

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act

1:32 p.m.

[Chairman: Mr. Ady]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the meeting to order.

The purpose of this meeting is to approve the annual report that our legislative secretary sent around to you last week. Hopefully, all of you received it for perusal.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mine might still be in my Edmonton office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I've got some additional copies. I assure you that it's all in order and you won't have any difficulties with it. Perhaps just let me make some additional introductory remarks.

On behalf of the committee I'd like to express appreciation to Corinne Dacyshyn, our legislative clerk, who has been very helpful in assembling the report.

Its status presently is that it has been printed for our purposes and it's necessary that we deal with it at this meeting with a motion to approve it. Then it can be sent to the printers, which means that I'll have to table four copies next Monday under Standing Orders. Then after the printing is completed, it will be made available for public distribution. It's necessary we do it that way because the time frame has been too tight this year for us to get all this process done and get it printed.

Are there any issues other than that? I'd like to just spend a moment talking about the investigative visits that we didn't take in the past year. They were beyond our control. As you know, we had planned to travel to Prince Rupert. It was not possible to do that. In the forthcoming year there are funds in the budget for a visit to the Husky upgrader, because by then it will be completed and hopefully in operation, and we'll be able to see it.

MR. MOORE: Did you put money in for James Bay?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, we didn't put money in for James Bay. Money has been approved in the budget for part of our committee to travel to Prince Rupert, if, in the wisdom of the committee, we should do that. In view of the budget restraints, we did not budget for everyone to attend.

There are also funds in the budget to have a day or two of our committee meeting in Calgary. You will remember that we discussed that and then passed a motion, a recommendation that we do that. So we do have it in the budget. In addition, we could spend a day in Calgary visiting one of the health facilities that we visited in the first year after the election, if we so choose. So that's a thumbnail sketch of what we would do next fall in our committee meetings and investigative visits.

Any discussion on that particular issue? The Member for Lloydminster.

MR. CHERRY: Mr. Chairman, the opening of the upgrader is going to be in the latter part of November. I don't know whether you would feel it was worth our while to be out there during that day or not, but it will be a highlight of the upgrader, and it's happening, I believe, November 21 or 23. If you would like me to explore it further, then I certainly will. If not or if you feel that another day would be better . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would be the official opening, sometime in November.

MR. CHERRY: They'll certainly be giving tours through it that day I'm sure, but it's up to you whether . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the Chair is in the hands of the committee on an issue like that. Certainly they should make that decision.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Is it a little bit premature for us, inasmuch as some of us, after session starts, may not be reappointed, may choose not to be reappointed, however our respective caucuses go about determining that? I mean, I think it's a worthwhile suggestion, and I appreciate it being made here this afternoon. Maybe we can give it some thought. I don't know to what extent, though, we could maybe commit the next committee to doing those sorts of things.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think it's a good item for information. The other thing that's an issue is that we may -- we don't know -- have a fall session, which would impact dramatically.

MR. MITCHELL: What if there's an election in November?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If the federal government chooses to have an election, it really won't impact on this committee, so it wouldn't be a problem.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, just on a closely related matter with respect to our overall budget. For the information of committee members, the chairman and vice-chairman and Corinne worked on this, and I believe the proposal that went into the Members' Services Committee was for a 21.4 percent reduction. It may still be that when the final figures come in we are somewhat under that, but that budget is based on maximum attendance at all these events. That is the only way that we can forward a budget, but there is certainly a reduction in what has been proposed for previous years.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our committee, I think, has to be commended on the budget reduction we were able to obtain in our fiscal year that we're just completing.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, are we able to make comments on this report? Are we coming to that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, we'll come to that.

MR. MITCHELL: Okay, we're coming to that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other items of general concern to the committee? If not, the Chair would entertain comments on the proposed report of the standing committee.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: I have a comment, Mr. Chairman. I remember distinctly questioning the Premier on the nature of the debenture that the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund holds with AI-Pac. In fact, I asked about at least two definitions, and those were the definitions of "cash flow" -- they defined it as adequate: when cash flow was adequate, then this company would pay back the government -- and interest rates under certain conditions. Mr. Getty told me at that time that he would respond to me because there must be a book that defines those things. He didn't or hasn't, to the best of my knowledge, responded, nor is that discussion noted in this report. If it's possible to change that, I wouldn't mind, later.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Just let me check with our legislative clerk.

In fairness, the clerk will check *Hansard* and make note of your comments, and that can be included.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Other comments on the report? The Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. JONSON: I think the report covers the discussions of the committee perhaps a little more extensively than in previous years, which is good. I would like to make note, Mr. Chairman, that you've covered very thoroughly, I think, the availability of information on committee discussions through *Hansard* and so forth that goes beyond what could be included in this report. That was another matter that was agreed to by the committee.

1:42

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Other comments? If there are none, the Chair would entertain a motion to accept the report. The Member for Ponoka-Rimbey makes the motion.

The Member for Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: I'm the seconder.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. It's not necessary to second it, but we'll accept that as a vote of confidence.

Any discussion on the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question's been called. All those in favour of accepting the draft report with the modifications as noted by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark? Opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

Is there any other business to come before the committee?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Just to thank you for your steady hand, Mr. Chairman. We've had our disputes, but I appreciate your manner in conducting the meetings. I do appreciate that and want to express a word of thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Again special thanks to Corinne, who's helped us a great deal.

A motion for adjournment? The Member for Wainwright. All those in favour? Carried. The meeting stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 1:43 p.m.]