and say, "Right, you've got your three-month extension and you'll pick up where you left off in June or July or whenever the heck you do it," fine. But if the Government House Leader and the Assembly turn around and say, "Look, it's now or never," then we'd better get back to now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: To be clear, I'm giving you the same response that I just gave Frank. Our responsibility is to report to the House, not to give them a motion we passed but to report to the House. I have no qualms about making a copy of the motion Mike put forward available to the three House leaders. That's fine in an informal sense, but our formal responsibility to the House is to report, and that's what we'll do.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, on that point, I agree with you it is to report. I would share the concern of Tom and Frank that within the constraints we've got – which are obvious – we do get the report done as expediently as we can so the House can deal with this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Chairman, I guess I'm a little concerned. The question is: what are we to report? We were to report recommendations for changes in legislation. I don't believe that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're reporting progress and request leave to sit again. In essence it's a takeoff from our estimates.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes. So from that standpoint I think we should get it on the floor just as quickly as possible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, in the form of a motion, and this is all subject to finalization with Michael Ritter, parliamentary counsel.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, I think we're all agreeing that we have to get the show on the road, sort of thing, and I think we're all in sync on that. Could we leave it with you as Chairman that you check with Michael Ritter and find out what you have to do and then maybe get to us by next Monday, our meeting next week?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a moment. If the advice from Michael Ritter is that we really should be reporting at the earliest opportunity, that means tomorrow afternoon. It's not next Monday. And the report . . .

MRS. BLACK: Well, could we leave that in your hands as Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I hope you can.

MRS. BLACK: Can we leave that up to you to sort out with Michael Ritter on behalf of the committee?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because the Assembly has the right – the three House leaders could turn around and redirect our committee: no, that's not what we want; we want you do the work now, get back at it. If it means holding hearings on . . . I don't know. We can't order the House to have a fall sitting. We can request. I believe that's what the motion does: request a fall sitting.

MR. SIGURDSON: I was just wondering if there's any way tomorrow, when we go through the daily agenda, if under Tabling Returns and Reports we couldn't table the motion we passed here tonight.

MR. DAY: That's a motion of this committee though. It's . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a motion of the committee. I would like to discuss the matter with Michael Ritter. I think we're back on a report which was tabled to the House from the committee, not a motion we passed here. In my 15 years in the Assembly I have not seen a motion by a standing or select committee come to the Assembly in that form.

MR. SIGURDSON: So you're proposing to meet next Monday.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next Monday afternoon. It's one of the reserved . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: Is there any reason why we could not meet

on Thursday? I believe we said Mondays and Thursdays.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are all members available Thursday?

MR. SIGURDSON: We had agreed to check off time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, we did. Can you double-check with Pam? That's fine with me if we can move it ahead to Thursday.

MR. PRITCHARD: It seems to me somebody canceled on Thursday.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, you can check with Pam, Tom, and subject to Pam's agreement, is everyone else agreed to Thursday so that we could then make the report on Friday?

MRS. BLACK: That's the 15th.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Okay?

MR. CARDINAL: Instead of Monday. 5:45?

MR. CHAIRMAN: 5:45.

MR. DAY: To do that, do you have to have all members here?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, we're not dealing with a motion, although it would be nice if everyone could be at the meeting.

MR. DAY: What time are you . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: 5:45.

And the sole purpose is to discuss – and possibly we'll invite Michael Ritter to that meeting, Bob. That may be the best way to deal with it.

MRS. BLACK: Unless he directs you to enter something tomorrow.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MRS. BLACK: Is that correct?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Correct. We've got that leeway.

MR. BRUSEKER: So if Michael directs you that it must be tabled at the earliest, tomorrow, which would be the 13th of March, then you would . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: And I won't do that without letting everyone know. There'll be no surprises in the House.

MR. DAY: All right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. So we're on for next Thursday evening.

MR. SIGURDSON: Motion to adjourn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please.

[The committee adjourned at 7:17 p.m.]