

Title: Monday, November 26, 2007 and Elections Committee

Date: 07/11/26

Time: 8:03 a.m.

[Mr. Lougheed in the chair]

The Chair: Okay. Let's call the meeting to order, please. Welcome, all committee members. It's good to see such a fine turnout this morning. I understand this is the first meeting of this committee in 20 years and two days. I don't know what the reason was for the last meeting, but the reason for this meeting is in *Hansard* from a motion back in about April that this committee would review some of the temporary Standing Orders. By the end of next week, next Thursday, the end of session for the fall, we have to have reviewed temporary Standing Order 59. Our task today is to get some information and see what we will do with that and go from there.

Let's run through introductions quickly, and then we'll get down to business and consider the agenda. I'm Rob Lougheed, MLA Strathcona and chair of this committee.

Ms Rempel: Jody Rempel, committee clerk, Legislative Assembly Office.

Mr. Herard: Denis Herard, Calgary-Egmont.

Dr. Pannu: I'm Raj Pannu, Edmonton-Strathcona.

Mr. Cardinal: Mike Cardinal, Athabasca-Redwater.

Mr. Flaherty: Jack Flaherty, St. Albert constituency.

Mr. Griffiths: Doug Griffiths, Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Reynolds: Rob Reynolds, Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

Ms Blakeman: Laurie Blakeman, and I'd like to welcome you all this frosty November morning to my fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Pastoor: Bridget Pastoor, Lethbridge-East.

Mr. MacDonald: Hugh MacDonald, Edmonton-Gold Bar. Good morning.

Mrs. Fritz: Yvonne Fritz, Calgary-Cross.

Mr. Mitzel: Len Mitzel, Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mrs. Forsyth: Heather Forsyth, Calgary-Fish Creek, constituent of Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Marz: Richard Marz, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

The Chair: Thank you. You have before you the proposed agenda that was sent around. Are there any comments, changes, or revisions that you'd like to see? It's pretty open. We'll be looking for information, as I said. Let's take a look at that agenda. Any comments there? Is that okay? Does anybody want to move to accept it as it's been presented? Yvonne. All those in favour of this agenda, then, as presented? Any opposed? Okay. It's carried. Thank you.

Just quickly, as I had said, the motion was passed in the Assembly on April 17. I understand you have copies of the excerpts from that

motion, and you have copies of temporary Standing Order 59, that we do have under consideration today. We've got more things. You've probably noticed in the motion way back from *Hansard* that we also have to consider all of the Standing Orders and see what other Assemblies are doing and so on, and that report is to be tabled in February. So we apparently will have more to do beyond just 59.

The House leaders have been contacted and asked to make presentations and let us know what they're thinking about the Standing Orders. We have opportunity to hear them. That, I think, is one of the sources of information that we'll have for today.

Are there any questions about the temporary Standing Orders, going along with agenda item 3 there, the overview? Any questions there? Any thoughts? From staff? Robert, do you have any comments that you would like to make?

Mr. Reynolds: No, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much. Unless there are any procedural issues that the committee has, I think you've covered it. The Standing Orders are temporary, and they last until the dissolution of the 26th Legislature. The dissolution would occur on the calling of an election. As you've pointed out, the House directed that the committee report back before the end of the fall sitting with respect to the supply process.

That's all I have to say at this stage. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other comments?

Well, if the House leaders are prepared to make their presentations, let's go ahead with that. Ms Blakeman, are you ready for yours?

Ms Blakeman: I think I'm the only House leader that's prepared to make a statement this morning, if I'm correct.

The Chair: The others will be showing up, I'm sure.

Ms Blakeman: I await them.

Mr. Cardinal: You've been waiting 20 years.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. Exactly.

Well, thank you for the opportunity. I just want to go over a couple of points. I'm assuming what we're going to try and do here is basically bring up any areas that we really, really liked or really, really didn't like and leave the rest alone and move on beyond it.

I have done a survey of my caucus, and I can speak a bit about how I went into those negotiations. Essentially, I was looking for about four things. I was trying to enhance private members' business. I was looking for a more democratic and predictable process. I was looking for a better quality of life, "more humane" were the words I kept using, and an improved budget process, which was very problematic for us. I think that since then it's fair to say we didn't touch the supplementary supply budget process, and that is something we probably want to address because it's a bit unstructured and can be chaotic and may not be the best use of all of our time at this point.

8:10

The enhanced private member role and inclusion, I think, has been quite successful; for example, being able to preserve the private members' day that was not able to take place. Already in this fall session we were able to recoup that time on the following Friday, so we were able to preserve private member time. There's so little of it scheduled in, and I think it's important to hang on to it. I think that was a valuable addition to our Standing Orders.

We've tried to include a number of things that made it more democratic, and I think those have worked. I haven't had anybody raise an issue with me. It's about the start dates and the budget dates and including minority reports and a few things like that.

On the better quality of life I haven't heard anyone not be happy with the constituency week, which was the major change. I think that that was a good step toward a better quality of life for all of us. However, I have heard a number of people commenting on the difficulty of working with the start time at 1 o'clock because there are so many functions in the community that they would like MLAs to attend, and getting back for 1 o'clock is really difficult. In some cases it's a pinch to get back for 1:30. I wonder if we don't want to have a look at that.

Now, I'm aware that the government wanted to add on an hour a day, a half hour at either end, thereby recouping essentially three hours a week, replacing at least one of the night sittings, but that 1 o'clock start is causing everybody trouble. Either we say to the community at large, "Don't have functions at lunch while we're in session," which isn't very practical, or we say, "Well, our people can't really get there," or they're there for 15 minutes and they've got to scarp. So I think that that might be something that didn't quite work well for us and may have been a great idea on paper but, in practicality, is not working for the MLAs.

I think most of the commentary I heard was around the budget process, which was a new way of doing things. I've had very strong and positive feedback from having the quorum lifted and the ability to have staff on the floor. People viewed that as a very positive thing. It allowed us to work well with our staff and to get more work done on the floor.

On the cross-ministry idea people really like it, but we didn't get it to work. There are improvements that could happen there. The idea of being actually able to come at an issue as a whole with all ministries that are involved seemed to again be a great idea on paper, but we couldn't get it to work. I think we should try again because, as we experience in our lives, issues don't fall neatly into those silos for us anymore. Life is too complex, and we need to be able to look at some of those issues in a cross-ministry way.

The other issue that I heard around the budget process is that the ministers felt they were answering the same questions over and over and over again because each group was in there essentially by themselves, if I can put quotes around that, and may not have been reading *Hansard* diligently every day to see what had gone on the previous day. The ministers felt they were just answering the same things over and over again. I don't think that is a good reason to toss out the process. I think it was working in many other areas. I think you address the problem, which is perhaps to circulate the questions and answers in an abbreviated or action-oriented form to the other caucuses that weren't present. That would cut down on some of the repeat questions, I think, and allow everybody to move to sort of the next level of questioning on it.

Overall I'm quite happy as a House leader with the way the temporary Standing Orders have performed. As I say, there are a number of things, I think, that work really well, but I'm not going to go into a long list now. I've raised a couple of the points that I think clearly have been problematic for us. I'm sitting on the committee, but I'm also happy to act as a resource for you, seeing as I actually sat in all those meetings for all those months. So happy to do that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Blakeman. I can't believe there may be some that don't read *Hansard* to check up on things.

Are there other comments? Laurie, you covered a lot of ground besides 59, which is what we have to get to and deal with now, today

and at our meeting set up a week from today, so we really want to concentrate on that.

Let's get going. I've got Heather down first on the speaking list.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, I just want to thank Laurie for her comments; I think they were well done. It was nice that she had the opportunity to survey her caucus, so obviously she is bringing forward from her caucus what she feels is important.

I have a couple of comments. First of all, I've been a Member of this Legislative Assembly for, I think, 14 years now. Through the whole 14 years it's been interesting to watch the process and how things have been working. I recall and every member around here recalls the long, long nights that we were sitting. When you refer to the quality of life and what it did to our quality of life – when we were sitting here till 10, 11, 12, 1, 2 in the morning, it certainly wasn't what I considered a quality of life. So the timing that has been brought forward under the new Standing Orders, I think, is working well for that quality of life.

The private members' business is something that I've always supported right from the get-go because I think it brings the opportunity for private members to come forward with ideas from their constituency and allows the debate and gets the discussion out there, and then you start to get Albertans on the debate on some of the private members' bills that have been in discussion.

What I'd like to talk about is the comment that she's not happy with the start time of 1 o'clock. You know, I understand where she's coming from. It's okay if you live in the city of Edmonton and you're an Edmonton MLA and you can have the opportunity. But we have a lot of colleagues that are not from Edmonton, so we aren't in our constituencies, and then if we delay it an hour, if we have to fly back or drive back, it really slows the process. I had a meeting on Thursday, which was the first time I've taken a government plane for some time now, and we got delayed. Thankfully, my husband hosted the meeting, but walking into the house at 8:30 at night isn't conducive to, you know, a start time of 7 o'clock. A week before that I drove. That's not good for your health and well-being when you're driving a highway at 6:30, quarter to 7 at night. While the drive from Edmonton to Red Deer was okay, from Red Deer to Calgary, in my mind, was hell on wheels.

An Hon. Member: Slow down.

Mrs. Forsyth: Slow down. I was slow.

I can't speak for my caucus, but I think that, quite frankly, the 1 o'clock start is a good time. At least it gets us out of the Legislature at 6 o'clock. A lot of times if it's during the week, we have other government commitments, and sometimes we're not trucking home till 9:30, 10 o'clock at night.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Heather.

Next, I have Mike on the list.

Mr. Cardinal: Well, thank you very much. Thank you, Laurie. That was a good presentation. I do hear, too, a number of people who are concerned about the 1 o'clock start, that it is a little tight. If you happen to have, say, a caucus meeting between 11 and 12, by the time the ministers have assignments to prepare for the House to open at 1 o'clock, it's just not enough time, so I guess something should be done about that.

One thing I could suggest, being that I'm leaving now – and I've been here the longest of any members, I think, other than Kowalski – you could reduce question period by 15 minutes, and it wouldn't hurt anything.

8:20

An Hon. Member: Because you don't answer anything.

Mr. Cardinal: I haven't answered a question in 18 years. It's not answer period.

Anyway, you know, I sit and listen to question period even today. It's not the number of questions you get in the House; it's the quality of some of the questions you should worry about as much as getting lots of questions. So that's just a thought.

The Chair: Thank you, Mike. This isn't really a time for confessions, but thank you for that anyway.

Ms Blakeman: To Mr. Cardinal. I just wondered if he was willing to have the reduction of 15 minutes in question period be the questions that are asked by the Tories.

Mr. Cardinal: No. I can't comment on that.

Ms Blakeman: Oh. Okay.

Mr. Cardinal: Just a half-solution I suggested.

Ms Blakeman: Okay.

The Chair: You were hoping for an answer, Laurie.

Ms Blakeman: Oh, yeah. Right.

Mrs. Forsyth: To Laurie. I can tell you that many of our Tory MLAs are bringing questions from their constituents, and that's their record on *Hansard* when they're bringing forward questions from their constituents, so I don't support that.

The Chair: All right. Let's go on to other comments.
Next I have Tony on the list.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry for being a little late. The traffic and the weather were not very good this morning, but the breakfast is good, so thank you very much.

Just a few comments on Laurie's presentation, and that is that I would actually also agree that the 1 o'clock start time is a little bit tight. I liked the 1:30 start time. To kind of make up for that, I would throw in the odd evening sitting, I think. You know, I'm not saying three nights a week, like we used to do, but perhaps one or two nights a week we could sit in the evenings. I believe the evening sittings are very good in the sense that it's a great time, if we are in Committee of Supply, to be able to mull around and talk to some of the ministers about different issues. Also, the evening sittings are good in that if we do have a bill where there might need to be an extensive amount of debate, we can sort of dedicate an evening or two towards that and allow a lot of speakers to get in. So I think that if we were to go back to 1:30 and then have evening sittings one or two nights a week, that would be good.

The other big issue that I have, though, with the question period is not the amount of time per se, although if we did shorten it by 15 minutes, we would all lose questions. Not just the opposition but some private members on the government side would lose an opportunity to ask questions as well. My issue is with the 45-second rule. I just think that it's wrong. It's not parliamentary. There's no tradition anywhere in the rest of the Commonwealth or anywhere else where they have a parliamentary system where you're allowed

preambles on the supplementaries. So I think the 45-second rule is just completely wrong. It's against tradition.

To allow the ministers and the Premier of Alberta only 45 seconds to answer a question is absurd in the sense that the opposition has literally days and weeks and hours to formulate their 45 seconds of what they're going to say, whereas our ministers have to stand up and on the spot respond to a very, very well crafted 45-second question. They have to think on their feet, give a detailed and intelligent answer in only 45 seconds. So I could see 45 seconds on either side if, perhaps, the questions were all sent over a few days ahead of time. Then if our ministers had a couple of days to work on the answers, they could get a nice little tidy answer in 45 seconds as well.

So the 45-second rule is not good. I don't believe that it's enough time for our ministers and our Premier to give proper answers to questions that are sprung on them. Like I said, the opposition, when they ask these questions, have tons of time to formulate them and to get in a lot of innuendo, et cetera, and our ministers and our Premier don't have the necessary time to really give a good answer back. So I would like to see that change. I feel that that's a huge area where we're kind of straying from the norm of how a parliamentary system works with QP. Also, like I said, I think it would just give better answers to Albertans who are watching and listening.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Tony.
Yvonne, please.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My comments are very brief. It's about private members' bills. I have a lot of value for private members' bills and for private members' business. I've seen over the course of about the last five to six years that it's slowly eroded in the Legislature for private members to bring forward their bills and motions. I know it's been 20 years since the committee met, as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, but I don't know if the purpose of the committee is that you would do research and would bring back, if there was a question from the committee about private members' bills, how it has eroded over the course of time and how much time we've lost for private members.

You know, the bills that are put forward by private members are very creative. They're local. They have a lot of thought. In fact, some of my favourite debate is through private members' bills. They have the ability to pass into law and at times are adopted as government bills as well. So if that's requested of the committee, if I ask that question, if we could look at private members' bills to see where it was even five or six years ago compared to today, is it possible to bring that back to the next meeting?

The Chair: Not the next meeting, but in our subsequent meetings we will do some research and find that out. Do you want to frame the question on exactly what you're asking?

Mrs. Fritz: I'm asking that it be evaluated and researched about the change in the time that's dedicated in the Assembly to private members for their bills and motions.

The Chair: You mentioned in the last five years. Do you want to go back to pre '93?

Mrs. Fritz: No. I'm thinking of when it changed. That was about six years ago, when we were in Red Deer, that it came forward to our caucus. It was a significant loss to private members at that time. We got some of it back, I remember, but I don't know where it's at today. So however you would like to take that information and put

it together for whatever you think is appropriate. It can go back as far as you determine as you're looking at this, Mr. Chairman. I'm just interested in how that would be.

The Chair: We'll have staff look into that and get back to us. Probably, you know, it'll be at our next meeting before we can consider some of these things.

Mrs. Forsyth: I support what Yvonne is saying. I guess what I need to understand clearly is what the mandate of this committee is. I'm not exactly sure what the mandate of this committee is. Now, I know that we're supposed to be talking about Standing Order – I think it's 25.

Mr. Marz: It's 59.

Mrs. Forsyth: Oh, 59, which in my understanding is on the estimates process. I'm wondering if we're supposed to be doing this and all of a sudden going this way, and if that's the case, do we have the mandate under this committee to look at all of these changes all of a sudden: start times, working nights, private members' bills? I would really like a clarification because I'm not sure what the mandate of this committee is. Not that I'm opposed, but clearly we need to get a mandate.

The Chair: Well, perhaps it's timely that you did make that little statement because I was thinking that if the Speaker was in the House, he'd be saying, "Aren't we supposed to be focusing on whatever?" and admonishing the members in the Assembly to focus on what we were supposed to be talking about at that time.

We have been running around a little all over the map here and looking at things that we have to consider for our report in February, but within a few days, the end of session next Thursday, we have to table comments with respect to Standing Order 59. How about I just read for all our purposes here this excerpt from *Hansard* dated April 17, 2007. It's Government Motion 15.

Be it further resolved that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing shall, without further motion, review and consider

- (a) the amendments to Standing Orders resulting from the March 7, 2007, House Leaders' Agreement by comparing the reforms to the practices in other Assemblies, examining whether the reforms afford open discussion of public policy where Albertans can participate and whether the reforms maximize oversight and accountability;
- (b) the need for additional amendments or reforms to the Assembly's rules and practices to further objectives of open, public discussion of public policy, the role of the Assembly in overall government accountability and the work/life balance of Members; and
- (c) following the 2007 Spring Sitting the operation of Standing Orders 59.01 to 59.05 and the process used for Committee of Supply in 2007,

and shall report to the Assembly with its recommendations no later than February 2008 with respect to the matters in clauses (a) and (b) and no later than the conclusion of the 2007 Fall Sitting with respect to the matters in clause (c),

that being Standing Order 59.

8:30

That's what we have to do. It's wide open for the February report that we have to make, but by next Thursday it's only Standing Order 59.01 to 59.05. This is great to frame our discussion later on. I don't know how many meetings we'll have to consider all of that, but 59 is what we have to get done right away. So perhaps we

should really focus on that and get specific comments. We want to have House leaders and everybody let us know what they were thinking, and we will have to put some things together. Well, we'll see where we'll go.

Are there other comments, especially with respect to 59, then? Doug, you were on the list.

Mr. Griffiths: Yeah. But if I can register a couple of things before I go on to 59. I'm not in favour of shortening question period because I think it's critical. I could see going from a 45-second preamble to a 30-second preamble because that's what the House of Commons does, and I do appreciate the preamble to contextualize the question. I could shift the starting time and support that too because lots of times at lunch I don't have time to have anything to eat, and quite frankly I sit around here till 7 o'clock anyway because with rush hour I never get out of downtown until later anyway. So we could shift everything.

Private members' business. I'm the chair for our party of the Private Members' Business Committee, and I've worked very hard to make sure that all the private members get attention and recognition, and they really get to do some constructive work in the House. For the budget time when private members have their own time to ask ministers questions, I've seen some fantastic questions being asked. I mean by our members but by opposition members too. I think it makes private members feel more part of the process. Especially when you have officials on the floor, you get to have more of a frank discussion. It's not question period, and it's not the games being played; you really get to ask questions and most of the time get some very detailed, descriptive answers to match your questions.

There are still some bugs to work out, I understand, but quite frankly the process that we've used, though it's gone through some minor changes, has been going on for a hundred years. To have one session where it got tried out and then to say, well, this isn't working – I really think we need to hang onto this and try it for another session. I think we'll see more activity by private members. We'll see this evolve and people's mindset change to the new process. I think it will make the entire House and every single member more effective.

So I would leave it as it is for at least another term, until we all get the chance to adjust and realize our full potential and take advantage of the new structure to serve the public, quite frankly.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Any comments? Any questions about those statements?

Mr. Marz: Well, my comments were relative to what Heather said about getting back on track, and I was wondering if we're going to review 59. If we go through it clause by clause, maybe we'd actually get something done on 59. We don't seem to be making much progress.

Those that want to talk about starting and ending time, my suggestion is maybe get up a little bit earlier in the day, start your day a little bit earlier rather than dragging it out at night. For those of us that don't live in the capital region, we are already getting back home to our constituencies on Thursday night half an hour later than we used to, which makes it possible but most of the times improbable to get to any function on a Thursday night, whereas before we possibly could. To stretch that out another half an hour is going to pretty much negate any Thursday night activity in our constituency when you're looking at a two and a half to three-hour drive after that.

My suggestion is that if we have to get 59 done, we set out some kind of structure in order to get at it and make some progress on it.

The Chair: Well, thank you for that admonishment and also the additional comments.

Denis, you had some questions or comments?

Mr. Herard: Yes. Thank you very much for your clarification with respect to what the mandate is. I guess I feel somewhat at a loss because this motion has been on the books for some time, and having heard you read it, comparing what is done in the Alberta Legislature to other standing orders in other jurisdictions I think is a valuable thing, but we have no information. So it makes it very difficult for this meeting to do otherwise and go all over the place with all kinds of different issues because we really can't discuss the items at hand.

I'll be just as bad as the next one. I think one issue that needs to be brought up in further meetings is the way in which quorum is structured with respect to how we do it versus how other Legislatures do it. Quite frankly, on some evenings in the past there have been one or two members of the opposition present and 25 or 30 members of the government present. That does not allow an MLA to return calls, for example, to his constituents or attend meetings with constituents and so on. I think that needs to be reviewed.

Now I'm just as bad as the next one. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Denis.

I have next on my list with respect to 59 Tony.

Rev. Abbott: Yes. Thanks, Chair. Sticking specifically to 59, I guess my comments on that are that I do actually like the new Standing Orders. I like the fact that we have designated times for the Official Opposition, third party, government private members, et cetera. I like the fact that we don't have to keep quorum during that time, that if you have some questions or comments, you can show up and you can sort of amongst your own party members decide who's going to speak when. Again, I really appreciate that. I think that if there have been any great successes on these new Standing Orders, that's it. I also agree that it's good to have the department officials in there helping the ministers to answer the questions.

I guess my comments are saying to continue to keep 59.01 to 59.05 as they are, as I said, with the exception, though, of possibly sitting one or two evenings a week if necessary. But that wouldn't be on Committee of Supply. That would be more on government business, to take care of some of that amidst Committee of Supply.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Anybody else on these?

We've asked other folks to come in and make presentations with respect to 59, and Mr. Backs has joined us. If you have comments, I would like to hear those now. If you would go ahead, Mr. Backs.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I apologize for being late. It took over an hour and 10 minutes to get from the northeast today on the roads. There were a few cars stalled.

Mrs. Forsyth: We face that every day in Calgary.

Mr. Backs: Yeah, well, Edmonton's there.

Standing Order 59.01, in terms of how it works for an independent member in the debates on supply, is just an absolute failure. The independent members, and that includes, I believe, the Alliance – I

don't exactly speak for him, but he did mention some of the same things to me to maybe mention – have to wait around, may be at the whim of what will happen. It is not worthwhile to waste one's time for the whole afternoon just waiting to see when you might possibly get on and, you know, waiting in a House that's largely empty. I have sat through it a number of times and been bored by some members just filling the time with their allotted time to deal with debates.

8:40

It is good to have the ministerial staff there when one does get an opportunity because one does get some chance to get more comprehensive in some of the questions, and I found that to be very good when I did get the chance.

But these debates on supply seem to be an unseemly use of the Chamber in terms of the use of resources. It is the Legislature. That place is often empty when we have these supply debates, and we're using a very, very costly place with all of the officers and all the rest of it. It could just as easily be done in this room here for much of what goes on on some of those days when there's hardly anybody in there. There are one or two or three members of the opposition maybe coming and going and a few people with a particular minister and some maybe waiting around.

It seems to be in that sense also that although nice in terms of not making people stay on either side to ensure that there's not a vote, voting in democracy is essentially the whole purpose of the place. If we're not having debates that are essentially subject to democracy or votes and they're just for purposes of information and thrusting back and forth between opposition parties and the government, that could be done in this room at much less cost, and the Chamber could be used for other purposes or not at all for cost purposes.

In any case, the process has not been a very satisfactory process at all for independent members. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Anybody on these comments specifically?

Okay. We're getting more focused on this Standing Order 59 and Committee of Supply. Heather, do you want to make a comment?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, just for the record, I think what we're doing on this committee has been a good process. Because it's the first year, we have an opportunity to maybe look at how it works next year and then bring it back. But so far I have no criticism of how it's been working. I think it's worked fairly well, and I support what we're doing at this particular time.

The Chair: Raj?

Dr. Pannu: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I just want to share with the committee the position of our caucus on this specific standing order. We did review the matter last week as a caucus, and our view is that the new arrangements have worked reasonably well and we need to keep these in place at the moment subject to further experience. Let's give ourselves, as Doug Griffiths suggested, another run at it, at least one more session, before we even consider changing anything in this.

Having been around for 11 years, I remember the first four years were the toughest. I was under some unique circumstances one spring in particular when I was alone in the House representing my caucus. The Committee of Supply arrangements at the time were such that it was impossible for me to really meaningfully participate in these very important deliberations; that is, deliberations on the budget.

So these arrangements are a breath of fresh air. It's really an improvement even over what we had between 2001 and 2004. I would strongly urge the committee to keep Standing Order 59 in place as is, and I'd be willing to make a motion on that at the appropriate time for the committee to vote on.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you for those comments. Yes, we will consider that in due time.

Laurie, on this point?

Ms Blakeman: Not specific to his remarks, no.

The Chair: Okay. I don't think there was anybody else on my list, so go ahead.

Ms Blakeman: Well, I don't know if it's within the parameters of what we're doing today. If everybody is more or less happy with the main estimates debate, what we're missing is supplementary supply. I'm wondering if we have the parameters to address that today. Can we do that or make recommendations or start on it or ask for research or anything?

The Chair: If I'm not mistaken, we're only dealing with 59, and that is what's urgent. Rob, have you got some comments on that?

Mr. Reynolds: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Essentially, the motion, I believe, asked to review what's existing with Standing Order 59. Supplementary supply, I think, involves somewhat different standing orders. Then again, if the committee wants to make comments on it, there's nothing to restrict the committee on that. I mean, the task at hand is the amendments to the standing orders relating to Committee of Supply in consideration of the main estimates.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. I'll just leave my comments on the record, then, that we need to do something about the supplementary supply budgets. From when I started 11 years ago, when we were debating several millions in supplementary supply, now we're regularly debating more than a billion dollars, usually in less than one day, spread out across multiple departments, usually over 10 departments. It's an impossibility. I think we need to address that particular issue with this committee at some point. It's the piece of the estimates that's the orphan. It's off to one side right now.

Thank you.

The Chair: We can keep in mind some recommendation for the February report, to bring that in somehow.

I'd just like to make a bit of a comment. As you would note in reading temporary Standing Order 59, it talks about 60 hours of debate in the spring 2007 session. The comment was made to me in the Assembly a few days ago that it was a long period of time compared to other years. Staff did do some research and checked out the number of hours that Committee of Supply sat in different terms.

You'll recall that back in '97 to 2001 the structure was quite different. It changed in 2001, and then it changed again in 2007. In looking at the hours here, where it was 60 hours almost exactly this spring, in other years it was 50, 57, 48, 56, 55, 39, 56, 59, 52, 52, 63, 58, 71, 77. It's all over the map with those kinds of hours but, you know, in the order of the 60 hours that we sat.

I guess it always seems like it's been a long time just after we've gone through it, but it's been sort of average over the years. That's just a little information. In case people do make those comments to you, you'll have some idea of what it has been like before.

Rev. Abbott: I have a question on that, Mr. Chairman. In that breakdown of hours, is it broken down by party? In this one, the temporary standing order, it's very clear that hours 1 through 6 are Official Opposition hours, 7 through 9 are third party, et cetera. I would be curious to see in those breakdowns who spoke when. For example, were there any private member's speeches at all in some of those 50 or 60 hours? I'm sure there were one or two but perhaps not very many.

Ms Blakeman: Almost none.

Rev. Abbott: Yeah. Almost none.

Ms Blakeman: Well, that's what we were trying to do: make sure we were protecting – sorry to butt in – the ability of people to get up for questions. In the early days, '97 to '01, it was a madhouse because two budget committees met at the same time, and you couldn't be in two places at the same time. You were literally running up and down the stairs between 512 and the Assembly, trying to get in on both debates. Lists weren't kept in those days, so you just had to fight it out on the floor to get up. It was really unfair, actually.

8:50

Rev. Abbott: Yeah. That's why I'm curious, Mr. Chair. Just to finish the thought, good statistics can give you good direction to go forward to see what works and what doesn't work. I think that it would be very interesting to have that.

Also, a question for Mr. Backs, the independent. When exactly did you get in, then, on your issues? You mentioned sitting around waiting for some time at the end of the day. Was there any time at all scheduled for independent members, or did you sneak in on each of the three or four designated periods? When did you get to speak at Committee of Supply?

Mr. Backs: I didn't get to speak on a number of the departments that I wanted to speak on. It just was not possible to wait around to get in on those debates because there was no time given by whatever party was speaking with them at that particular time. There was some designated time I worked out. We did get some time with a few ministers, and I did try to work some in. It was pretty much at the whim of some folks. I did get some help from some of the House leaders in getting some time in, but it was pretty much at their whim.

Rev. Abbott: That might be the one thing we do want to change: put in some designated time for either a nonrecognized party or an independent member.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you for that.

In thinking about what we have to do here and our opportunity to make some comments about 59 and recommend some changes, we should be thinking about how much time was spent and how it was allocated, as several people have talked about here, to independent members or private members or opposition or third party or Official Opposition, all of those things; the order in which all of those estimates are considered, how we split them out, who makes those decisions; and maybe as well that the Assembly is used efficiently. I know there was an attempt in '97 and 2001 to try and have as much speaking time as possible. Yeah, it was in two different locations, and there were challenges there. Things have changed quite a bit from that. We have to look at 59 and decide whether it's the way we want to go.

Then there's also the question – private members' day is on Monday, so we never consider budget items on Monday, right? That was reserved. So then other government business, government bills, were kind of jammed in wherever. Didn't we end up sitting nights a few times just to make sure that we could consider some of those government bills?

We've got other problems besides just looking at 59. How do we make sure that the House goes efficiently and we're not sitting till August trying to get some of the government bills through unless we spend a whole bunch of evening time? Then we're back to the evening question, that several people talked about with respect to quality of life and so on.

Those are things that I think we should really kick around and focus on rather than just saying: let's move that 59 stays as it is for another year. Well, that's fine, but somebody will have to deal with this in another year. We can maybe tweak it a little bit and have some small adjustments and see how that goes and go from there. Those would be my thoughts on what we have to do with 59. I'd welcome your looking at 59 and seeing what kinds of things we should do with it.

Some comments?

Mr. Marz: Just on that point, Rob. I look around the table, and I see seven members here that for sure won't be here next time. We're dealing with something that's going to affect everybody that's going to be here. I would support the motion that was put forward by Dr. Pannu, that we try this again for another year. Then it falls to those that have to work with it in its entirety, whoever is there. There could be more than seven that are going to be gone. Who knows? That's the decision of the electorate. So the timing of changing it now: I don't think it's a good time. One year is not a really good test of any procedure. I for one think that it's a massive improvement over previous years. So I think we should give it another year to go, and we'll perhaps have a little more input with the next Legislature, see how it affects those people, and let them make that final decision on it if they want to make some changes at that time.

Ms Blakeman: A couple of things. Just a reminder that we were very late in starting the budget process last year, and we had more or less a finite end date, so there was a scramble to pack everything in. Remember, now that we have a fixed start date for the budget, we wouldn't need an interim supply. The idea was that we'd be done this baby by the time the new fiscal year started, and that would in fact leave time to debate regular bills, et cetera, to the end of the session. But the budget process would be done by the end of March. You also wouldn't lose several days to debating interim supply because you wouldn't need it; you would have passed the budget on time.

The other thing is the way the designated hours were allocated. The thought at the time, I can tell you, was that if we did it in three-hour blocks, then any additional time that was available in the day – and often we're finished question period by 2:30 or 2:35. If you booked a three-hour time block for the designated groups, there was up to half an hour of extra time that was left at the end of the day. I came in fairly often at 5:30 to see what was happening, and we did have people taking advantage of that open, undesignated time, if you would like, either for independent members or the fourth party or other members that wanted to show up and question that particular ministry. And that was the point of that: knowing that we had about three and a half hours to play with, but three hours specifically would be designated to the particular group of the day, and the extra time was open to anybody.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, again, Mr. Chairman, I've already stated the fact that I support what's happening under Standing Order 59 at this particular time. I think it worked well. It's had its first year, and I think we need one more year to get it under our belt. You know, I think that you can then look, coming back a year from now, and say: no, this isn't working. We're going to have new members in this government, on both sides, and it'll give them a chance. You bring fresh ears and eyes into this debate; they probably would bring some nice comments back to us.

So I would like to make a motion, if I may – and I may be usurping – that we support what's happening at this particular time and reconvene a year from now to review it.

The Chair: It sounds like a hoist motion to me.

An Hon. Member: We have a motion on the floor already.

The Chair: Well, we don't have a motion from Raj. He had talked about making a motion at some time in the future.

I think we have some more comments before we should really entertain that motion at this time. Would that be okay?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Chairman, if I may. I know we've discussed private members' bills. I know we've talked about earlier sittings, later sittings. We've talked about a whole bunch of things. I'm trying to stay focused on Standing Order 59 at this particular time. I'm not opposed to looking at how things are done differently, but right now our mandate is Standing Order 59.

The Chair: Our Standing Order is 59. I think I would like to hear the discussion and see if there is desire on the committee's part to tweak 59 a little bit. It would be easy enough just to say: let's leave 59 exactly as it is. As somebody said, we don't have to show up next Monday either. Then, that would be something at the committee's pleasure. But I think we may not serve the purpose of this well if we don't consider some of the options that may or may not be before us for 59 specifically.

Bridget, you had a comment. You've been on the list.

9:00

Ms Pastoor: Yeah, I did. Thanks, Mr. Chair. I was under the impression that Raj had made a motion. I believe he said: I'll make the motion. We can check back. Anyway, now, in my mind, we've got two that are basically saying the same thing. Certainly, I would support, you know, that we leave it as is.

Perhaps I'm fortunate that I'm not going back into the mists of antiquity and pulling up all these different things. I've only got three years under my belt. What I'm not sort of understanding here is how this came up to this committee. This committee hasn't met for eons, and now all of a sudden we're meeting when, in fact, I thought that between the House leaders they know what they're doing. I mean, these are highly skilled people in their jobs. So I'm not really sure what this is all about.

The Chair: Some of those that have been here since antiquity maybe could explain better. At any rate, yes, this committee was vested with the responsibility by a motion of the Assembly to look at it. So that's where we are. That's why we're here.

Ms Blakeman: It was just an obvious thing, Mr. Chairman. In case

we had made a terrible mistake, there had to be a way to correct it, and that's why this was put in place. It was as a double check. So it might appear to be a bit pro forma now in that people seem reasonably okay with what's happened and are willing to try it again. But, yes, to the Member for Lethbridge-East, that's why.

Ms Pastoor: Okay.

Ms Blakeman: It was to make sure that there was an out if we'd done something terribly wrong.

The Chair: Thank you for that flash from the past. Denis, you had some comments.

Mr. Herard: Yes. I wouldn't support a motion to simply accept Standing Order 59 as it is because when you were quoting the motion passed in the Legislature, one of the, I think, very important, at the risk of repeating myself, parameters there is to look at what goes on elsewhere and see if there might be some good suggestions on how we can improve 59. Simply ignoring that, to me, is not serving the purpose of this committee, and it's really not, I don't think, fulfilling the mandate that the motion has given us. So I would not support voting on it today until such time as we can be provided with information, debate the information. If we arrive at the same solution, then I think we will have fulfilled the motion that the Legislature intended.

The Chair: If I could question you on that, Denis. Because we're supposed to report to the House by next Thursday, would your intent be to review, as we have staff and whoever can, other Assemblies to revisit this in the February report?

Mr. Herard: I think that there has been lots of time since the motion passed. There's probably been lots of work done on it already. If we can get information this week, then perhaps next Monday we could make a decision, if that's possible.

The Chair: Moe, would you like to go ahead, please?

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My understanding of Dr. Pannu's motion is to leave 59 for another year, for only one more year. As Mr. Marz said, as seven or eight or maybe more members will not be here next time, I would suggest that we vote on Dr. Pannu's motion. If this committee meets in the next year, unless it's not going to meet for the next 20 years again, then the new members will decide on 59.

Mr. Marz: Then you'll have the comparison.

Mr. Amery: Yeah. And then we'll have the comparison.

That was my other question. We don't have a comparison right in front of us as to how it is done in different Legislatures around the country. By that time I think we will have some information, and then we will be able to make an informed decision on how to deal with this issue.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Johnson: I would be in favour of Raj's motion there. I don't know if it bothers me, but I was wondering about it, and Denis brings up. It's mentioned here somewhere, looking at other places and other jurisdictions. We don't really have time to do that. But I

would think that when the original motion was formulated, probably it was done at that time. Can someone enlighten me as to what input there has been into what we have before us from other jurisdictions or other places?

The Chair: Can someone make that comment? David McNeil.

Dr. McNeil: Yes. We provided a series of briefing information to the House leaders and their supporters at the time when they were going through the process of proposing amendments to the standing orders. We can provide information specific to the supply process to this committee probably by Thursday. If you want to focus on 59, which you have to do, we can give you some, you know, broad information about what happens in other jurisdictions across Canada as far as the supply process is concerned. We do have that information, and that information was developed along with a lot of other information for the House leaders when they were going through the agreement process.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Does that answer your question, LeRoy?

Mr. Johnson: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. There are a couple other folks on the list, unless somebody wants specifically on this point. Tony on this point.

Rev. Abbott: Mine is on this point. Thanks, LeRoy, for saying that, because I figured the work was already done. Yeah, it would be nice if we could get that and have a look at it prior to Monday's meeting.

Also, if we could possibly get a breakdown, the one that Rob just quoted from there, as to our own Legislature, if we could all get a copy of that, our own Legislature and how many hours we have spoken on supply, and – again, I don't know if it's possible – at least some kind of a ballpark figure as to percentages as to how it's broken down by party, then I think that would help us if we want to do some tweaking next Monday with regard to 59. You know, it's kind of nice to see what we've also done and see how it compares to the past.

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Chairman, do we have a motion on the table? Has there been confusion here? We've been talking about a motion that I said I would make, then Heather made an attempt again to focus our attention on Standing Order 59. I want to know whether we have the motion on the table or not at the moment.

The Chair: The chair was not willing to entertain the motion at that time. Yours, as I understood, was a future possibility to make a motion. Heather was talking about making a motion.

Dr. Pannu: But where are we on that now?

The Chair: We do not have a motion on the floor at the moment.

Dr. Pannu: Are you ready to entertain a motion now?

The Chair: I would rather hear some of these comments first, and then I'm perfectly willing to go ahead with whatever.

Dr. Pannu: Okay. On the issue of the review of standing orders in other places and that that information be available to us before we make a decision on it, Mr. Chairman, I think that merely to enumer-

ate what the standing orders are with respect to Committee of Supply in other Legislatures will not be of much help. We need the experience of how those standing orders work. We know how our standing orders work and what our deliberations are focusing on, our experience during the spring session as to how our temporary Standing Order 59 has worked or not worked. We need that kind of information from other Legislatures if that information is to be useful at all to us.

I don't think we have enough time between now and next Thursday to have not only a catalogue of the standing orders of other Legislatures but also some information from someone who knows how those things have worked. That will take time. That can't be done, you know, on the fly. You have to talk to opposition parties. You have to talk to House leaders if you really want the information about how they think their orders have worked or haven't worked. Otherwise, what's the point of having just a catalogue before us?

I'm now urging you to have a motion on the table so that we can debate it and dispose of the issue of the status of temporary Standing Order 59, and I'm willing to make the motion.

9:10

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Griffiths: Well, I'm curious what other jurisdictions are doing but more for broad term ideas. Much like Dr. Pannu said, they may have some standing orders that look good but don't actually operate effectively, and that's important. Even though I'd like to see them, it's more for conceptual ideas for what we might want to try.

I still think our focus needs to be what works for us in our House, in our Assembly. I mean, we've only had one go at this, one session to try this. Even if there was some brilliant idea in the standing orders, I'd be reluctant to take it until we tried ours for another session to see fully what could be changed or what works effectively, so I would also encourage you to entertain a motion that the temporary standing orders stand for another session as temporary standing orders. Then we can continue to do research.

Rev. Abbott: Well, just on this point. I think Bridget pointed out that this committee meets less often than Saskatchewan wins the Grey Cup. I think that if we are going to make any decisions, we perhaps should make some now or perhaps next Monday because even though we're saying the committee may meet again in a year, it in fact may not. So I think we should come up with a decision or a motion or whatever. Like I said, if it is to put it off for a year, then at least we need to make it very, very clear that this committee has to come back and meet again in a year, and it's not just handled through the House leaders.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, again, you know, I think we have the opportunity to make some changes. What I would like to see is, again, to stay focused on what we're talking about, Standing Order 59.

Under the leadership of Doug and I believe it was Mr. MacDonald under Public Accounts, they took Public Accounts from here to way over here – I believe it was a year ago, and I could stand to be corrected – when they had the ability to start calling people like the regional health authorities, et cetera, forward. They did make some huge changes under Public Accounts, which had been doing business the same way for 20 years. Whether this committee has met once every 20 years does not preclude the fact that we cannot set that motion to start making changes after the fact.

But I'm not prepared to make any recommendations until I have some research in front of me. I think it's fundamental, and I would like the opportunity to talk to some of my colleagues to see how they

feel about some of the changes that have been suggested. Ms Blakeman made opening comments when she was speaking about 1 o'clock. Well, it affects us hugely from Calgary in regard to some changes.

You know, I think we have a wonderful opportunity to meet again, as we have out of session in Public Accounts, giving the members some time to be able to do their calendars and everything. But as for Standing Order 59 right now, I think that's what our mandate is to have a vote on, and then how we choose to move this committee forward can be done at another time.

Mr. Marz: Laurie pointed out something that's going to reflect some major changes next year as compared to this year, and that's the fact that our budget is going to be tabled early, and we're not going to have that interim supply debate. It won't be necessary. So that will affect the timing of everything, and I think it will reflect on even the end date of the Legislature because it will shorten debates in other areas. By leaving them for another year with that change alone, it'll give the committee a chance to evaluate the whole process and how it looks with that new budgeting process in place.

The Chair: Okay. I'd like some comments from any of the staff that may wish to.

I have one question, actually, with respect to 59. As it stands, 59, if it's adopted, will be 75 hours next year, not 60 hours, correct?

Mr. Reynolds: Yes.

The Chair: Which will change from what it has been, from 60 in the spring of 2007 to 75 next spring?

Mr. Reynolds: Yes.

The Chair: That's automatic if we keep 59 as it is.

Are there other comments with respect to this?

Mr. Reynolds: Well, there are a few things. One is that if the committee makes a recommendation along the lines of the motion, I mean, there might be some, if you will, tidying up of it in the sense that there are some provisions that wouldn't be applicable because you're talking about 2007. So if you extended that into a future session, that would be another thing.

The other thing is that if the committee was going along that track, they may want to consider having a date certain when that would expire in the sense that you could say that they would be extended until December 31, 2008, which if there was an election prior to that date would tie the hands of the next Legislature but not indefinitely, if you know what I mean. It would just be a process that the committee would recommend. If the Assembly adopted it, then the Standing Orders would be in place for the next Legislature, I mean, when they come back if there was an election.

The Chair: Okay.

David, comment?

Dr. McNeil: Yeah, just to emphasize that point. Right now if an election was called, not by us on our website but by the appropriate people, then we would revert to the old Standing Orders when the Assembly reconvenes as the 27th Legislature. If the committee thinks that we should at least extend these temporary Standing Orders so that they cover the first period of time in the next Legislature, then that may be something that you would want to consider so that they don't die when this Legislature ends.

The Chair: Good point.

Mr. Herard: I think Rob covered it when he said: if the Assembly adopts it. As I understand it, this is really a report to the Legislature, and then the Legislature will decide if it's going to adopt it. So having heard that from Rob, then I'm okay with it.

The Chair: Okay.

Other comments? On this point, Richard.

Mr. Marz: Yeah. If we're extending this temporary Standing Order as it was this year, then 59.02 would be 60 hours, not 75 hours.

Mrs. Forsyth: No. It's going to be 75.

Mr. Marz: But if we're extending it as it was this year.

The Chair: David, would you like to respond, please, or Rob?

Dr. McNeil: The 60 hours only applied to the 2007 supply process; 75 hours in subsequent 2008.

Dr. Pannu: So that's clear in the temporary Standing Orders?

Dr. McNeil: Yes, it is.

Ms Blakeman: The 60 hours were because we were on such a tight timeline. We condensed it in order to get through and get out faster. As well, we were conscious of time that had been spent before, but we wanted to add time for the cross-ministries. That's part of that additional amount of time between. Two things happened: one, we truncated the debate in order to get finished on time; and two, we wanted to add in sufficient time for the cross-ministries, so that's why there's a difference in the hours.

The Chair: Could David perhaps clarify for me: if we have a motion to extend this temporary Standing Order 59 for another year, bring it as a recommendation to the Legislature, the Legislature could vote on it and approve it for the subsequent session? How does that go?

Rob.

Mr. Reynolds: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. If there was a recommendation by the committee that the provisions of Standing Order 59 be extended for a year, let's say, to December 31, 2008, then there would I think have to be a motion to amend the Standing Orders to indicate that, or there would have to be at least a motion by the Assembly to extend them to December 31, 2008, because the Standing Orders now say that they only last until the dissolution of the 26th Legislature.

9:20

Now, obviously, if the 26th Legislature continues on past December 31, 2008, it's not an issue, but if it's dissolved and there's an election before that time, then obviously the Standing Orders, as Dr. McNeil said, would disappear. We would go back to the previous version. We would be meeting at 1:30, we would be rising at 5:30, et cetera. So at least if you recommended that the supply process stay in place, which is what you're considering at the moment, and the Assembly recommended that, then we'd be there for another year. What you choose to do about the rest of the temporary Standing Orders would be the subject of another meeting, as you pointed out.

The Chair: Some other people are asking for clarification. If nothing is changed with this either after an election or even when session comes back in the spring, it starts at 1:30, not at 1 o'clock.

Mr. Reynolds: Okay. This is with respect to the other parts of the Standing Orders because the committee has two tasks, really, as you indicated at the beginning. The first task is to consider the supply process, which is what you're doing right now. The second part is to consider the rest of the changes that were made. You've got the supply process under consideration right now.

What I'm saying is that with respect to the other parts of the temporary Standing Orders, when you meet to consider those, if there were no recommendations adopted by the House with respect to those changes, then those temporary Standing Orders would disappear at the dissolution of the 26th Legislature, which would be on the calling of an election. That's when you would go back to the previous permanent Standing Orders. But the motion now before the committee, as I understand it, would extend the provisions concerning the supply process for another year, or till December 31, 2008. I'm not sure of the exact wording of, I believe, Dr. Pannu's motion or Mrs. Forsyth's motion. In any event, that part of the temporary Standing Orders would be preserved, if I'm making myself clear.

The Chair: Other folks have some questions. Yvonne, first.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you. Just a clarification. The 60 hours in the spring: was that the cap?

Mr. Reynolds: Yes.

Mrs. Fritz: So there was a cap?

Mr. Reynolds: The 60 hours was the cap for the 2007 session. In subsequent sessions it's supposed to be 75 hours. Yes.

Mrs. Fritz: Okay. So that was the cap. It wasn't that the cap was higher than that and then determined to be 60 hours so that they could fit into session what was said earlier.

Also, what was it, then, in 2006?

Mr. Reynolds: Well, there was no cap as such. You mean before the temporary Standing Order changes?

Mrs. Fritz: Yes.

Mr. Reynolds: There was no cap as such. It was a number of hours per department. I believe that was based on the number of departments there were in the government. Each had I believe a minimum of two hours, which was a total of 24 sitting days. We were just going to distribute the amount of time that was spent. Also, in the briefing material I believe there is a reference to the fact that there were 24 sitting days spent on supply.

Mrs. Fritz: It's just that, you know, Mr. Chairman, that's why it would've been helpful – and it goes back to what Denis Herard said earlier – if this information had been circulated at the beginning, not just the information we're handed out here right at this moment but other information that, it has been said earlier, the staff have. It could be supplied to the committee; I agree. I think we should wait and see the information. I mean, now that I know that the cap in the spring was 60 hours, there wasn't a previous cap before that, the cap's going to 75 hours, it's beginning to make me wonder, just the minutia of each sentence that you almost go through here: what else

is there that's different? So maybe by next week we could determine that.

The Chair: Okay. We have on this point questions for the staff.
Laurie.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. Sorry. Just to Mrs. Fritz. I have now located my notes. The difference between the 60 and the 75 hours included the two things that I'd spoken about. There were also to be remaining hours that were open to participation by all members as recognized by the chair. That would have included any possibility of anybody that wanted to get up and question, and that was part of our attempt to protect time for private members from any and all caucuses and independent people. So that accounts for the extra 15 hours.

I'm aware that we've got four minutes left in this meeting. Is it possible to get that motion on the floor and have a vote?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, I'd just like to say this, Mr. Chairman. I thank Ms Blakeman for that information, but I agree with you, Mr. Chairman. There may be small things in here that we would like tweaked. Given the information in the last six minutes here, that we're learning about the cap and other things in this, I would just support what Denis Herard said earlier about more information for the next meeting on Monday and perhaps make this motion next Monday.

The Chair: It does seem that we've learned quite a bit more since we came in and perhaps when Raj made his initial comment about having a motion. It may be prudent to wait a little while and see what direction we really do want to move in and whether we do want

to tweak 59 and come in with something that can be recommended, even some of the time frames, things like that. If you want to have a motion and bail out of here and then leave it for somebody else, so be it, but if you want to wait and consider it further with more information – it is correct that some of this was maybe done before.

As you may recall, I accepted the request to chair this committee on Thursday, and on Friday I found out that we were supposed to meet. I thought: how tough can it be to chair a committee that never meets? So one should do more research.

Anyway, if I understand your thinking right now, you would just as soon wait to make a motion on Monday morning, a week from now.

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: We will deal with it then. More information, as much as staff can get in our hands, will come to us this coming week.

Thomas, do you have a comment?

Mr. Lukaszuk: I just want to comment, Mr. Chairman, that you should be commended for the fact that this committee hasn't met for 20 years, and the moment you assumed the chairmanship, it met the next day. So kudos to you.

The Chair: The next meeting is next Monday at 8 o'clock in the morning.

We have to have a motion to adjourn, please. Tony. All in favour? Carried.

[The committee adjourned at 9:28 a.m.]

