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PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Legislative Assembly

March 22, 1978
10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Taylor

MR. CHAIRMAN: Members of the Public Accounts Committee, the Committee will come to order. It is exactly 10 a.m. and we have a very excellent turnout for the first meeting and with the short notice.

The first item that I would like to touch on, is the introductions. First of all, I would like to introduce to you Mrs. Doreen Phillips, who will be the secretary of Public Accounts. As a matter of fact, she is the secretary of all committees, so you will get to know Mrs. Phillips quite well. I've been pointing out the various members to her, because she wants to get to know you too. Then we have our old friend Mr. Rogers, the Provincial Auditor; and a new man, Mr. Neil Henkelman, the Audit Director, who will be with us today and probably with us at most Public Accounts meetings.

The first item on the agenda is the matter of meetings. Is it your wish to have meetings every morning from 9 a.m. to 11:30 as per previous years? Any comments?

MR. McCRAE: Traditionally we've met, Mr. Chairman, from 10 till 11:30, have we not?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we have a motion in that regard, and then we'll know what you want?

Moved by Mr. King that the meetings be held every Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 11:30. Seconded by Mr. Bradley. Any comment? All in favor?

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, just before we vote, I would assume, Mr. Chairman, that we will not apply that to next Wednesday.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was going to raise that next, Mr. Clark.

MR. CLARK: I would also assume, Mr. Chairman, that at 11:30, if we are in the middle of . . . the government members are in the middle of some exciting questioning, that we would be quite agreeable to extending that on occasion, as long as there is agreement of the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think the committee has been quite flexible in that regard. As a matter of fact, we were so flexible one year, we went till a quarter to two. I don't like to be that flexible too often.

All in favor? Against, if any? The motion is carried.

The next one is next week. What are your wishes in regard to next Wednesday? No meeting? All agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, I guess we don't need a meeting for that. It's agreed that there will be no meeting on next Wednesday, March 29. After that, every Wednesday at 10 a.m.

The next point I'd like to raise is, in previous years we sent out a notice to every member on the Friday or Monday that there would be a Public Accounts meeting. This seemed to be superfluous and a lot of extra work. Everybody knows there is going to be a meeting every Wednesday. However, do you want us to continue sending out a notice each week? I would suggest that we do it this way: if there is not going to be a meeting, the chairman will then be bound to notify the members. Otherwise there will be a meeting. Is that satisfactory? All agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now the next point I'd like to raise is the matter of the agenda. Last year we had the opposition and the government alternatively suggest departments or sections of departments that they wanted to examine. What are your wishes this year?

MR. CLARK: If my memory is accurate, last year, I believe, we agreed that the opposition would suggest the first item, the government the second item, we the third, and the government the fourth. Certainly, as far as my colleagues and I are concerned, that's an agreeable approach and we'd be prepared to indicate our two first suggestions right now. The first one would be Alberta Government Telephones; and the third one would be the Alberta Research Council.

MR. McCRAE: Could I express the viewpoint that last year we apparently did agree on that system, but I think it was only, Mr. Chairman, after we had listened to the members list their suggestions for review by the committee. That is, rather than have the PC's or the government members say that we want this on the agenda, and then you people say we want this, and balance it fifty-fifty, what we did: all members made recommendations or suggestions to the committee at large and then we sat down as a group and tried to determine in what order of preference we would review those different items.

With respect to whether or not the official opposition should determine the first matter before the committee, I think that's something we should discuss after hearing the various recommendations of the committee members. Mr. Chairman, it strikes me that we all have an equal voice in here and it may well be that we'll agree that Alberta Government Telephones should be number one. But I do think we should first of all give everyone an opportunity of listing the items they would like to discuss.

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to support the position put by the hon. Member for Calgary Foothills, that we're all equal on this committee. This committee is not meant to be in the protagonist/antagonist sort of position of the House, and I don't believe we can give any preferred position to the opposition to compensate for their paucity of numbers. The decision should be left to the majority of the committee. It is the democratic way. I think, however, that we should begin -- and we normally have begun -- with a review of the position of the province generally, from the Provincial Auditor as set out in the public accounts before us, so that he can explain some of the accountants' technical jargon to us in layman's language.

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, whether the opposition believes it or not, there are many of us members just as interested in public accounts as they are. Over the years -- or last year at least -- there were several topics we would have liked to discuss, but really never got around to doing it. Now, I realize you have a very hard job of trying to balance things out; but from my own point of view, I'm not particularly happy with this fifty-fifty business, but that will be up to the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments? If not, could we have a motion?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Chairman, might I suggest that we hear from the other members of the committee as to particular items they would like to have reviewed, before we get down to picking the agenda items.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, you asked for a motion. I'll move that we continue the practice that we established last year, and that was that the opposition would suggest an item, then the government members did.

If the hon. minister from Calgary will go back and check last year, that was the agreement we worked out here: the opposition would have an item, then the government would. We came this morning on the assumption that the government members would want to continue that kind of an approach. But our first two priorities, indicated earlier, are the AGT and then the Research Council, and I would move, Mr. Chairman, that we follow the same procedure we followed last year. Frankly, what areas the government members want to bring up, I would certainly leave that to the government members to decide among themselves which ones they want to place priority on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a motion. Is there a seconder to that motion?

Moved by Mr. Clark, seconded by Mr. Speaker, that we alternate from opposition to government in regard to topics.

Any discussion on that motion?

MR. FARRAN: Speaking on the motion, Mr. Chairman, and against the motion, I want to say that this fifty-fifty split, this imperial preference for the opposition, is against parliamentary tradition, against the tradition of Public Accounts committees. We already have a member of the opposition as the chairman, and that is as far as it goes. After that, it should rest entirely with the majority decision of the private members who are members of the committee.

MR. LYSONS: Mr. Chairman, in all fairness, we did go through the AGT previously, the Research Council is under some review now, and I'm not just exactly sure what the problem is over there. We have gone through AGT and I would have to say that I'd be opposed to the motion of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, based on the same reasoning that the Member for Cardston stated, that there are a number of things we would like to discuss. I would certainly like to discuss some things on Transportation. That's a pretty heavy spending item and I don't think that we are asking too much to be able to bring up some of these other topics.

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Chairman, could I just say I think we're debating a red herring here. The system we used last year, according to my recollection, was that we asked the committee members to list the items they wanted to review. It wasn't a question of opposition, government, opposition, government. It was a question of all members saying what they wanted to talk about. We then adjourned to the back room and at that time agreed that on the list we had -- which included the government recommendations as well as the opposition recommendations -- my recollection is that there was an alternate selection there, but of the total list. I think we're debating, frankly, about nothing. I really think what we should do is listen to all the members equally. We've had the opposition people blurt out what they would like on the list. I would like, Mr. Chairman, for us to go through the committee members, and those who want to offer something for review should be invited to do that. Then, when we've got the major list, be it 12 or 20 topics, let us then look at

it and decide what will be first and how we will go about selecting that. I'm sure, Mr. Chairman, (not recorded) the system we used last year, and we're not departing from any established procedure by following this suggestion. I would recommend, Mr. Speaker, that we vote down the motion by the hon. Mr. Clark and get on with selecting items for the committee to discuss.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Last year, as I recall the procedure, we asked for various topics. There was a motion from a government member asking for an adjournment -- I think it was Mr. Young -- so that the government members could pick out the topics that they wanted. Then we came back and it was agreed that the opposition's topics would alternate with the government's topics. I think that was the procedure we followed last year in practice. Any further discussion?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to say that we were agreeable to that format, and are willing to do that again, so that there can be equal opportunity on topics. It seems as if the government members, when they come together, seem to agree on some type of a priority, we agree on a priority, then we can alternate them. I think even for the--you know, there's four of us sitting on that side of the House. If we could be twentieth down on the agenda, if the government wants to whitewash us, they want to cut us off from having some say on some topics in this Legislature, go to it. The hon. member for Calgary just exemplifies that kind of attitude in some of the remarks he's made. I think that's rather sorrowful. We can pass the message on in other ways, but we support the precedent established.

MR. COOKSON: If I might just say a word, Mr. Chairman, with regard to the motion. In all fairness to the members of the opposition, even in our selection of the various legislative committees, we do select in terms of the relative numbers that represent the Legislature. So we are, in effect, following through with that kind of philosophy. Now the situation may have been different last year from what it is this year. My understanding from the discussion so far is that there are a number of government members who are extremely interested in a number of areas. Now if you work in terms of alternating, there is no question in my mind but the vast majority of government members will not have an opportunity to raise the particular areas they are interested in. I myself have a particular area that I'm interested in and, if we follow the procedure that was followed last year, it's quite likely that that particular topic will never be raised. Now if I could be assured, Mr. Chairman, that the opposition members would be selecting the same topics as some of the topics that were raised by government, then there may be some consideration given. But we don't know this and probably the best thing to do is to vote down the motion as proposed by the opposition and then put forth the topics which we think should be discussed, and work from that position.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to suggest that I think it's rather unfortunate we've got ourselves into a tangle over procedure. I'd like to suggest that we either withdraw this motion, or hold it, or defeat it, whichever; and get out the total list of topics that come from all members and see what we've got then for a proposal and take a look at that. Maybe we can work the thing out without any difficulty at that time.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, I assume I am closing the debate unless someone else wants to speak.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Clark will close the debate.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, with great respect to the Member for Edmonton Jasper Place, I have no intention of withdrawing the motion. We came here this morning on the assumption that we follow the same pattern which was established last year. I can't recall, in the years I've been in the Legislative Assembly, when the opposition haven't been basically able to determine what the early issues are going to be as to public accounts. And that's for a number of years, rightly or wrongly. This system appeared to work reasonably well last year and I just see no reason why we can't continue with that kind of situation. The motion I made basically follows the same pattern the government members agreed to last year. For the life of me, I don't know why they want to change the situation this year.

MR. FARRAN: Would the hon. member permit a question before we put the vote? How do you reconcile saying that as long as you've been a member this has been the practice, and that it was a first last year?

MR. CLARK: It was a first last year that government members got the second opportunity. Previously, until last year, if you had attended, Mr. Minister, you would have found that the opposition virtually set the agenda for the early items that came to public accounts, up until last year. Last year then the arrangement was worked out where the opposition set one, then the government members. That's why the government members last year adjourned -- you went out and had a caucus back there if you were here -- and came back and said: this is our first priority, second priority, third priority, as far as government members were concerned. That fit in the slots of second, fourth, sixth, and eighth. Our priorities were first, third, fifth, and seventh. That's the way the agenda was arrived at last year, and it seems to me a logical approach if we'd do it this year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question? Would you read the motion, please?

MRS. PHILLIPS: Moved that we continue the practice that the opposition would suggest the item, and then the government members. Mr. Taylor repharased that: that it would be an alternate from opposition to government in regard to topics.

MR. CLARK: Would you reread the motion?

MR. TAYLOR: The motion is, moved by Mr. Clark, seconded by Mr. Speaker: that we alternate the topics from opposition to government.
All in favor of the motion?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Chairman, I rise at this late moment, but would it be in order to prefer an amendment at this stage? I was not quite . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think . . . (not recorded) closed the debate.

MR. McCRAE: Fair enough. I was not quite clear as to what the actual wording of the motion was and now that it has come out that succinctly and that clearly, I . . . well, let's have the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody in doubt about the motion? Okay, those in favor of the motion? Those opposed to the motion? The motion is defeated.

It has been suggested that we list the topics before proceeding further. Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, could we have a list of the topics that you would like to have discussed?

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Chairman, I would be greatly interested in perhaps having a review of AADAC, which is the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission. That's Vote 8 in the public accounts '76-77, volume one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: AADAC has been suggested. We have AGT, Research Council, and AADAC.

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I would like to discuss Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response. That's Vote 7 under the Executive Council. That's Vote 7.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Vote 7, but what was the name of it?

MR. THOMPSON: Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response. Disaster services, but I guess they changed it.

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Chairman, I would like to propose that we review the spending of the ERCB and that is on page 176, Vote 4, volume 1.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to raise an item, being the Alberta Housing Corporation, Housing for Albertans. It's under the Department of Housing and Public Works, Vote 6 on page 197.

MR. BUTLER: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to raise, under the Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, the Provincial Planning and Construction, Vote 3, page 229, volume 1.

MR. LYSONS: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to study the Department of Transportation, page 269, votes 2, 4, and 5.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Chairman, last year we had on, but didn't get to it, the Personnel Administration under Treasury, which is Vote 6 of Treasury in the current estimates.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Personnel Administration, Vote 6. Any other topics?

MR. BRADLEY: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to raise the topic of Special Education Services under Vote 4, Department of Education, statement no. 64, page 140, volume 1 of the public accounts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other topics?

MR. KING: I'd like to suggest votes 2, 3, and 4 of Culture.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Culture, votes 2, 3, and 4. Any other topics?

MR. CLARK: I think our third and fourth priorities would be, thirdly, Native Secretariat and fourthly, Personnel Administration, the suggestion Mr. Young made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Native Secretariat. Any others? We now have 11 topics. Is that the list? Okay, what's your pleasure now in regard to giving them a number?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Chairman, I would move that we go with Alberta Government Telephones as number one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Young, that AGT be number one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any discussion?

MR. LYSONS: Mr. Chairman, I thought we went over AGT here two years ago.

AN HON. MEMBER: We did.

MR. LYSONS: I'd like to vote against that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, there's really nothing in the rules that says you can't go over the department every year if you want to. It's in the hands of the committee.

MR. BUTLER: Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that we get kind of sporting about this and put them all in a hat and draw.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that a motion?

AN HON. MEMBER: Do we have a motion in front of us?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, we have a motion, so we can hardly accept that one right now. We have a motion that AGT be number one by Mr. Young. I take it you're not wanting to have a seconder to every motion. Is that right? Just the mover.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, are you ready for the question? All in favor?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: AGT will be number one. Is there any particular aspect of AGT so when I'm giving out the instructions . . .

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, no. If we could perhaps have the general manager of AGT deal with the programs that AGT offer in non-telephone areas.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Non-telephone areas?

MR. CLARK: Those are areas like Altel Data, and things like that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Chairman, could we have the vote number on AGT?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. We'll ask Mr. Rogers to give us that vote number.

MR. ROGERS: It's in volume 2--on pages 383 to 389 of volume 2.

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I move that we discuss Alberta Disaster Services, my topic, as the number two topic on the agenda.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a motion that the number two topic be Disaster Services.

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Chairman, I move that we have as number three choice . . .

MR. CLARK: We haven't finished . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: (not recorded) at one time.

MR. STROMBERG: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It has been moved that Disaster Services be number two. Are you ready for the question? All in favor? Against, if any? I don't know which way it went. I couldn't hear anything one way or the other. All in favor of Disaster Services number two?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Against, if any? Disaster Services is number two. Could we have the pages and so on, Mr. Rogers?

MR. ROGERS: The details of that vote are on page 176 of volume 1.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now Mr. Stromberg.

MR. STROMBERG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that our third discussion be with the ERCB and their spending. I had previously given the page and the vote.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by Mr. Stromberg that ERCB, page 176, volume 1 be number three on the list. Are you ready for the question?

MR. CLARK: I don't plan to vote for the motion that we take this particular item as third. Once again I go back to the point that irrespective of the numbers, we last year have established the practice, and for several years before that, that the opposition got to determine a number of the first items that go to Public Accounts. Last year we worked out the arrangement of ourselves and then the government.

We've done this to the first two items today and I would ask members to -- not that I have anything against the area Mr. Stromberg wants to discuss. But I think the principle of alternating the suggestions . . . I was very clear to members of the committee at the outset that we wanted the Research Council to come before the committee. As far as I can recall, we haven't had the Research Council here for some time, if that's any additional incentive to members. But I respectfully request the members that we get the Research Council as the third item here and then, after that, we'd be quite agreeable to this question of Personnel Administration becoming one both groups could agree upon. But I

think in fairness to the fact that there are only two of us on the committee, three when Mr. Notley is here, that we should have the opportunity to have high priority as far as the items we want before Public Accounts.

MR. FARRAN: I'd just like to say, Mr. Chairman, that the ERCB must be the most important agency that we have in this government, and that we depend for 53 per cent of our revenue on the sale of depleting resources -- oil and gas and coal. The ERCB is partly funded by private enterprise and partly by the government. I think it's very important that we get into this area.

MR. CLARK: Then why didn't you have it in the first place?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a motion . . .

MR. FARRAN: We didn't have it as a first one because we're reasonable people. We gave you the first one.

MR. CLARK: When your first one . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question, or any further debate? The motion is that ERCB, page 176, volume 1 be number three on the list. All in favor?

MR. ROGERS: Mr. Chairman, I would also point out that in volume 2, pages 196 to 201 -- on these pages is shown the financial statements of the ERCB which I think the committee would want to look at at that time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. It has been moved that ERCB be number three on the list. All in favor indicate by raising their hand. Opposed? The motion is carried.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, can we have then the Research Council as the fourth item? As far as Public Accounts are concerned?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by Mr. Clark that Research Council be the fourth item.

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Chairman, could I make a comment or two on that? I would be more than happy to see the Research Council come before the committee for review. But it's a question of timing, Mr. Speaker. It isn't a question of putting something off altogether. When we talk about whether you're number one, number two, number three, we're debating a nothing motion or a nothing issue, I think, except in terms of the Alberta Research Council.

The opposition members have asked questions in the House concerning the welding aspect of research in the council. The Attorney General has declined to answer because apparently some aspect of that is under review. I don't know the extent or the detail of the review. But as the Attorney General has said, it would be totally inappropriate for him to answer questions on that subject in this House while some sort of review or inquiry is going on. And if it is not appropriate for the question period or the estimates debate, then it is also not appropriate for this committee to be reviewing the Research Council until such time as the review is complete and charges are laid or not laid, if they are laid, until the matter is dealt with by the court.

So, I respectfully suggest to the committee that we put the Research Council to the bottom of the list until the review that is presently under process is over and then make

a decision on whether it should come back up or shouldn't. That will depend on the actions of the Attorney General at that time.

Mr. Chairman, the reason I say that: to bring them in here right now, we know what it does to people's reputations; we know the innuendoes, the wild statements that can be made with the immunity that we have here. I think it's unfair to the organization and unfair to individuals to even attempt to review it at this time. So I suggest that we move Personnel Administration into the number four position, as the selection of the opposition, and move the Research Council down to the bottom of the agenda, or until late in the agenda so that we don't deal with it until such time as the Attorney General's review or inquiry is finished. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can't take that motion because we already have a motion. But there's one point I think we should notice: that we are studying public accounts for '76-77, not the present year.

MR. McCRAE: Agreed, Mr. Chairman, but I don't know the extent of the review that is apparently going on right now, whether it relates to last year or this year or two years ago. And that not having that knowledge -- and, of course, none of us can until that review is complete -- that is why I say it is so totally inappropriate to try to deal with it at this time. Not only inappropriate, but unfair to the people involved. So, we're not suggesting it not be dealt with, we're just suggesting it be dealt with at a fair time.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman, of all the . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Hyland and then Mr. Clark.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think even realizing we're supposed to be dealing with '77-76 in Public Accounts, I believe we've found when we got into the Alberta Export Agency, that we got into more than just the year we were dealing with, and also we got into a lot of innuendoes and some near name-calling by some people who we had appeared before us. I think in view of that fact, that the chance in something like the Research Council that we'll stick within the year would be very unlikely, and in view that it is being looked at and the Attorney General will report on it, I think we should wait until after then before we even bring it up at all.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, with the greatest of respect to the Member for Calgary, the Minister Without Portfolio, I have never heard such idiotic arguments in this committee in my life. Mr. Chairman, you are aware, sir, that any member from the Research Council or the minister responsible can simply say this matter is under investigation, if it's the welding project. I indicated to the member for Jasper Place, in the course of discussion here, that we were quite prepared not to pursue the area of the welding project as far as the Research Council's concerned.

Now, Mr. Chairman, and to the members of the committee, the members of the committee know very well that Mr. Dowling, the minister, or the acting chairman of the Research Council at any time can get up and say, look, this matter is under investigation by the Attorney General's Department. We don't want to pursue that area. And we are perfectly reasonable and prepared to do that. And to say that we shouldn't look at the Research Council because there's an investigation going on there, one could follow the same logic as far as AGT is concerned; you could say, because there's rate increases.

MR. McCRAE: But obviously we haven't.

MR. CLARK: And obviously, Mr. Chairman, the hon. Member for Calgary is simply unreasonable in his argument.

AN HON. MEMBER: He's been told to come here.

MR. CLARK: He's been told to come here and somehow keep the Research Council out of Public Accounts, it appears like. Now I'm quite prepared, in a reasonable way, to give my word to the members of the committee: we will not pursue the welding issue in the Public Accounts unless the Attorney General has indicated his investigations are finished.

There are several other aspects of the Research Council: the work they're doing as far as oil sands work is concerned; the work they've been doing in cloud-seeding; the overall structure of the Research Council. There are a whole variety of areas that as far as I know are not under investigation by the Attorney General, the RCMP, or anyone else. Because that one investigation is going in the area of this welding project, that shouldn't stop this committee from being able to look at the Research Council.

MR. FARRAN: I must say that I tend to agree with the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury in that. But I wonder if he could clarify it. Did you want to go into AOSTRA and all the huge sums of money that we're spending on research?

MR. CLARK: That's not part of the Research Council, Roy.

MR. FARRAN: No. Well, you were talking about oil sands, so I just wondered how far you want to go into research generally. You didn't give an appropriation number so you were pretty vague. How far do you want to go into all the sums of money that are being spent on research? There are some from the heritage savings trust fund too on health research. Maybe the committee would get a better hold on it if you could define exactly what you're after.

MR. CLARK: Well, I think I made it very clear. I said the Alberta Research Council. Now the Alberta Research Council doesn't control AOSTRA funds. It likely should, but it doesn't.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Rogers just pointed out that Vote 3, page 115, volume 1 covers the Research Council as under the Department of Business Development and Tourism. Is that the one you wanted? Okay. Mr. Cookson had the floor.

MR. COOKSON: Again, Mr. Chairman, we're dealing with a motion that really abandons the concept of representation. We've been generous enough to the present stage to include AGT as the number one. We've accepted Disaster Services. Our chairman has been generous enough again to suggest that where we're in an area where we jointly agree on discussions such as Personnel Administration, it's feasible that we could move that up without creating any undue problem.

But aside from the area of importance -- I think we can all make a case for importance -- but in terms of the relationship of representation, I really believe that we should defeat the hon. member's motion to put ERCB in its particular position in terms of priority and representation.

MR. KING: Could I ask the hon. leader a question? Could he make an undertaking on behalf of the Member for Spirit River-Fairview that if we discuss the Research Council there would be no discussion of the welding development?

MR. CLARK: No, I absolutely can't. But I can make the commitment on behalf of my colleague and myself. I'd be prepared to get up in the committee and tell the member for Spirit River that he shouldn't raise the matter. I think with the numbers in the committee, and with our gallant support, we could stop the questioning in that area.

MR. KING: Mr. Chairman, in view of the fact that one of the interested members is not here and there is no one here who can make an undertaking on his behalf, I'd like to make a motion that we table the vote on this resolution until the first meeting of the Public Accounts committee in the fall.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A motion to table is not debatable. The motion on the floor at the present time -- I don't know how we can deal with a table.

MR. KING: I'm making a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But the motion is to table. That's not debatable. Okay, the motion is that we table . . .

MR. FARRAN: It's debatable as to time, isn't it, Mr. Chairman? He said, table till the fall. Can we debate it as to time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: A motion to table is not debatable as far as I know.

MR. KING: But when it comes back off the table.

AN HON. MEMBER: When it comes to time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: When it comes off the table then it can be debated further but the motion is that it be tabled till the fall. You can defeat the motion or vote for it.

MR. CLARK: What's the motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, those in favor of the motion to table Research . . .

MR. CLARK: Could you please read the motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. The motion is that the Research Council be tabled until the first meeting of Public Accounts in the fall session.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, we're now debating whether we're going to hold the Research Council over until the fall and then this committee make a decision as to whether we'll bring the Research Council before the committee in the fall?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's what it means.

MR. CLARK: That's what the government members want to do? Despite the assurance that we've given them?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's what the motion is. I don't know whether the government members want to do it or not, but that is what the motion is. Are you ready for the question?

MR. KING: Since I've had argument that we may be prepared to deal with the Research Council prior to that time, I'll withdraw the motion to table.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, motion to table is withdrawn.

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Chairman, what I suggest we do in this dilemma: we've got three subjects now on the plate, which is going to keep us going for quite a while; why don't we just put this question of the subsequent subjects off at least until we've dealt with the first two?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it won't be any easier. Why not vote on it now? We have the motion before us.

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Chairman, could I have the floor again? I just want to respond to the emotional suggestion by the member opposite that we want to preclude a review of the Research Council. Anything but. We simply want to be assured that when we do that we're not interfering with the judicial process. I frankly don't know the extent of the inquiry. But I do know that when you get into an inquiry, you don't always know where it's going to stop. It just isn't an area here that you go this far and stop. So, all we've suggested is that we defer the matter until the Attorney General has completed his review of it and taken action, or not taken action.

Another possibility would be that we might discuss with the Attorney General how narrow or how confined his examination is. If it is indeed restricted to the welding technique area, then by all means, if the member would like to identify the cloud seeding and certain other research areas, I don't think our members would have any difficulty with it at all. The problem we have right now is we don't know the extent of the review by the Attorney General.

I'd be more than happy to go along with the suggestion by the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill that we defer this question until we do have an opportunity to discuss it with the Attorney General. If he's of a mind that it would be perfectly in order to deal with specific aspects of the Research Council, by all means let's do it. Then we'll put it to the committee and if it's number four, then it's number four. What I do object to is any suggestion that we're stonewalling or trying to prevent a review of the Research Council before this committee.

MR. CLARK: You sure are!

MR. McCRAE: It's just plain not the fact, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wonder, Mr. Farran, did you make a motion to defer?

MR. FARRAN: Yes, I make a motion we defer consideration of the fourth subject until we've completed the first two.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we have a motion to defer number four until a later time. The question's being called. The motion is that we do not name the number four item at this time, but defer Research Council until a later meeting. All in favor? Against, if any. The motion is carried.

So I take it then that we will now operate on one, two, and three. By the time we finish number two, we'll then have to decide on number four. Satisfactory?

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, could I just have it noted in the minutes that my colleague Mr. R. Speaker and I voted against Mr. Farran's motion to defer the study of the Research Council?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Quite in order. A note in the minutes that Mr. Clark and Mr. R. Speaker voted against the motion to defer.

At this time I should also mention that Mr. Notley did plan to be here, but something came up that he was unable to be here. Yesterday he did plan to be here.

Now we have then item number one, two, and three. I will notify the minister of AGT and the general manager that we will expect them to be here two weeks from today at 10:00 a.m.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that in the past several years, we've notified the minister responsible for a particular area and the minister determines who he brings with him into the Legislature. This is not a motion that the minister and the general manager of AGT come in here. I believe the policy has been that the minister makes a decision who he brings in with him.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the committee has the authority to ask for specific persons as well. If the committee wants somebody in a department, it is quite in order for Public Accounts to call that particular person. But the practice we have followed is, as Dr. Neil Webber pointed out, we notify the minister and ask him to bring personnel with him who will be able to deal with the matter under question. Is that satisfactory?

MR. KING: It's satisfactory on that point, Mr. Chairman.

I'm rising to back up, if I may, a step. You suggested that we would ask Dr. Warrack to be here on the fifth of April. Am I not correct that in previous years, at our first full meeting, we've gone through the public accounts in a general way with the Provincial Auditor? And wouldn't it be our intention to do that on the fifth of April and to have Dr. Warrack here the following Wednesday, which is the twelfth of April?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that would be up to the committee. We did suggest that the first two years because we had a lot of new members in the committee. I personally felt that that was not necessary this year, but that's up to the committee. If you'd like to have a general review of the public accounts by the Provincial Auditor and the Auditor Director at the next meeting, we'd have to have a motion to that effect.

MR. KING: Okay. I would so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by Mr. King that we ask Mr. Rogers and Mr. Henkelman to give us an overall review of the public accounts at the next meeting. All in favor? Against, if any. Motion is carried.

Thank you. We will do that. Would you gentlemen be ready for that?

MR. ROGERS: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other business?

MR. YOUNG: Do I understand then that the minutes or the record of the meeting will show that there were a long list of items suggested and what they were?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh yes. Yes, I expect the minutes will be just as complete as they were other years. We'll try to make them that way.

MR. CLARK: Is it your intention to be able to make transcripts available to members on about the same schedule you did last year?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. I wanted to mention that. Thanks for reminding me, Mr. Clark. The transcript will be made available to any member who notifies the chairman by the time of the end, you know, a few minutes after the meeting, so that we can have them made for you. If some member wants every transcript, such as the Leader of the Opposition and leader of the NDP, it's not necessary for them to tell us. But if other members, and the government leader in the committee; if other members want a transcript or specific ones, please notify us so we notify them so they can do it at the time they're making them. It cuts down the cost in that way.

Any other points anyone would like to raise?
The only other thing I have is: do you want to appoint a deputy chairman of the committee? We had a deputy chairman last year.

MR. CLARK: Who was the deputy last year?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Young.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, perhaps before we adjourn we can have one item we can agree upon, and in a gesture of great unanimity, I would suggest that the hon. member Mr. Young would be the deputy chairman. He'll be some distance from the Government House Leader and he'll have better judgment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, moved by Mr. Clark that Mr. Young be the deputy chairman. All in favor? Against, if any. Motion is carried.

MR. McCRAE: Just one other item, Mr. Chairman, on which I'm sure we'll all agree and that is just how happy we are to see you back as chairman. MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We'll do the very best we can. I appreciate that.

Anything further? If not, the meeting stands adjourned.

(The meeting adjourned at 10:52 a.m.)