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Standing Committee on The Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act

Monday, August 17, 1981

Chairman: Dr. Reid

1:30 p.m.

MR CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to call the committee to order and welcome the members who have got here. I presume the others will be arriving shortly.

This, as you know, is the fifth annual series of meetings of the Select Standing Committee of the Legislature on The Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act. For some of you, it's your fifth year on the committee; for some it's the third year; and for some it's the first year, including myself. Needless to say, because it is my first year on the committee, I did some reading about the committee's formation, about the savings trust fund Act, and about the function of the committee. I thought it might be useful for those who are also new to the committee, like myself, to briefly review what the function of the committee is.

The committee was set up as part of The Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act. Under Section 13(3), which has now been slightly amended by an amendment in 1980, it says:

When a copy of an annual report is furnished to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly pursuant to section 12, subsection (3) the annual report shall be deemed to be referred to the Select Standing Committee for review and a report concerning the investments of the Trust Fund which may contain any recommendations of the Committee concerning those investments [or any alternative investments].

That may seem like a fairly narrow area to work in, but in actual fact of course any committee of the Legislature may do certain other things of its own volition, and it would seem that over the previous four years there have been certain interpretations made of that section.

It appears that on most occasions the ministers who have projects under the capital projects division or who have entities that are funded by or which borrow from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund have appeared before the committee to explain the funding of those agencies and to explain the expenditures of money during the year under review.

Because of time problems, I've taken the liberty of inviting certain ministers already to appear both tomorrow and next week. I think I've sent you a schedule of those ministers' appearances and the times. The difficulty is that the surface rights committee is taking a trip to Europe, starting at the end of this month, for some two weeks, and three members of this committee are on the surface rights committee, including a member of the official opposition. The ministers scheduled are: tomorrow, the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care, the Associate Minister of Public Lands and Wildlife, and the Minister of Transportation; next week we have firm schedules for the Minister of Agriculture, the Provincial Treasurer, and the Premier.

There are some questions that we will have to set up during this organizational meeting: whether we are going to book all those ministers who have projects funded by the trust fund, whether we book appearances by all the ministers whose departments or organizations under their departments may borrow from the trust fund or who have other expenditures which come under the aegis of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

There are some other decisions that we should make. In previous years there's been discussion about having public hearings; there have been, I believe, some visits to projects funded by the trust fund; there have been discussions about receiving briefs; and, on one occasion, a consultant was hired to prepare a report for the committee.

By my understanding what the committee does not do is it does not delve into the area of the general public accounts committee of the Legislature; it only deals with those matters funded by the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. Nor is it a committee of the estimates of the trust fund. That happens at the fall sitting when the ministers have to present their estimates for projects under the capital projects division. The other estimates of course have been dealt with under the general budget by the Provincial Treasurer.

So far as possible we will ask ministers who are going to submit written information to the committee to get it here ahead of time so that members will have it to peruse in advance. There will be some difficulty about the ministers who are appearing tomorrow because of the scheduling. I understand that some information will be in your offices later on this afternoon from the Associate Minister of Public Lands and Wildlife.

With those introductory remarks I'd like to say I'll try to keep the comments and interference by the Chair at a minimum, but I don't promise to stay out of the discussions, especially where they get to be more interesting and more involved. I think that the committee is an important one. It serves a very useful function in the communicating to Albertans of the function of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, the investments under it, and the use that has been made of it for the benefit of present Albertans as well as future Albertans. With those remarks I'd like to open the meeting to general comments and discussion as initiated by the members. I think the first hand was the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview, which doesn't surprise me.

MR NOTLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I think that in terms of logistics obviously we should have all the ministers before us, as we've had in the past. I think that's a straightforward approach. I think that you've correctly contacted the ministers and set up a tentative schedule. Certainly I have no quarrel with that, and it seems to me that as a committee we should accept that schedule.

The reason I wanted to initiate the comments is I think that in addition to the discussion with the ministers, which has been a traditional role, we should take a very close look this year at public hearings. I think I have to point out, especially to the newer members, that one of the recommendations that was specifically turned down last year was a recommendation for public hearings. I don't want to try to pull the wool over anybody's eyes here, but I think most of us probably have transcripts or at least access to the transcripts from last year. During the course of those transcripts there at least was some indication that the time to discuss public hearings would be at the beginning of our process, not as a final recommendation. Nor would it necessarily be something we'd want to tie in forever as a part of our procedure.

But I submit that with the trust fund being in existence now for five years that this is an appropriate time to consider public hearings. The hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo on his own has held meetings throughout the province. Some of us as individual MLAs, I'm sure, have had representation made to us. I certainly have. But I think there is a difference between individual representation and the kind of input that we have from a properly constituted public hearing.

I remind members of the committee that in the 1978 session one of the formal recommendations that was approved in September and October of 1978 was a commitment to hold hearings on grain handling and transportation. We were never able to follow through on that commitment. The election was held before it was possible to arrange the hearings. But it was a formal recommendation made by the committee.

I suggest to members of the committee that it would be, I think, a very useful innovation but not totally inconsistent from at least our discussion in the past to hold public hearings this year. The time, I think, clearly is now to raise it, because organizing public hearings does take some time. It will obviously have an impact on when we complete our report so I felt it necessary if one is going to raise it to raise it at the first meeting.

MR LITTLE: Mr. Chairman, in going through the annual report, I observed that there's quite a complete or at least an adequate report of the long-term investments of the fund. However, within the last year or probably even since the filing of this report March 31, 1981, some significant and phenomenal changes have taken place in interest rates; in fact, historically all-time high. In view of that, I think it might be useful for this committee to have reports from the investment committee of the short-term investments; that is, the transactions and the policies of this investment, and probably on a more frequent basis than the annual report. Might I suggest a quarterly report of this type of investment at least for the period of time that we are experiencing these phenomenally high rates of return?

MR CHAIRMAN: Might I suggest that the Provincial Treasurer will be appearing before the committee on the afternoon of Tuesday, August 25. Perhaps that's a suggestion that you could make to the Provincial Treasurer when he appears in front of the committee.

MR PAHL: Mr. Chairman, speaking to the recommendation of the hon. Member of Spirit River-Fairview for a public hearing, I wouldn't want to trot out all the reasons that have already been gone through for rejecting that recommendation in committee. I think that we as a newly-formed committee have a responsibility to consider all items perhaps afresh.

I would like to raise a question of whether we have a field trip. My recollection of the debate was that it revolved as much around field trips, in fact more so than the possibility of a public hearing. So if other members had a desire to go on a field trip, I think we should be addressing that fairly quickly.

MR CHAIRMAN: I think if we're going to discuss any field trips and travelling that we should look at several. If anybody has any ideas to put up, I think this might be a time to start broaching anything they might wish to visit.

Are there any more comments to do with the proposal put forward by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview regarding having public hearings, at least this year?

MR KNAAK: Well, I guess I was the person who sort of explained at least last year in some detail the philosophical base for why this committee as a committee either through the Act creating this committee or otherwise doesn't really have the mandate nor is it set up for public hearings. I think an initiative like the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo took is worth while for an MLA to the extent that it is worth while and to the extent that interest groups come out to make presentations, and I guess we'll hear about that.

I guess the question I have is public hearings for the sake of public hearings. I can't really comment on that other than the broad approach. The Member for Spirit Rivier-Fairview didn't identify what the purpose of any such public hearing would be, so I can't comment on the merits of it. But as a general proposition, my view is that this committee is not set up for public hearings. If we have public hearings, it should be broad, government public hearings than merely this committee.

MR NOTLEY: [Not recorded] arguments for public hearings. First of all, we do have the precedent that most legislative committees . . . I don't recall too many legislative committees established by an Act of the Legislature or by a resolution of the Legislature that have not held public hearings, whether it be on workers' compensation, the constitution, or . . .

AN HON MEMBER: Private bills.

MR NOTLEY: Well, I think most of the all-party legislative committees set up for a specific purpose, though, hon. member, have had, to my recollection anyway, public hearings. Looking back over the committees, whether it be on the question of foreign ownership or crop insurance, we've had public hearings. I don't think there's a reason to have public hearings just for the sake of public hearings. I certainly would agree with that.

But on the other hand, we have now had five years of the operation of the heritage trust fund. I don't think there is an item within our purview as members of this Legislative Assembly that is as frequently discussed. One of our obligations as a committee is to review the investments made by the Heritage Savings Trust Fund and make recommendations, which may or may not be accepted by the investment committee, but our obligation is to make recommendations. I can't think of a more appropriate vehicle to conduct public hearings.

Now individual members can certainly take the initiative. I think the Member for Calgary Buffalo is to be congratulated on the initiative he's taken throughout the province to hold individual meetings, if you like. But there's not a substitute for meetings with the entire committee. I think that in terms of the process of evaluating options, making recommendations, we can be assisted and guided as a result of public input, just as any other legislative committee is assisted and guided as a result of public input. The precedents in terms of other legislative committees are overwhelmingly in favor of some public hearing process.

MRS FYFE: Mr. Chairman, just speaking on the point made by the Member for Spirit River-Fairview, I think it's difficult to compare this committee to that such as workers' compensation, on which that member and myself both served, as that committee was established with a specific task of reviewing the legislation. The mandate of this committee is to review the report. If we were given a broader context, that we were reviewing the total legislation under which the fund operates and this committee exists, then I think we would

be looking for much broader input. But in the terms of reference that are set out for us, each of us has the mandate within our constituencies or within the province as a whole to bring input to this committee. We have the liberty and the freedom to ask questions of the ministers that are put forward. But I think it is unfair to try to compare this committee with other types of committees that have a specific task set out for them.

Thank you.

MR KNAAK: Mr. Chairman, well, I certainly agree with that point. The other committees that were used as an example were what I would refer to as task force committees. They had a particular task to make a recommendation. This is more analogous to the Private Bills Committee, and I haven't seen them have any public hearings. We don't intend to have any, I being chairman.

The second point -- and this is what I asked and there was no response to it. What would be the purpose of a public hearing? To determine whether or not the trust fund should exist at all? What ways we could find to spend it? Is that the purpose of the public hearing? Should we find out what investments to invest in? Whether we should invest in company A bonds, company B bonds, or company C stock? Is that the purpose of the investment? Or are we talking about the capital projects division, whether we should have a park in Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, or whether we should have a park in Edmonton or Calgary?

Aside from the principle, the Member for Spirit River-Fairview said, well, you know we should talk about the principle. How can you talk about . . . Well, we can talk about the principle. We don't even have a sensible recommendation for the purpose of a public hearing. How can we even talk about the question?

MR NOTLEY: First of all, there have been hearings by the sort of ongoing committees of the Legislative Assembly. For example, in 1977, as my memory serves me correctly, the Private Bills Committee had fairly extensive hearings on the Wheat Pool Act. We had various people in here from the Wheat Pool and we had some people who were opposed to the Wheat Pool. And the thing went on for three or four weeks during the session of the Legislature. So we have had examples of public input, if you like, into the decision-making of the ongoing committees of the Legislature as opposed to those that are more oriented toward a specific task.

Now the question of input we get from the public. One would not want to prejudge the input, but the public is just as capable of looking at this report as we are. We have copies that are now available and should be available throughout the province. We as responsible legislators would hope that our constituents and the public in this province would be reading, at least large numbers of them would be offering to us the kind of advice . . . I don't think we need to screen the kind of proposals that we . . . You know, I have a good deal of confidence in the common sense of the people of Alberta that the kind of input we would get, just as the input we get in any other legislative committee, by and large, is surprisingly well researched. Not every example of it, but for the most part it is, and helpful and useful. I would say that the kind of input we would get from public hearings which would be based on this report so we wouldn't be talking about proposals that would be dealing with ongoing operating costs of government. We'd be talking about this particular report. The kind of advice that we may well get from public hearings would be useful. I'm not saying that it would be the total result of

our efforts by any means. It would be just a part of it. But it would be an important part of it.

I remind members that it's five years. I remind members that in 1978 we established a principle, at least with respect to grain handling, that we would have public hearings, and never got them off the ground. It was moved, seconded, and carried that we would have public hearings on grain handling, and never did. But it was moved, seconded, and carried. So I say to the members that I think it's well worth the process.

MR CHAIRMAN: May I take it from what the Member for Spirit River-Fairview is saying, that if there were public hearings, they should be held within the same limits as the limits for this committee?

MR NOTLEY: No. Mr. Chairman, I want to make that very clear. We're certainly not going to be holding wide-ranging public hearings that would go all over the map. But I think we all should have sufficient respect for our electors that they would meet the test of the ground rules for this committee just as they meet the test for any other committee.

MR SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to support the suggestion that this committee hold public meetings. I'd like to refer to your opening comments and rebuttal to some of the points made by members of the committee.

In your opening comments, Mr. Chairman, you said "any committee of the Legislature may do certain other things of its own volition". I found those words to be very encouraging. Given those words, I don't think we have to be bound by some of the points made by members of the committee; that is, that holding public meetings would be outside the purview of this committee.

One of the points that has been raised in regard to holding the public meetings is: what is the purpose or the objective? I would suggest two, perhaps both of them being the same but looked at from a different point of view. The first purpose, I think, of holding a public meeting would be for the committee to identify the concerns and interests of the public. The second purpose or objective in my opinion would be to provide an opportunity for the public to speak to their legislators in regard to the operation of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

I did undertake some private meetings over the last year in regard to the heritage fund. The thing I found most was that people I spoke to and those who wrote to me felt that the heritage fund was a good idea and was fairly well managed. I think that's worth while to know. And I think that would be worth while for this committee to find out and report back to the Legislature.

I might suggest a compromise move rather than setting up a schedule of public meetings; that is, combining the suggestion of a public meeting and the suggestion of a field trip. Perhaps if we identified a field trip and in conjunction with that field trip at that particular locality hold a public meeting to determine what the response of the people there would be. If no people show up, it might suggest to this committee that people in that area and perhaps by extension throughout the province, are well satisfied with the heritage fund. I think that's worth while to know in itself as well.

So in summary, I'd just like to say that I do support the suggestion of holding public meetings. I concur with your thoughts that any committee of the Legislature may do certain other things of its own volition, so then certainly we're able to set those public meetings if we so desire. And I think it would demonstrate to the people of the province that we're sensitive to their needs, and we're willing to go to them and to listen to them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR CHAIRMAN: Are there any more comments on this subject? The Member for Edmonton Whitemud.

MR KNAAK: I have a question of the Member for Calgary Buffalo. I'm wondering if he would mind telling the committee the kind of interest he received in terms of his committees and what the average attendance would have been at his meetings, if he can go by way of averages, or maybe just identify the kind of attendance he had at various places, if that is something he'd like to disclose.

MR SINDLINGER: If you like, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to share my experience with the committee. Early this year I placed advertisements in seven newspapers across the province: Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat. In those advertisements, I asked people to send to me their recommendations or concerns in regard to the heritage trust fund. I indicated in the advertisements that about two months after I got those I would visit their centres and discuss those recommendations, submissions, or whatever with them. I received about 120 different submissions, each one containing one or more recommendations, suggestions, or comments on the trust fund.

Subsequent to receiving those, I went to visit five of the seven: Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, and Lethbridge. At those meetings: in Lethbridge, five people attended; Calgary, 22 people attended; Red Deer, two; Fort McMurray, two; Grande Prairie, 20; and Edmonton there were five, but I did not hold the meeting in Edmonton subsequent to those five showing up.

I was pleased with the summaries or the representations that I got by mail. They're well reasoned, well thought out. I've consolidated those and it's my intention to present those, along with other suggestions I receive from people I've spoken to over the last six months, to this committee, along with those that I've been able to develop on my own.

It might be said that because of the low turnout at some of the meetings that there is not an interest by Albertans in the heritage fund. I would not conclude that too readily. I would think that perhaps the vehicle might have been the problem; that is, my activity might not have been perceived by individual Albertans as being representative of the government or of the Legislature. Furthermore, I did not have the resources to actively publicize my attendance at these locations. It may not have been that well known. On the other hand, it may be concluded that because there was such a low attendance at some of these meetings that Albertans do feel the heritage fund is a good idea and is being well managed on their behalf by the present government.

I think for that reason alone it would be worth while for this committee to hold public meetings to determine whether or not that is in fact the case. I think that would be a very positive fact that we could bring back to the Legislature, that Albertans like the fund and they like the way it's being managed. I think it would be a very beneficial message to carry to the rest of Canada as well, so Canadians could see that we in Alberta do stand behind the fund if that is in fact the case. As it stands now, we as a committee can make that report to the Legislature, but all we're doing is reporting our own individual points of view. If we could back that up by saying we have gone to the people, we have given the opportunity to express their points of view, and

they say that they like the fund and they think it's well managed, it will give our report that much more credibility.

Thank you for allowing me to review that for the committee.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Any more comments on that? The Member for Edmonton Mill Woods followed by the Member for Edmonton Whitemud.

MR PAHL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think there's somewhat of a confusion. Our meetings are held in public. These are public meetings by virtue of where we hold them. The approval of appropriations in terms of the percentage of non-renewable resource revenues that go to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund and the appropriations in the capital division are passed by the Legislature in a public forum. So public business is being conducted in public, as is this committee's review of annual reports.

So I just have a good deal of trouble understanding why we would -- and I guess it's very tempting to respond to the suggestion that the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo made that we could maybe get ourselves patted on the back a little bit, but it just doesn't seem to serve a directed public purpose to hold hearings without a purpose. I think we're just on the wrong track with respect to the mandate of the committee. The meetings are in public and we haven't, at least in my view, identified a need or a purpose to public hearings, and I wouldn't support taking the committee down that trail this year.

MR KNAAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the Member for Calgary Buffalo for detailing his public meetings. It's interesting.

I think something that had to be thought about, and I don't think this committee could -- maybe can, maybe can't -- authorize it. I don't know. I hadn't thought about it. But if we want to get to the question about whether the public is happy with the existence of the trust fund, and with the way it's allocated in terms of the various divisions, a poll would be a simple way of doing it. I think polls are so sophisticated that we can quite accurately obtain from the public a reading of whether or not they support the existence of the trust fund, whether they support the existence of the five divisions.

In terms of the thing we're talking about here, public input, I think back about why I elect an MLA. I wouldn't want him to come back to me every second day and say, should I do this or should I do that. The reason I elect him is that I want him to represent me for four years. If I have a concern, I'll talk to him. But I don't want him coming back asking me questions continually. And that's the way I feel about my job. I'm sent here to do a particular job. My phone is available; they can phone me at home, they can phone me at the office. I have meetings in my constituency. I'm available. But I don't think it's our job to go back to my constituents and expressly solicit views that they can freely express now to me by phone either at the office or at home. We're talking about a different thing that I talked about before. It's the way you view your role as a government. We were sent here to make decisions and judgments, and I'm prepared to do that and I'm available. I have confidence in the public and they elected us.

Thanks.

MR NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I don't want to prolong the debate, but I think there's no question that all of us as members of the Legislature owe our constituents our best judgment. No question about that. I don't think we need to get into a long debate over that issue. But it's a question of how we

make that best judgment. Sometimes -- not always, but sometimes -- that judgment can be improved as a result of public hearings.

As a general precedent, when we've had legislative committees in the past dealing with special assignments, we've had public hearings. Now it could be argued in every one of those cases that we didn't need public hearings. But I think it's fair to say -- and I've been a member of the Legislature now for 10 years and sat through all kinds of public hearings -- I don't think there was a single public hearing where committee members didn't gain something. Not all the representation was of the same quality, but I can't think of a single public hearing where we didn't gain something.

It seems to me that on a matter as important as the Heritage Savings Trust Fund for the reasons that the Member for Calgary Buffalo has pointed out -- I think the fact that the individual member as a result of the advertising received 120 proposals in itself is significant. I think his point is extremely valid that if it was the entire committee, my guess is that many Albertans would come forward with the kind of proposals relating specifically to this report that would help us.

I don't think we need to get into a situation where we're somehow abrogating our roles as elected members by holding public hearings. We're dealing with a unique fund. We're dealing with five years of its operation now. We're not talking about a recommendation which will make public hearings part of the yearly process. We're talking about doing it this year after five years. Mr. Chairman, I suppose we're just going over the arguments again. But I think this is well a time when we could take a few extra hours or a few extra days that are involved as members of the committee and allow the public access before we make our final recommendations this year.

MR SINDLINGER: I'll make a closing comment on this too. In preparation for these meetings what I've done, among other things, is gone over all the annual reports, reviewed them, and it's been some time since I did that. I was very impressed by the contents of those annual reports. If you look over those things for five years, there are a large number of very good and beneficial projects for the people of this province.

The problem is that the people of the province in general aren't aware of all those things. People in particular project areas are, and those people affected by the projects are. This is one of the recommendations that we had over the last few years; that was, that we communicate more broadly the things that we're doing with the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. As a result of that we came up with the logo for the heritage fund. We've also come up with what I understand to be some sort of public communications project now for the heritage fund to identify and communicate as broadly as possible to Albertans all the projects that have been undertaken for their benefit.

It seems to me that holding public hearings would be an extension of such a program; that is, by going to the public it's not a one-way dialogue, it's a two-way dialogue. In the first place, the public is able to dialogue with us and present their ideas and concerns. On the other hand, we're able to present to them as well those things that have been undertaken by the Heritage Savings Trust Fund -- a very worth-while opportunity for us to communicate to them what the Heritage Savings Trust Fund has done. I think we ought to take that into consideration as well in deciding whether or not to hold public hearings.

MR CHAIRMAN: Any more comments before we have the question?

Those in favor of the proposal as put forward by the Member for Spirit River-Fairview to hold public hearings of some nature? Mr. Notley and Mr. Sindlinger.

Those against? Mr. Knaak, Mr. Fjordbotten, Mrs. Fyfe, Mr. Little, Mr. Musgreave, Mr. Mack, and Mr. Pahl.

I guess the proposal did not make it. Next year.

The other thing I heard in the comments made by the Member for Calgary Buffalo was a suggestion that if there were any visits that the public hearings be held in conjunction with them. Was he suggesting that there should be visits, or was it only that there should be visits in conjunction with public hearings? Have you any comments on that?

MR SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, I was suggesting that as a compromise subsequent to the suggestion by Mr. Pahl that we do have some field trips. If we were to undertake the field trips, perhaps on a test or trial basis we could combine that with a public hearing. Now that the consensus says we're not having a public hearing, I guess it doesn't make much sense. But if you're asking whether or not I'd support the suggestion of a field trip where warranted, yes I would.

MR CHAIRMAN: Well, one of the other decisions we have to make is are we going to have any field trips this year. I wasn't on the committee before, but I understand there has been at least one to some projects funded by the Oil Sands Technology Research and perhaps another one to do with housing . . .

MR NOTLEY: Airdrie.

MR CHAIRMAN: Yes, a trailer court at Airdrie. Has anybody any comments to make in addition to those made by the members for Edmonton Mill Woods and Calgary Buffalo?

MR NOTLEY: I think a field trip would be useful, Mr. Chairman. What I would suggest, though, if we decide to do it, is perhaps we might leave members the responsibility of making suggestions to you, Mr. Chairman, so that next Monday, perhaps at some point after meeting with one of the ministers, we could then look at the suggestions that have come in for field trips. I don't think we should decide now which field trips; maybe decide on the principle of whether we want to have field trips, and then there may be suggestions from members.

I remember in 1978 when we went on the field trip to Airdrie, the field trip as a matter of fact came as a consequence of our hearings with the ministers. We as a committee felt that the answers we got on the question of the housing situation, the trailer situation, in Airdrie was such that we wanted to go down. So we could well find that as a consequence of our meetings with the ministers that there may be an interest in a field trip. So I don't think we want to decide today and lock ourselves into field trips, but the principle is a good one.

MR CHAIRMAN: What the member is saying is that you approve of the principle of field trips if there is indication for any trip once you have heard what the ministers have to say when they appear before the committee?

MR NOTLEY: That's one option. The other option is that it may be that members of the committee may have suggestions. What I'm saying is that I don't think

today it would be a very useful thing to say we're going to go on field trip A, B, or C. I think, let's give the members at least until next Monday or Tuesday and have an opportunity to make whatever suggestions we have and then look at it at that point. But I think the idea of a field trip, as recommended by the Member for Edmonton Mill Woods, is a good one.

MR CHAIRMAN: Is that satisfactory with the rest of the committee, that anybody who has any suggestions for field trips submit them to me by next Monday afternoon so they can be discussed next week?

HON MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR CHAIRMAN: This is shorter than I thought it would be so far. Does anybody have anything else they want to bring up for discussion to do with the organization of the meetings this year?

Before we do that, could you check with the office of the official opposition and see if you could find out what happened.

SECRETARY: Would you like me to go now?

MR CHAIRMAN: Yes, if you could, thanks.

MR NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, the dates that I have here are August 24 and 25, and September 14, 15, 21, and 22. Do we have any other dates that we've tentatively set aside, because I think we're a little optimistic if we feel that we can complete our report within that time schedule. There may be other dates, but I haven't got any.

MR CHAIRMAN: The other date that you should have received notification of is the morning of Wednesday, August 26, which is when the Premier will be appearing. . . . You have that one.

MR NOTLEY: I'm talking about later in September, by the 22nd.

MR CHAIRMAN: No, subsequent dates have not been fixed. I was leaving it up to the committee to see if the suggestion of two-day meetings on a Monday and Tuesday was acceptable to the rest of the committee, whether there was any difficulty with those days. Many of us travel a distance, as you well know, and to come for one day means almost a day's travelling for a one-day meeting. It seemed more appropriate to at least get two days out of each trip. That's why I scheduled these four weeks with two-day meetings.

If there are any comments on that particular subject, I'd appreciate them now so we can schedule subsequent meetings on different days if that's a better set-up. Does anybody have anything against the Monday and Tuesday, and continue with that subsequent to September 21 and 22 for as long as is needed?

MR MUSGREAVE: Mr. Chairman, I think some of the members won't be back by the 21st and 22nd, if you're trying to accommodate them; if not, it doesn't matter.

MR CHAIRMAN: Originally I was told that the surface rights committee would be coming back on the weekend of September 13. That's why the 14th and 15th were scheduled. I subsequently found out that may not be accurate, but we've already made commitments with two ministers, I understand, for that week. I

think we'd better go ahead with it, otherwise it will be too late in the year before we're finished.

In addition to my comments earlier about days, so far I have scheduled meetings for the Monday afternoon, for the Tuesday morning, and for the Tuesday afternoon. Is that acceptable to everybody, rather than scheduling Monday morning, which means that some people have to travel on Sunday night? That's agreeable.

Is there any other matter that anyone wants to bring up before the committee at this time about the organization of the meetings?

MR NOTLEY: That 9:30 a.m., that's still open is it?

MR CHAIRMAN: It's not finalized at this time. As soon as it is, I'll let all members know.

MR NOTLEY: I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that we mark off, tentatively anyway, the following week, the 28th and 29th. I'm very pessimistic that we can even begin to get through our recommendations in the time frame that you have there. If we add another two days, it's tentative at any rate -- just so we start blocking that off on our respective calendars so we don't find ourselves in a bind.

MR CHAIRMAN: It's already blocked off on my calendar. This was mainly for scheduling the appearance of ministers so that could be arranged ahead of time. September 28 and 29, that's the following Monday and Tuesday.

There being no other business, I think we should adjourn and meet tomorrow morning at 9:30 when the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care will be with us.

Thank you.

The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.