

2:02 p.m.

Tuesday, October 9, 1990

[Chairman: Mr. Ady]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the committee to order. It's nice to have all of you assembled. We're ready to do the process another time. We have two new members on our committee this time.

MS SKURA: Three.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Three?

MS SKURA: Connie Osterman, Jerry Doyle, and Bob Hawkesworth.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Three new members; my mistake. One of them is here. We'd like to welcome them as part of the committee.

To just give you a brief review of the events so far, we have concluded the investigative visits for this year. As most of you know, we visited Whitecourt, the pulp mill there. We also visited the city of Fort McMurray and toured the Syncrude facility and the AOSTRA facility as well as the interpretive centre there. I'm sure all of you found it worth while and informative. I know that I learned a great deal about some of the things the heritage fund is involved in at those sites. We then went to southern Alberta to visit the irrigation districts and the systems. Again we saw some interesting things, and I think all of us came away with a better understanding of what the irrigation districts are endeavouring to accomplish.

All of those arrangements were put together by Corinne Skura, our legislative secretary, and on behalf of the committee I'd like to express appreciation to her for the work she did. We won't hold her responsible for the plane being late going to Fort McMurray.

A brief word on the annual report. I've endeavoured very hard to have the annual report in your hands. At this moment you don't have it; however, I do have a commitment that the printed annual report will be delivered to us in this committee momentarily. The annual report will not be made public until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock, but it is being made available to the committee. All I can do is apologize for the fact that it wasn't in your hands sooner and ask you to use some discretion with the fact that it is not a public document until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock. In an effort to give you some time to spend with the report prior to the appearance of the Treasurer tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock, it will be made available to you; it just came through the door. So much for the annual report.

Moving on to something more on our scheduling, last year in our first meeting after the committee was struck, we passed a motion indicating that the process to be used when the ministers are before us would be that there would be a list taken by the chairman, and each member wanting to be on the list as a questioner would be given one question and two supplementaries, then would go to the bottom of the list. I give you that for the benefit of the new members so that you understand the process. It seemed to work reasonably well last year.

The schedule of our meetings: each of you has that in your binder. The one anomaly in that schedule is the October 23 meeting with the Hon. Dick Johnston. Last year the Official Opposition requested that I endeavour to get Mr. Johnston to meet on an informal basis with the committee in an effort to

allow them to get a better understanding of the mechanics of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. The Treasurer has agreed to meet on that occasion for that purpose. I should mention that the intent is that it would be an informal meeting: it would not be public, it would not be in *Hansard*, and the press would not be there. So it would be that kind of a meeting where you can talk freely and openly in an effort to get just a better understanding of the mechanics of the fund. Hopefully that will be helpful to the committee and will fulfill that request that was made of the Chair last year. Note also that it's only one hour long instead of the regular two.

Does anyone have any questions on the schedule of meetings?

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, as I think I've already written you, I have a lot of difficulty with the Wednesdays. Is there a consistent day when the government caucus meets? Maybe I can talk my party into having their caucus the same day or something. I end up with Wednesdays as our consistent caucus meeting. Do you have a consistent caucus time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon wrote the chairman with a problem that he has. His caucus meets every Wednesday, and this gives him a conflict with our having our regular meetings on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. I reviewed that in an effort to try and accommodate the Liberal caucus, and I really had difficulty trying to come up with some way to handle that and still get our meetings into some semblance of time. If we didn't meet on Wednesday, we would be meeting Tuesday, and the members that come in from out of town would necessarily have to lay over until Thursday. That didn't seem a reasonable thing to do. We almost need to meet for three days in a week to make it worth while for those who travel in. The chairman had a lot of requests from people trying to avoid Mondays and Fridays, so you can see how it evolved. It wasn't that we were trying to be difficult, because if we could accommodate, we certainly would. That's the function of the chairman: to try and accommodate the members so they can attend the meetings. I would be open to some suggestion if someone has something that would seem reasonable.

To answer your question: no, the government side does not have a regularly scheduled day in the week for a caucus meeting.

Yes, Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark?

MR. MITCHELL: Does the fact that you've scheduled meetings for November 13 through 16 indicate that you know the House will not be sitting during those days?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, the Premier has not published the time of the fall session, and I'm afraid we're all in the dark as to the exact date of that. The best that I could do was to schedule them immediately following the hearings from the ministers, giving a little time for the recommendations to be submitted. That's how that schedule was arrived at. If it doesn't work because the fall session comes in, we may find ourselves having to meet in January to finish up the business of the committee. Hopefully not.

Okay. The recommendations. As you know, last year we set a date for the recommendations to be submitted to the committee so that all the members would have time to study them and to prepare for the debate on those recommendations. I wonder if I could have the concurrence of the committee for November 9 to be the last day for accepting recommendations unless, due to rescheduling, we have one or more ministers appear after that date, in which case we would still accept recommendations

pertaining to those ministers' portfolios. Would that be acceptable to the committee?

The Member for Three Hills.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, just to say: does that mean that the recommendations are immediately made available to all members? That's not very many days between receipt of recommendations and discussion of them.

2:12

MR. CHAIRMAN: To clarify that, as the recommendations come in – for instance, people could start making recommendations now if they'd like – they're made available to members of the committee so that they can be working on them. In the last day or two perhaps we'll only get a handful of recommendations, because they come in and we read them into the record as they're submitted. Members have the option of bringing forward their recommendations beginning with our very first meetings, so it's an ongoing process. We're just trying to establish a cutoff.

The Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, if you wish, I'd be prepared to move that November 9 be the deadline for recommendations, with the proviso that you made, and that is that if because of scheduling adjustments ministers appear before us subsequent to November 1, another deadline, so to speak, be set for recommendations that pertain to those areas of ministerial responsibility.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Is everyone clear on the process then?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If so, could I have a vote on the acceptance of that process? All those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any opposed? Thank you. Carried.

Immediately following the process of debating the recommendations, we'll move to put in place the annual report of the committee in an effort to have it ready for the opening of the Legislature in the spring. Under Standing Orders we're supposed to table it the first Monday of the session.

The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Actually, I wanted to get onto the tail end of the recommendations before we left that. We ran into a problem last year, I think all members on the government side as well as ours: after the recommendations were in and they were written up and we saw what other people were doing with them, the question of amending the recommendations. Remember? I thought the Chair was very intransigent, bullheaded. Anyhow, it was very, very unco-operative in amending some of the recommendations. If we're making our recommendations independent of each other – quite often there was a case that we'd maybe amalgamate them or put them together or something.

I was just wondering if there were some way – certainly a deadline for recommendations to be in – there'd be some additional time after you've given all the committee everybody's recommendations, that we add maybe another week or another few days to amend them or change them or amalgamate them.

I might want to get together with the member from Vermilion or even Fort Saskatchewan. Normally I don't talk to them, but we might get together or something like that, put it together, which would help get through it.

MR. GESELL: Mr. Chairman, I need to rebut the comments there to some degree. There were sufficient opportunities given last year, if I remember correctly, to amend. We went through a dual process whereby the recommendations actually could be amended formally in content, and then there was some subsequent opportunity that the chairman provided to make some typographical, minor corrections. To me, if recommendations come in early enough during the discussions prior to meeting with the ministers, as has been our process, there's enough opportunity throughout this whole schedule that we have here to actually make appropriate amendments, not only to individual recommendations but also in how they relate to other recommendations. That overview does exist after a certain period of time and a certain number of recommendations have come in.

I'm very conscious of the time limit, Mr. Chairman, that we have in order to get a final report in. If we are to go through ongoing amendments to recommendations, we'll never make that time frame and get our final report in on the first Monday of the spring session.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; thank you.

As I recall, we accepted amendments up until the cutoff date last year. Is that correct? I'm going from memory. Then we didn't accept amendments after that. Is the member questioning that process?

MR. TAYLOR: No. I think it's all right as long as we have a few days between all the recommendations being laid down so we can see them and the deadline. It's that couple of days in there when we can see each other's.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, to clarify . . .

MR. TAYLOR: We sat down, and we put a lot of them together – remember? – maybe as a group. Maybe that session you hold where we decide what to do with the different recommendations is enough as long as it's loose enough to be able to amend them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On November 9 perhaps.

MR. TAYLOR: Sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. After November 9 we would not accept recommendations.

One other point that I would like to make specifically to the members for Westlock-Sturgeon and Edmonton-Meadowlark: there is some question as to whether recommendations that are put forward jointly are acceptable. I wonder if the members would endeavour to separate them this year. Last year they were submitted in joint names. I believe it would simplify things if you could submit them under one name this year.

MR. TAYLOR: On that score, I think the idea of putting it in jointly was that either of us could speak to it. You had been following the practice that if whoever proposed the thing was not present, it lay there; there was nobody proposing it. If one of us is absent, as long as I can propose, with the permission of

whoever it is, to bring it onto the floor for discussion, it'd be all right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I believe the Chair has always allowed someone to be designated to speak to a motion in the absence of the mover of that recommendation, so that's not a problem. Okay?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, just a procedural question, and I apologize for not having this information at hand. In terms of the recommendations coming in, who is in receipt of all of these recommendations? Is it just the committee? Are they circulated amongst the people who have made recommendations, or is it just the committee members that bring forward various recommendations?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's only committee members who bring forward recommendations to the committee. They are circulated by the legislative secretary to all members of the committee on an ongoing basis. She probably will keep you updated every week or two on the recommendations. As far as people outside the committee submitting recommendations, no, that's not part of the process.

MRS. OSTERMAN: It would be to individual members that the public would make recommendations they believe to be appropriate, and it's through the membership then.

Is it possible for individual members, having seen that they are to some degree duplicating their efforts, to then withdraw two resolutions and make them into one? Does it have to be the committee that does this after? There can be no alteration?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I believe we allowed them to be withdrawn last year, and that process seemed to work all right.

MRS. OSTERMAN: And then there would still be the opportunity till November 9 to resubmit if several were withdrawn?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Fine; thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions or business to come from the committee?

Yes, Member for Edmonton-Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to raise some questions about the annual report, not the contents of it but the fact that we're just getting it today, just 24 hours before both the Provincial Treasurer and the Auditor will be before us. I'm wondering, since it is the annual report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1990, almost six months ago, what the problem has been with the delay in publishing it. Here we are, the day before we're to get into the meat of the matter with both the Treasurer and the Auditor General, and we just now have it in our laps. Something is wrong. I know the difficulty you must have in scheduling the number of ministers from cabinet, including the Treasurer, with their schedule and ours, but I think it's inexcusable that we are called together as a legislative committee to review the annual report and have it at such late notice. Could you please explain? I mean, I'm sure it comes from the Treasurer and the department up there. I'm just wondering why they've taken so long and if there isn't a better way: for us in the future to at least have the annual report in

our hands a week before the actual hearings begin, with the questions to the various ministers.

2:22

MR. CHERRY: Well, I think, Mr. Chairman, that the Provincial Treasurer can answer that tomorrow. We can ask him the question right then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Lacombe?

MR. MOORE: I dealt on another matter.

MR. MITCHELL: I have a question that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: On that point?

MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, it speaks to that point. A very critical feature of our ability to assess, for example, claims that the Alberta heritage trust fund was paid \$750 million in earnings by five Crown corporations – a critical issue that relates to that question is how much money those particular Crown corporations made, whether they were solvent, whether they were able in fact to pay \$750 million to the heritage trust fund, or whether the Treasurer merely wrenched the money out and then stuffed it back in through the back door in this circular accounting that he does. How can we know? We also haven't seen the annual reports of those five Crown corporations. So it's very difficult for us to assess the quality of their earnings, upon which, surely, their ability to pay their debenture interest to the heritage trust fund would be based, if because of timing we haven't even seen the annual reports of those five Crown corporations. My point is: how can we properly question the Treasurer without having that information? Now, I'm sure he has that information, but I only get three questions tomorrow. I've got five Crown corporations I have to ask about. Could we maybe have a few moments where we can have him lay on the table what in fact the earnings of those five Crown corporations are so that we don't have to utilize our questions on technical matters that should have been provided for us anyway?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, let me endeavour to answer both of your questions as best I can. It was the intention of the Chair to have the annual report ready at least one week prior to this meeting today, and that was the commitment that the Treasury Department endeavoured to meet. I checked it very closely as the date grew closer, and for whatever reason they were not able to meet it. I understand the difficulty that you experienced. I did my best to avoid that, because I realize that you would like and need some lead time to prepare your questions and to peruse the report. I apologize for it being as late as it is. Certainly in the coming year I'll meet with the Treasurer and then see if we can't do something even better than we did this year to get you some more lead time. All of the committee should have it. That's a given point.

To move to the point made by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, I hope the member is not asking that the Chair be responsible for co-ordinating the annual reports of those Crown corporations so that they coincide with the issuance of the annual report of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. That, I believe, would be rather difficult. I do believe that to satisfy the question you put forward, you're going to have to deal with the Treasurer on those points in the meeting, whether it be at this meeting or at the informal meeting.

MR. MITCHELL: Would it be possible for you to talk to him even today and just ask him to provide us with one sheet that says that this is the earnings of the Crown corporations after all government of Alberta subsidies to those Crown corporations so that we could have it on the table tomorrow morning before we start talking to the Treasurer? In fact, those figures are available. Otherwise, they wouldn't have been able to prepare this financial report.

MR. GESELL: Why don't you ask him?

MR. MITCHELL: Well, I don't want to waste the committee's time asking a technical question for which the information should be available.

MR. GESELL: You're wasting time now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, I can't make that commitment because I don't know if I can get time with the Treasurer in this short time.

MR. MITCHELL: Could you call him?

MR. CHAIRMAN: To see if that's even possible to do that? If that's the sort of information you want, the Chair would really suggest that in future years perhaps you could put that request to him when you meet with him on the informal basis, and hopefully a process could be put in place that would satisfy your need.

MR. TAYLOR: I'd like to make a motion, Mr. Chairman, that we cancel the appointment with the Treasurer for tomorrow morning and move it to somewhere at least five days or more down the schedule, at your and his convenience, because I think it's ridiculous to take the main stud here in this whole affair and give us a piece of paper 10, 12 hours ahead of time.

MR. MITCHELL: Perhaps I could offer that at least we would have him after the informal session. I mean, what's the point of having the information on it after he's . . . Why not make tomorrow the informal session?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Did I miss a hand? Was Calgary-Fish Creek on ahead?

MR. PAYNE: That's why I was pouting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please go ahead, Calgary-Fish Creek. I'm sorry.

MR. PAYNE: That's fine.

Well, as a former chairman of this committee, Mr. Chairman, I do want to emphasize, and I'm sure the members of the committee are aware of, the extreme difficulty in scheduling the Premier or the Provincial Treasurer and all these other cabinet ministers within an admittedly tight time frame. At the same time, I'm wholly sympathetic to the thrust of the question from the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. I'm wondering if he would accept this as a feasible compromise: that we proceed with the scheduled meeting with the Treasurer tomorrow, bearing in mind that each of us has at least six hours' reading time between now and then to at least be conversant with the content of the report, with the proviso that the Provincial Treasurer be prepared to respond to other technical questions

at our informal meeting, such as those that have now been raised with respect to Crown corporations, recognizing that that is an informal meeting, without media and without *Hansard's* facilities. Nevertheless, if it's an information-gathering exercise, it seems to me that perhaps that informal opportunity with the Provincial Treasurer might enable us to elicit this additional information. I'm wondering if that would be an acceptable compromise.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I could just make a point, I hope the committee can be sympathetic to the difficulty of trying to, first of all, move the Treasurer to one of these other dates that someone already occupies and, secondly, move that person to a new date. It will not be easily done. I suppose nothing is impossible, but I know how hard our legislative secretary has worked to get this schedule. The Chairman is really reluctant to distort it if we can avoid it. If there's some compromise that can be reached, I would certainly appreciate it.

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Chairman, I see no reason for moving the date of the Treasurer if we're not going to receive any new information before that date. If he's basically coming and we have no more new information, what is the point of changing the date? We have to have that information before we can . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The point the member was making, member, is that they haven't had sufficient time to study the annual report that was just . . .

MR. DOYLE: And the assets of the Crown corporations, Mr. Chairman, and the assets of the corporations who have paid off some of the debt to the heritage trust fund.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, in fairness I think we have to accept the fact that there are more issues than that to be dealt with in this report. The members are concerned that they want time to access themselves to the report in total. They're just concerned that they don't have time to prepare their questions and so on, and I'm sympathetic to that but hopeful that we can find some compromise to maintain our schedule.

2:32

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think all members of the committee wish that the report could have been available a bit earlier. However, in response to the motion before the committee, having been at a number of these meetings, I would think the committee would have a number of questions for the Provincial Treasurer. I can remember various debates in various committees about not having him here at the particular time. Now that we've got him scheduled for tomorrow, I think we should certainly move ahead and have the Provincial Treasurer appear before the committee tomorrow. I think that would be a missed opportunity, so to speak, because there are the scheduling difficulties that you've referred to, Mr. Chairman.

The other suggestion I would make is: the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has spoken of the informal meeting on the 23rd. An alternative might be that if after assessment of our meeting tomorrow we feel that it's advisable, that might be another formal meeting. That could be another formal meeting, with all the procedures that normally go with our formal meetings in this Assembly, so that there would be a second opportunity to meet with the Provincial Treasurer.

I do, however, recognize the difficulties of scheduling that you referred to, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One further point: the committee does have the opportunity to request the Treasurer to return, if we can schedule the time.

Edmonton-Meadowlark, you have a question?

MR. MITCHELL: I'm not averse to compromising on this. In fact, maybe we're coming to the same conclusion. Why not specify now that the October 23 meeting with the Treasurer will definitely be an open, public, formal meeting and use the first hour tomorrow as an information session? He's going to be here three hours, one of which is going to be an information session. Why does the information session have to be after the other sessions? Why don't we make the first hour tomorrow that where we can talk informally, get the information we need, and then have two good, formal, public hours of discussion with the Treasurer in the clear light of day?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Clover Bar, on that point.

MR. GESELL: Thanks. On specifically that point, Mr. Chairman, I would feel that it may be more appropriate to go through the meeting tomorrow and see what develops and arises from that meeting before making a decision whether the subsequent meeting with the Treasurer should be a formal one or an informal one or whatever. So I would look for a motion at that point in time from the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark to determine. I think then the committee members could make an informed decision rather than guessing at this point in time.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, Mr. Chairman, that's ridiculous. I mean, the committee members – surely you were in consultation with these guys – already made a decision that they need an informal session. That decision's already been made. So now you're saying that we have to get other information before we . . . I know we can use it. We met with the Treasurer last year and the year before. Who knows how many times we've met with the Treasurer? I mean, this is clearly an argument of convenience. I'm tired of it. Why don't we just make the right decision for once and say, "We'll get the goods from this guy for the first hour, and then we'll have two hours of open, public hearings"? Why do we always have to hide? What are we afraid of?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, in view of the fact that an informal meeting with the Treasurer has been organized, in fairness I don't believe that the committee is trying to hide anything. The request was made last year, and it's being met this year.

The Member for Three Hills.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I gather that normally you recognize members before they speak, and I'm hoping that that's what we'll follow, although I realize that there is some concern here.

First of all, I would expect that the Provincial Treasurer, having responsibility for the printing of this report, will realize that it has caused some problems for the committee in terms of their mandate and their job. I'm sure he will realize that. If the committee is to do their job, obviously we all wish, and I would hope he would wish, that we had additional time. There are three hours available to the committee. One of them was designated as an informal hour with the Provincial Treasurer. It would take his concurrence obviously, but I would suggest that

potentially the message could go forward from the committee that given this problem, which is not of our making at all, the Provincial Treasurer be asked if in fact he would consider an informal information session first – wherever we would do it, that hour aside – and then use the other two hours for a formal session.

I'm not expecting the chairman to be able to speak for the Treasurer. The Treasurer may well have preparation that he wants to do in terms of how he sees himself fulfilling his role at these various meetings. I believe we should carry forward using the time that's available to us – the Provincial Treasurer is already scheduled – but make a request for him to consider this slight variance and at the same time ask the Provincial Treasurer for the technical information that has been mentioned by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. I don't believe we can do anything more than that. The chairman is in a position today of not being able to make a commitment for someone else. All we can do is ask that he pass the message of the committee along so that we can utilize the time to the very best extent possible.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, I find it kind of interesting. I'm involved with Public Accounts, and the very people that are saying we can't have the Provincial Treasurer first were very critical and very demanding that the Provincial Treasurer be first at Public Accounts. We said, "No, we'll hear a few ministers first, and then we'll get to the Provincial Treasurer." Now they say, "The Provincial Treasurer is first here; he must be moved back." So I don't know; they're as consistent as always.

We aren't trying to hide anything, I can assure the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. I think these meetings have been set. It's public knowledge. The press are up there. They realize it's here. They'll be here tomorrow. The public will be here. I don't see too many of the public here, but they have the privilege of sitting up there in these meetings. They've been announced. How do we close it off and say that we're going to have a private meeting, that we've already set down the road? I think we go with the schedule the way it is. This jockeying around isn't hiding anything, isn't proving anything. Let's go with it. That's why we're here, to question people as they come before us, and we will question them when they come.

I think that the more time we bicker around this afternoon, the less time we have before 10 o'clock tomorrow morning to read this report which everybody says is so important to read. If we take another 10 minutes off here, we could put it on reading that report. I'm sure it would be very rewarding for the members for Edmonton-Meadowlark and Westlock-Sturgeon. They would have 10 more minutes to read it instead of us listening to them on something that's already been decided.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If the Chair could just make a couple of observations, first of all, in fairness to the Treasurer I'm sure he plans some type of preparation to come to the informal meeting. That takes on a different format than what we normally have. I'm not sure he would be prepared to do the informal meeting tomorrow at 10 o'clock. It doesn't give him any time for preparation as to what he would believe you would want to know about the fund, prepare it and bring it here. Hopefully we could move ahead with the meeting as it's scheduled. I think if I were a member of the committee sitting there, it would seem to me that the option of legitimizing the meeting on the 23rd as a regular meeting with the minister would be of value to committee members, more value to them than to have the unstructured meeting first tomorrow. I'm not trying to lead you

or put words in your mouth other than to just make an observation, and those two observations I would make for your consideration.

2:42

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Chairman, of course we just received our document of the annual report for '89-90, but I would like to ask you what document was being picked up by the Conservative members as I walked in here, the ones that are sitting on the table. Is that a copy of this document that they had earlier?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, I can explain that to you. There were photostatic copies made of that report because the Treasury Department did not have that report available. The legislative secretary picked it up at Treasury Department a few minutes before the meeting convened, brought it in, and was going to make it available to all members and started to do so. I received a call from the Treasury Department saying that the final copy as we have it here was available and they would bring it down, so I asked her to gather those up and replace them with this one. They were being distributed to all members. She picked one up from Westlock-Sturgeon and Edmonton-Meadowlark. So no one received any copies prior to anyone else receiving a copy. The first viewing of these copies by any member of this committee was in this room today. Okay?

REV. ROBERTS: Sir, is there a motion on the floor?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, there's a motion on the floor. Is there still discussion on that motion? Okay. Clover Bar.

MR. GESELL: Thank you very much. I believe I should clarify the remarks I made earlier. They were addressed specifically to the motion. I don't quite understand the defensiveness by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark that exists, but the motion by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon asks that the meeting be canceled or rescheduled as an informal session. I don't agree with that, because we've set the meeting up; it may not be possible to reschedule because of the time conflict. My suggestion – and I need to repeat it, Mr. Chairman – is that since we have scheduled that meeting, let's proceed with it. Once we've had that session, then we can determine whether the subsequent meeting with the Treasurer should be a formal one with the total committee, recorded in *Hansard*, or whether it should be an informal one. To me that makes sense. I don't quite understand the defensiveness that exists with that particular suggestion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Closing remarks on your motion, Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, and we'll have a vote.

MR. TAYLOR: I wanted to tell the Chair I'd be willing to withdraw my motion in favour of a motion by the Member for Three Hills.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Three Hills didn't make a motion because she couldn't. We had a motion on the table already. She may have made a suggestion.

MR. TAYLOR: But I'm now giving her an opportunity to make a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our Legislative Counsel has just brought some procedural matter to my attention having to do with the

so-called informal meeting, which was a poor choice of words on the part of the chairman. It's not possible for us to have an informal meeting of a committee. We either have a committee in camera or have a regular structured meeting. So that we know what we're talking about, that meeting of the 23rd would be an in camera meeting.

MR. JONSON: Just a slight procedural matter, Mr. Chairman. If the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon does, as he's indicated, withdraw his motion, in terms of order of making alternate suggestions I believe I was next in line.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, you have withdrawn your motion. Now, I don't believe you can withdraw it based on accepting someone else's motion. You either have to withdraw it or not. So I understand that it's withdrawn. Thank you.

So as it now stands, we have a meeting. We're back to the original schedule with a meeting with the Treasurer tomorrow morning at 10 a.m., and we have a meeting scheduled with him on October 23 which would be in camera.

MR. TAYLOR: That's entirely a horse of a different colour. I mean, this is an information session, Mr. Chairman, from what I have. It sure as hell doesn't say in camera. As a matter of fact, almost the opposite of an information session is an in camera session, so I think we have a . . . Is this the Chair's ruling? Is this in fact an in camera session rather than an information thing?

MR. CHAIRMAN: What the Chair was really endeavouring to do was to fulfill a request by the committee. If it's not possible to fulfill that request by the committee, then we will not be able to have the meeting. The in camera meeting would not be on record and would not be public, but neither was the other meeting going to be public or in *Hansard*. I fail to see the difference, but if you have a problem with it, the meeting was not organized or called at the request of the Chair; it was requested by the Official Opposition.

MR. TAYLOR: The Official Opposition asked for an in camera meeting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Official Opposition asked for the meeting as I originally described it, and as I said earlier, that was a poor choice of words on the part of the chairman. We have two choices now if we're going to have the meeting on October 23. We either have an in camera meeting or have a fully open meeting such as this.

MR. GESELL: Let me raise a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Point of order.

MR. GESELL: *Beauchesne*, sixth edition, 586. We've had a motion on the floor by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon. If I read the rules correctly, "The member who has proposed a motion" – and I'm quoting from 586(1) – "may withdraw it only with the unanimous consent of the House." Are you going to ask the members of this committee to vote on whether that member can withdraw the motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. GESELL: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is all discussion over with it? Then all those in favour of the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon withdrawing his motion? Carried.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I would move that we proceed with tomorrow's meeting as scheduled with the Provincial Treasurer, and that subsequent to that meeting the committee determine whether they wish to request and establish that the meeting scheduled for the 23rd with the Provincial Treasurer be in camera or in regular open session.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Everyone clear on the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Discussion on the motion?

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Chairman, are we just addressing the one question of going with the meeting tomorrow? I think it's wrong to discuss both issues in the one motion, tomorrow and the 23rd. Could we have them separate motions?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, hon. member . . .

2:52

MR. DOYLE: I'm in agreement with the continuation of the meeting tomorrow but not to a closed in camera meeting on the 23rd. A public information meeting would better meet the needs of this committee and the public.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for West Yellowhead, let me clarify again. The committee by procedure is limited to some extent, to the point that we either have an in camera meeting on the 23rd or have a regular meeting such as we have here today, on *Hansard* and open to the public and the press.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, speaking to the hon. member's motion, I would be in agreement that certainly the meeting should continue. I just wish that it were possible for us to agree that the chairman could express to the Provincial Treasurer the discomfort of some members of the committee in terms of dealing with the late information that has come to us and if the Provincial Treasurer can at all accommodate the suggestion that had been made about how October 23 might be configured in terms of information by way of however – that at least that be considered.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, speaking to the motion, I am in support of the motion advanced by the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey. It seems to me to make inherent good sense to proceed with our scheduled meeting tomorrow, have a clear understanding of what our needs are, and then make a decision with respect to the October 23 meeting, whether it be in camera or not. I think it's an eminently sensible motion.

MR. MITCHELL: On the motion, I have to support the idea of proceeding tomorrow with the meeting as scheduled and only because all the options seem to have been ruled out by members of the government side of this committee and so on. I would like to state very clearly, however, that there can be no question and is no question in our minds – my colleague's and mine from

the Liberal caucus – that there could be an in camera meeting with the Treasurer. It's simply not acceptable, secondly. Thirdly, I would like to endorse the comments of the Member for Three Hills. It seems like a very reasonable and easy request for you to make of the Treasurer, simply could he be apprised of our discomfort with the lateness of this information and could he come prepared if necessary. I'm sure it's not a problem for him – he seems to be able to talk about almost anything at any given time – to come and present whatever information we feel we need as background to discussion. But none of that would be in camera.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Let me make one more comment. Let's be clear that it was not the intent of the Chair or the intent of anyone in this committee to instigate an in camera meeting. An in camera meeting immediately brings on connotations of secrecy. That was not the intent. That was something we got backed into by a procedure. So that everyone on the committee is clear, it was not the intent of the chairman or any of this committee to instigate an in camera meeting. It was only put forward as an alternative.

We're ready to vote on the motion put forward by the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the motion? Opposed? Carried.

Is there any other business to come before the committee today?

MRS. OSTERMAN: May I make the motion that the chairman reflect the tenor of the discussion of this afternoon's meeting so that the Treasurer to the best of his ability will be prepared tomorrow for a wider range of questions that necessarily go beyond the annual report we have just received?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Rest assured that the chairman will be conveying to the Treasurer the disappointment of the committee of the time of arrival of the report, the difficulty it has placed on the committee, and also the other pertinent points made by the Member for Three Hills. Inasmuch as that was a motion, all those in favour? Thank you. Carried.

MR. JONSON: Could I have the motion reread, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps the Member for Three Hills would articulate her motion again for the benefit of the members of the committee.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, I asked that the chairman report the tenor of the discussion this afternoon and in view of – and I'm not sure I said this – the lateness of the report, in consideration of what it was we were going to discuss in the longer term, he to the best of his ability be able to address issues beyond the annual report, because I understood there were other things he was preparing in terms of information for us. To the best of his ability I think is important. It's to the best of his ability.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We've already voted on the motion and it's carried. If the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey has got a problem with the wording, then we have to hear his problem.

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, with due respect, I did have my hand up to speak before you . . . Just a couple of comments, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I have no objection to the first part of the hon. Member for Three Hills' motion in that we should express concern over the lateness of the report. I'd just like to indicate, in support of you, Mr. Chairman, that I know every effort was made by yourself to get this report here a week prior to this meeting. My concern, though, is: if this is going to be recorded as a formal motion of this committee, I have concern with the request for discussing issues beyond the Heritage Savings Trust Fund report. There's usually a great deal of meat, a great deal of substance, in these reports, and I'm sure this can occupy the time of the committee in an important and fruitful way for the time available to us. Maybe I'm being a little too worried here, but if we're talking about issues beyond, we've got 24 or 25 days of estimates for the whole budget consideration of the government. I think I would like to see support for the first part of the hon. member's motion, but I do not like the precedent being set by the second part.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member. However, the question has been put. The Chair will use discretion on his communication with the Treasurer in an effort to stay within the scope of our mandate on the committee.

MR. GESELL: Point of order, Mr. Chairman. Is there anyone who may be opposed to the motion? I believe you asked who was for the motion. You omitted . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those opposed to the motion?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, are you saying that your ruling was that the motion had been voted on?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. And carried.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Oh. All right. Fine. Because I would have . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, only to clarify - and I apologize if my verbiage was poor - I was not suggesting that this committee go beyond its mandate. I said if the Provincial Treasurer would be prepared; that's all. Thank you.

MR. MOORE: I think we've got all our organization done. I move we adjourn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion to adjourn has been put.

REV. ROBERTS: I have two points of clarification.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Apparently we can debate the motion to adjourn, but you have to debate and defeat it to go on with the discussion.

MR. PAYNE: Speaking to the motion, could the chairman express why he feels it's not an appropriate motion? Or to put it another way, does the chairman have other business items that remain to be discussed?

3:02

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chairman doesn't have any other business items. The Chair did want to give everyone a full opportunity to discuss those things they wanted to discuss, and hopefully we have. However, a motion to adjourn is not debatable, and consequently the Chair, through necessity, must call the question. All those in favour of adjournment? All those opposed? The motion is defeated.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Chairman, I have two points of clarification which I think are important before we adjourn. One is that I would like some further elucidation about the status of this report now. You have said that this is given just to members of the committee. You didn't say the word "embargo." Am I to understand that this is not a publicly released report? There's a lot of useful information in here which I think the public and the press should see, and I don't see why holding it until tomorrow at 9 o'clock is going to make that any different. So I was unclear on your earlier comment in terms of its status. I guess I could be held bound by your further ruling in this regard, but I would like that matter clarified, and I have another matter I'd like clarified as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, the Treasurer has the responsibility for preparation and release of that report. In an effort to accommodate this committee, he saw fit to allow it to be distributed to the committee to facilitate the meeting tomorrow morning. He is not making the report public until a press release tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock. As a member of the committee you have the report for that purpose. I don't suppose that as chairman I have the authority to tell you that you can make the report public, and I have to leave it on that basis.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Is it necessary for the committee to have a motion that declares the interest then? I think we fully understand by your description that the report was given to us as a consideration because of the time problem. If the chairman needs a motion to respect the Provincial Treasurer's position, then I think we ought to have that motion that the committee considers that there is an embargo on this report.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm advised by Legislative Counsel that our option is that we can accept the report on the conditions given us by the Treasurer, or we can reject the report and return it. [interjections] Just a moment, please.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I move that we accept the report under the conditions stated by the Treasurer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Discussion on that motion? Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, I mean, that's ridiculous. I would have to oppose that. Although it is public information, paid for by the people of Alberta, we can't discuss this with our constituents or with the media, with anybody, simply because we're going to affect the Treasurer's public relations campaign on this particular document. Is that what we're being asked to do? No. Then my only option is to hand it back and not have it at all until one hour before I get to meet with the Treasurer, and that is the option I have to exercise. I'm not going to have a report

that's perfectly available . . . Let him do his press conference tonight at 4:30. That's when they usually do them.

MR. GESELL: It's an interesting argument that's been presented, Mr. Chairman, but it appears to me that it doesn't make any difference whether the report is given back and presented at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning, as the member has suggested, or we honour the embargo. It makes no difference; it's the same thing. So I'm speaking in favour of the motion that's in front of the committee. I don't accept the argument that's just been presented, because it doesn't make sense.

MR. PAYNE: I'd like also to speak in support of the motion made by the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey, Mr. Chairman. It seems to me that over the years this committee has enjoyed a very effective, functional, co-operative relationship with the Provincial Treasurer, and I would not want to see that traditional relationship damaged in any way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Meadowlark, did you have another question? Three Hills; I'm sorry. Three Hills was the person I recognized.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Just to say, Mr. Chairman, that I think there are many precedents for information that is provided to the press and others and embargoed for a short period of time so that the people who in fact are responsible for explaining the information they are about to make public have that opportunity. Leaving all the rhetoric and the politics aside, I think we ought to accept that those precedents exist. The chairman did explain when we came into the meeting the situation with respect to this report. Certain members of this committee did not vociferously object; nothing was said about it. So I would certainly hope that given that particular set of circumstances and their lack of any comment at the time, it wouldn't be a problem now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?
The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Chairman, just to answer the Member for Three Hills, when you did make that statement in the initial part of the meeting, it did distress me quite a bit. You did not ask for comment or questions on that, and I was trying to get it in until Lacombe tried to close off debate this afternoon. So I think there have been people who were concerned about this. In fact, my reading of it is that it is in fact the Treasurer who has broken trust here. I mean, the Treasurer was asked to give this report at least seven days prior to us meeting. If he can't fulfill that obligation, tries to come in here at the last minute, dumps this into our laps, and then expects that we can hold it until he can, as Edmonton-Meadowlark says, have his public relations campaign in the morning, I think it's really quite unacceptable.

I guess I'll have to be bound by some parliamentary tradition here in terms of embargoing it, if that's the will of the committee, but something has to change here. I mean, this kind of procedural wrangling around by the Treasurer and thinking this committee is just a rubber stamp of his cooking the books in any way he'd like to has got to stop.

So I will vote against the motion. If it does indeed pass, I'll abide by its dictates, but notice has to be given that this is just unacceptable.

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Chairman, I haven't chaired many meetings in the past and I have great respect for your chairmanship, but I have very little respect for the mode taken to deliver this document 24 hours prior to us sitting down with the Provincial Treasurer. I will be voting against this motion because we have to talk with our researchers and other people who are maybe much more up on finance than we are and much more experienced with the heritage trust fund. So I have to talk to those people. I would not say that I will be releasing the document, but I have to discuss this with other people, and I need more than just a couple of hours or an hour to do it.

MR. GESELL: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I don't know how we . . . Point of order?

MR. GESELL: I wish to draw attention to remarks by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. I believe he indicated that the Treasurer was "cooking the books."

MR. MITCHELL: What citation?

MR. GESELL: Citation 592: language in this House needs to be temperate and decorum . . .

Now, Mr. Chairman, the member was upset about the report being delivered late, and I can understand that and sympathize with that, but the comment about cooking the books is something completely different. It signifies that there is some illegal manoeuvring that has taken place. I feel that that is inappropriate, and I would ask the member to withdraw that remark.

MR. TAYLOR: May I speak on the point of order? I think it's quite correct. He isn't cooking the books; this is the rawest thing I've ever seen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any more discussion on the motion?

The Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. JONSON: Might I close debate on the motion, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. [interjections] One point of clarification. The Member for West Yellowhead had a concern with not being able to discuss this with his research staff.

3:12

It would seem to the Chair that you should be at liberty to discuss this with your research staff, but that still does not make it public. There's a difference; it can be contained within your staff.

MR. DOYLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I understand that. The fact was that we wouldn't have been able to even debate this had we not defeated the motion of the member not present now. He went anyways; I guess it didn't matter.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I want to speak to the general motion. First of all, I don't know – maybe my hearing aid wasn't working that well – but when this was handed to me, I had no idea that it was embargoed. I don't know if I would have accepted it. This idea of an embargo I think came along later in the meeting, firstly.

Secondly, I mentioned that we needed a few hours to study the thing, and nobody seemed to bat an eyelash. It was not only myself but my researchers, or helpers, and I have some volunteers to look at the thing. So if the thing is embargoed, it's literally useless to me until it's free to be released, which is tomorrow morning. Why bother issuing the thing to us if it's embargoed?

I think the whole debate, Mr. Chairman, should have been: do you want this thing embargoed or do you want to wait until tomorrow morning? I never had a chance to do that, and I feel like the rules have been changed in mid-game on me, to tell me now, after I've read through the first three pages, that I've got to do the whole thing myself; nobody else is allowed to look at it. I can't guarantee an embargo. If I'm letting it loose for volunteers and helpers in analyzing the thing, I can't guarantee the embargo. It's useless, so I'd have to vote against embargoing the thing. We'd just start tomorrow morning. I don't like to hand it back to you because when you gave it to me, you didn't say it was embargoed. As far as I'm concerned, I keep it because you gave it to me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, you have the report. It's fine with the chairman if you keep it.

Now, when the Chair spoke about the distribution of the report, it indicated that it was being made available to the committee and that it would be made public tomorrow morning by the Treasurer. In an effort to facilitate the appearance of the Treasurer tomorrow morning, we were being given it today, but it was emphasized that it would be made public by the Treasurer tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock. If it went past the hon. member that it was not public . . . [interjection] That was not the intent.

MR. TAYLOR: That doesn't stop the Chairman making it public tomorrow. As a matter of fact, it wouldn't be unusual for the Treasurer to be 24 to 48 hours behind everybody.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Ponoka-Rimbey, to close debate.

MR. GESELL: A correction, Mr. Chairman, on that point of order. I still would like to get a reading of the Chair's opinion; however, I misquoted. I was trying to go from memory, which wasn't that precise. I was one digit off in the front and the back. The correct citation is in fact 491 in *Beauchesne*. I would appreciate a ruling from you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could you read the citation?

MR. GESELL: Yes, certainly.

The Speaker has consistently ruled that language used in the House should be temperate and worthy of the place in which it is spoken. I believe I quoted that to some degree.

No language is, by virtue of any list, acceptable or unacceptable. A word which is parliamentary in one context may cause disorder in another context, and therefore be unparliamentary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does the Member for Edmonton-Centre wish to make a comment?

REV. ROBERTS: Well, I would be guided by your ruling. To me the term "cook the books," like the term "rubber stamp" or any other metaphors and analogies, is very common parlance and is a way to describe certain frustrations that certain members of the Legislature feel about what government does. I was not imputing any illegal motive or any matter of illegality necessarily. Though it might be there, I'm not raising it at this point. To me, "cooking the books" means that there's some manipulation; there's some concern here in terms of what information we're getting, how we're getting it, what information we're not getting, and the time we have to discuss those matters.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The Chair finds that the term is not unparliamentary but, however, would ask that the member use some caution in the terminology he may use for such a description in the future.

The hon. Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. To close debate on the motion I made, I would just like to make three brief points. First of all, I think the committee fairly unanimously has indicated their wish that this report had been available to us earlier, and that is, I think, well and sincerely expressed.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, I think you made your intentions and the wish of the Provincial Treasurer very clear at the beginning of this meeting in terms of the status of this report being nonpublic when it was given to this committee.

Thirdly, this is not an unusual procedure, Mr. Chairman. We have numerous precedents which I could quote at great length, but I'll just mention one, and that is the budget of the province of Alberta. For the preparation of various parties involved in responding to it, information on the provincial budget is made available ahead of time with the condition that it not be dealt with in the public venue until such time as, in this case again, the Provincial Treasurer brings it formally before the Assembly. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I hope hon. members will support my motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll read the motion:

Moved by Mr. Jonson that the committee accept the 1989-90 annual report of the Treasurer, with the conditions as specified.

All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Chairman, just one other matter for clarification, perhaps. Unlike these other cans of worms, it won't take quite so long to answer this one. Being convinced, as we are, that we need lead time – at least a week – to receive this report as well as the annual reports of the five Crown corporations in the Alberta division, would it be in order to make that a recommendation of this committee? My understanding has been that recommendations of the committee have to do with the nature of the fund, and this might be more of a procedural matter. But I would like to make some sort of recommendation or some policy that from here on in, next year, we don't get into this situation again. I'd again appreciate your clarification and guidance as to whether that could come in the form of a recommendation from the committee or how those kinds of policy matters can be ensured.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, let me assure you that the Chair will be doing everything possible, even to the point of postponing meetings, in the future to ensure that the committee has lead time on the report.

On that point?

REV. ROBERTS: Yes. Let the record show that the chairman did all possible in his power to grant this kind of request. I mean, it's certainly not directed at the Chair, who I think is doing a fine job in these circumstances.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. CHERRY: I would move that we adjourn, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All in favour of the motion? Opposed? Motion carried.

[The committee adjourned at 3:21 p.m.]

