

[Chairman: Mr. Oldring]

[10 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning, everybody. It's 10 a.m., and it'd be nice to start the meeting right crisply on time and set a good precedent for the rest of the meetings, I'm sure.

I want to begin by welcoming everybody back. I trust that you've all had good summers and you're delighted to be back in the Legislative Assembly. I'm going to try to maintain the tradition of short meetings for our organizational meeting. It shouldn't take too long this morning.

I want to start, though, by first of all acknowledging the committee secretary, Louise, who did a superb job, I think all of you would agree, of organizing the three tours that we were able to take recently. Everything went extremely smoothly and there weren't any problems with schedules, and a lot of that credit has to go to Louise. So thank you, Louise, for all your efforts.

I would have to say that from my perspective the tours were very successful and, I think, very helpful to all the members that were able to participate. I think it's safe to say that we all learned something from them.

I want to quickly address the scheduling of the meetings now. Initially we had hoped to have the Premier appear for us at the early part of the meetings. Regrettably the trust fund report hasn't come back from the printers at this point. It could be another week to three weeks. I haven't been able to get a final date on when the printers are going to be able to be done with it. And I didn't feel it was appropriate to proceed with either the Premier or the Treasurer until we had that report back.

In reference to some of the other ministers, I'm at the will of the committee. I would think that with the schedules we have as MLAs and the schedules the ministers have, it might be prudent on our part to go ahead and proceed with some of them. I notice that right off the bat next week we have the Hon. Norm Weiss. I don't think there's anything relevant we'd need from the trust fund annual report to go ahead and meet with Mr. Weiss. Or Mr. Russell, a \$100 million scholarship endowment -- again, I don't think there's anything pertinent in the trust fund report that we'd need for him. So I think there are some ministers we can proceed with, but I'm at the will and discretion of the committee.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I'm sorry; I don't have the schedule previously circulated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We don't have any ministers scheduled for the 26th or the 27th. On the 28th we have the Hon. Norm Weiss, Minister of Recreation and Parks, scheduled at 2 p.m., and I think it would be reasonable to go ahead and proceed with him. What we've had in the past is an up-to-date report right to the day when Mr. Weiss comes forward. I think he's been very good about bringing us even further than the trust fund report itself would take us.

Mr. Russell is scheduled for Thursday morning at 10. In his instance it's the \$100 million scholarship endowment, and he will update us to the nth degree as it relates to the number of scholarships that have been given out and whatnot. Again, I don't think there's anything pertinent we'd be able to pull out of the trust fund report.

In the afternoon we have the Hon. LeRoy Fjordbotten, and again I don't anticipate there would be anything in the report that he wouldn't be able to share with us.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I'm just curious. Is Prince Rupert

under the ministerial responsibility of the Treasurer, Agriculture, or economic development?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Economic development.

MR. GOGO: The reason I raise it, Mr. Chairman, by looking at the schedule, I believe there are five new members on the committee. I'm reminded of the Premier's comments that the committee should visit all areas where funds are invested. I'm kind of curious as to what the views of the new members of the committee would be if later, sometime in November, Prince Rupert were to be considered as a two-day visit. I don't know the financial standing until the minister reports; i.e. whether their debt repayment is on time and so on. I wonder if the committee would consider Prince Rupert, and in addition, because Pine Ridge is only hours from Edmonton, if the committee would consider using part of one of our meeting days for visiting the Pine Ridge nursery, which is funded by the heritage fund, unless you consider that new business.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Well, certainly the chairman is always at the will of the committee. I've encouraged all committee members over the years to please advise the chairman if there are specific projects or sites they feel would be pertinent or appropriate to visit. So certainly I'll take that suggestion under advisement.

Perhaps if we can deal with the schedule of appearances and put that behind us, then we can put future tour possibilities on as an agenda item following that. So if I can come back to appearances and receive some direction there.

The Member for Lacombe.

MR. R. MOORE: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I accept your explanation of scheduling; it's reasonable. I make a motion that we proceed as outlined, starting with the Hon. Norm Weiss next week.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The only qualification that I would want to put on that is that I think it's important that we have that report prior to hearing from either the Premier or the Treasurer.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Chairman, I certainly want to be flexible here and accommodate the direction you want to take. I'd like to know, though, beyond these three ministers -- and that's fair enough to proceed this way for next week, I would guess -- what other ministers you had thought for the following week. Or would it be these three, and then we'd hold off until we receive the report before scheduling the rest of them? I guess my concern is that we should keep to a minimum, not just the Premier and the Treasurer, the number of hearings we have without the report being available to the members of the committee -- either that or some flexibility in being able to recall ministers once the report is made available, if we have further questions.

Just the sense of the committee reviewing the trust fund without having the annual report for that fund strikes me as a bit odd. Again, as I say, I'd like to be flexible here and help the committee get on with its business, but I wouldn't want to see us have half of everybody come before us before we even have the annual report. That's my concern. I just wonder if you have some more thoughts for the week following, into October, on who might be coming. Would they come before or after the report was made available?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Certainly in response to two questions -- one is the option of the committee as it relates to being able to recall ministers. I wouldn't anticipate any problems with that. You know, if there are ministers who have appeared prior and we feel it's pertinent to recall them, that's certainly only at the discretion of the committee.

As it relates to further meeting dates, at this point on Monday, October 3, we have the Hon. Les Young, minister of technology and communications. We have the Hon. Nancy Betkowski, minister of hospitals, scheduled on Monday, October 3. On October 4 we have the Hon. Shirley Cripps, Associate Minister of Agriculture, scheduled at 10 a.m. Last year, as I think members will recall, we did bring her back a second time as well. On October 5 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. we have the Hon. Larry Shaben, minister of economic development. Those are the only ones I have scheduled that week. So there would be a possibility of four additional ministers.

MR. R. MOORE: Just on a point of information, Mr. Chairman. It's my understanding that if we proceed next week, as hopefully we will -- and hopefully shortly thereafter we'll have that financial report -- should the financial report, when it is tabled, indicate that we require further questions, we can bring those ministers back at any time for additional information if we require it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right.

MR. R. MOORE: Proceeding now isn't really hindered by the lack of a financial statement, especially with the ministers whose investments are like an endowment fund, and we're asking questions on how it was used and so on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Little Bow.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I was just going to suggest that I think the ministers and their departments have the relevant information that's gone into the report. I was wondering if a request could be made to them to submit to us, say this week or early next week, some written material, letter material, which you could distribute to us ahead of time, which would pertain to their respective budgets. That would at least update us in that area. We wouldn't be able to compare it to the overall report, but at least we'd have it ahead of time. I know Mr. Weiss did that when he came and other times. Maybe this time they could give it ahead of time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't think arranging for that would be a problem. That would probably solve any concerns there might be, in fact.

MR. PASHAK: When do you expect the report?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we haven't had a final date from the printers. Initially they said it could take up to three weeks. We're trying to have that expedited, and I haven't heard back from the printers to say, "Yes, we're going to be able to do it in a week or two weeks." Hopefully I can give you that information certainly by Wednesday, when we meet next.

MR. R. SPEAKER: It's a printer problem; it's not the minister that hasn't had the time. Now, would he agree to some kind of photocopy ahead of time? We don't need a glossy report sitting

on our desks. Is that possible?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I can inquire if the Treasurer is prepared to release it in that form. I'm not sure if he would or wouldn't.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, we have a motion on the floor now, don't we?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. HYLAND: Okay.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I think you can understand my dilemma, Mr. Chairman, in terms of hearing from up to seven ministers, or maybe eight, without having the annual report for the trust fund available to us. I appreciate your undertaking to ask ministers ahead of time for written information available to the committee and also to approach the Treasurer to see if we could get photostats instead of the actual finished, published report. If you'd undertake to agree to do that, that's great. I guess in the interests of proceeding with the committee, I would go along with the motion on the floor, which deals with the three ministers for next week.

I'd be reluctant, though, to make a commitment beyond that until we have some idea of what kind of information would be available to us. I think we could at least leave it, for today, for those three ministers next week, and then see where we're at next week in terms of advance information and the possibility of the report being made available to us. I think you can appreciate the reluctance I'd have for hearing as many as seven ministers without having the final report in front of us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion on this? If not, there seems to be agreeance at least for next week's schedule. Perhaps we can get on with that, and we'll evaluate it at that point, if that's agreed.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Moving on, then: discussion of future tours. Is there any further debate or comments on that?

MR. HYLAND: Relating back to the scheduling again now, can we assume for planning purposes -- barring what may happen with the report, can we at least use the schedule you outlined as kind of a guideline, so we can lay things out and plan around it rather than just planning a week at a time? It doesn't give us a lot of flexibility, you know, some time down the road.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chairman would be happy to send out the schedule of appearances as we have it to date, and I think all we can do is plan around that. If there are future changes, we'll have to make those at that point.

MR. PASHAK: I think the Member for Lethbridge-West, in terms of raising this issue about the future tour, suggested that they might be of benefit to new members of the committee, and I think I'm the only new member of the committee that's present here today.

MR. GOGO: Well, Mr. Fischer is here.

MR. PASHAK: Oh, Mr. Fischer is here as well. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And Dr. West.

MR. PASHAK: Well, I guess everyone can speak for themselves then.

I found the tour to these sites where heritage trust fund dollars are being spent valuable. I think that it would be relatively easy and inexpensive to work in a visit to Pine Ridge, but whether or not we should go all the way out to Prince Rupert is another matter altogether. I know that there are members in our caucus who were members of this committee and who have visited, and I think that would be sufficient as far as I'm concerned.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Any other comments?

Okay. As I say, the chairman would certainly be happy to take any suggestions that you might have. You don't have to wait for a meeting time to present them to me. I'll take them under advisement and see what we can schedule.

MR. FISCHER: On this tour scheduling, is it customary or traditional to go out of province where some of the money is invested?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, certainly we've done it in the past. Yes, it's most appropriate and customary, recognizing that the Heritage Savings Trust Fund has substantial dollars invested in a project like Prince Rupert.

MR. FISCHER: I was thinking of eastern Canada.

MR. CHAIRMAN: To the Member for Wainwright: I can't think of any projects that we have under construction or completion in eastern Canada.

MR. FISCHER: Has most of our committee been to Prince Rupert?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think a number of members of the committee have had the opportunity to get out and see the facilities at Prince Rupert.

Any further discussion?

MR. FISCHER: Well, I would like to make a recommendation, then, that we do a trip out that way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I was just going to suggest the Pine Ridge one. I'd be interested personally. I've never been there. I think there was a tour back a couple of years ago, and I didn't go. So if there were enough, I'd be interested in that. It just takes the afternoon to do that.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, it may sound as though it's semantics, but I do not think that the mandate of this committee is to encompass things like tours. I would rather we term it an investigation trip. I really don't think they are tours as such. What we do is investigate where those dollars have been. So I would prefer the terminology that the committee has investigative trips to these places as opposed to tours. It's the implication that concerns me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think that's a point well

taken, particularly if we look at the schedules we've kept on the recent investigative trips we've been on.

MR. HERON: When we investigated the irrigation districts, Mr. Chairman, I'd hate to think that 1,100 kilometres in three days in a school bus was anything short of a tour.

DR. WEST: Mr. Chairman, has consideration ever been given to part of the committee touring? There are some of us who haven't been to Prince Rupert. We come from rural constituencies and also may be involved in some other things -- grain transportation and what have you -- and it would be of benefit for us to have a look at that facility. Like I said at the beginning, has any consideration ever been given to part of the committee going if some members do not wish to go again?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good suggestion, and I don't think we've had a hundred percent attendance on any of the investigative trips we've been on. Ultimately, it's at the discretion of the individual members as to whether they want to participate or not. So perhaps what I can do is leave it with the secretary of the committee. We can survey each of you individually to find out who would be interested in participating either in the Pine Ridge project or the Prince Rupert project, and that'll give us some direction. Maybe just a quick show of hands might help the chairman and the secretary at this point.

MR. HERON: Before you do, Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a brief statement, and that is that it's one thing to look at a facility and say that that's where your dollars are, but clearly in business you look at the change from year to year. In the case of Prince Rupert I believe we discussed last year that some of the interest on our debentures was in fact in arrears. I think it's important, as part of an ongoing monitoring process, that we make sure all committee members have looked at the flow, have looked at the project, and feel comfortable with monitoring.

I use as an example our trip just last week to Kananaskis, facilities throughout that area. At every facility cash flows were discussed, and the flows of people were discussed. The numbers have changed somewhat dramatically from year to year. In some areas we saw a 20 percent increase. We saw where some of our facilities were taxed and were inadequate. If we're passing resolutions, perhaps we should be looking at some resolutions to expand some of those facilities, and we may be wanting to put a priority on increasing Alberta's use of, say, the William Watson Lodge and things like that. It's all part of our ongoing monitoring process.

So I think it's important that we not only get a look at the initial capital outlay but that we prepare ourselves for an ongoing monitoring process, that we can bring back things to this committee when we're here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Can I maybe have an indication of how many of you would be interested in touring the Pine Ridge forestry project? Okay. It looks like everybody would want to do that one, so I'll take the necessary steps to see that we can arrange that. How many of you would be interested in Prince Rupert? There seems to be significant interest there as well.

Okay. I'll take that under advisement and see what we can do, perhaps utilizing some of the dates we have scheduled. Do we want to try to arrange some of these as quickly as next week if we can? I'm not thinking so much of Prince Rupert because

that takes more advance timing than that, but perhaps we can arrange to at least go out to the Pine Ridge nursery.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: In lieu of having one of the ministers coming, if people are setting aside the day, perhaps it could be used as an information-gathering day out at the nursery.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Should I see if we can arrange it, then, for Tuesday, September 27?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Good idea.

MR. HERON: I might suggest to you, Mr. Chairman, that if we're looking at Prince Rupert, we consider the weather -- as you know, the west coast can be very, very foggy and cold and difficult to get into at certain times of the year -- and that we try and schedule our trip to take account of the weather out there. Clearly, the tour involves quite a bit of outdoor examination and walking around the facility.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Chairman, I was thinking in terms of the following week, in October. You know, if our annual report is not available to us in preparation for meeting with ministers that week, perhaps we could cancel visitations from the ministers and turn it into an information-gathering day for members of the committee to travel out to the nursery.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It could be available by then, though, so I'm reluctant to cancel ministerial dates if we can do it on the 27th. Is that a problem for the Member for Calgary-Mountain View?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Yes, on the date that you've chosen, the 27th, it would be impossible for me to go, but I hadn't planned on going to the nursery in any event, to be fair about it.

Nevertheless, I guess I'd just come back to an earlier point I made. I'm reluctant to schedule a lot of ministers without knowing at this point what kind of information would be available to the committee. I was just thinking that that would be a way of sort of setting aside an information-gathering day that week following, in October.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As I say, I'm reluctant to do that if the report is ready, recognizing how busy schedules are both for the committee members and for the ministers.

MR. PASHAK: Well, we don't have anything scheduled for the 5th and 6th; yet those were days that we'd set aside for heritage trust fund meetings. So if it could be accommodated, I'd...

MR. CHAIRMAN: The 5th in the afternoon we have now the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, the Hon. Larry Shaben.

The Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn, I know, wanted to go to Pine Ridge. Is the 27th all right for you? It can't be done for you either? Okay. Well, I think it's important, and I want to be as accommodating as we can. What about the 26th?

MR. FISCHER: The 26th is the cabinet tour. That's going to affect quite a few people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The 26th and the 27th are both cabinet tour days.

MR. HYLAND: Maybe we'll find out as we go along that we have a day we can use to go out to Pine Ridge.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; what I'll have to do is leave it with the committee secretary, and we can maybe work on some dates and poll the individual members.

MR. GOGO: So it's not Tuesday.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's not Tuesday.  
Any further discussion?

MR. R. MOORE: I move we adjourn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just before we do that, the Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I don't know what the committee has done -- well, it hasn't done it in committee. I'm thinking of the irrigation tour of southern Alberta arranged by yourself and Mr. Hyland. I'm very grateful, as I'm sure all committee members are, for the help of Mr. Ed Shimbashi and Mr. Roy Jensen. I think Mr. Jensen is president of the Alberta Irrigation Projects Association and Mr. Shimbashi is president of the irrigation districts. Mr. Hyland could clarify that. I'm wondering, if you haven't done it, if a motion would be in order that we write thanking them for their co-operation and assistance in accommodating this committee in the tour of the irrigation districts. I think it would be in order, and I would so move, if it's in keeping with the committee.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification. Mr. Ed Shimbashi is chairman of the Irrigation Council. I think added to that list should be Jake Thiessen of the Department of the Environment and also Gary Hartman, who set up the tour but because of a death in the family was unable to be with us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The chairman will certainly be happy to take that under advisement and will make sure that I send out letters on behalf of the committee.

If that's a motion for adjournment, Member for Lacombe...

MR. R. MOORE: A comment on this one. I think it would be normal if you go ahead without the say-so, that all these people who work with us on these tours get that letter from you. It'll just flow from your office automatically.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Certainly it's been the practice of the chairman in the past to make sure that the appropriate letters go out following an investigative trip of this nature.

The only other item I want to bring to members' attention is that the Chair hasn't anticipated any changes in the format we've adopted over the years: one major question, two supplementaries, and an equal opportunity for all members to be able to have their names put on the list. I think it's worked quite well.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good. The Chair would be happy now,

then, to recognize the Member for Lacombe.

help and co-operation. We shall see you, then, on Wednesday, September 28, at 2 p.m.

MR. R. MOORE: I move adjournment again.

[The committee adjourned at 10:31 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Thanks, everybody, for your

