

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Wednesday, October 21, 1981

Chairman: Mr. Mandeville

10 a.m.

MR CHAIRMAN: It's time and we do have a quorum, so we'll bring our meeting to order.

The minutes for our last meeting, May 20, have been distributed. Are there any errors or omissions? If not, we'll have the minutes filed as we have been doing in the past.

To start our meeting, we haven't completed the Auditor General's report, but I discussed it with him this morning and he feels it will only take a short while to complete because we just about came to a conclusion on it. At this time I'll turn the meeting over to the Auditor General. I understand there are some questions that weren't answered. Mrs. Cripps had one question we had to get a reply for -- I see her coming in -- and also Mr. Stromberg. Mr. Rogers will give the replies to the questions asked on May 20.

MR ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the sheets now being distributed answer the question asked at the last meeting as to the way in which the Alberta Research Council handled the matter of protecting patents for research carried out by them. I believe the sheet is self-explanatory, and if there are any questions I'd be happy to deal with them.

A further question was asked regarding the cost of the hotel directory which is in use, stemming from the Auditor General's report of the previous year. The direct cost, the amounts that have been expended for 1,500 copies, amounts to \$8,479. This brings to the attention of those people travelling, hotel rates that are, on an average, 20 per cent below the rates without getting the government rate. There is a further possible cost. I should explain that the material in the directory was actually gathered by the federal government, and there is supposed to be a cost-sharing which was estimated at just over \$3,000. However, since we have not been billed by the federal government for that amount, we haven't paid our share of the cost.

MR GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could ask Mr. Rogers with regard to the hotel directory. I understand that the procedure recommended is that when someone is making a reservation at one of those hotels, they state that they are an employee of the government of Alberta and request the government rate. I believe I've seen that. Is that applicable, in your view, to boards and agencies that are funded by the government of Alberta?

MR ROGERS: I believe that is the case. Certainly that should be the practice, and I believe it is.

Mr. Chairman, first, does everyone have a report? We have some extra ones here. Looking at the minutes, I think we had proceeded to page 53. That deals with some observations on middle management and, recognizing that it is very difficult to obtain people with the necessary skills, the recommendation is that there should be a concerted effort to improve skills of people already working in the service. The recommendation is:

It is recommended that where appropriate, in the interests of improving technical skills and managerial competence, consideration be given to developing for middle and senior managers specially tailored courses featuring exacting examinations, and that satisfactory performance in related course examinations be a criterion in determining a manager's suitability for promotion. It is further suggested that overall managerial competence would be improved by a system designed to combine the above and other definitive promotion and demotion standards with meaningful and critical performance evaluation.

I believe that the Public Service Commissioner and the office PAO have taken steps in at least the direction of providing additional courses in this area. If there are no questions, Mr. Chairman, I'll proceed.

MR CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions in this area? We'll continue.

MR ROGERS: Thank you.

The next section, 2.7.7, picks up on a matter that was reported in the previous report. Because of the timing problem that we mentioned in our discussions in the spring, although we had received the reply, we still did not know how things would develop and still, therefore, continued the recommendation that in those situations where it was appropriate -- that is, where financial activity is significant -- a position of senior financial officer reporting directly to a deputy minister or chief executive officer of a provincial agency be established. I think there was perhaps a misunderstanding because, when we say:

" . . . Since senior financial officers should be properly qualified accountants [and managers], their positions should be classified accordingly."

This did not necessarily mean the possession of a professional designation; simply that through experience the people concerned very often can be excellent accountants and that every effort should be made to ensure that those people are compensated at a proper level, and we did have some situations in mind when that recommendation was made.

I think that steps have been taken in this, but I think our next report will show more clearly what has been done on this matter.

The related recommendation was that there should be the concurrence of the Controller and we've expanded this recommendation this year to say:

. . . (or a committee on which he is represented), after assessing the competence of the individual concerned, be made a prerequisite to the appointment of senior financial officers [in the] departments . . .

The reasoning for this is that the chief financial officer is one officer on whose work, in effect, the Controller relies in that material figures, reports, prepared by chief financial officers in various departments are received by the Controller, both for the purpose of making payments, compiling the financial statements of the province, and therefore there is, in effect, a link between a chief financial officer and the Controller directly. My

opinion is that the Controller therefore should at least have some input into the people who fill that position.

I attempted, I'm afraid rather unsuccessfully, to link this with the passing of specified examinations in accounting and management, and unfortunately quoted the wrong recommendation -- one of these things that one misses in the final drafting of the report. Unfortunately, I said: "see also Recommendation 47" and of course that should have read "48", because that was the recommendation dealing with the establishment of courses. My apologies for that.

MR STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I guess my question would be whether or not the Controller has had or will have the opportunity to respond and provide advice to the Provincial Treasurer. But surely adding another input, another level to the recruitment selection interview process, will only further add to the difficulties of recruitment. I wonder, Mr. Rogers, if the classification or the detail that describes the qualifications, suitability, and all the various requirements for the individuals to be candidates, is clear; that it is up to the department head or the deputy head in the system that's established for management recruitment to ensure that the best candidate comes forward. Isn't adding another concurrence of another committee, or another official, just going to clog up further the difficulties we have in this day and age of interviewing, recruiting, and selecting candidates? I don't know what the Controller feels about this.

MR ROGERS: If this was a class of people, and there were many of them, I would agree completely with that. But we are talking about a very small number of people at a very senior level, and the turnover of these people is not great. So we're not talking about many appointments or many interviews in the course of a year. I really didn't see it as sort of clogging the recruitment process. If it applied, for instance to the director level, or something like that where there are many more of them in the service, yes, I would agree. But when you're talking about the senior financial officer, you're talking about a comparatively small group of people.

MR CHAIRMAN: Are there any further questions?

MR ROGERS: Mr. Chairman . . .

MR CHAIRMAN: There are no further questions. Would you please continue.

MR ROGERS: The other recommendations are fairly parallel to the ones concerning the senior financial officers and apply to the internal auditors, and also call for the establishment of standards of internal audit. This has now been completed in that the manual that is published or compiled by Treasury and followed by all departments, establishes exactly what the expectations are of internal auditors and, from what we can tell, this is being followed. I think that this whole area of internal audit has improved greatly over the last couple of years.

The same comments regarding recruitment do apply in this area as well as the chief financial officer area.

Are there any questions on recommendations 51, 52, and 53, Mr. Chairman?

DR McCRIMMON: Mr. Chairman, with respect to [inaudible] does this basically remove the hiring of individuals with accounting expertise out of the hands of

the actual department or the Provincial Treasurer, and move it into your department? It seems to be a shift in actual responsibility. I wonder what your comments would be on that, Mr. Rogers.

MR ROGERS: It isn't into my department. The Controller is an officer under The Financial Administration Act and a member of a part of the Treasury Department. It has nothing whatsoever to do with my office. Again, because the Controller has responsibilities in that his office has set standards of internal audit, it seems to me to make sense that he have a voice -- no more -- in the selection of those people who are to be internal auditors, because this is the area that he has the expertise which is very often lacking in the department. There should be some way of having his opinion, sort of front and centre, when people are being selected for this area. But I don't really see it as removing it from the department, because we only say "concurrence". In other words, he agrees with the decision made by the department in the first place. And if he disagrees, then it is for reasons.

MR CHAIRMAN: There appear to be no further questions in that area.

MR ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Two-seven-fourteen at the bottom of page 57 deals with program effectiveness and takes a different thrust to the recommendation made in the previous year's report. Recommendation 54 says:

It is recommended that the objectives of each program be stated in as specific a manner as possible, with quantitative data being provided wherever practicable, as measures of the intended results to be achieved by the expenditure of the funds requested for the program. Upon completion of the fiscal year, reports should be prepared on behalf of the responsible Minister evaluating the achievements resulting from the expenditure of funds from a program in terms of the objectives and quantitative data given in the estimates.

In other words, it is simply a tying in of what was actually achieved with what was said would be achieved at the time the money was requested from the Legislative Assembly.

These reports should result from an organized, documented, systematic evaluation of program activities and would be subject to audit by the Auditor General. Subsequently, the reports would be laid before the Legislative Assembly by the Minister as a part of his accountability reporting.

I think, Mr. Chairman, we did discuss this in the spring, because I recall that we discussed the fact that this whole area is in an early development stage, and that simply through pilot projects we should sort of see if it cannot be of value. I'm not suggesting anything was a bureaucratic exercise. It would be able to demonstrate that it was of value.

And so, Mr. Chairman, unless there are questions on that point, I think that completes the recommendations of the report.

MR CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Cripps.

MRS CRIPPS: Not on that point. I'll wait.

MR CHAIRMAN: Any further questions? Mr. Stromberg.

MR STROMBERG: [Inaudible] I'll wait.

MR CHAIRMAN: I think we're prepared. That's the last of the recommendations. So, Mrs. Cripps, if you have a question on some other area of the report.

MRS CRIPPS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I haven't had a chance to review the answer to my question when I asked about it, and I have since. My question is to Item 5, page 2: contract research. It says:

Normally the rights [of] discoveries resulting from research under such [agreement] vest in the sponsors.

Would it not be wise to have that type of research -- and I don't know whether this is in your parameters or not -- come under the same regulations with regard to patents as if they were directly working for the Research Council? Because if they are under contract for a specific project they are, in effect, working for the Research Council.

MR ROGERS: Actually, the sponsors are in effect hiring the council in this case, and the sponsors are, in effect, shall we say, putting up the funds. The ownership of rights and patents is a subject of each contract and is specified in the contract. It is very much a matter of policy in the way the Research Council operates. I think that is a matter of decision, if you will.

MRS CRIPPS: So, if I understand you correctly, it's the Research Council which is under contract to do the research but, if they make a discovery, they have no patented rights to that discovery.

MR ROGERS: That is agreed to ahead of time.

MRS CRIPPS: Who agrees to it?

MR ROGERS: The Alberta Research Council and the sponsor in the contract that is written between them.

MRS CRIPPS: Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Mr. Stromberg, did you have a question or concern?

MR STROMBERG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would refer Mr. Rogers to page 9, Legislation, where he makes reference to various items used by Members of the Legislative Assembly that cannot be located. I was wondering what items had flown the coop.

MR ROGERS: They were small office items, but, Mr. Chairman, I really would like to come back next week with comments on the detail of that.

MR STROMBERG: That will give them a chance to return the things before next week. [laughter]

Does this include the pencils, too?

MR ROGERS: No, sir. I don't think so. I will come back next week with more detail. I don't think the items were terribly significant, but there were some minor items missing.

MR CHAIRMAN: Any further questions on the Auditor General's report? If there are no further questions, on behalf of the committee I thank Mr. Rogers and Mr. Henkelman for going over the report very thoroughly, and also Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Heisler for their input at our meetings. It's much appreciated.

Committee members, we've spent a good deal of time on the very comprehensive report. Now it's up to us as a committee to determine how we're going to handle the recommendations and the report.

We have an interesting document prepared by the Comprehensive Auditing Foundation: how to improve the accountability of public accounts and legislative auditors. Going through the recommendations in it, I find that the Auditor General's role in the province of Alberta is the best in Canada. [applause] I want to congratulate you on that, Mr. Rogers, because a lot of the recommendations we have are in here. There are 69 recommendations in this report, and a lot of them did come from our legislation and the Auditor General's legislation in this province.

As I say, there are 69 recommendations, and I have no intention of going through all of them. I'm just going to highlight some of the recommendations for committee members, since we do have some time this morning, and see how they feel we should handle them, so that we can put them into force. I have to say that, as a Public Accounts Committee, we're rated as one of the lowest in Canada.

MRS CRIPPS: What are we rated on?

MR CHAIRMAN: On the performance of our work, I think, more than anything else, and I'm going to have to take the responsibility for that.

I have felt, and I know many committee members [feel] that we need to have a different method of handling and going through public accounts. Should we have a report to the Legislature, or should we just go through the act of doing this and not carry it on any further?

I'm going to highlight some of the recommendations in this report, not in order of importance, but just in the way they're numbered. I'm going to start with Recommendation No. 5: ministers be called as witnesses before Public Accounts committees only when they have been personally involved in decisions under examination. No. 7: provisions be made to allow Public Accounts committees to meet whether the House is in session, recessed, or prorogued. No. 8: they felt that we have too large a Public Accounts Committee. We have the largest committee in the nation, and they recommended that we should have between five and 11 members so that we'd be more effective.

I think No. 9 is one of the most important recommendations: that the Public Accounts Committee sit for the full term, four years. What happens now is that each year we elect a Public Accounts Committee and the chairman to the committee. We don't have any continuity; we don't have anything to follow through. What happens when we adjourn this fall? There's no committee, no chairman, so if any work that the committee wants to carry on, it can't, because we're dissolved. So I certainly think this is one recommendation we should recommend to the Legislature or to someone: that we have some continuity in our Public Accounts Committee so we can set up our program for four years, or whatever the term of the Legislature is. It also says: the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee serve the life of the Legislature,

or until replaced, and that the committee elect a vice-chairman, being a member from the government. I think this is important. Do you have a question, Mr. Gogo.

MR GOGO: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Would that require an amendment to the *Standing Orders* of the Assembly, or an amendment to The Legislative Assembly Act?

MR CHAIRMAN: It's an amendment to the *Standing Orders* of the House. It has nothing to do with the Act.

In most cases ministers are not on the Public Accounts Committee, and the recommendation is to not appoint ministers to the Public Accounts Committee. Provision should be made to the committee -- which I think we do have -- so any member of the Legislature can sit in on any hearings. However, they can't vote in the committee.

I think Recommendation 34 is another that we certainly have to take a good look at. That's a follow-up. We've had our resource people here, they gave us all the information, but where does it stop? What do we do with the recommendations we get? We should have a report to the Legislature. However, I see many reports made to the Legislature and that's the end of them. So, is going to the Legislature the answer? If we could just come up with some method, or if there are recommendations in the Auditor General's report or, if we have recommendations as far as public accounts are concerned, if we could zero in on them and be some help to the expenditures in the province. I think that's an important part of our committee.

The recommendations go on and on. There are 69 of them, and so I would recommend that committee members check this report and, possibly before we adjourn this fall session, we could spend one meeting on how to handle these recommendations. Should we set up a subcommittee to deal with the recommendations and report back to the committee, or what method should we use to handle these recommendations in this report?

Mr. McCrae, did you have a question?

MR McCRAE: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to respond to a couple of things you've raised, if that would be in order.

The first, Mr. Chairman, is to express a vote of confidence in you as chairman of this committee. I think your comment that we were at the bottom, or lowest, in the ranking of the Public Accounts Committee may have been an unfair judgment by someone as to what your or our performance has been.

I just wanted to comment on some of the 69 recommendations, if I might. First, we're already doing a lot of them. The authority of the Auditor General is a unique role. His autonomous role, the staffing he has, the financing he has, the reporting mechanism to this Assembly, I think, if they aren't unique they are certainly good. I think we've sort of been put on the defensive by these 69 recommendations; sort of, you're not doing them here in Alberta and, therefore, what you're not doing that may be inconsistent with some other jurisdictions in Canada happens to be the worst. Frankly, I don't accept that. I could go through a number of recommendations. As I said, we're already doing many of them: for instance, the accessibility any member of this House has to this committee at any given time. It's a recognized fact that if a member wants to come in and take part in the discussion and ask questions, he's free to do it. So we're already accomplishing that. And he doesn't vote; fair enough -- he's not a member of the committee.

I could comment on the recommendation that we reduce the committee membership to to five from 11. Presumably that is to get a more partisan

flavor into the discussions. Frankly, I think there's some merit in a large Assembly such as ours exposing all members -- or as many as we have -- to the opportunity of availing themselves of the Auditor General's comprehensive report of learning how the whole system works, of an opportunity to ask penetrating questions, to challenge, to do everything they are doing. I don't know what the reduction to five from 11 would serve unless it was the intention to balance it between opposition and government members. I look at the attendance records -- and nobody wants to snipe at who's here and who's not here -- but if you look over my shoulder and see who's here and not here, the balancing act would effectively mean that we didn't have a quorum and we couldn't have any committee meetings.

I go on to the recommendation that the committee should have the opportunity of meeting when the Legislature is not in session. It does have that opportunity right now. I think the best time to meet is when all members are here so that we're not called back at public expense. I note this recommendation for payments when we're not in session. But the best time to sit is when we are here. Again, you should be here if you want to participate in the meeting.

I should point out that the committee is autonomous. It's able to do many of the things that are suggested here, in the way of calling witnesses. We have done that on occasion if it seemed important. I think that as an autonomous committee of the Legislature we essentially prescribe our own rules.

Mr. Chairman, I think a good deal of what constitutes the 69 recommendations is what we are already doing. Some of what we're not doing -- I don't think we should necessarily accept that we are wrong, or the worst in Canada, because we're not doing it. I come to the writing of a report, and it would be the last thing that I'd want to touch on, but the Auditor General writes a report. He then takes us through it in great detail. We spent three or four sessions going through it, and I would assume next week we would ask the Provincial Treasurer to come up with a response to the Auditor General's recommendations and then offer the members of this committee the opportunity of questioning or commenting on the governmental response. So that, in effect, constitutes a written report. We have a transcript, we have minutes, and we have the assessment and response to the Auditor General's report.

We could write another report, I guess. It could be a summary of what we do here. I've no objection to that. But I don't think we should get caught up in a whirlwind of activity responding to these recommendations unless it is something we really think needs doing. Frankly, I don't know what purpose the writing of a report and having a subsequent debate on it in the Legislature would serve, unless there's a major issue that comes up during the public accounts discussions. It would simply mean more paper. If we find there is a major problem in the public accounts, or will find from year to year as we go through them, I think the committee would then write a report and it would be discussed in the Legislature. But when we go through them, I think we're fortunate that there isn't the fire and flame that there might be in some other jurisdictions. There isn't the problem here at this juncture that would require that.

I'm not condemning the report, or saying that the 69 recommendations aren't good. I've said a lot of them are already in place. Others are within the autonomy of this committee to determine. Others are things that I think we should look at very searchingly, and not agree that simply because we're not doing them here, they are bad.

I'm agreeing with you, Mr. Chairman. We probably should set aside some time to discuss them in detail sometime before we adjourn. But let's not go into it defensively; let's go into it with an open mind as to what we think is right in this province. There's no doubt we're very fortunate in having Mr. Rogers as our auditor. We're co-operating fully with him, and I think the system is working quite well. When we find something that needs challenging and public reporting, let's do it. But let's not just manufacture a bunch of paper because somebody has said others are doing it and you're not.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman. As I said, I would assume that for next week we get the Provincial Treasurer in and get the governmental reaction to the 53 recommendations of the Auditor General, and then have a good discussion on that.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much . . .

MR McCRAE: And then beyond that we would also pick a minister to come in and answer questions as we've traditionally done.

MR CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. McCrae. We appreciate your comments.

I, too, look at these recommendations. Some of them would be advantageous to our committee, but in my reign as chairman of this committee I haven't seen anything in the Auditor General's report that hasn't been followed up either through a minister's department, or the problem has been solved. So we have been serving our purpose in that manner. Some are repeat recommendations, but I'm sure if they're repeated too often, the Auditor General will have it in his recommendations and we'll deal with that. I think one of the best of all the recommendations I see is that we don't have continuity: we're not for the full four years. If we were for the full four years, I'm sure we could play our role much more effectively. When we adjourn this fall, I'm not the chairman and you're not the committee members. I think it would be much better if we had the full legislative term. However, we've dealt with this, and possibly it's something we can look at and see what we can do.

Mr. McCrae has made a recommendation to the committee that we now have the Provincial Treasurer in to examine his department and his role as far the province is concerned. Does anyone have any other recommendations? We could accept the recommendation we now have, but we should have some alternative departments just in case we can't get the Provincial Treasurer next Wednesday, or if you don't agree that we should have him.

Mr. Magee.

MR MAGEE: I'm just going back to your recommendation that possibly we look at the four-year term. I see no problem with the chairman and vice-chairman carrying through for a four-year period, but I think only a portion of the committee should go for a revolving situation. In other words, 50 per cent would be on for a year and be replaced every two years so that all members of the four-year term would have an opportunity to become part of the Public Accounts Committee, if they were so inclined. In other words, rather than just being appointed right from the outset to go for a full period, it should be on a revolving option basis.

MR CHAIRMAN: Yes. The reason we have our committee set up is that it changes each year so that each member of the Legislature has the opportunity to get acquainted with public accounts and the Auditor General's report.

MR MAGEE: I'm thinking of the continuity aspect, where only 50 per cent are replaced each year, rather than a whole new group. I think this would then serve the purpose.

MR CHAIRMAN: Mr. Cook.

MR COOK: Mr. Chairman, while I've read the "improving accountability" report over the summer -- your office or Mr. Rogers' office was kind enough to have that sent out to members of the committee earlier this year -- I think as well I'd like to have the chance to discuss it with people who are not here. I think other members of the Assembly would feel we have a responsibility to them as, in a sense, this committee serves them, and to consider their points of view before we get into some detailed discussions or make recommendations. I'm not sure that I'd be prepared to get into a hot and heavy discussion over any particular recommendation or problem today. I wonder if that's the case; whether we couldn't think of trying to review this in our respective caucuses and come up with some ideas; then come back to it, following up in the interim on Mr. McCrae's suggestion, which is to have the Provincial Treasurer come back next week and review the Auditor General's report and give responses to the recommendations; and then, at a later date during the fall session, come back to this excellent report and discuss it when we're all a bit better prepared.

If that's reasonable, I would move that we ask the Provincial Treasurer to be with us next week to review the recommendations.

MR CHAIRMAN: We have a motion that we have the Provincial Treasurer at our meeting next week. All in favor?

SOME HON MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Mr. Gogo.

MR GOGO: Well, I don't know the Provincial Treasurer's schedule, but in the event he can't make it, Mr. Chairman, I would recommend that the Minister of Education be invited next week.

MR CHAIRMAN: Would anyone like to recommend any other departments in the event we can't get the Provincial Treasurer? As Mr. Gogo says, his schedule might be such that we can't have him or his department next Wednesday.

MR R SPEAKER: Housing and Public Works.

MR CHAIRMAN: Any further recommendations? Mr. Gogo.

MR GOGO: Mr. Chairman, on a procedural matter. I made the suggestion that in the event the Provincial Treasurer cannot be here next week, we consider the Minister of Education. With your concurrence, I would add to that, that in the event the Provincial Treasurer is here next week, the Minister of Education come the following week if that's agreed by the members.

MR CHAIRMAN: Is it agreeable to committee members that in the event we can't have the Provincial Treasurer in next week, we get the Department of Education and, providing that we have the Provincial Treasurer, if we complete his department, we have the Department of Education for the following week?

MR COOK: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if we might also invite the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Municipal finance is a pretty complicated area with grants and loans and payments to different agencies. I'd be interested in the accountability of those funds. Could we as well invite the Minister of Municipal Affairs at some point in our committee deliberations this fall?

MR CHAIRMAN: In the past we have handled this by taking recommendations from the committee and then having a subcommittee of the Auditor General, myself, Stu McCrae, the leader of the official opposition and Grant Notley. This is the way we've handled it in the past, and I'm not saying this is the way we have to handle it in the future. We've taken the recommendations and the subcommittee then determines what departments are available. If we want to continue in this line of handling it, or if you want to change it we can certainly do that.

Is it the wish of the committee to make recommendations? We have three recommendations now. We voted on the Provincial Treasurer for our upcoming meeting on Wednesday, and then we have the recommendation of the Department of Education, the Department of Housing and Public Works, and the Department of Municipal Affairs. Do you want to leave that with the subcommittee, or do you want to determine it at the meeting this morning?

MR COOK: Why don't we go with the recommendations the committee has made now, Mr. Chairman. If the subcommittee wants to meet at a later date to review anything else, that's fine.

MR CHAIRMAN: Just so I understand you clearly, Mr. Cook. You're saying that we go with the Provincial Treasurer first; our second priority is the Department of Education. Is that what you're saying?

MR COOK: Yes. And Housing and Public Works, I think, was recommended by the Leader of the Opposition.

MR CHAIRMAN: You want to take them as they've been presented to the Chair: the Provincial Treasurer, Education, Housing and Public Works, and Municipal Affairs.

MR COOK: You might have some difficulty lining up a particular minister, so whatever is convenient.

MR CHAIRMAN: If that's satisfactory with the committee, we'll take them in that order, provided we can have the witnesses.

HON MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR CHAIRMAN: So that leaves us: Provincial Treasurer number one, Education number two, Housing number three, and Municipal Affairs, number four. Any further recommendation?

Mrs. Embury.

MRS EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the member of the committee who suggested the Department of Housing and Public Works would mind indicating why that particular department was chosen. I don't know where the suggestion came from, and it may be a newer member of the committee but, having sat on this committee before, I realized we just did that department, and I wondered if

there was any particular reason why this one was brought up again, or if we could look at another department.

MR CHAIRMAN: Mr. Speaker, do you want to comment?

MR R SPEAKER: I think one of the specific areas we'd want to look into is the accumulation of property in any new annexed area. That was the new subject area.

MR CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gogo.

MR GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I guess I need some clarification. In the chairman's reference to this committee, I thought we dealt with public accounts for the year 1979-80. Am I hearing that we're going to be dealing with 1981?

MR CHAIRMAN: We're dealing with public accounts of 1980.

MR GOGO: I just wonder then how that fits in with the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition that we talk about the assembly of land which, to my recollection, has taken place in 1981.

MR R SPEAKER: I suppose maybe we couldn't talk specifically about the expenditures, but there would be the opportunity of talking about the principle of that type of thing. [interjection] You could work that around some way.

MR CHAIRMAN: Mr. McCrae, did you have a question?

MR McCRAE: Mr. Gogo raised my comment.

MR R SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I'm willing to review it on the advice of the Chair in terms of that. Let's go with the first two and then have another discussion. But in answer to the question, that was my intent.

MR CHAIRMAN: Are there any further questions? If there are none, I would entertain a motion to adjourn. Mr. Hyland.

Meeting adjourned at 10:56 a.m.