

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Wednesday, April 29, 1981

Chairman: Mr. Mandeville

10 a.m.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I see it's 10 o'clock and we'll bring our meeting to order. Good morning, everyone.

Just before we start, I see some new faces on the Public Accounts Committee this year, so I'd like to introduce some of the people we have here. First of all, I'm going to start out with the beauty. I'd like to introduce to you our secretary Shelley Cross. We have Donna here. She's going to assist us for a while. Mr. Henkelman, Mr. Rogers, Mr. Heisler, and Mr. O'Brien.

This morning, committee members, we've decided that we would more or less have an organizational meeting, and we thought possibly if we had time we would just give a broad overview of public accounts. We do have some new members on the committee. Mr. O'Brien tells me it will take about 10 or 15 minutes.

In the past, Wednesday has been the day we've been holding our Public Accounts meeting. Is it still satisfactory with the committee to have our Public Accounts meeting each Wednesday?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The time we've been having the meeting is between 10 and 11:30. We've been spending an hour and a half, if that is satisfactory to the committee as well.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In the past we haven't been reading and approving our minutes; we've been filing them. If that's still agreeable with the committee, we'll continue to operate in that fashion.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We want some input from new members. Don't agree with everything we say. If you think there should be any changes . . .

MR. NOTLEY: Agreed. [laughter]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Also, last year's committee meetings: we've been sending transcripts to all committee members. If that's agreeable, we'll continue to send out the transcript of the meetings to all members.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At some of our past meetings we got involved, and we would get one committee member who would hold up considerable time in the meeting. So we have said in the past that we could have one question and two supplementaries. Would there be any changes we would want to make in that rule we made at our last meeting?

DR. CARTER: Can we work the same formula in the question period?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Were there any changes in that particular area as far as one question and two supplementaries? Did you want to add more supplementaries?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's pretty well everything that I have here. Are there any suggestions from committee members on any changes or other rules we should make in our committee before we begin the year? If there are any changes, just feel free to contact me personally or bring it up at any of our meetings, because we can certainly make changes at any time.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, will it be this day -- or probably not; I suppose it would be next time. When are we going to decide which subjects we want to study in more detail? I think that is reasonably important. Obviously we're not going to want to deal with every aspect of government, so I think the traditional approach has been for the government to decide to propose one area and for the opposition side to propose one area, so that we cover items that are of interest to both sides of the House. Are we going to be doing that today, or when do you see that being done?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was going to make the recommendation to the committee that at our next meeting, since we didn't have a chance to set up an agenda, we deal with report of the Auditor General, and then at some point in time, when we've finished with the Auditor General, we could make a decision from the committee. We'll have some recommendations and then the committee can approve or add to the recommendations on the different departments we'll be dealing with, if that will be satisfactory. We can do that at the last meeting that we have the review of the Auditor General's report.

MR. NOTLEY: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If there is nothing else as far as getting our meeting set up to function for this year, at this time I would like to call on Mr. O'Brien to give us just a broad, general overview of the public accounts.

MR. O'BRIEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The public accounts before the committee are for the fiscal year 1979-80, which ended March 31, 1980, so they're more an historical document than a current financial record. The table of contents for Volume I of those public accounts is found immediately after the letters of transmittal, and the first volume includes the financial statements of the Crown and provincial agencies which are subject to The Financial Administration Act.

The volume is organized firstly into the consolidated financial statements of the province, which include a consolidation of the results of the other

entities that are included in that volume, and the principles of consolidation are set out in the notes to those statements. The second . . .

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Chairman, I'm perfectly happy to have Mr. O'Brien proceed, but on the other hand I think all members, or most members, assumed this was strictly an organizational meeting today. It appears that many of us didn't bring our public accounts volumes. We have the Auditor General's report. It's very difficult to follow Mr. O'Brien's page by page, chapter and verse review of the public accounts without having the volumes before us. I am assuming that his overview will take maybe 10 or 15 minutes, and I wonder if we couldn't deal with that at the next meeting of Public Accounts just prior to the Auditor General's entry into his report, at which time we would all have the books. I'm not hung up on it, but I just think we'd probably all get a good deal more from it if we were sitting here with the volumes in front of us. I would say that we had thought it was organizational, discussion, and not getting into the contents of any of the booklets.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our attempt was to give a broad overview, Mr. McCrae, not a page by page -- just on the general aspect of how public accounts work. But if it's the wish of the committee, we could certainly hold that until our next meeting and have that first on our agenda next Wednesday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is the wish of the committee? Is it the wish of the committee for Mr. O'Brien to carry on with the overview of the public accounts?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Chairman, I just think it's somewhat difficult to follow without the booklets in front of us, and they're not here because we had thought it was an organizational only type of meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We've pretty well set up the organizational portion of our meeting, which was the intent of our meeting this morning. If it would be satisfactory with Mr. O'Brien and the committee members, possibly we could start our meeting next Wednesday by bringing down the overview of the public accounts and then continuing with the recommendations of the Auditor General's report. Is that agreeable?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If that's the case, I'm prepared for a motion to adjourn.

*The meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.*