

Standing Committee on Private Bills

9:05 a.m.

[Chairman: Mr. Renner]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning, everyone. I'd like to call this meeting to order. This is a meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills. Everyone has in front of them an agenda for today's meeting. If I could have a motion to approve the agenda as circulated, please.

MR. HERARD: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by Mr. Herard. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

We also circulated a copy of the minutes from our last meeting, Tuesday, October 26. If you've had a chance to read through them, I would like a motion to approve those minutes.

MR. YANKOWSKY: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Yankowsky. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

We'll move onto agenda item 4. That's the discussion of four private Bills that remain outstanding for final decisions to be rendered today. We may want to go in camera for these discussions. At the advice of the committee I would entertain a motion to do so.

MRS. SOETAERT: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Soetaert. All in favour? Carried.

[The committee met in camera from 9:07 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The committee is back in open session. We're dealing with Bills Pr. 3, Pr. 17, Pr. 15, and Pr. 16. If I could have a motion regarding Bill Pr. 3, Mosaic College of Canada Act, please. Mr. Yankowsky.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Yes, I would like to move that Bill Pr. 3, Mosaic College of Canada Act, not proceed to the Legislature.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MRS. GORDON: Mr. Chairman, you can't have a negative motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This committee can.

MRS. GORDON: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our options in this committee are that the Bill proceed, not proceed, or proceed with amendment. Those are the recommendations that this committee will take to the Legislature. So while it's a negative motion, it's not really a negative motion. I understand where you're coming from though. My report will include that wording, and then the Legislature will either agree or disagree with my report.

Any other discussion? All in favour of the motion? Ms Marston, will you read the motion first?

MS MARSTON: Yes. Mr. Yankowsky moved that Bill Pr. 3, Mosaic College of Canada Act, not proceed to the Legislature.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour of that motion? Opposed? One opposed. The motion is carried.

Next, Bill Pr. 17, Canadian Health Assurance Corporation Act.

MR. JACQUES: Mr. Chairman, I would move that we recommend that Bill Pr. 17, Canadian Health Assurance Corporation Act, proceed to the Legislature.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion or amendments?

MR. BENIUK: I'm concerned about the title, about "health" being in the title of the Act. It might send a signal that it's an endorsement of a two-tier health system. I would oppose it on that basis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MRS. SOETAERT: Are we putting amendments at this point or later? Did you want to change that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think anyone can propose the amendment. Mr. Reynolds has the wording.

MRS. SOETAERT: Can I do that to his motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MRS. SOETAERT: Okay; I'll do that.

Here's the amendment I'd like to add to the motion. The committee recommends the following amendments to Bill Pr. 17:

Section 4 is struck out, and section 5(1), subject to section 4, is struck out as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion on that amendment? Seeing none, then all in favour of the amendment? Opposed? Carried.

So then the new motion would be that it proceed with amendment. Is there any discussion on that motion? Then I'll put the question. All in favour of the motion to proceed with amendment? Opposed? Two. The motion is carried.

The next Bill is Bill Pr. 15, Alberta Seniors' Legislature Act. Mr. Yankowsky.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Yes, I'd like to move that the Standing Committee on Private Bills approve and recommend that Bill Pr. 15, Alberta Seniors' Legislature Act, proceed to the Legislature.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Is there any further discussion? Then I'll put the question.

Mr. Kirkland.

MR. KIRKLAND: Just one final word on it, if I might, Mr. Chairman. I think Albertans have always been somewhat innovative. We can see that this process has been in place in the States for a considerable number of years and has not, to my knowledge, caused any grief or concern. I would just like to reiterate what I indicated earlier. We were the first to elect a Senator in this country, and I think it certainly shows good spirit also to embrace this. It really is collectively attempting to bring together the seniors' voices in this community, which are somewhat scattered and a shotgun approach.

I see this as being a benefit, and as I indicated earlier, simply approving this concept does not mean that it will come to be. There's a whole load of miles to be covered before in fact we ever see this thing formalized in the state that this one individual

envisions it. I don't think we can be afraid to get off the pavement in life and embrace this. I welcome this particular input from the seniors of this province. They're a valuable resource, and I think we have to tap them. I do see it as eliminating probably -- I think there was a \$700,000 figure quoted in the presentation, but I suspect it'll be a lot larger than that when this thing is up and running and everybody comes to, hopefully, an agreement that it is a good way to capture the seniors' opinion and expertise in this province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mrs. Laing.

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really feel a private Bill isn't necessary at this time for this concept. I think it can be done through the Societies Act. Let's get the bugs out of it, try it out, get a lot of support perhaps from the seniors, and then bring it back and apply for a private Bill. There's a lot of distance to go at this point. We really don't even know how much support there is in the general public for a seniors' Legislature.

I believe one of the other members mentioned that it might be setting a precedent. We might then have a women's Legislature, we might have a students' Legislature. There are a whole range of groups that I can see who would have the same type of legitimacy and might want to raise a Legislature of their own as well.

This could all be done under the Societies Act. They could form a model parliament. They could do all these things without a private Bill and give it a trial run and see how it works.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to make a couple of comments. I can recall that in the early '70s we worked very closely with the newly-elected Premier Lougheed on the matter. We were able to convince him that there was a need for what was called an MLA/handicapped joint committee, which I chaired. There were five MLAs and five persons with disabilities on it. The three government members: one was the Deputy Premier, the other two were cabinet ministers. It gave us a vehicle that brought about a great deal of change, such as the AISH program, Aids to Daily Living, Individual's Rights Protection Act, and on and on and on, because we had the direct access to the decision-makers. It worked very, very well. In fact, it worked so well that they got a little frightened by the thing, and it was discontinued for some of the same arguments that are being used now: that it could open the doors to other groups.

But let's not forget our role here. Our role is to represent the people. Whether they're gays or lesbians, they have the right to come out and ask us our opinion, to lobby us. We can't even contemplate an argument that there's expense involved, because there's some expense to lighting up this room, for example. This is not our room; this is the people's room. Let's not forget that we're here as a servant to the people and not feel that we have the right to sit here and burn electricity, heat, whatever, yet the people who put us here don't have that same right. That's not a valid argument in my opinion. I think there is a meaningful role that this concept can play, and I don't think we should be frightened off by it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr. Hlady.

MR. HLADY: Yes. I believe we've gone a little too far when we're getting into that steep. I think where we're at is at a point that they have to develop their organization. Going through the Societies Act is a level that we should look at now. I would like to also see us possibly sending them a letter of encouragement -- that although we don't support it going through private Bills, we believe we should see development in the way of a society -- and let them know that their organization is important, but it's not right at this time for a Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Are you ready for the question? Could we have the motion read back, please?

MS MARSTON: Mr. Yankowsky moved

that the Standing Committee on Private Bills recommend that Bill Pr. 15, Alberta Seniors' Legislature Act, proceed to the Legislature.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All in favour of that motion? Six. All opposed? Ten. The motion is defeated.

As I mentioned earlier, Bill Pr. 16 will be held in abeyance awaiting further information from the petitioners, so there will not be a motion regarding this at this time. That concludes our discussion on the private Bills.

9:40

Item 5, Other Business. I have nothing other than to just explain briefly the procedure to everyone so that you know what is going to happen from this point on. This afternoon I will present a report on behalf of this committee dealing with the second half of the Bills that we've dealt with in the last few weeks. That report will outline all of the remainder of the private Bills, from Pr. 1 to Pr. 17, that have not been already introduced, with the exception of Pr. 4 and Pr. 16. Those two are the ones that are on hold and we'll be dealing with at a later date. Once I give that report, then I'll ask for the agreement of the House to accept that report. I will then ask for unanimous consent to deal with second reading of these Bills that are recommended to proceed in my report. That will take place today. Then we will hopefully get into committee on these Bills sometime this week. If we get through committee, by that point all of our Bills that have been recommended to proceed will be at third reading stage, and we can proceed with third reading sometime next week. That's my plan.

Anyone who is sponsoring a Bill that is to proceed will have the information on their desk today, and I would ask that you make sure that you familiarize yourself with the information on that Bill in case any questions should come up in the House. I will also be available to answer any questions on any of the Bills if they should arise. They've gone very smoothly so far. I don't anticipate any more problems, but if there are, I will field the questions and I certainly would encourage anyone to complement my responses as well. I will have my file with me, so I'll be familiar with all of the Bills if questions should arise.

With that, then, I would entertain a motion to adjourn. Mr. Kirkland.

MR. KIRKLAND: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Kirkland. All in favour? Carried.

Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 9:43 a.m.]