

[Chairman: Mr. Ady]

[2:01 p.m.]

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MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the meeting to order and welcome all of you to our first meeting of our select standing committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. I'd like to welcome all of the new members. I think it's interesting to note that all but four of the members on this year's committee are new, having not served on the committee previously. I'd like to also identify and introduce our new legislative secretary, Corinne Skura, who's been very helpful in organizing our schedule and the recent investigative business that we had in Calgary and into Kananaskis Country. I trust that all of you have received the annual report that was published today. If you have not, Corinne has additional copies that you can obtain from her.

As I think you are all aware, having received previous schedules, our first formal hearings will begin tomorrow at 10 a.m. with the Premier appearing. I would just like to give you some background as to how the scheduling has been done so all the members can be aware. I made a deliberate effort to not schedule meetings in September, in view of how late the session ran, to give members of this committee an opportunity to do things that no doubt piled up while the session was on and with the thought that we could still begin our meetings in October and be finished quite easily in this calendar year. But I did want to leave September as free as possible, and I hope it worked out well for you. We have a new schedule of meetings that Corinne will pass out to you.

MS SKURA: It's in the binder.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's in the binder. At the present time all of the people who will be appearing before this committee are scheduled. We can only anticipate that there may be some changes as emergencies arise with those who are scheduled, but hopefully we can stay quite close to that schedule. To give you some idea of how we're doing in comparison to last year, we presently have 21 meetings scheduled for this year, and that includes the investigative visits. Last year there were 29 conducted by the committee. We can anticipate that there may be some change to that if some of the people appearing have to change the schedule.

Are there any questions from the committee or comments that you'd like to make on the schedule as you see it in your binder?

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, is it possible for us to propose others to come and meet with our committee, people who aren't on this list? I was thinking of the head of the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He's on there.

MR. PAYNE: I don't think you have Dr. McLeod.

MR. MITCHELL: You don't have Dr. McLeod here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: November 8.

MR. PAYNE: Fred Stewart. There it is.

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, I see. Fred's there, so the heritage foun-

MR. CHAIRMAN: He will be appearing, if that's your question.

MR. MITCHELL: Dr. McLeod will? Okay.

Would it be possible, for example, to have Ed Marshall come in this formal setting with his minister, or whatever minister would be appropriate, to provide us with some answers?

MR. CHAIRMAN: He will appear with the Department of Recreation and Parks. At least he appeared last year, so I believe the minister will have him here.

MR. MITCHELL: Could we ask?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can verify that.

MR. PASHAK: Could you do the same thing with Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation?

MR. CHAIRMAN: For the chairman to appear? That actually, I believe, comes under the jurisdiction of the minister responsible for that, and normally we do have those chairmen appear with them and have them available. So certainly we can check with them to see if that's their intent again.

MR. FISCHER: I think they were all there last year, weren't they?

MR. PASHAK: They were. I thought it was useful that they were here.

MR. MOORE: Ed Marshall has never missed. He's been at every heritage trust fund I've been on. I've never missed a year without Ed being over there.

AN HON. MEMBER: You can't work without Ed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any more comments on the scheduling? The schedule is really quite tight this year. However, I would really like to get our meetings over with in this calendar year to give us ample opportunity to get our report prepared and get it submitted by the first Monday of the new session so that we can comply with the Standing Orders.

MR. PASHAK: I notice, Mr. Chairman, that you don't have dates in here for when we would convene to look at recommendations and that sort of thing. What time were you thinking of?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Within the next 10 days we will have some dates finalized and submitted to you on the last part of the meetings. I think there will probably be an additional four meetings to complete the business of the committee. Previously they've used three meetings to discuss the recommendations and the final meeting to approve the final report or to vote on the recommendations. So within the next short time we'll be putting that schedule together and sending it out. Certainly we can entertain some flexibility on that to accommodate the members of the committee after we have that circulated. Okay?

MR. PASHAK: Okay. Would it be useful sometime today to

give you some dates when we're not going to be available? Would that be at all helpful?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd appreciate it if you could give some of those dates to the legislative secretary. That would certainly be helpful from the members of the committee.

MR. PAYNE: What would be helpful? Dates of nonavailability during what period?

MR. PASHAK: Between now and Christmas, I guess.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Well, I'd like to hopefully have them finished up in early December. So let's say between now and December 10.

Yes, Athabasca-Lac La Biche, you have a question?

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah, just quickly. If a number of us are sitting on a bunch of committees and we start submitting the dates we're not available, you'll never ever have a meeting. I think it's a matter of us trying to prioritize the importance of the committees we're on and drop other meetings to attend a meeting of this nature. Otherwise we'd never agree on dates because there are so many members. It's impossible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think your comments are important because hopefully everyone on this committee attaches a good degree of priority to this committee and their involvement in it. So when you're submitting dates that you would not be available, please make them those when it would be absolutely impossible for you to appear, as opposed to inconvenient.

I thought it might be interesting, because of the number of new members of this committee, if I just briefly went through the functions of this committee so that we're sure everyone understands that function and their responsibility. First of all, of course, we have an organizational meeting today, which is primarily to set up the format of how we would intend to conduct the meetings. As you already know, we have the opportunity to conduct investigative visits. We have already spent three days on that, and we have two more days scheduled. Those are on your itinerary. We will have ministerial hearings, and they begin tomorrow with the Premier. Of course, other people who are not ministers will be called before the committee by the ministers who are applicable.

Following that we will have development and debate of recommendations, and on that point I would recommend that all of you who would like to submit recommendations to the committee in a formal manner should do them by November 15. The reason for that is that those recommendations should be read into *Hansard* and into the minutes of the committee, and that's the last meeting that we have scheduled, so it will be the last opportunity to have them read prior to starting the actual meetings to debate them. Does that give you enough time?

MR. MITCHELL: We haven't scheduled a November 15 meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry; November 14. So November 14 would be the last day. Is there any discussion on that? That gives us about six weeks as committee members to develop whatever recommendations we see fit.

The next function of the committee would be to vote on

those recommendations, and that will make available whatever time might be required to do those two functions; preparation of the annual report that I spoke of earlier. The legislative secretary and myself will have prime responsibility for preparing that. Then we'll call a meeting to approve that annual report, and the final phase of our annual responsibility will be the tabling of the report on the first Monday of the new session. Are there any other questions or discussion on the things that I have discussed?

If I could go back now to one particular item that I did discuss but we didn't go into it in depth. That has to do with the format of the meetings. In previous years the format has been that each member would be allowed one question with two supplementaries and then fall to the bottom of the list. I assume we may want to follow that similar format. Is there anyone . . .

MR. MOORE: I move that we follow that. It works out very, very well; everybody gets an opportunity to get back in in an organized fashion. I think it's an excellent way to give everybody the opportunity to ask questions. The fact is that these ministers come before us at the time. If it's possible, there's always arrangements to have them come back.

MR. FISCHER: I second that motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we have a motion. Discussion on the motion?

MR. PASHAK: I'd just like to speak against it. I think members should have the leeway to follow a line of questioning through to some completion of an issue, and it might mean four or five questions. I think the chairman should be able to use some discretion with respect to allowing a series of questions to continue or not. I think as a kind of a rule of thumb that perhaps one question and two supplementaries is fine, but I think that if we're into an important issue, the Chairman should be able to permit a further sequence of questions to bring a matter to a conclusion.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, although I can understand and am in fact sympathetic to the point of view just expressed by the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn, given the size of this committee -- and from my past experience it's the kind of committee in which most if not all members like to and perhaps ought to participate. Having experienced the frustration of having what I feel is an important question with some supplementaries to raise and being restrained from so doing because two or three members -- I'm not speaking about the current membership, of course, but I'm thinking specifically of two terms ago, where one or two or even three members could dominate the questioning for almost an hour and a half or even two hours, and it's extremely frustrating. I'd prefer the proposed format made by Mr. Moore in that it at least ensures we all get an opportunity to participate. I think if we all participate expeditiously and briefly, even though we've dropped to the bottom of the order, there's a likelihood we could get back in as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MS M. LAING: I would support the motion that we change the format. Certainly being on Public Accounts Committee I found it extremely frustrating. One of the things we use when I have

forums is that we put a time limit for a questioner, and that gives them some time to explore. But when it gets excessive in terms of time, then we have to move on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I could just make a point of order. We already had a motion on the floor, so this is in the form of a discussion on it.

MS M. LAING: Okay. I speak against it.

MR. FISCHER: On that, when we come back in, when we come to the top of the list again, we can always go back to the same topic again, can't we?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. There's nothing ruling out that you can't deal with the same subject again. So certainly you could get back in and have your question and two supplementaries on the second turn.

MR. MITCHELL: I speak in favour in the motion as well. I've had the experience on Public Accounts of being frustrated.

MR. PASHAK: Against the motion.

MR. MITCHELL: Yeah. I'm against the motion but in favour . . . You didn't do a subamendment?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No.

MR. MITCHELL: So I'm speaking against the motion. I don't know what the protocol would be for this: one way that we might satisfy the frustration mentioned by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek would be to have another condition and that is that every member who wants to ask a question is guaranteed the opportunity to ask that question either by extending the meeting beyond the time, if the minister and staff who are with him would allow that, or by guaranteeing that we would reconvene the meeting with that minister at some time in the future, so that if you had a question, you could get a question even if time were eaten up because of some members getting more than three questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a very good point, and on that point I should add that that opportunity presently exists to call anyone appearing before this committee to come back a second time. Perhaps that could solve the concerns that the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn has expressed, by having an opportunity to continue until he's finally exhausted all of his questions.

MR. FISCHER: If I might say that from my experience if we let one or two or three people dominate your whole, then there wouldn't be any rules to stop it if you put it in your way. What is stopping it, may I ask?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I could just make a point. I can see that it would put a great deal of responsibility on the chairman to have to make that discretionary decision. It would put him in a position where he could be accused of preferential treatment or criticism by the other members for having not gotten a fair share of the time.

Someone else had a hand or a discussion? Yes.

MR. CARDINAL: I did. I believe as a new member I sure would support the motion that we do restrict it to a main question and two supplementaries with an opportunity for the person to have another shot at asking questions, because we could end up here as another Oral Question Period with potshots taking place across each other, and you could have very, very long days and more meetings. I'm not sure how efficient that is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Unfortunately, these meetings are scheduled for a specific time, and that amount of time is given to those who will be appearing before the committee, and it's difficult, many times, to extend that time. It would be necessary to call the person back before the committee if it was the feeling of the committee that they did not have ample opportunity to question the person who was appearing. But that option is there.

MS M. LAING: I think my concern with the option of calling somebody back is that we wouldn't get the committee's consent to do that and that only a couple of people who had failed to get their questions in would want that to happen, and therefore we wouldn't in fact get a chance to call the person back.

MR. MITCHELL: What is the rule on that, Mr. Chairman? If one member wants that person to come back, is that okay?

MR. CHAIRMAN: As I understand it, the process is that the opportunity exists to call the member back before the committee and that this has in fact happened on several occasions. But there is not a hard and fast policy that they will come back. Part of that is a scheduling problem probably as much as anything else. In reviewing the minutes of this committee in *Hansard*, I haven't seen a resistance by the members of the committee for that to happen. When it hasn't happened, it's come across that it's because of a scheduling problem. The year wore away, and we were just never able to get them back prior to any report being compiled. Certainly we would not be setting a precedent by calling them back.

MR. MITCHELL: As for the question and two supplementaries, will there be some flexibility in that? I mean, in my two supplementaries do I have to be right on, or can I ask three questions of the Treasurer about three different matters?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think there would be a slight amount of discretion on the part of the chairman. For instance, if you asked a question of a minister of, "Have you done it yet, do you intend to do it, and if so when will you do it?" I would look at that as one question, as a for instance.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's what you asked him.

MR. MITCHELL: No, that's a corollary of what I asked him, and that's great; that's good. Thank you for clarifying that. But what I'm saying is that if I want to talk to the Treasurer or the Premier, where this would particularly apply because they have an overall view, and I say, "I want to ask Mr. Johnston about Kananaskis park, and then I want to ask him about the Tom Baker cancer clinic, and then I want to ask him about the Walter Mackenzie hospital, can I do those three? Would that be all right, because they wouldn't follow supplementals?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. They do not have to remain on the

subject similar to what we do in question period and Public Accounts.

MR. MITCHELL: Public Accounts is much more flexible than question period, thanks to the efforts of the chairman.

AN HON. MEMBER: He's easy to get along with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are we ready for the question? All those in favour of the motion? Six. All those opposed? Four. Motion passes.

Is there any other business that should come before the committee at this organizational meeting? Yes, hon. Member for Lacombe.

MR. MOORE: Yes. I move we adjourn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's not debatable.

MR. MOORE: We've covered the agenda, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of adjournment? Any opposed? So we are adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow, and it will be in Chambers with the Premier appearing before the committee.

[The committee adjourned at 2:25 p.m.]