

[Chairman: Mr. Oldring]

[10:03 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning, everyone. We'll call the meeting to order. Welcome to the first meeting dealing with recommendations of this year's Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund select committee.

Again I would remind members that the process utilized for presenting motions is that any members wanting to introduce a motion will begin by reading it into the records and then distributing copies to all members present. Again, we will not be discussing any recommendations that are introduced today, as has been the policy of this committee. We always like to extend at least the opportunity for each member to be able to review the recommendations for at least a day after receiving them. So any recommendations introduced this morning will be discussed tomorrow morning.

I haven't been able to confirm return times at this point for any of the ministers. I'd hoped that we might be able to fit a minister in either this morning or this afternoon. With cabinet on, that doesn't seem like it's going to be possible. So what I would suggest, if we have completed with recommendations this morning, is that we would forgo this afternoon's meeting. We do have confirmation of the Alberta Heritage Medical Research Foundation returning on Wednesday, January 20, at 10 a.m.

On that note, I would open the floor for any members wishing to submit recommendations. I recognize the Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to confirm the schedule, is the Chair open to recommendations until Friday or Monday? Was there a deadline?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It'd be at the discretion of the committee on that. I think we'll have to set a deadline at some point. Whether it should be next Tuesday or Wednesday I'll leave at the discretion of the committee, and we'll maybe open it up for discussion on that note.

MR. GOGO: I'm in the process of preparing a couple more, Mr. Chairman. That's why I wanted some assurance that at least until Friday members are eligible to submit recommendations. Mr. Chairman, I would . . .

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, on that subject . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: On that subject matter, Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that we try to get the recommendations in as soon as possible so we can wind up the meetings and maybe leave an exception out there. There are some ministers that members wish to call back, I would think. The majority have their mind made up on the resolutions and the callback wouldn't change it very greatly, but we probably should leave that opportunity open for the possibility of having the odd resolution come in because of what a minister may say on the callback. Other than that, I would agree with the Member for Lethbridge-West: either Friday or, at the latest, maybe -- no, we're not meeting Monday, are we? Tuesday would be the last day for recommendations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would like to be able to offer the members the weekend to perhaps work and finalize recommendations. If

Tuesday, January 19, would be possible, I would like to recommend that.

Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Yeah. I think we should try to get them in early enough so that we have time to look them over. The Member for Cypress-Redcliff did say that, you know, just in case there was something that came up with another minister, we shouldn't be totally closed off. Could we not have a gentlemen's agreement that Tuesday would sort of be the day to get the bulk of our resolutions or recommendations in, but that that would not preclude somebody adding one or two more, given that something came up that they might want to change? Would that be acceptable?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm in agreeance. Yeah.

MR. McEACHERN: Until such time as the last minister has met and the meeting following the last minister.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think as long as members agree and understand that Tuesday, January 19, is the target date we're striving for, and the only exception to that will be something pertaining to a minister arriving after that date.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would recommend the following. I'm sorry, but I gave the Table my copies so they could spread them around, instead of myself. I'll read into the record the recommendation, Mr. Chairman, as per your instruction.

The committee recommends occupational health and safety research selection committee encourage a study of the types of illness public service employees experience when utilizing the "sick time" contained in the general services master agreements and recommend ways of reducing this loss of time by incentives.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. GOGO: We'll argue the case another day, Mr. Chairman, I understand.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Correct. There is an opportunity for a couple of brief comments at the time you introduce it, but we ask that they be kept very brief, one or two lines.

MR. GOGO: Well, I'll keep them very brief, Mr. Chairman. It's my view that we can get greater productivity out of people if we could bring in an incentives system such as some jurisdictions would offer. For example, the master agreement now has 10 days sick time per year, and if you don't take it, you lose it. My view is we should offer some incentives, such as a quarter day for each day that you don't take off in the form of being added onto holiday time. I would be arguing that type of case.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Lacombe, followed by the Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. R. MOORE: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Just before I read

two resolutions into the record, I want to just clarify with you the procedure regarding reading resolutions into the minutes. I understand it's been the practice that we do not debate resolutions the day they're read into the records, that we debate them the following meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's correct.

MR. R. MOORE: That's still in effect, so that some of these last minute resolutions aren't going to suddenly come out of the blue and want to be debated on that day, because I . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, it can't be. I think it's very clear that the policy of this committee has always been to not debate resolutions on the same day they're submitted, out of respect and fairness to other members, so that we're all given an opportunity to review and do some research if we feel it's appropriate.

MR. R. MOORE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to clarify that point.

MR. McEACHERN: But the introducer of a recommendation would make a few comments as to why he's putting forward the recommendation at that time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That opportunity is there; that's correct.

MR. R. MOORE: I have no statement on these. They're very clear and straightforward, so I'll just read them into the record, Mr. Chairman.

First resolution:

That a hold be put on further new capital projects until such time that oil royalty revenue is again flowing into the fund.

The second resolution is:

That the mandate of AOSTRA be expanded to include research into the underground gasification of coal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. So those are recommendations 2 and 3.

Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: I wonder if I can ask a question about this second resolution. Is there any particular explanation or reason you can give me for using the word "underground" gasification of coal? Is this not something that can be done in a plant aboveground, or what's the reason behind that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't want to get into debate, but for clarification perhaps the Member for Lacombe might offer a short comment.

MR. R. MOORE: I could comment on that. Gasification of coal underground: why the "underground" is there is that there's a vast quantity of coal underground that's beyond the economic factors to get it out if you have to take the overburden or put the shaft down. We can go down and gasify that, get that energy out without disturbing this, going to the high cost of mining or putting a shaft down. The other thing is that with mining operations it does disturb the surface, especially where you're going into strip mining. There's a tremendous impact on the environment, and we don't want that. If we can take that energy out without disturbing the environment, all the better. I think we should look at that area rather than going with conven-

tional methods.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Firstly, I'd like to read into the record one on behalf of the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey, if I may. I note that in it I think there's a typographical error.

That an endowment fund be established from Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund moneys to support basic and applied educational research and the development of innovative instructional materials applicable to grades K to 12 education in the province.

The paper that's being handed out says K to 12, but I believe that should be 1 to 12.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, K to 12. That would be kindergarten.

MR. HYLAND: Oh, kindergarten. I guess that's what it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Good.

The Member for Cypress-Redcliff had his own recommendation to read into the minutes now?

MR. HYLAND: Right.

As section 24(5) of the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research Act requires a review of the endowment fund as to its adequacy of future requirements of the foundation once the triennial report has been filed, be proceeded with as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman, just to quickly explain. It's as a result of the request made by Mr. Geddes in his appearance before the committee and fulfilling the wishes of a review of the adequacy of the present amount of money in the medical research foundation endowment fund.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Any further recommendations at this time? Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. GOGO: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I would like to resubmit a recommendation I made last year.

The committee recommends that as the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund has now been in existence for 11 years, that the government of Alberta consult with business, labour, and the general public as to the goals and objectives of the fund for the next 10 years [or next decade].

Mr. Chairman, this was the subject of a resolution of the Assembly which only got 20 minutes debate. I think it's very important, particularly now that dramatic changes such as capping the fund have occurred, and we've just had a resolution by the Member for Lacombe that we review with these three very interested groups, who in many ways are the owners of the fund, as to where we should be going in terms of investment for the next 10 years.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Lloydminster.

MR. CHERRY: Yes, Mr. Chairman. This recommendation is quite similar to one that has been put in before.

I recommend that when funding is available, the government consider an ongoing urban parks program to include villages

and towns in a scaled-down version of the previous urban parks program.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Any further recommendations at this time? Member for Stony Plain.

MR. HERON: I'd like to put forth that

The committee recommend that the Public Affairs Bureau be encouraged to consider developing a series of informational films and/or videotapes on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. These film kits will be available at many outlets to complement the informational pamphlets now available at many locations in Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. HERON: I think the recommendation, Mr. Chairman, is self-explanatory.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further recommendations at this time? Well, I'd like to compliment the members. That's a good start, and it will certainly give us an opportunity to have some interesting debate tomorrow morning when we reconvene. Tomorrow afternoon we will be hearing from the Deputy Premier and Minister of Advanced Education.

Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: I just wondered if we had a written copy of that last recommendation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll have to forward it to you. The member hasn't had an opportunity to have it copied, but we'll get that out to the members right away.

If there's no further business, then we'll stand . . . Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to raise a matter and get the views of the committee. This is perhaps administrative in nature. Two points really. When we conclude with the meeting of January 22, which is scheduled at this time, I understand we will then be coming back at a date to be set. I don't believe it's been set, but may be three or four weeks from then. During the interim, I would expect that you as chairman will be compiling all these resolutions that members are making in the form of a final voting list. Is that accurate? Then whatever that date is, we will then set that time? Is that accurate?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. GOGO: Well, for that reason, Mr. Chairman, I would recommend that you as chairman be indemnified for three or four days in order to come to Edmonton and do that work. That's the first item I'd like to move as a formal motion. Then I'd like to speak to another matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Any discussion on the motion? All those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agreed? Thank you.

MR. HERON: Is that unanimous, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

MR. GOGO: The other matter, Mr. Chairman, is -- members will recall, when Mr. Getty was here before the committee, I put the question to him. It's a matter I feel quite strongly about, and he as president of the investment committee of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund has ministers expending funds on various programs, and we've called them as witnesses or are calling them as witnesses. The question I put to him was his view on the role of this committee, specifically with regard to this committee physically visiting the sites on which those dollars are spent. If you recall, Mr. Chairman, the Premier strongly endorses the fact that this committee should visit all those sites and physically inspect what's happening with those dollars. Now, because of scheduling, it was not possible to do this year. I'd like to suggest -- and I don't know how it can be done, but I'd like to hear the views of the committee -- that (a) next year, assuming there's no general election, assuming this committee continues to function, we plan early in the fall to visit those sites; and secondly, not knowing the legislative calendar for the coming year, whether or not it's possible to visit some of those sites between now and the time the Legislature sits.

I don't think there's a great deal of merit, for example, in visiting the irrigation system in the winter. I don't think there's a great deal of merit in visiting these sites following the testimony of the witnesses we've had, because we then will not have the opportunity to question them. Come next year there may even be a different minister responsible for an expenditure of the fund, but I would like to raise this matter and get the views of my colleagues for scheduling next year. We may think it's premature, but we do have a few minutes as to whether or not -- not the sites we should visit, but the very principle that we should visit as many sites as possible in accordance with the Premier's views, prior to testimony of future witnesses in the latter part of '88.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Calgary-McCall.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Chairman, we have over the years had the opportunity to visit various activities and review some of the sites that considerable moneys have been expended on. I don't disagree with the Member for Lethbridge-West; he makes a good point, if we are able to get back onto some normal track where we hold our Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee meetings during August, September or September, October depending on when there may be a fall session. It is my view that many of these locations could, in fact, be visited during the summer months of this year: June or July or August. There are certainly some advantages to visiting the irrigation systems in July or thereabouts. There are certainly some advantages of visiting the tree farm. I think all members should visit that. That is just an exceptional investment of heritage savings dollars, as are many other projects. It would be my view that we should take the opportunity over the next two or three months to set some time aside for those visits when most members are available, because I'm sure that members who have young families like to pursue holidays and what have you in the summer months. But it's possible, if we plan early enough with those members, that we may be able to visit some of these locations in the months of June, July, and/or August to better get a feeling prior to our discussing again with the ministers their participation in these projects. That would be my recommendation at this point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Member for Stony Plain.

MR. HERON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I heartily endorse the recommendations of the previous two speakers and those of the Premier.

I'd like to speak from a personal point of view that my exposure to Kananaskis Country last year unfortunately -- and I say it's unfortunate that I haven't had the opportunity to travel there -- was the only knowledge gained firsthand on that project. The same can be said of our visit to the Prince Rupert terminal. I feel that it enhanced my ability to question the projects in this committee immeasurably.

I also think there is a void for those of us who have only served on this committee since the last election. That void became very apparent the other day when the Minister of the Environment presented the pictures of the irrigation headworks and the projects going on in the south. I feel very strongly that we should have firsthand knowledge of those projects and the developments which are occurring so very, very rapidly. I also felt the same void yesterday when the Minister of Energy presented the latest developments and capital expenditures on some of the AOSTRA projects in the Fort McMurray region. I feel that committee members should have a firsthand working knowledge of those projects. So I think I make my case with the two examples I've used, but there are many others that we should visit firsthand and keep an up-to-date knowledge of the development in each of those projects if we are to serve this committee to the best of our advantage.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. PIQUETTE: I would recommend in terms of any future visitation, perhaps more for my personal interest but I think in terms of knowing a little bit more about it, the Food Processing Development Centre at Leduc, which I don't believe we had a chance to visit last year.

I would also second the motion on the Alberta oil sands technology and research. I think in terms of even some of the plants or investments, research we have done in terms of the Cold Lake tar sands, et cetera, and some of the injection technology, we should be taking a look at that. Whether we should be going back to Kananaskis Country is debatable, because I think a lot of us have gone there. But I think more of the investments which will address some of the future needs for research for development of agricultural products or energy diversification, et cetera, should be looked at by the members so we can form opinions about how valuable -- or a change of direction that can be orchestrated in some of these research funds.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Member for Lacombe, then the Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. R. MOORE: Well, I was just going to move adjournment. I felt we had a good discussion, and the hon. member from Calgary that just walked in has earned his hundred dollars, so I thought we could go.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, just a follow-up to Mr. Piquette.

Mr. Jonson, who is new on the committee, has not had the opportunity to visit any sites. There may be merit, based on what Mr. Piquette says, in considering subcommittees of the committee going to different sites. I personally feel, based on what Mr. Heron said, that it's very important to have an understanding of the total workings of the expenditures under the fund, that all those sites be visited. Now, if there are 10 sites, it may be more prudent to say we'll do three this year, three next year, and three next year, or using the subcommittee system. I don't know. But I simply want to reiterate that I feel it's very important, as the Premier has said, that members of this committee actually visit on-site all these projects so they have a firm understanding when questioning the ministers. It would be interesting to ask the ministers, as a matter of fact, whether or not they've been to the same sites.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I'd just like to speak in support of the item of discussion. My past experience is Prince Rupert. The visit there has been very, very valuable in terms of my knowledge of the operation of that plant and the current strike that's going on. I have a much better understanding, even for my constituents as well as for this committee purpose. So that's good. I would think, just citing my own interests, that I would like to see the Leduc facility. I haven't been there, nor the tree nursery north of Edmonton, Pine Ridge. I'd certainly like to recommend as well to committee members that haven't actually walked on-site, in terms of some of the irrigation projects and the improvements, that that does happen. I happen to live next door to some of the capital works that have gone on, and it's very impressive. So I'd certainly urge the chairman to consider some type of traveling schedule.

The other item I wanted to raise was with regards to the timing of meetings, and I believe the Member for Calgary-McCall raised this. For my own purposes, I find these January, February meetings easier to fit into a yearly timetable than, say, the September, October, November meetings prior to the fall session. So say we had some visitations in the fall with more of a focus on meetings in January. I believe the ministers seem to be a little more readily available in January than in that fall period of time, too, when they're heavy into preparing the next fiscal budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just to comment on the ministerial availability, I must say that this time it was difficult for the Chairman to put the schedule together at this time of year with the ministers. It seems to be a busy time for them, and also, a number of ministers are away at this time of year.

Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche, followed by the Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. PIQUETTE: Further on what the Member for Lethbridge-West indicated: forming a subcommittee for some of the visitations. I think some of the problem with that in the past was trying to get 100 percent of the people to attend, say, one particular visitation of a site. If we can set up where we have subcommittees that could be . . . You know, I don't think all of us as a committee can perhaps be there at all the sites, but at least we can have a greater flavour of some of the information the committee has by increasing the number of perhaps little minitours of sites, so that as an individual member you can at least visit the sites or the research projects, whatever, where you have more personal interest and expertise.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Chairman, I was just wondering: are we still planning to conclude our meetings by the end of January then, and the visitations are seen as something outside that time period?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, that's correct.

Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to remind all members that when they're ready to tour irrigation, there's a file sitting in my office and Mrs. Quinn's office of a two- or three-day tour that can be put on within two or three days notice.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chairman appreciates all the comments and discussion on this matter, and maybe I can conclude by saying I'll certainly endeavour to arrange some appropriate tours at

an appropriate time. At this point I would say that as a tentative schedule, it seems the priorities would be Syncrude and the underground testing facility, the Pine Ridge Forest Nursery, the irrigation system in the south, and the Leduc food processing facility. Those are the ones I have in mind at this time. If there are further projects or other suggestions members would like to make, I would certainly welcome those. I will attempt to schedule tours of those facilities as soon as reasonably possible. I would anticipate the earliest it would be is sometime this spring, possibly for Syncrude or the food processing centre. I think the other two facilities would be better in the summertime or in the fall.

Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: I move we adjourn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion to adjourn. We stand adjourned, then, until tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock. Thanks very much.

[The committee adjourned at 10:34 a.m.]

