

9:01 a.m.

Wednesday, April 10, 1991

[Chairman: Mr. Pashak]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call today's first meeting of this session's Public Accounts Committee to order. I apologize for starting a minute or so late. We'll try to be more prompt in the future.

I'd like to welcome the Auditor General, Don Salmon, and his associate Andrew Wingate to our deliberations this morning and introduce them to those of you who haven't yet . . . I think probably all of you know the Auditor General, but you may not know Mr. Wingate. For the benefit of new members, generally the Auditor General attends all of our sessions, and usually he does bring someone from his department who is responsible for the audit of the department that we're examining that day.

I'd like to welcome new members to the committee as well. Here's the list of new members: Mr. Glen Clegg, who is not feeling well this morning, Mr. Drobot, Gerry Gibeault, and Tom Sigurdson. Welcome to the committee.

I'll just go over very, very quickly some of the powers of the committee and that sort of thing, especially for the benefit of new members. If any of the previous members disagree with me or want to make a comment, that would be fine.

Basically, the authority for this committee is contained in the Standing Orders. There's only a very limited reference to the Public Accounts Committee. It says something to the effect that we shall examine the public accounts. In past years we haven't been mandated to report back to the Assembly, but last year I asked the committee to give authorization to have a written report of our activities prepared. When that written report is prepared, we will table that with the Legislature for the benefit of all members so they'll at least know what we are doing as a committee. I think that's a step forward, or it's a progressive, conservative movement.

Our budget for this year has already been approved by the Members' Services Committee. For the benefit of new members, the budget does not permit us to meet outside of session. Our meetings of the committee will have to take place during the session itself. With respect to the conduct of meetings, I'm the Chair. The chairs of committees apparently have the powers of the Speaker of the Assembly, except that I can't name a member or throw a member out of the committee after engaging in disruptive and disorderly behaviour. However, I can cancel a committee meeting if it does get out of hand and report back to the Legislature itself.

With respect to questions, that, generally speaking, becomes my major function on the committee. I prepare a speakers' list. I try to do it as fairly as possible, although some might disagree with that. I try to recognize in turn members from all political parties and make sure that everyone during the course of the meeting does have at least a chance to ask one set of questions if we can do that. If members are left off, I try to bring those members forward at an early opportunity at the next meeting. That's essentially my powers as Chair of the committee.

Now, with respect to the budget estimates for this year, there is provision in the budget for members of the committee to attend two separate conferences. One will be held in Darwin, Australia. Although that's been approved and the expenditure has been authorized, we do have to go through a formal process of naming people who will represent this committee at these functions.

Mr. Moore, did you have a motion that you're prepared to make with respect to representation at the Public Accounts

Committee event that will be held in Darwin, Australia, in May of this year?

MR. MOORE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. We gave approval to this in the budget process, and it's just a matter of who will represent this committee in Australia. I'd like to make the motion that you, Mr. Chairman, and the Member for Drayton Valley represent this committee in Australia at those deliberations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: "And their wives" has to be . . . Can you include that in the motion as well?

MR. MOORE: Uh huh. And their wives too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

All right. We have a motion before the committee. Is there any discussion?

MS M. LAING: Do you need it seconded?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. In committee we really don't need seconders.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question's been called. Those in favour of the motion? Carried.

With respect, then, to attendance at the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Perhaps for the benefit of new members I should explain that there is a national organization called the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees that has an annual conference. Normally it's held in conjunction with the auditors general conference - it's going to be held in conjunction again this year, I understand - and some joint sessions are held. It really provides an excellent opportunity for members of the committee to find out what is happening in other committees and to look at concerns that auditors general have about the functioning of public accountability and this sort of thing. Is there any motion then?

MS M. LAING: I'd move that Gerry Gibeault attend.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. There's a motion that Gerry Gibeault attend. I would assume that what we're doing here is assuming there will be a representative from the government side in this committee and then a representative from the opposition side.

MR. SEVERTSON: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification, was there money put aside in the budget for that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's money in the budget to attend the conference, and for their wives, for the Winnipeg conference as well.

MR. SEVERTSON: Okay. I just wasn't sure that you'd said that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So a motion is now on the floor, then, with respect to the naming of an opposition member to attend this conference, and Mr. Gibeault's name has been put forward. Mr. Jonson.

MR. JONSON: If this is in order, Mr. Chairman, as an amendment to the motion or whatever, I would move that the Member for Lacombe attend this conference.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I will accept that as an amendment, and we'll vote on the two things separately. We're voting on an amendment that Mr. Moore . . . It's really not an amendment. [interjection] Can you hold it just for a moment?

Okay; we'll get back to the original suggestion, which is that Mr. Gibeault attend the conference on behalf of the committee. Any discussion on that? All in favour? Anyone opposed? Okay, that's carried.

Now, Mr. Jonson.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to nominate by way of motion to attend this conference the Member for Lacombe.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And his wife.

MR. JONSON: And his wife.

MR. CHAIRMAN: His traveling companion, special guest.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; question on the motion. All those in favour? Anyone opposed? Motion carried.

There is perhaps one other item that we should discuss with respect to the budget before we move off item 3. There is legislative provision to claim for attendance at these meetings. Now, the practice last year was that a number of members did claim for some of their expenses at the start of the hearings, and then it seemed that at some point members, through some sort of process of osmosis or whatever - I don't know - just decided that they wouldn't claim, so claims were not submitted. I think all I can do is point out that that's an individual decision or maybe a decision that's made by caucus. There is provision to claim for attendance at these committee meetings. But because they're held during session, I just want to mention that at a certain point last year members did stop making that claim. But it's up to individual members to make that choice.

Okay. Organization of Future Meetings; Meetings of the Committee. Now I'm going to recognize Mr. Paszkowski.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the past we've tried to meet with all the ministers in charge of portfolios. On some occasions we haven't had the opportunity of meeting with all the ministers, so my recommendation basically is that we continue to try and meet with ministers whom we have not met with in the past. With that in mind, I think a handout has been submitted to all of the people that are here. I'd like to move that the rotation of ministers appearing before the Public Accounts Committee for this session be as included in the handout. Do you want me to go through the rotation, or is the handout sufficient?

9:11

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think you should read it into the record. We're really jumping down in the way in which the agenda was distributed, but this seems to be usually the more controversial issue. So perhaps if we can deal with that, then we can go back quickly and pick up the other points, if that meets the acceptance of the committee. Is that all right, that we deal with this issue now?

MR. MOORE: It should be read into the record.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. So would you read this into the record, then, the order in which you're moving that ministers appear before the committee?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Yes. This is only for the appearance of the ministers. This has nothing to do with our discussions with the Auditor General. I would move:

That the rotation of Ministers appearing before the Public Accounts Committee this session be as follows: (1) Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, (2) Minister of the Environment, (3) Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications, (4) Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, (5) Solicitor General, (6) Minister of Family and Social Services, (7) Minister of Tourism, (8) Minister of Health, (9) Minister of Education, (10) Attorney General, (11) Minister of Recreation and Parks, (12) Minister of Transportation and Utilities, (13) Minister of Municipal Affairs, (14) minister of culture, (15) Minister of Advanced Education, (16) Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, (17) Minister of Energy, (18) Minister of Career Development and Employment, (19) Provincial Treasurer, (20) Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Chairman, I'd also like to move:

That in case a minister is not available on the day he would appear on this rotation list, the first available minister in the rotation would exchange positions with him/her.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a motion before us, which is to essentially adopt this as our scheduling practice for bringing ministers before the committee. Did you wish to comment on your report before I recognize other members of the committee?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: As I had mentioned, we had established a regular rotation in order to meet with all the ministers. On occasion there have been times when we haven't had an opportunity to meet with some of the ministers in this past year. So what we are indeed doing is continuing the rotation that was established prior to this year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Chumir.

MR. CHUMIR: Well, amongst other concerns I have, it would seem to me that we should be interviewing and visiting with the Provincial Treasurer every year. He is the chief financial officer of the government. He's responsible for the public accounts in general, the balance sheets, the profit and loss statements, et cetera. On this basis, with him sitting here 19th, we'd never get to him again. That seems to me to be totally incredible, that we could do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you prepared to make an amendment?

MR. CHUMIR: I would make a motion that the Provincial Treasurer be the first minister we visit with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. There's an amendment to the motion, which would be to bring the Provincial Treasurer in effect to the head of the list. Now, on this amendment, Mr. Thurber.

MR. THURBER: Yes, Mr. Chairman. While I recognize what he's getting at there, I think it's important to remember that each one of these ministers is responsible for his own department and he presents these things to the Treasurer. While the Treasurer may be overall responsible in some areas, I think it's

important that we have these ministers before us, because some of these ministers haven't been before us yet in the last year or so. I'd have to speak against that amendment. The way they're laid out now seems to give us a good override of all the ministers, and just with that in mind, that they are responsible for every cent in their department.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Paszkowski.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Much along the same lines, I feel it important that we hear the individual ministers, who indeed are responsible for their expenditures. Obviously, each minister has a degree of responsibility for their individual expenditures. I think it's essential that we hear the individual ministers explain their particular expenditures.

MS M. LAING: I would speak in support of the motion, because I think the Treasurer gives us a context, in a similar way that the Auditor General does, in which to look at all the other ministries. To put the Treasurer at the head of the list means only one minister will be dropped off the bottom. Given that we often see only six or eight of them, I don't think that is a high price to pay to have the person that really is in charge of the fiscal policy of this province come to set a context in which we question other ministers. So I strongly support this motion.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, I feel that wherever there's a dollar spent, it should be accounted for, and this committee is quite able to do that. The ministers are the ones that spend the money, not the Provincial Treasurer. We have ample opportunity to question the Provincial Treasurer in the Legislature here during estimates on how we arrived at the money that goes to those ministers. In the final analysis, it is the ministers that have spent the money and are accountable for it.

I should also point out, Mr. Chairman, that the Provincial Treasurer was right here in the last session, just before Christmas, and some of these have not been before us. We would like to get to those ministers that haven't been here before.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Mrs. Black.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's important, as Mr. Paszkowski said, that we have a chance to see all the ministers involved. When you look at the list, in the first nine there's three-quarters of the provincial budget allocated to those departments, at least three-quarters of the provincial budget, and some of these people we have not had before this committee. I think part of our job as Public Accounts is to review the audit of those departments that has taken place.

If it was the current budget allocations and determining how they were asking for funds, I would go the other way, but I think they have to justify what they have done with the funds within their departments and respond to the comments of the Auditor General from the Auditor General's report after he's completed the audit of it.

I would really like to see the ministers that are listed in the first nine appear in that order, because we have not had the opportunity to question these ministers in the public accounts realm, and I think it's very important that they do get in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Sigurdson, on the amendment.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you. I would speak in favour of the amendment, because as important as it is to have all the ministers appear before the committee, I think it's also important to have the Treasurer appear before the committee because he ultimately makes the allocation of those funds to each department. If there's an overbalancing of the books, it's the Treasurer that tends to take the flack for that, not the individual ministers to the same degree. The role of the Treasurer is to provide funds to all departments, and therefore I think it's vitally important that the Treasurer appear before the committee in the first order of business.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. On the amendment then. Those in favour of the amendment? Those opposed? The amendment is lost.

Back to the main motion. Mr. Gibeault.

MR. GIBEAULT: I'd like to suggest one friendly amendment; that would be the Minister of Culture "and Multiculturalism," which was left off there. I'd also like to ask the mover of the motion if it's just an oversight or if there's some reason why the Minister of Occupational Health and Safety is not on the list. If it's just an oversight, we'd like to add that on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mover of the motion, do you care to respond to those questions?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: No problem at all to add to the Minister of Culture "and Multiculturalism," and I apologize.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about the other concern, about the minister of Occupational Health and Safety, is it?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Yes. They were dealing with all the ministries, and I have no problem with his name being added as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You'd put him in as (21)?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: I would expect number (21). He was with us last year.

MR. GIBEAULT: If we could just inquire: was the minister of Occupational Health and Safety before this committee last year?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Or was he? We'll just check that out for a moment.

MR. GIBEAULT: Because if he was not before this committee last year, I would like to suggest it should be a somewhat higher priority than last on the list.

9:27

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think all we can do is entertain another amendment to this list. If you'd care to make an amendment that the minister responsible for Occupational Health and Safety be number six or seven or whatever, we could entertain a motion to that effect.

MR. GIBEAULT: I suppose the first thing is to get them on the list, and then entertain a subsequent amendment.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: I'd like to move an amendment to my original motion if that's acceptable, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, if you do that, then I think we'll just take it as a friendly amendment.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: I'd like to add to (14), the Minister of Culture: "and Multiculturalism."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does anybody object to my just including that on the list? Since there's no objection, that's done.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Twenty-one, minister of Occupational Health and Safety.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That we'd have to deal with as a separate motion. Because you moved the main motion, can I ask Mr. Gibeault to move that that be added to the list?

MR. GIBEAULT: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I'd be glad to move that the minister of Occupational Health and Safety be included.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So you have an amendment to the motion. Those on the amendment? Mr. Jonson.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, do I understand that the amendment is to add the Minister of Occupational Health and Safety as (21)?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I think we've established a type of procedure here whereby we're working with a rotation. I think we should check to see where the minister was in our order of the rotation, and he should go into that spot. I don't think we should automatically put him at the end; I think he should be coming in. If he wasn't heard last year, then obviously he would be higher on the list. So I think if we could leave it to be checked out and he'd be inserted into the rotation, I think that would be the reasonable way to go.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If it's all right with the committee, what I would propose is that we have - I don't know if it's necessary to take a recess. We could get on to other business while we deal with that. I'll ask the secretary of the committee to check that out, to find when the minister did appear before the committee, and report back. In the meantime, I think we can go ahead and deal with some of the routine. Is that all right, if we suspend business on that point for a few minutes?

Mr. Paszkowski.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Just before she leaves, Agriculture is not on the list as well, nor is Labour.

MR. SIGURDSON: Can we check them all?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Agriculture and Labour, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They just appeared. What I'm hearing from the committee is that you want to build a whole rotation list of all the ministers so that that's all nailed down finally and completely. Well, we can do that quite easily. We'll find the list of when other ministers appeared before the committee last year and add those in.

All right. While we're waiting for the secretary to return, I think there are some items we could proceed with rather quickly. Meetings of the Committee: Mr. Thurber.

MR. THURBER: Mr. Chairman, you mentioned in your opening remarks that there is no budget for us to meet outside of the session. I agree with that, but to follow up on that, if we could nail down the times of our meetings here, it would be helpful to us. Some of us here this morning have already been through two meetings already. I would like to move, therefore: That the Public Accounts Committee meet when the House is in session at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday mornings only.

MR. CHAIRMAN: From 8:30 until?

MR. THURBER: Well, what's it been going to? 10 o'clock?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's fine. Okay, we have a motion on the floor that we meet every Wednesday while the House is in session from 8:30 to 10 o'clock in this Chamber. Any discussion on that motion? Those in favour? Anyone opposed? Motion carried.

Questions by Members. This question refers, I guess, to the number of questions a member may ask and the procedure with respect to whether there should be a rotation before a member is recognized a second time. Mr. Severtson.

MR. SEVERTSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I would like to make a motion to carry on the practice we've had since I've been on Public Accounts, where each member is allowed a question and two supplementaries, and then it's rotation from there on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He goes to the bottom of the speakers' list?

MR. SEVERTSON: That's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The motion is:

That each member be allowed to ask three questions. The member may have an opportunity to ask further questions, but his name goes to the bottom of the list of people wanting to ask questions.

So we have that motion before us. Any discussion? Those in favour? Those opposed? Motion carried.

Scope of Questions. Now, there's quite a range of questions that could be asked, and I'd just like to comment before we hear a motion. I've tried to restrict the kinds of questions that are asked to questions that arise either directly from the public accounts themselves for the year that's under review or from the Auditor General's report. To go beyond that, I think, gets us into a repetition of what takes place in the Assembly itself. But that's up to the committee to decide what it is they'd like to do by way of generally the kinds of questions. In terms of my experience as Chair of the committee, you can't really draw hard and fast rules about that. A certain amount of discretion is involved and a certain amount of leeway is sometimes given to members. If I give leeway to an opposition member, I try to balance that by giving some leeway to a government member. So it's not a black and white kind of issue, but is there any direction that anyone would like to give to the members with respect to the kinds of questions that are put to ministers as they appear before us? Mr. Jonson.

MR. JONSON: I think, Mr. Chairman, that the parameters as you've just outlined are those that we should follow. I appreciate the difficulty of being a chairman, and I think you've done a good job of being fair to members in balancing those considerations. The limits that you placed in the first remarks you made are those that I think we should be following.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion on that?

MR. MOORE: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question has been called. Those in favour? Those opposed? Motion carried.

Scheduling of Auditor General's Report. Again, past practice has been that the members have really welcomed a rather extensive appearance of the Auditor General before the committee. It usually involves at least two days of meetings with the Auditor General, and the first day the Auditor General is asked to make some remarks about his report. Now, what's the feeling of the committee with respect to this year's practice? Then I'll ask the Auditor General if that's acceptable to him.

MR. MOORE: Well, Mr. Chairman, I feel that whatever time is necessary for the committee to discuss the report with the Auditor General, we take it. If it's two days or three days or one day - whatever is required, we make that time available.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We do have to have some at least tentative scheduling in place. Would you care to suggest one, two, three, five days, Mr. Moore?

MR. MOORE: I'll pick three days.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Two days?

MR. MOORE: Three days.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Three days?

MR. MOORE: Two days is normal, I would take it, but if it's necessary, three. We'll say two, and play it by ear.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; two days. The request would be that . . .

MR. MOORE: So that any committee member has a chance to discuss the Auditor General's report.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This helps us plan, too, in terms of scheduling other cabinet ministers to appear before the committee.

The motion from Mr. Moore would be:

That at the next two meetings of this committee we would have the Auditor General before us, and we'd ask him to make a statement and respond to questions.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Chairman, I don't know if it's appropriate at this point to provide notice of motion. It would be my intent at the next meeting, if we're dealing with the Auditor General's report, to provide to all members of the committee written copy of the recommendation that the Auditor General makes in his introductory comments on page 3

that the Public Accounts Committee consider the question of Crown-controlled organizations and consult with the Provincial Treasurer with a view to making recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on any necessary legislative amendments to achieve appropriate accountability, including the disclosure of financial statements.

I suppose I provide that as notice to the committee that it's my intent to move the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will recognize you with respect to that suggestion after we've dealt with the motion that's before us. It really is on a separate point. I will ask the committee if they will accept that as notice of motion to deal with that at the conclusion of the Auditor's appearance before the committee.

In any event, back to two days of meetings. That's the motion before us. Those in favour? Those opposed? Is that reasonable, Auditor General?

MR. SALMON: Well, let's put it this way. I'll make some opening remarks and open it up to questions next week, and if that goes through for two weeks, that would be fine with us - whichever is needed.

9:37

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Now, back to the Procedure for Scheduling Cabinet Ministers. For some reason the minister of Occupational Health and Safety has not appeared before this committee since 1986: five years.

MR. MOORE: We should put that as (1).

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Chairman, I would move, then, that the minister of Occupational Health and Safety be the first minister to be called before the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And that all other ministers then would come down serially. The rotation would then change. So we have an amendment that the minister of Occupational Health and Safety be the first minister asked to appear before the committee. Any discussion on that?

MR. MOORE: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question's been called. Those in favour? Were you voting or . . . Mrs. Laing.

MRS. B. LAING: I was just going to say, you know, he might need a bit more warning than that. Maybe he should be third or fourth just so he's a bit more aware of it. I think the other ministers sort of had a sense of the fact that they would be coming up first, and perhaps he might need a little bit more time to prepare.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think there's provision in the way that this main motion has been provided to us, because it allows for a flexibility with respect to scheduling. If there's a problem that way, we can make an adjustment and come back and have the member appear third or fourth. Okay? I think the possibility of doing that is already contained in the main motion.

Mr. Bruseker.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just a question. What about the other ministers that were left off the list? How do they fit in?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We will deal with that after . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: Could we not deal with it all in one motion? I guess this is really what my question is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, if you want to include that in the motion then, the two ministers that are left off this list are Agriculture and Labour, and if we maintained that sequence,

what in fact we would be doing is making Agriculture (22) and Labour (23).

MR. BRUSEKER: Who's (21)?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would be the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, because Occupational Health and Safety would be (1).

So the amendment to this motion . . . Mr. Gibeault, do you care to make this amendment in effect then? Your amendment would be

that (1) would become the Minister of Occupational Health and Safety. All other ministries would advance one number, and to that list would be added (22) Agriculture and (23) Labour.

MR. GIBEAULT: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So moved; okay. Is there any discussion on that? Those in favour of the amendment? Those opposed? The amendment's carried.

Back to the main motion, then, which is to adopt this list of ministers as amended. Those in favour of that motion? Those opposed? Motion carried.

Any other business? Ms Laing. No, I have to deal with Mr. Sigurdson's motion.

MS M. LAING: This is in regard to scheduling of ministers. I would like to make a motion that the Chair of this committee advise ministers that we would prefer that they limit their opening remarks to 15 to 20 minutes so the members of the committee will have ample time to question them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, I don't know if we need a motion to that effect. Can I take that as direction to the Chair that I try to encourage the ministers to keep . . . I mean, they have the freedom to speak for the whole hour and a half if they want, but I think there's a direction to the Chair that I should try to restrict their remarks to approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Is that acceptable to the committee? Mr. Thurber.

MR. THURBER: To some degree, Mr. Chairman, but I do remember one minister we had in here who had about five departmental responsibilities. I found that his opening remarks, while they were rather lengthy, were absolutely interesting because he gave us a real overrun on what he was doing in each of these departments he was connected to. So I understand what you're trying to do, but I don't want to see it totally limited where they can't give us the information other than through questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Mr. Paszkowski.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Much along the same line, my concern is with the ministers that have a multitude of job descriptions. They really have to provide an overview of the entire work they are responsible for. It's fine for a minister that has only one area of responsibility to cover his work in 15 minutes, but when you have a minister that has multiresponsibilities, I think it's only fair that we hear all his responsibilities.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just differing from that, I recall that same minister when he was here having to virtually be cut off because he did not have the opportunity. In advance of the meetings we receive an agenda. Would it be possible for those ministers that

have more than one responsibility to provide a short written description of some of their responsibilities? They obviously have to prepare before the meetings anyway. It would perhaps facilitate the process and address the issue Ms Laing is speaking to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On one occasion I remember one minister came to me and asked me if the committee wanted him to comment on five different areas he was responsible for. I brought it back to the committee. The committee said, yes, they wanted him to comment on all five areas. I think that's why we got into that rather lengthy presentation. It's up to the committee itself if they want to do that. I would take that into account, but I'd have to bring it to the committee and get the concurrence of the committee in order to do that. I think that's a good suggestion.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, you've handled the time limit very responsibly. You've drawn it to the minister's attention sometimes when they get quite lengthy, and you take into consideration the responsibilities of that minister. If he has more than one department, of course you just can't have it cut and dried in 15, 20 minutes or what when some departments have not too big a load in this area and others have a considerable area to cover. So I support you. You have handled it well in the past and should continue to handle it on that basis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I probably will tell the secretary of the committee, if she's asked by a minister in terms of length of presentation, that we're looking for presentations in a 15-minute range or whatever, if that's all right with members of the committee. Mrs. Black.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just along the same line as Mr. Moore. I think you've handled the presentations very, very effectively in the last two years I've been on the committee. I would like to see the committee leave it up to your discretion as to the length of presentation. I think you're quite capable of judging if they're getting too far off track or not, so I wouldn't want to put a hard and fast rule on there. I'd like to leave it up to your discretion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Is there any further discussion on this point? Okay.

Mr. Sigurdson has indicated a notice of motion that following the Auditor General's remarks he intends to present a motion that we . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: Consider the first recommendation made in the Auditor General's report.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, probably as a committee that we adopt the Auditor General's recommendation. If it's acceptable to the committee, that's a notice of motion that will appear in the minutes, and we will discuss it at some point at the conclusion of the Auditor's presentation, probably during the second day of his presentation if we in fact do go into a second day.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Will the content of your intent be distributed prior to, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Any other business? Hearing none, the date of the next meeting, Mr. Moore.

MR. MOORE: I move we adjourn and sit again next Wednesday morning at 8:30.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Having heard the motion to adjourn, those in favour? Those opposed? Motion carried. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 9:40 a.m.]

