

2:08 p.m.

Tuesday, November 17, 1992

[Chairman: Mr. Gogo]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. If we can come to order, we wanted to talk about two and possibly three items. If I could draw your attention to the agenda, that was to prioritize the topics we want to talk about, assist Louise in terms of drafting a budget which would incorporate travel, if we're going to travel, to symposia or whatever we hope to do. Now, if you recall . . .

MR. FOX: My apologies. I had a lot of important work to do on behalf of constituents in my Legislature office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That sounded very apologetic in nature.

MR. FOX: John, do you have a pointer?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I could use one. Have you got one? I'll be standing up.

As I said, the three items we'd like to deal with, if we can, include prioritizing the list of items that have been submitted by members into a meaningful type of package. I don't know about a time frame, but within a reasonable time frame. Give me some guidance with regard to preparation of a budget which incorporates proposed traveling, which may deal with suggestions from the public. It may deal with symposia; it may deal with people coming to meet with us, et cetera, et cetera. That's two. Where is the third one? No, pardon me. The travel share in the budget and the priorities are really three.

Now, each of you has listed in your book, with the author behind them, under item 5, I think it is, the equivalent of a shopping list of items it was suggested we review in concert with our mandate, which is under XYZ:

the . . . functioning status of the Assembly and review ways of making it more responsive to the needs and values of the citizens of Alberta and elected Members within the context of our parliamentary system.

I very much appreciate your suggestions that I've received, one of which we dealt with in part this morning. So could I call your attention to the shopping list under tab 5. What I suggest we do is go through them. They're all listed here. If you recall, I didn't know whether we would have 50. It turns out we have 37. I had made a case at an earlier meeting that perhaps we could meaningfully deal with Canada as a priority listed. That's now been exhausted. I mean, we're not going to be here for two years. The Constitution is set. We can't be here for two years. We have to have an election in the interim, so we'd better deal with something that's within our reach.

I suggest that if you've had an opportunity to look at the list you have of all 37, we should perhaps go through them and determine what is within the jurisdiction of this committee. Frankly, I don't think some things are. I think they're within the jurisdiction of government; i.e., the cabinet. Then bearing in mind the terms of reference, i.e. interests of citizens and the members of the House, work out which ones we think are worthy of consideration. Now, once we do that, I don't want our view clouded with, "Gee whiz, it's going to be a heavy workload for the Assembly staff to put things together." I don't think that's our primary consideration. Our primary consideration is: what do we want to look at? If it means Louise and company have to give an extra week preparing something, I guess that's the way it's going to be in terms of the research, even though she's done a fair amount.

So if you've got your lists in front of you, perhaps we could go through them and look at the various forms. Then we'll come back and, I would suggest, use an honour system and vote, maybe have 10 votes. That would give us the top 10 and give us the priority. Dr. Elliott won't have a vote obviously. He's not here.

MR. EVANS: I'll vote for him.

MRS. HEWES: Not a chance. I'll vote for him.

MR. FOX: I see the merit to your proposal. In terms of the 37 items listed, number 14 includes probably 10 individual items, several of which are weightier in terms of the amount of research and debate with an eye to coming up with recommendations than some of the other items listed individually, and I'm just wondering if there might be other ways of grouping.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, likewise, item 5 is just a rewrite of Standing Orders, but many of the other items are attributable to Standing Orders.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, looking at your document . . . Everybody has the same document I have, I hope. Well, obviously they haven't. Now, what was this printed from? My document says number 4 is rewrite our Standing Orders.

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, I think you're looking at the breakdown of the topics as opposed to the random submissions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, just a minute. I'm sorry. Okay; touché.

They were broken into three categories. I think we have to restrict ourselves to those things that are within our mandate to do. I guess as a special select committee of the House, our mandate is very wide-ranging, but I don't think we can tell government what to do. I'm looking for some examples. For example, 19, conflict of interest legislation, comes to mind immediately. If we can consider that in the context of legislation, I guess it becomes our business. If it comes within the Premier of the day saying the cooling-off period for ministers and MLAs in accordance with the report that was received by Mr. Getty – and I think he's given an indication he's going to support it – I'm not so sure it's our mandate to do it. I look at number 20 and say to myself: we now have a committee of the House called Members' Services Committee appointed by the House to deal with members' benefits, indemnities, and so on, and they are currently under review. I don't view it as within our jurisdiction to supplant that committee. I mean, I just don't see it. I'm trying to be practical.

Let's very quickly go through our list anyway.

MR. GESELL: Could I have time to respond?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah.

MR. GESELL: Bettie raised a question I want to respond to because it was one of the items I raised. I think others have raised it as well. Rewrite our Standing Orders was your question, and I see that as item 10 because it's a summary. It's a wrap-up of some of the changes we might be making throughout, and it would be the final item to sort of cement those changes into a group of Standing Orders. So I would suggest it be item 10.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, with respect, I think it should be item 11. It shouldn't be one of the priorities, because it simply means this is how you do all those things.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's go through this. We won't vote. We'll go through this and have a discussion. I don't think there's any question that media relations, if media in its literal sense is the communication of what we do to the public, has got to rate very high. We had some frank discussions this morning, all the way from physical access to content and so on.

Election of the Speaker. I think its time has come. I don't want to push these items; I just want to make a brief comment going through them. It wouldn't be a precedent, except it's critically important to us. It wouldn't be a precedent in the country.

2:18

Free votes or voting procedures. I simply throw in that two months ago in England members of the House of Commons proposed an increase of \$19,000 for themselves. The government opposed it. The government owns the majority – or it wouldn't be the government – yet it passed in what's called a free vote. Whether you agree or not is not the issue. The point is that the members were free to choose and free to vote; they voted, and it didn't defeat the government. The government accepts it.

Question period format. I want to look at some of the authors of these: Elliott, Evans, Gesell, Gogo, Hewes. We should take a few minutes on each of these. For example, something has been removed from the question period, in my view, by deferring points of order till after question period. One time points of order, according to Standing Orders, had to be raised immediately. The Speaker dealt with them. Frankly, I didn't ever recall a problem. Now, Bettie, I want to ask each of the authors to make a comment because their names are behind these. The question period format: it's now 45 minutes. Bettie, can you just make a comment as to why you wanted it reviewed?

MRS. HEWES: We had a number of reasons, Mr. Chairman, and I think they're in the information I submitted to you. The piggybacking: do you remember when we used to be able to piggyback? Do you know what I'm talking about, sir? Supplementary to . . . That is, the Leader of the Official Opposition asks a question. He has a supplementary. Then the leader of the third party has an opportunity to ask a supplementary to the leader of the opposition's. We would like to have some discussion on that item.

The other one was the numbers of questions and how they are asked, the rotation. Now, the Speaker has had an informal pattern, but it is more or less formal, and I've heard members of the government back bench say they're concerned. They want their opportunities to ask questions. I respect that, but my understanding of question period and the real purpose of it is for people to question the government. I see that as the primary role of the opposition. But if in fact we have members' statements combined with question period, then I think we might arrive at a better balance. So question period would essentially be the opportunity for the opposition to question the front bench, and members' statements would be the opportunity for members, government and otherwise, in rotation to make statements regarding particular interests in their constituencies.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question period format in terms of who asks the questions: my recollection is that it was agreed to between Mr. Speaker and the House leaders of the parties.

MRS. HEWES: That's correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That does not mean it should not be reviewed.

Brian, you also brought a point on this. I don't want to put people on the spot, but because they made the suggestion that it be reviewed, I think they should have an opportunity before we prioritize to say to the committee, "Hey, this is why I wanted it done."

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, I recognize that question period is literally the only time the general public sees parliamentarians. It's the only real sustained interest the public has in parliamentarians, and it's a very acrimonious setting. I think there must be better and more creative ways for us to make government accountable from both the opposition and the back-bench sides, and I made a perhaps bold statement that we should reduce the time of question period to 30 minutes. I didn't specifically talk about increasing other time for accountability, but it seems to me it runs well beyond a useful period of time, beyond questions of the day, if you will, and I don't think it serves the kind of purpose we would want it to serve. As Bettie pointed out, from the point of view of members' statements, although you don't get a question in to a minister, at least you can make your point. I think that's what question period should be all about: making the point of whether or not people who are in the House feel the government's doing a good job, bad job, indifferent job, or what have you. The 30 minutes was a suggestion which I certainly recognized would be open to some criticism and/or debate, but I don't see any magic in 45 minutes. I think toning it down in terms of time might tone it down in terms of flavour as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Kurt also suggested this. I just point out that Nova Scotia on Wednesdays is 90 minutes and British Columbia is 15 minutes. So in terms of time, we've done all that research. We have that available. Certainly the length of the question period is a point. My point was that points of order really lose their impact if they have to be done after the question period.

Did you have anything . . .

MRS. HEWES: Yes, just another I neglected to mention, Mr. Chairman. That is, of course, the age-old problem of questions not being answered or being answered with a statement that doesn't relate to the question or relate to anything. Although I recognize the front bench is not required to answer the question, our point in our narrative to you is that either we change that so they are required to answer or they say "I decline to answer" or, if they indulge in a statement that doesn't relate to the question, they be called to order. Some days the Speaker is more rigorous in that than on other days. He does in fact shut down the front bench when they make speeches that do not relate to the question, but I'd like to see some real consistency in that.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I just have trouble with the concept that accountability has increased as question period decreases in time. One would argue, then, that the most effective accountability would come with a five-minute question period. I can't get my mind around that concept, increasing accountability by reducing the amount of time dedicated to the question period.

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, if I can respond to that. Bob, if you recall, I said there's clearly got to be a better way, a more effective way for us to deal with the opportunity of members to question the government. I just don't think the question period format is working particularly well. Quite frankly, I think one of the main reasons the public has such a low opinion of all of us, government and opposition, is because they are watching question

period and they do not have a very high opinion of our conduct in that format.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In fairness, it's here somewhere else on the list anyway. Let's remember that the opportunity to question government lies in at least four areas: public accounts, daily question period, the estimates, and motions for returns or written questions. I'm just saying we didn't even want to debate it – the person who listed it has not returned – because we're going to end up having a vote later. So they get a chance to say to the committee, "Look, please consider this because . . ." and we don't want to take the whole time.

Committee structure. I think by that, Gogo, Hawkesworth, and Derek . . . I just draw your attention to Standing Order 49 before I ask Derek and Bob to speak to it.

Standing Committees of the Assembly shall be established for the following purposes:

- (a) Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing,
- (b) Public Accounts,
- (c) Private Bills,
- (d) Law and Regulations,
- (e) Public Affairs,
- (f) . . . Heritage Savings Trust Fund . . .
- (g) Legislative Offices.

There can be special committees' names in addition, such as we are. I read into that committee structure that they are the committees. I don't know whether the proponents want to abolish them, expand them, change their powers, or whatever.

Derek, do you want to comment, and then Bob?

2:28

MR. FOX: Sure. Mr Chairman, this is based on a motion I've put before the House on several occasions over the last few years, based on my belief that some of the most effective work done by Members of the Legislative Assembly is done in committees, all-party committees where people tend to more easily set aside their partisan differences and put their talents and energies together to accomplish things for Albertans. It seemed to me that we should expand the role of the all-party committee, model it along the same lines as the parliamentary committees that are in use in Ottawa and in other Legislatures in the country.

For example, we could have a standing committee on agriculture so that when agricultural groups or representatives come to meet with government and opposition, we can schedule one meeting instead of three or four, so that when a piece of legislation is contemplated the Minister of Agriculture can refer it to the all-party committee on agriculture for consideration and perhaps even facilitate a formal public input process into the drafting of Bills. As well, committees could deal with budget estimates in a more thorough and thoughtful way than the current system allows. So it just seemed to me we could set up some parliamentary committees that have a fairly broad but specific mandate to make our work here more effective and more inclusive in terms of helping people be involved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll take it as a given when these comments are made that it's while the House is sitting. If it's to be different than that – because we're going to come to this under fixed schedule and somewhere else in here; i.e., when the House is sitting. I'm taking it your comments are applicable to when the House is sitting.

MR. FOX: Well, there may be times that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we should discuss that.

MR. FOX: . . . a parliamentary committee . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: We should discuss that as well, because we're going to get into this scenario when we get to here: California, first Monday in January, excluding New Year's Day, will sit for 90 days, and the gavel goes and it's over. Montana: first Sunday in January for 60 days every second year and the gavel goes.

At some point we're going to have to talk about, I guess, the length of session, fixed session, and so on. I just take it with your comments: "Hey, let's utilize our standing committees in a certain way and expand on them to hear various groups and so on."

Bob? Are you on the same kind of . . .

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Yeah. I don't want to eat up a lot of time repeating what Derek has said. Just looking at the House of Commons in operation, for example, once legislation has gotten to a certain stage, public hearings are often part of that system. Groups and individuals appear and make submissions based on their review of the legislation, often bipartisan coming together to support various amendments. I think the whole process can still be caught up in partisanship; there's no doubt about that. In our parliamentary democracy I don't think we'd want to change that too much, but it does provide an opportunity for a little more in depth, a little less partisanship in the review of legislation. Then amendments are often returned to the House with changes that have been recommended by the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Item 6. Each of these has been done during my tenure here. Each of these has been done. Bill 44 is this one. Margaret Ethier. I'm sorry; I shouldn't be talking about historical matters, Bob, to someone as young as you. But believe me, we've done each of these subcommittees. I used to chair one, the subcommittee of estimates. You know, you're asking for that. The big difference between subcommittees and the House is that a bureaucrat is not allowed in the House. In subcommittees the deputy must be with the minister. I'm not arguing pro or con, but we've done these in the past, so they're not precedents. So they would be wise – I don't mean to look at you, Louise, but *Hansard* has existed since I came, so it's all in *Hansard* how it functioned. It's not a bad idea to review that. Sitting hours. We sit 23 and a half hours a week now maximum, barring closure motions when you go to certain hours.

MR. FOX: Mr. Chairman, that's based on 10:30 adjournment or 10 o'clock adjournment?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's based on 8 to 10, I think. Halvar would know; he's the expert on this. But it's 23 and a half hours, and we have here all the sitting hours in Canada. These documents are all available. I don't think we gave them out.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: No, I've only just prepared them in anticipation of some of the committee's concerns.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So when people want them, Louise has a wealth of information.

As you know, there have been strong movements across Canada to change the sitting hours of the House to a more meaningful way. Alberta is a little bit different, I think, in terms of access from Pincher Creek-Crowsnest and maybe Medicine Hat and Fort Chipewyan, but in terms of getting here from Banff-Cochrane, I think that's fairly in order.

Bettie.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, we've heard some interesting comments this morning about sitting hours, and I'd be quite prepared to look at it. We have suggested that we convene at 7 instead of 8 for evening sessions simply to give us the extra hour and perhaps a more logical adjournment, but I think we might well look at moving up the time that we convene in the afternoon. I know it is an historical and traditional time, but if in fact getting our message to the people of Alberta is an important part of our functioning, then I think we've got to think through carefully what they said to us today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The flip side of that could well be – Halvar Jonson may have a comment on this – in many ways people perceive government being run by vested-interest groups: the Royal Glenora Club between the hours of 6 and 8 in the evening. I mean, that's the perception, whether it's the AMA, the Teachers' Association, and so on; you name it. So historically those hours have been kind of protected for meeting with those delegation groups. The only reason I draw that to your attention is that if we're going to change it, we want to give long enough notice that those groups who historically have met with MLAs would have ample warning.

Members' statements. This came across loud and clear. There's a lot of authors. It's used in, as you know, British Columbia for one. So we have Kurt, Bob, and Halvar who have suggested this. Do you want to make a comment on that, Bob, on member statements?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, it might get at the point that Brian was making earlier about how question period is sometimes used as perhaps an opportunity to put some constituency issues on the record or, you know, as a way of lobbying a minister to address a certain issue in a constituency or something like that. Perhaps member statements could fill a void or a vacuum or a need that members have, and therefore question period might also improve or benefit by maybe a little more pointed emphasis on questions as opposed to lobbying for a particular issue that's of concern to individual members. It's a possibility, and it's also a way of addressing urgent matters of the day that people want to have comments on put on the record and a very quick, brief, to-the-point opportunity for people from all corners of the House to get items on the agenda and statements made into *Hansard*.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. It reminds me of Dr. Elliott's comment saying: hey, you know, I get elected on the government side; I come to this building; I'm not in the opposition of either party, so I can't say anything; I can't have an opportunity; I can't ask a question, for whatever reason, yet there's a serious problem in Grande Prairie; I would like the opportunity of getting that message out. I think that's what I'm hearing.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Something like that; sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Kurt and Halvar, do you want to make a comment?

MR. GESELL: It's been covered. Are you on lengths of debate or member statements?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Members.

MR. GESELL: It's been covered.

MR. JONSON: I think it's a needed avenue for private members to put forward ideas and concerns.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're obviously going to come to it, but as you know, Tuesday and Thursday are Written Questions, Motions for Returns. On Tuesday it could occupy the entire afternoon, and on Thursday certainly an hour of the afternoon. We're obviously going to come to that. We're touching a little bit on it now: giving the member an opportunity to say something.

Length of debate or length of speeches. There's Brian, Kurt, Bettie, Halvar, and Bonnie. I put there "length of speeches," but as you know, now in committee each member may, upon being recognized, speak for 30 minutes at a time as many times as he or she is recognized, which in effect is a patent for saying everybody else cannot say anything. By the time the minister says something, the critic says something, the other critic says something, and the minister responds, Halvar adjourns the House.

2:38

MRS. HEWES: That's your problem.

MR. FOX: Conversely, Mr. Chairman, if we increased the length of debate, it might give the Member for Calgary-Mountain View time to complete his comments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's never enough time.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: So much to say and so little time.

MR. JONSON: I was one on the list that put this forward, and I think that the variety and quality of debate in the House could be improved a great deal; at least the possibility would be there. Certainly, depending on which particular part of the agenda we're on, there would have to be priority, I suppose, given to the official critics and certainly to the ministers. But I really think that people can say what they need to say in 10 minutes as opposed to 30 on almost every topic, including some very important ones. A great deal more participation could be allowed for in the Assembly, and I think the overall quality of debate and decision-making would improve if that could be dealt with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would we have the temerity to say the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition cannot have 90 minutes? Would we have the temerity to do that?

MR. EVANS: Just the other perspective, going back to the media session this morning. They have a very difficult time sitting and listening to 20 or 30 minutes of debate as well, because it's very difficult for them to get a 15- or a 30-second or a one-minute bite. So I think if we were to reduce that time frame, it might be more relevant. Hopefully it would be more relevant, and I think accordingly they might be more interested in covering the debates.

MR. FOX: Unless we get into discussing the specifics of which debates we're talking about here, I would speak generally against reducing the length of time for debates. I think the issues are complex, and though others may feel that they don't have much in the way of quotable dialogue in their speeches, some of us try and put a lot of meat and details and questions in our debate. You have to remember that debate, in the final analysis, is the only tool that members of the Assembly have to struggle with one another. In Saskatchewan, for example, I don't think the House in the past has had limits, and sometimes members would go on for five or six hours on speeches in an effort to delay things long enough that public attention is focused on the relative severity or the import of an issue.

In this Assembly the chairman has talked about things that have changed since he's become a member. One of the things that's changed since I've become a member is the number of times the government has used closure in debate. It may have been used two or three times in 60 years, and since I've been a member, it's been used 12 or 15 times in the last six years. I think that's unfortunate and sends all the wrong messages to people about our willingness to sit here as 83 members and debate the substance of issues of concern. Often it's only the ability to sustain debate in a creative way that gives an opposition party the opportunity to challenge the government's agenda without it being swept through the House. I mean, I've been in there and I've heard government members say, "As soon as I stand up to speak as critic on a Bill that's never before seen the light of day, people are shouting, 'question, question,' as if to imply that any debate on a Bill that no one's talked about is time wasted."

So I feel very strongly about this and will fight against a proposal like this, recognizing that there are other ways; for example, the expanded committee structure that I propose and the member statements that give all members an opportunity for legitimate input into the debate in the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't think I've been fair here because I've inserted "speeches," and to me there are two distinct avenues. One is length of debate, which, looking at the authors - I've got to look to the authors, you know. Halvar spoke to the length of speech, for example. Bonnie, are you speaking to the length of speech or the length of debate? Because there is, I agree, quite a difference in the two, so we should consider . . . For example, under Standing Orders now, at second reading of a Bill a member may speak for 30 minutes maximum unless it's the leader of a party. In estimates a member may speak for 30 minutes; in Committee of the Whole, 30 minutes but as often as they are recognized, and so on.

I think Halvar's point, at least as I'm interpreting it, unless I'm misinterpreting, was: hey, if you can't say it in 10 minutes on Agriculture in terms of the estimates - that should be long enough. So that's the length of speech versus the length of debate. To me they're two separate issues, frankly, so I was maybe unfair. Bob, and then Bettie.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Just on that point. When estimates are called for a government department on a Monday night, is there anything that requires the House to adjourn at 10 o'clock? Or could the House at the discretion of the government continue on till 11, 11:30, or later in order that people who are on the agenda who want to get in to speak would be able to have that opportunity? I mean, if there's a problem here, there may be more than one solution besides simply insisting that members reduce the amount of time available to make their comments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Where there's a problem on Monday night in Agriculture - I'm the House leader, and at 7 o'clock the next morning I've got to make an argument before a cabinet committee, so for me to sit to 11 or 11:30 at night . . . What I've said when I'm House leader is that this House is going to sit two hours. And Derek, in fairness, I've always tried to enforce that, whereas some of my colleagues - and I guess whoever is driving the train has a lot of say in how fast to drive the train. You know, Fred has gone to 11:30 or something.

I wasn't really referring to that, but I apologize for confusing you. I look at it in terms of length of speeches as opposed to length of debate. So there's a new element that I guess I've introduced, because clearly Bonnie and Halvar are talking about length of speeches; i.e., the opportunity for more private members

to get into the debate. I think that was the motivation, but we'll certainly look at them both.

Bettie, do you want to speak to that now?

MRS. HEWES: Yeah. Just a couple of comments, Mr. Chairman. I think we need to differentiate, because it does make a difference. I would say 10 minutes is too short, and I wouldn't support that. My major concern in raising it related to estimates. I recognize that we may in fact be dealing with estimates in a very different way than we have in the past. But I find myself in estimates not commenting really on the substance but simply reading into the record a list of 30 or 40 questions that I believe need answering. Usually the ministers are very good about doing that, but this is not, in my view, what that time is allotted for. There are so many questions in estimates that 30 minutes doesn't give me time to really expand on what the questions are. I just simply have to read the questions in to get them there so I can get an answer to them, but I think the answer to that one lies in changing how we deal with estimates. As far as speeches and so on, I think we might well reduce the time to 20 minutes.

Those are my comments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. If in effect this came to be, we would obviate a lot of the problem; i.e., subcommittees on estimates. But I share with you that as a minister of the Crown my job is to present my estimates to the House and have to defend them, which theoretically should mean questions to me, not policy options or alternatives. I view the throne speech and the budget speech as opportunities for members of the House to propose alternatives as they affect both the province and the constituency. Now, that's my view after all these years. It's interesting; I look back, and when the great Grant Notley was here, we had 11 days of estimates. Kind of interesting. He also had 13 supplementaries in question period, so times change and things change.

Movement of Bills. This is a very interesting one, Bob. You want to quote the Ontario experience? Well, let me just briefly summarize this movement of Bills. *Robert's Rules of Order* say that to become law, a Bill must have three readings, et cetera, et cetera. The feeling seems to be - Kurt may want to speak to this - both in Ottawa and in Ontario that if legislative change in the form of Bills is agreed to by all people, they can go bing, bing, bing through the House. Kurt, am I summarizing that?

2:48

MR. GESELL: Yes; that's correct. Right now the rules are that the readings have to be held on separate days. However, the rules also provide that where there's unanimous consent by the House, you can have more than one reading on one day. So the process to do what has been suggested is there already.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So if we could agree by unanimous consent, bingo, it's done. So that could be dealt with very quickly. I don't want to get into the public hearings; that comes somewhere else.

Fixed schedule: opening, adjournment, and so on. There are Brian, Derek, Bob, and Bonnie. Brian, do you want to comment on fixed schedule? I would just add that under our law, our fiscal year begins April 1. Or March 31?

MRS. KAMUCHIK: It ends March 31, so the 1st.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah; so April 1. We're all agreed that that is fixed. We might not deal with that business until July 1, but we already have a fixed date in terms of the budget year, unless you're dealing with the colleges; they're a different thing.

Brian, can I ask you what was on your mind? Are you saying, "Hey, let's, say, enshrine that on Gogo's birthday every year, which is February 15, the House will open"?

MR. EVANS: Well, it's a wonderful suggestion, Mr. Chairman, but actually what I was referring to . . .

MR. FOX: That's been celebrated for as many years as we've had a Legislature.

MR. EVANS: And beyond.

What I was suggesting in my note to you was that in every month we should have no more than three weeks' sitting of the Legislature, giving us one week in every month to spend with our constituents dealing with constituency matters. I could make another point about a fixed date to start a session, and I think there's a lot of merit to that. I don't think there's as much merit to an ending day. I think the members should deal with that through their debate and the interest they show in the Bills that are being brought forward, but I certainly agree that fixing a beginning date for session has lots of merit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I've quoted the California experience and the Montana experience: as you know, X days and the hammer goes.

Bob, I see you on this, and Derek Fox. Any comment on a fixed schedule?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, I think just the beginning of a sort of regularly scheduled fall - I'm trying to recall exactly what we were suggesting here, but I think it has to do with ensuring that there be a fall session as part of the overall yearly legislative schedule for the province. One of the things we thought would be a part of any fall session would be an update on the budget. It would come to be part of the regular schedule of legislative business.

MR. FOX: Just to add to that, I gather that in the olden days fall sessions used to be a regular fixture, but in the eight fall periods that have passed with this more recent administration, we've had only two fall sessions. I was amused when I heard the Deputy Premier refer to the regular fall session when talking about dealing with certain things in the fall session. In fact, it's not regular, and I think Albertans expect us to be dealing with their concerns and working on a regular schedule. I think what Brian says is absolutely right: there's more merit and more to be justified by fixing a regular start date rather than the end date. I don't think that we should sit here and fill the air with words for nothing if we've accomplished the business of the people in an efficient way, but the start date should be fixed to avoid manipulation of the political schedule as much as possible.

I guess I see that as being linked to a fixed schedule for elections. That's a little more controversial, and I suppose arguments could be made that even fixed election schedules leave opportunities for governments to have a political agenda unrelated to the economic agenda of the people, but I do think we should consider the merits of having fixed election dates. It's done in the United States; it's done in all municipalities in our province. If we're looking at more free votes and opening up that process, I think it gives us a chance to look at fixed election dates as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, for 35 years we had six-week sessions, and members attended by Greyhound. Along came a new leader and said: look, the spring sitting of the House, if I'm elected, will be followed by a fall sitting of the House; they will be called at

government programming times; i.e., spring session, including budget, at spring sitting, and in the fall there will be an accountability sitting of four to six weeks. Now, you know who I'm talking about, obviously. That worked that way for many years. It was also tied politically to its convention; i.e., resolutions at an annual meeting and a policy conference, which was accountability to the party. We're not doing that now because the leader chooses not to do it, and what I'm hearing is that we should maybe fix that kind of schedule.

Bettie, is that the same comment?

MRS. HEWES: Yeah. Mr. Chairman, although my name doesn't appear, I did have a comment about that as well. I agree that we should have regular dates and times. I'm not sure about the end time; I haven't taken a position on that. Also, in our submission we suggest that there should be a precise time for the tabling of the budget relevant to the date of the opening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Again, history is pretty accurate. It allows us 10 days following the throne speech.

MRS. HEWES: But it doesn't always happen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. But it has become a tradition, except for the last two years.

I would point out - Louise has done some homework on calendars. Presently most provinces don't have a calendar, but Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and the House of Commons have a calendar, a preset calendar. You'll find that interesting as to how that works.

Number 12. Really, I guess I was the one who said: hey, if we're paying out the kind of money we're paying out and not sending people to Somalia but sending them to Barbados or wherever, I think we should have a report from these people. I don't rate it in the top 10 priorities, but I think it's incumbent upon them to report to the House if they're sent by the House. I don't know if there's any further discussion needed on that. Well, just Elliott and Gogo.

A big one is access to information. Some of them would interpret that to read freedom of information, I guess. There's been a commitment by Premier Getty and the Attorney General, Mr. Rostad, to have access to information legislation for those who can afford it. I'm assuming they look at the mother Parliament in Ottawa, and it's not cheap. You can get xerox at 3 cents a copy in this province. It costs you 30 cents from Ottawa. Just so you're aware there's a flip side to access to information. We're going to spend a great deal of time on that. I think it would be fair to assume, looking at this committee, that everybody's in favour of that. Well, everybody wanted it.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Could I be so bold as to ask if there's a draft piece of legislation the committee could review?

MR. FOX: That's a secret.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nope. By all means, ask.

MR. EVANS: He doesn't have access to it.

MR. FOX: You might not be able to access that information.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm only the House leader.

I've got to share with you. Greg Stevens, whom most of you know, was a minister of the Crown. He felt so sensitive about

information – you know, didn't want anybody knowing anything – that I had a rubber stamp made. I stamped it, and it said: please destroy before reading. Greg got very upset about it.

Now we get into financial accountability. This we deal with here in many ways, I think – almost policy of government of the day. For example, how could we expand the authority of the Auditor General unless it was a government Bill? Are you saying that it can be a private member's Bill to do it?

I'm just asking questions here now.

The budget review by Leg. committees. Now, the authors of almost every one are Bob Hawkesworth and Bettie Hewes. It goes on and on.

2:58

MRS. HEWES: Well, well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no. I'm not trying to be smart. I'm just saying help me out.

Regular budget updates. Bob's point. That's the same as saying financial statements, I guess, Bob, is it?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Yes, it is. If you like, I could maybe just give some general overall comments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: The whole British parliamentary system got its impetus from a group of barons who didn't want to be taxed anymore by the king without having some say over how the money was spent. The whole matter of accountability of Parliament and the roles and responsibilities of Parliament have grown and developed directly in relation to issues of taxation, spending, the whole business. So I think financial accountability really gets at the heart of what the parliamentary system is about. In terms of accountability of the parliamentary system, I think it's pretty key to everything, and I don't think this committee really can afford to set aside these issues. I think they're really very important.

Especially some of the comments made by the Auditor General in his recent review of the NovAtel situation and his concern about the accounting of Crown controlled organizations just bring to the forefront that one of the most recent of the major controversies in this province centres around the spending and the accountability of money. I think we really need to increase. If we want to increase accountability, we just have got to look at the whole budgetary process. The kinds of documentation that we're given: when I compare the information contained in the estimates of the provincial government to the budget presented to us as city council legislators at the city of Calgary – and I think the same could be said for the city of Edmonton – municipal governments in this province are light-years ahead of the provincial government in terms of the quality of information in a form that's understandable to the general public as well as to the legislators themselves.

Quarterly statements of budget updates. I know that the province of Ontario has been doing that for, I think, somewhere close to 20 years. It's just a regular part of the activities of the Provincial Treasurer. When I was there a year ago, their half-yearly statement had just been released. Public accounts were released in the first part of October, whereas in this province ours weren't tabled until well over six months later.

It just seems to me that access to information, informing the public, giving an update, the quality of information, the ability of officers of the Legislature such as the Auditor General to do their job on behalf of taxpayers: there's a whole basket of issues that

are interconnected but come right to the root of what we're about here, in my view, and that's ensuring accountability for the way moneys are spent and accounted for.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bettie, are you on this too?

MRS. HEWES: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I think this whole subject of financial accountability really goes to the heart of our reform process here, and this has to be a very significant item. The one that we mentioned before, the estimates review, I think is part of this. Does it appear there?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Which one?

MRS. HEWES: The subject of how estimates are dealt with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, it's not here.

MRS. HEWES: But it should be part of this subject matter; no question.

Mr. Chairman, we've listed such things as: quarterly budget updates – Bob has spoken to that, and I couldn't agree more – that a specific date be set for public accounts release; the tendering processes; the lottery revenues accounting principles; and the powers of the Auditor General. Well, you have a great list there. I really feel we have to put our minds to this whole subject matter. I grouped mine, sir, in those two frames. One was the review and reform of the Standing Orders, which takes in many of the ones we've talked about so far, and the other subject matter being the whole business of financial accountability.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One thing we would do, Louise, is look under jurisdictions, I think, if we got into this. Dealing with the last three, I suppose, depending on what December 5 brings, we may not have a heritage fund, I guess.

MRS. HEWES: We may not now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, if one of these occurs, Bettie, the other would automatically occur. That's the lottery thing.

MRS. HEWES: Yes, and there are some over here, government contracts and so on. I think they could well be rolled into the financial accountability subject matter, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments on 14?

Number 15, review of OCs. That would be just appointments. Bonnie, you mentioned that as well as Derek and Bob Hawkesworth and Bettie Hewes. What do we mean by review of OC appointments? You mean reviewed by committee prior to the fact? What do we mean by that?

MRS. HEWES: Absolutely.

MRS. B. LAING: Yes.

MRS. HEWES: Sorry, Bonnie.

MRS. B. LAING: A representative board, I thought, that would review all appointments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would that be an all-party committee kind of thing?

MRS. B. LAING: It could be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Theoretically to get the best person for the job. I suppose that's the objective. Is it?

MRS. B. LAING: Yes.

MRS. HEWES: That's exactly what we're speaking to as well.

Mr. Chairman, having been the recipient of a great patronage appointment, I know the perils, and I know the joys and pleasures of it. I know it from both sides, and I know very well what we need to do about it. I think this is something that all parties have come to realize has got to be cleaned up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If the referendum had carried, obviously that's exactly what would have happened with federal government key appointments, I guess, eh?

MRS. HEWES: Uh huh.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bob, are you on this?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I was going to ask that question, if it was sort of along the lines of the Senate ratifying in the United States appointments to certain positions like judges to the Supreme Court. I presume there would be sort of a category of boards or a category of commissions, like the head of AOSTRA, for example, to use an acronym from this morning, but not necessarily the assistant deputy minister of advanced education. Is that my understanding?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You'd have a category, right?

Recall. I assume that's on the American principle. I don't know that. As you know, various states have the principle that if X signatures are collected, in effect you call another election. Bob and Halvar and Bettie Hewes, on recall is that the principle we're talking about?

MRS. HEWES: Yes.

MR. FOX: But not for Preston's daddy. It never worked for him, right? Or no, Aberhart. It was Aberhart they couldn't . . .

MRS. HEWES: Yeah, they changed the rules.

MR. FOX: It was Preston's daddy who changed them.

MRS. HEWES: If you don't like the rules . . .

MR. FOX: . . . change them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So then what you're saying is that because Mr. Kilgour has not faced an election of the party he's with, he could have been recalled and forced to . . .

MRS. HEWES: Well, there have got to be certain terms: so many months after an election and before an election and so on when it can or cannot occur and the circumstances, the criteria very clearly spelled out. So there's nothing mischievous about it. It's very straightforward.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Publication of government contracts over \$50,000, open tender process. I guess the process now is that there are invitational tenders given. If only three people have a

good track record, it goes to them. Otherwise, it's advertised and so on. Is that what you mean, that all must be advertised?

3:08

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Could I just jump in here? I don't know whether this has been discussed before, but I know that as a member of city council in Calgary each member was given the contracts awarded by the board of commissioners in the previous week or the previous month. Any member of council, if they wanted to raise a question, could sort of veto a particular contract or tender and require it to be reported on in a public council meeting, about what was involved in that and an explanation for why something was done in a certain way and not another.

Is there some sort of an amendment to that process? It doesn't need to be necessarily totally duplicated; it probably couldn't be. I don't know. A regular monthly data base of some kind that's provided about all the tenders that have been awarded that month or a certain level of tender: that would be an opportunity to somehow under the access to information get further information about the details. Something like that would just inject a little more openness into the procedure of approving tenders.

At this point I think we're thinking of ideas. Perhaps that suggestion wouldn't work particularly well, but it's at least a topic that I think merits some further discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the Alberta government has adopted in the past year the principle that all real estate sales must take place through an MLS process. That's Kowalski's area, Public Works, Supply and Services. My recollection is every contract let must be published in a daily paper. Now, maybe what I'm hearing is, "Yeah, John, but that's too late." I don't know. I know it's published.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Or perhaps consolidated in one document that may be a little more accessible, a summary document perhaps.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The whistle blowers protection. What we're going to do when we finish this - we've attempted to consolidate into legislation, cabinet, and so on, as you see on the attached sheets. Bob, you talked about whistle blower. Is this to protect people who, for whatever reason, point out, et cetera, et cetera?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Yes, and I think one of the first people to advocate this was the Ombudsman. A previous Ombudsman in one of his reports suggested that the Legislature look, if memory serves me correctly, at the state of Alaska - now, I could be wrong on that; my memory may not serve me entirely correctly - had suggested that the Legislature look at some form of protection for people who in the public interest are in a position to see something happening and want to report it or air it or make it open, to give them some protection from retaliation by their employer for doing that. I think the Ombudsman was one of the people that drew our attention to this a few years ago. Apparently there are precedents elsewhere for it, and I think it probably would be in the public interest as well for us to consider something here in Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody else on that?

Conflict of interest legislation, I think, is already under way. My recollection is that we're just awaiting proclamation of something dealing with that very thing.

A cooling-off period for MLAs and so on. The committee made recommendations. My recollection is that the Premier accepted it.

It's going to be found within that legislation. So that's probably dealt with.

Independent panel. I mentioned this earlier. It seems to me we now have a Members' Services Committee, a standing committee of the House under our Standing Orders, doing that.

Something that concerns us directly is 21, which occurs on Tuesdays and Thursdays, much to the chagrin of some and much to the pleasure of others. I see, Halvar, that your name is attached to that. Do you want to make a comment about that?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, I put this one on because I think that while I recognize that the matter dealing with written questions and particularly the motions for returns is an opportunity for private members and particularly the opposition to have another accountability session, the experience over the last two or three sessions has been that it seems to be gradually encroaching upon what is already rather short time for private members' day. I've raised the issue because I think there needs to be some set balance, shall we say, that protects the allotted time for private members' day and still provides regular time for dealing with questions and motions for returns.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If Members' statements were adopted, that would relieve that, I guess, to some degree.

MR. JONSON: That would be, yes, part of the balancing process.

The other thing is that – perhaps I'm concerned about conserving paper – I do think that while there are many good questions in motions for returns on the Order Paper, there are many repetitious questions filling up a great deal of space each year. It would be, I think, more effective if there was more emphasis on the really key ones and those were debated in the House or preferably answered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The authors of those perhaps don't agree with you.

MRS. HEWES: I'm not going to get into that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, but seriously. A member puts it on the Order Paper. Give the hon. member the benefit of the doubt; he's sincerely interested in the answer. I mean, you've got to look at it in that way.

MRS. HEWES: Possibly if we do get freedom of information legislation, some of the necessity to ask these questions and to keep reasking them in whatever form you possibly can may be eliminated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Number 22, legislative calendar. Halvar, these are all yours, I think. As the fellow who ramrods the House, you obviously have a reason.

MR. JONSON: I think, Mr. Chairman, we've had some discussion of that already this afternoon with respect to a set day for the starting of the spring session and perhaps regular fall sessions and a sort of protected break around Christmas and those sorts of things: somewhat, I think, along the lines of what the House of Commons has adopted. I realize that going into great detail, the way they do perhaps in some of the American states, isn't feasible here because we don't have a set election date, but I do think it is something that if the committee has time we should have a look at to see if it could be improved. I think one of the benefits of this, besides perhaps having a more regular step-by-step process in

terms of operating the Legislature, is that the public will get used to it and look for certain things to happen at certain times. It'll help the understanding of the Legislature as far as the public is concerned.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Citizen forums: is that a role of an MLA?

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, can I ask a question of Halvar?

You're simply talking about the same subject that we talked about before. You're not talking about a legislative calendar that would – in the throne speech it says we will introduce legislation on this, this, this – give if not precise dates, some brackets as to when that legislation should be anticipated? I had thought I'd read something a bit more into that.

MR. JONSON: Well, number 27, depending on how far one could get with dealing with number 22, could be an eventual question for consideration: Bills should be introduced by a certain date, or there should be a minimum of two weeks between the introduction of a Bill and second reading, those kinds of things. I was thinking more of that under what was number 27.

3:18

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, I think that's very important, and I'm glad that it is in there someplace, because so often people say, "Well, when is this legislation anticipated to come forward; we want to be sure to be there," and so on. Many special interest groups and individual citizens are concerned, and we can't help them with that and you can't either, because we don't have a fixed schedule. We don't even have some sort of guidelines for it. I think that would be a useful thing to consider.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The citizen forum, Halvar.

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, I won't take much of the committee's time on this one, because perhaps only I am interested in the concept. One of the things that I have noticed is that much of all of our time, particularly government's time, is consumed with meeting with interest groups, lobbying groups. Not that they don't have a very important role but it seems to me we would have perhaps better decision-making and perhaps we wouldn't have to feel obliged to govern so much if there was a regular public debate in the constituencies on the various proposals coming forward from different groups. It would be a public meeting. I suppose it's conceivable that opposition people would attend, but it would, in my view of things, be initiated by the sitting MLA. It's something that I've heard has functioned in some of the states in Australia. It would be an idea of getting public involvement on many, many ideas and proposals vetted at the local level before they work their way up the system.

MR. FOX: I would just point out there, Mr. Chairman, that in our party's constitution, it requires that party MLAs hold, both before and after session, public information meetings or accountability sessions in their constituency. Maybe that's not quite the same as what you're talking about though. You're talking about more formalized opportunities.

MR. JONSON: I think the vast majority of MLAs, be they backbenchers or opposition or cabinet members, do that, but perhaps we don't put the same emphasis as we should on receiving proposals through that system. We do report, we do inform, we do discuss, we do account for what we've done, but it's already done.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fixed election date. Did we touch on that earlier? I think under fixed schedule. Under our British parliamentary system that's always the prerogative of the government, so that would be a dramatic change.

What do we mean by the deadline for introduction of legislation?

MR. JONSON: Well, Bettie and I were just discussing across the table that 25 and 26 are sort of related.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, okay.

The review of how the Leg. process is presented to the public. Are you getting at: we shouldn't go to second reading until a specific time after introduction?

MR. JONSON: Those types of things, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. I view that important, as an MLA.

Balancing the general public's versus the interest groups' influence. Well, welcome to the club.

MRS. HEWES: So what's your point?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The strongest union is AMA; second strongest is the legal profession, et cetera, et cetera. I don't know how you balance that. I mean, I view that as the function of the member.

I would just draw to your attention that under Mr. Manning six groups met with the cabinet each year in the cabinet room, one of which was the Alberta Medical Association. The Alberta Teachers' Association - there were six. Mr. Lougheed came to office under lots of election platforms. That gave way; there are no longer meetings with cabinet but with groups of MLAs, caucus committees. I think that was his attempt to balance that off; i.e., the vested interest group versus the other.

The use of referenda. We've opened a process, I guess, in Canada. You know, the state of Washington cannot build a million dollar school without going to the public in the form of referenda. They may refer to it as a plebiscite, but it's authority to spend the money. Now, with our October 26 we may have started something. Your suggestion was in there before that, I think, Halvar. A referendum, depending on definition, is binding on somebody, whereas a plebiscite is advisory. I have difficulty interpreting the two, but I think that's a fair . . . We went to the public on daylight saving time. Everybody wanted it, and it failed. It eventually passed because the cows were satisfied.

Bettie.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, of interest here, I don't know how many of you were present when the delegation of young political leaders from Australia was here. Anybody else meet them? The Senator was a delightful gentleman, and he of course was interested in what was happening in Canada at the time. This was a month and a half ago. He said, "Well, of course, we've quit having referenda in Australia." So I'd be interested in getting a bit more information from them about some of their reasoning. He said that in its simplest form it's a good idea. The idea is right, the time is right, but the process brings out some of the wrong kinds of things, and suddenly the idea is gone and you don't have another chance for however many months or years. He said they had simply stopped using the procedure because it was so flawed. I'd be interested if we can get some more information from Australia.

MR. JONSON: That'll be our first trip, Mr. Chairman, and I suggest you hurry because it's good weather down there.

MR. FOX: They were all walking around wearing yes buttons in the Alberta Legislature, these Australian delegates. So we asked them about referendums, seeing as how they'd had more experience. His comment was: "Well, people always vote against referendums. Don't you know that?" I said: "How on earth would we know that? We had one before I was born and now this one."

MR. JONSON: I think they said they'd had 44 tries and passed eight or something.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, down under they do things differently. Bob Hawke was Prime Minister, as I recall, and the caucus chose the cabinet, not the Prime Minister. Mr. Hawke is no longer there.

Attendance. This was brought to our attention by Bob Elliott, who is not here. We have a scorekeeper now in the House, the Sergeant-at-Arms. I don't know whether it referred to numbers in the House during debate, you know, government members sitting there, Bob, while you were out campaigning at night. I don't know what prompted it. We'll leave it for Bob Elliott.

Number 31. Reduce the Order Paper in terms of the size and scope.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Just for the public record, Mr. Chairman, I campaign all the time, not just at night. How am I doing in Lethbridge-West?

MR. CHAIRMAN: And your office is proof of that, right? You're elected.

Number 31. This might sound like a small detail. As you know, the Speaker addressed that and saved \$25,000 or something. I think Kurt had a comment on it. Did you, Kurt?

MR. GESELL: Well, we've made some significant changes.

MRS. HEWES: No problems with it. I think it's useful.

MR. FOX: No objections.

MR. GESELL: No, it's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Somebody made the suggestion that the Order Paper and Votes and Proceedings should be called agenda . . .

MR. GESELL: That's just plain language.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . and minutes, which is the previous day.

Published schedule for estimates debate. As you know, the Government House Leader looks at ministers' schedules and so on, and we attempt to schedule A, B, C, D and work those in. Now, that's not always satisfactory to all because changes have to be made. I think that with discussion between caucuses or House leaders that could maybe be done in a better fashion. I don't know. If we deal with the sitting hours of the House, we may have a whole new format. If we deal with subcommittees of estimates, it may be a whole new format.

Summary of cabinet meeting minutes to be published. As you know, I take an oath that if I disclose anything within 30 years, I'm prosecutable. I think cabinet minutes are confidential. The exception to that was the former Labour minister, John Munro, who just finished his trial after a million dollars. Sheila Copps replaced him. Mr. Mulroney, through an Order in Council, opened the cabinet minutes to disclose certain evidence. Minutes are always extremely confidential. The results of cabinet minutes, orders in council, must be published when the Lieutenant Governor

signs them, which is every Thursday at 11. So this Thursday, if there are orders in council, they'll be published.

Citizens' petitions to be debated. Are we talking about our Standing Orders now for petition?

3:28

MR. HAWKESWORTH: No. Well, I suppose, in a way. This was one that Gordon Wright had a fairly extensive motion on the Order Paper, if you recall, a number of years ago, the idea being that if a petition were signed by a certain minimum number of Alberta electors, that issue they were signing would require that a motion be submitted and a debate held in the Legislature. We can go back through the *Hansard* record or the Votes and Proceedings record and get the actual wording of the motion that was submitted. It was another way for the public to ensure that the Legislature is focusing its debate on a matter that the public considers urgent enough that a petition is gathered and signed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, as you know, Standing Order 15 makes provision for emergency debate, and if you can do certain things, then that becomes the focus of the day, even the conclusion.

Derek.

MR. FOX: Well, I think this is a really important area for us to consider. A lot of the things that we're proposing deal with things that are important to us as elected members – changing the length of debate or members' statements or the question period format – but I would submit that in the real world they don't matter very much to very many people. There are rules in our little goings-on here, and the extent to which they're important to people is how they influence their lives. What people want is to be included. They want to know what's going on here. They want to have access to what's going on here, and they want to have input.

I think the most significant recommendations this committee could make to the Legislature would deal with things like this. If there is some legitimate process that we can construct here that would give citizens the right to compel plebiscites or referenda or require debate on certain items in the Legislature, then they can see how their influence can be felt. I'm not pretending that these are simple issues, because there are lots of liabilities. If the rules aren't carefully constructed, you give powerful interest groups unfair advantage and unlimited opportunity to dominate the schedule, and I don't think that's right. We're talking about citizens at large. I think we need to really examine this whole issue very carefully.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If we'd had that in early 1990, would we have had GST if 85 percent were opposed to it? Is that removing government's hand from governing?

MR. FOX: Well, there are pros and cons. That's why I say we have to look at it and carefully think about the implications.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We talked about 35 this morning. We got some figures; I quoted \$2.1 million and \$2.4 million on these or something. Members' Services did a study on televising the House sitting, right? So I think we probably dealt with that.

Here's a very interesting one: open competition for all public service positions, the deputy minister down. Who's the author of that? Bob and Derek.

MR. FOX: I guess it involves trying to come up with some guidelines that would govern the hiring the government does. All governments are vulnerable to accusations of patronage appoint-

ments, and I think we have to be prepared to draw a line there that's clear, that people can understand, where if you as a minister are hiring someone to work directly with you in your office and you have impeccable taste and judgment, I think that's your business and you hire whom you want to work with. But in terms of someone working in the Department of Advanced Education, you know, a line civil service position, then I think people would agree that clearly open competition where everyone has the opportunity to apply and be considered on merit rather than on whom you know or what you've done for somebody – I think we have to have clear guidelines there to eliminate the cynicism that people have about the whole process.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess, listening to candidates who are currently campaigning, there's going to be dramatic change, if one can accept what is said. Now, I guess the caution would be, "Be careful what you enshrine in legislation, and enhance what you put in policy." But I hear what you're saying.

Well, there are all the suggestions. We kind of broke them into three categories.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Could I just make one last comment about item 37, election financing and disclosure? I appreciated that the federal report of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing was circulated. I found it very interesting reading. I don't know how many dozens and dozens and dozens of recommendations are contained in that report. I think that any one of our members who has taken the opportunity to go through that would recognize that it dwells on a lot of the questions we've been raising here in terms of the way parties function, the way they manage their business. It's in the public interest that that be done in an accountable way, and they make lots of suggestions about how political parties could be better at being accountable in their actions and in the way they conduct their business. It's a very interesting report, and I would hope that we might give this some consideration, how it might apply in the Alberta context.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Being mindful of the time, I would suggest we attempt to go through and see if we can set initially 10 priorities. I looked at it in the context of must do, should do, could do, but there's probably a variety of ways of dealing with it.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, there are some clusters here. They're considered one item, aren't they?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. I've got clusters here, and I want to speak to that.

I just wanted to mention that looking at the motion again – I hate to sound as though I'm harping:

Making it more responsive to the needs and values of the citizens of Alberta and elected Members within the context of our parliamentary system,

I think there are many members who want to see a major kind of reform as it applies to them and I think also the public. For example, I would take it as a given that media relations is one that has to be seriously addressed.

Now, I was going to suggest that we use a lottery system of voting, that we go through these and we take a vote. The top 10 we would deal with, and I ask you to use the weighty parcel in your documents under 5. We've got legislative process, financial accountability. I think in many ways it relates really to cabinet and policy items; i.e., order in council, cabinet minutes, and so on

were exclusive jurisdiction of cabinet. Then the independent panel for MLA salaries and so on: we've dealt with that anyway. Maybe it's another committee. So just looking at the list you have in front of you, we'll take a formal vote.

MRS. DACYSHYN: Mr. Chairman, I can write them on as we go through.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Yeah, that would be helpful.

MR. FOX: We've got two documents here, so you're clear that you want us to be looking at the one . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Legislative process is the heading? You have that?

MR. FOX: So it's the second document, not the first, not the randomly submitted document.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We dealt with the random. We tried to break them down into categories for ease.

MRS. B. LAING: These pages match your document.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. This is super. I didn't realize that. Remarkable to have a staff like this.

3:38

MR. FOX: You want us, then, to vote 10 times on what appears to me to be 35 items if you add it up now when all the pages are flipped. Is that what you're suggesting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. What I want us to end up with are 10 items we could deal with and assign some responsibility for the research to be done, because I want to get to this business of travel or budget and so on today, if we can do it.

MR. FOX: So what I'm asking is: like, number 4 would be one even though there are eight points there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. I think we should deal with them separately. I think sitting hours are pertinent to our members. Length of speeches or debates: how important is that? I think it's difficult to deal with that as one.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, with respect, I don't agree. I think that is one item, and that's what I've been saying all along. I think also that the subject matter called financial accountability is one, and then there is a whole series of subthings, some of which we may say are not significant at this point in time or may want to include. That's what I was speaking about, relating to clusters.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I guess when I look at number 4, the Standing Orders, some of those are much more important than others. For example, movement of Bills: I don't know how important people would feel that is. Committee structure: maybe that's very important. I had broken them down into what I thought were pertinent things. I think 4(a) is very important, and that could be considered on its own. Length of speeches, (b); the question period format. How do you feel about it? I think there's a lot in there that may turn the tide.

Halvar.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I think we should move through item by item. Using item 4, I think we should go through 4(a), 4(b), 4(c). My reason for saying that is that what we want to do as a committee, as I understand it from our previous meeting, is get some priority items on our agenda, some work to start so that we can actually get into a decision-making mode before too long and be able to advance with our work. Now, maybe all the items under number 4 will be one of our 10 priorities, but that whole package with all its interrelationships, which really is an overall review of Standing Orders, could consume all the time and effort and so on that we might have available and detract from some of the other things. So I think that we should be looking at those specific things which are at the top of our individual priorities, see what the voting consensus is so the group can get on with those. As you've said many times, Mr. Chairman, this doesn't mean that this will be all that we deal with, but it certainly sets our initial direction. Those other things can be dealt with in due course if we've got the time and resources.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before I hear from Derek and Bob. For example, if we voted on 4 in its entirety, yet (a), (b), and (c) were our priority, frankly what I'm hearing is that we'd be wasting a lot of time on (d), (e), (f), and so on. Yeah, I hear what you're saying.

Derek, Bob, and Bettie, please.

MR. FOX: I think it's important that we set our priorities and come up with a list of things that we deal with. I'm just concerned that if we were each going to have 10 votes to cast here in terms of setting our own priorities, by implication there are 25 things that we're not voting for. I'm just worried about the grouping. I might point out that on the page under financial accountability, item 6, which is an item all its own, accounting of Crown-controlled organizations, essentially is the same as item 2, expanding the authority of the Auditor General. So I just think we have to be careful how we define each individual item when it comes time to vote on them. I would argue, for example, that items 10, 11, and 12 on that same page could be classified under the review of the heritage savings trust fund. Instead of three items it's one. It may be relatively more important if you can vote for that kind of thing with one vote rather than having to spend three on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Items 10, 11, and 12 were passed by the heritage savings trust fund watchdog committee - my recollections of it. The government didn't act on it.

MR. FOX: Is that right?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, yeah. They were passed. I moved the motion.

Bob?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I'm just at this point wondering if we could perhaps take the categories you've outlined here, because I think what you've come up with in terms of grouping is very similar to the memo that I sent to you earlier about how a number of issues fall into different categories, like the procedures of the Alberta Legislature, the legislative process. The role of the Legislature in overseeing the business of government falls into a category of financial accountability. So the third category about how the public gets access to this place and how we, in turn, are accountable to the public is another sort of group of issues. I had a fourth one about the role of individual members, but in some

ways that fits also under the procedures, the legislative process. So it could be rolled into sort of three categories. If there were some consensus around the committee table about those being sort of three key areas that we're all agreed on, that we want to focus on those three areas, then maybe within each of the areas we could identify the three or the four top items, as opposed to taking a broad brush of 35 items and trying to prioritize all of them. If we could at least agree that we're agreed on the categories, then perhaps it might be a little easier to identify priorities within the categories themselves.

It's just an alternative I offer for your consideration, and it might then get at some of the concerns Derek has about three items dealing with the trust fund. You might not want to spend three of your 10 votes looking at that. The trust fund might be a low priority or a high priority within financial accountability.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think we could maybe end up with one heading, financial accountability, and roll about seven items in it. I want to assign some responsibility in terms of research and so on so that come next meeting we can get on with some of these things, because I would like us reporting to the House. For example, media, number 1: I think we can start to do things immediately in terms of matters that were raised today. It's my sense.

Well, let's go through them that way. We may end up with 14 priorities instead of 10, but I had suggested 10.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, one comment on it. I don't disagree with Bob, but I think that the Standing Orders one within the legislative processes as you've described them does come out separately. I know how long we have struggled with that as House leaders. Each year we make serious attempts to open up the Standing Orders and make the changes that I think are in some cases elementary; they're going to be very simple to do. I have no objection, when we get to 4, it being one category, if we simply, say, drop two or three of them off the bottom that are not going to make that significant a difference and get a priority within that. But I think Standing Orders is a separate one as I think financial accountability is, and the same applies there. I think there may be some in that that we simply don't have the time to deal with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think financial accountability draws an entire range.

Well, let's start and see how we are. We'll have a show of hands, and you can write them up there. Media relations/access: all those in favour?

3:48

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, can I ask a question just before you go on? It's your intent, then, in this one for instance, as a result of this morning's discussion, that when we next come there will be something that says that the recommendation deals with the four items that they told us need to be dealt with?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we'll be asking a lot of questions, like what do other jurisdictions do and so on.

MRS. HEWES: But we'll have some before us?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, that's my intent, something to consider.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you.

MR. FOX: So you want us to keep track of how many times we voted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it's an honour system here. I want you to remember how often. You know, use your fingers.

MR. FOX: On November 28 I'm going to vote early and vote often, and then on December 5 I'll have that chance too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, you'll sign the form.

MR. FOX: Five bucks is five bucks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Election of Speaker of the House.

Free votes. End of party discipline.

Now, with regard to the Standing Orders, I look at them and I see some far more important than others - I don't know what your views are - for example, the sitting hours of the House.

MRS. HEWES: Can we agree, first of all, that we think we need to open up the Standing Orders and rework them?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, there's no question in my view.

MRS. HEWES: That doesn't use up a vote? Then I don't want to use up a vote on some of these little Mickey Mouse ones.

MR. GESELL: No, I think we need to decide on individual items: sitting hours and so on. I thought we had agreed . . .

MRS. HEWES: . . . that we have a priority within a priority. All right; that's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Sitting hours of the House.

MRS. DACYSHYN: You might have to do that again. Sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Maybe I should be voting. No.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: No. Only when there's a tie.

MR. FOX: You don't count.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't count. Thank you.

MR. FOX: You're disenfranchised.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, the length of speeches and length of debates. I recognize that it's fraught with problems because of arguments heard.

MR. GESELL: Could we change that to participation in debates and the length of speeches? I would feel a heck of a lot more comfortable with that. My point on this was that I would like more members to participate in the debate. I don't want to curtail debate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, that was a strong case made earlier. Okay, participation in debate and length of speeches. Is that . . .

MR. GESELL: Yes. I can live with that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We want to include Mr. McEachern, you know.

MR. FOX: So, Mr. Chairman, are the votes that people cast under item 4 included in the 10 votes we get to cast in establishing our own priorities?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we may end up with 14. I don't know how we're going to adapt this. I'm trying to get a meaningful list. Okay, then (b).

MR. GESELL: We're on (c)?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item (b).

MR. GESELL: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You spoke to it since.

MR. GESELL: I'll vote for it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. To review the whole question period format.

Members' statements: I sense there's a fairly strong feeling for that.

Movement of Bills: that's a pretty popular one.

Committee structure: that's from the standing order, isn't it?

MRS. HEWES: Budget review by committees, yes.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Formalized public hearings by standing committees, et cetera.

MRS. HEWES: Yeah, that's the whole of estimates.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That goes all the way through, eh?

MRS. DACYSHYN: That goes just to here, and then we've got (g).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motions for returns, written questions. Any problems with that now?

MR. GESELL: To me there's a relationship here between (g) and item 7, and you pointed that out previously, Bettie. Should they be linked somehow?

MRS. HEWES: Well, they aren't linked as it is. I'm not using up my 10 in this prioritizing in item 4.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I almost sense that the purpose of written questions and motions for returns is to find out something, and access to information seems to find out something.

MRS. HEWES: Well, it might be, depending on what the legislation is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Just carrying on. Published schedule for estimates debate is something that is probably done now.

Attendance.

Order Paper.

Fixed schedules: now, you recall the discussion on that.

MRS. HEWES: But isn't that part of Standing Orders, sir?

MR. GESELL: Yes, it would be.

MRS. HEWES: I think it's part of 4, you see.

MR. GESELL: But obviously if we go for it, it would necessitate some changes in the Standing Orders. Most of these things, if we vote for them and agree on some recommendations, will necessitate some changes in the Standing Orders.

MRS. HEWES: Not most of them. Many of them.

MR. GESELL: Well, all right. Many of them.

MRS. HEWES: That's why I think rewriting Standing . . . Well, I said it.

MR. FOX: I would argue that fixed schedule, that implies a start and perhaps an end to every legislative session, has broader political implications and is more complex on its own than members' statements during the day.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Louise?

MRS. KAMUCHIK: The fixed schedule could also apply to - for instance, the Committee of Supply is 25 days. You can have fixed schedule for debating the throne speech, which is 10 days.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are we ready for the vote? Okay; fixed schedules.

Parliamentary delegation reports.

Access to information.

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. EVANS: When I look at access to information and I look at whistle blower protection, they're obviously not the same thing, but I think they're directly related one to another, which is opening up the process and protecting the legitimate comment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you suggesting we combine the two then?

MR. EVANS: I would feel more comfortable with that, because I don't really want to use two votes for items 7 and 8, but I think they're both important.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you agree we combine them, Halvar?

MR. JONSON: Well, I don't agree with the combination, because my first priority is with number 7. I can see merits in discussing number 8, but there's a whole set of other considerations in terms of protection and so on there. I guess I'm worried about getting bogged down by putting two of those together.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bettie and Derek.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, the government is already committed to 7.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MRS. HEWES: So why are we using that here? If we have comments, I think it's fair to put them in, but I'd like to see the Bill that the government is going to place before us. It may be exactly what I need.

MR. FOX: Yeah. The way I see it, the onus is on the government to live up to its commitment to present such legislation, and as members we'll have an opportunity to debate that and recommend changes to it in the Assembly. We all agree that it's important; whether you guys do the job you're supposed to do or not is yet to be seen. For the committee to take time to try and draft a Bill that government is supposed to be drafting I think is not productive.

MRS. HEWES: Redundant. I think so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Brian?

MR. EVANS: Well, what I'm hearing, I think, Mr. Chairman, is that we would put some kind of a footnote to our report that we encourage this to be brought forward because we think it's important, but we're not going to recreate the wheel.

MR. FOX: Yeah, redesign the wheel. We anticipate that this is being done already.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because if the Attorney General says, "Well, I've read the Select Committee on Parliamentary Reform, and they did not include access to information; therefore we won't proceed with the Bill . . ."

Halvar, and then Bob.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I think it would give this legislation some added impetus and importance if this committee supported it. The other thing is that personally I'd like to record my vote in favour of number 7 as opposed to picking and choosing through the financial accountability section, because I think good freedom of information legislation addresses those specifics, and we can go on to work on other things.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, can we come back to getting a view, can we combine 7 and 8? Would they encompass what we're after, or do you want them separate? Let's have a show of hands. How many want them combined into one? Well, there are four there. So 7 and 8 are combined.

3:58

MR. GESELL: They're not the same.

MR. FOX: I think they're unrelated.

MRS. HEWES: Somebody convince me, please, that they're related.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Someone convince me.

MR. EVANS: Can I speak to it, Mr. Chairman? The access to information is, as I understand it, a principle that we should ensure that the general public has as much information as possible. That is precisely the reason for whistle blowers' protection: those who have inside information can make that information available to all without fear of recourse. It's all the same general philosophy, which is: let's be sure that the citizens of Alberta have the very best and most accurate information possible. Therefore, if we do have those insiders who have information, let's be sure that they

can divulge that information, and if it's done bona fides, they are protected from recourse from the company, the individual that they snitch on, if you will, that they disclose information about.

MR. FOX: Well, I think they're unrelated. Access to information legislation to me means the government living up to its responsibility to make information available to people, that people can request information about what government's doing, what government's spending money on, who did what when. That's an important part of accountability. Whereas whistle blowers' protection deals with citizens providing information to government or to one another. It's just a different process altogether, both important in their own right but linked in only a curious sort of way in my mind.

I'd just like to say in terms of access to information legislation that I think every member of this committee agrees that that's a very important thing, that it's absolutely necessary. What we're trying to decide is whether or not we devote a lot of our committee's time to discussing that item, you know, whether or not that's a prudent use of our time, because the understanding is that it's being put into legislative form so that we can debate it in the Legislature.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I ask you to keep an open mind on all this now. The Conservative Party pass resolutions at their annual meetings which are advisory to government. New Democrats pass resolutions at their annual meeting which are binding on their government. So I ask you: get that out of your mind and keep an open mind. Okay? Now, I just ask you that. I don't want you married to a resolution passed by your party.

Did we decide whether 7 and 8 were combined? I don't think we resolved that. I heard persuasive arguments. Vote on them separately then.

We've dealt with access to information. We haven't. Okay, all those in favour of number 7, access to information? Okay.

Whistle blowers' protection. All in favour?

MR. GESELL: I've used up my vote.

MR. FOX: Well, actually I may have too.

MR. GESELL: I've used up my vote.

MRS. HEWES: No, you couldn't have.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Count again.

MR. FOX: Oh, yeah. There were more than that on whistle blowers' protection.

MR. CHAIRMAN: She's only counting the arms.
Number 9, citizens' petitions.

MR. FOX: What's that number beside initiatives?

MRS. DACYSHYN: Oh, nothing. That's part of the same.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Initiatives to force plebiscites or referenda.

MR. FOX: Citizen initiatives.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But the title is citizens' petitions to be debated.
Recall.

MRS. HEWES: Yes, I'd want to go for recall.

MR. EVANS: That'll be 22 now, Bettie.

MRS. HEWES: It's my 10th by my own scoring.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Television broadcasts of all sittings.

Citizens' forums held in constituencies on a regular basis.

The preparation of legislation, a standard sequence and structure and deadline for introduction.

Review how long . . .

MRS. DACYSHYN: No, "long" is wrong.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Review how the legislative process is presented to the public.

Balancing general public versus the group influence.

MR. GESELL: Can I just back up to 14? That includes that two-week period between introduction of a Bill?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, yeah.

MR. GESELL: Okay.

MRS. HEWES: Oh, that's not just review. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Remember, the case was made that substantive Bills introduced impacting on people should . . .

MRS. HEWES: Yeah, all right. I'm at 11.

MR. GESELL: You're voting for 14?

MR. JONSON: So long as you're voting on the ones I want, you can do that, Bettie, but otherwise no.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Halvar.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Balancing the general public versus group influence.

Use of referenda.

Fixed election date.

MRS. DACYSHYN: That's it for this section.

I'm sorry, Derek.

MR. FOX: Derek is voting on that one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. That's the end of that.

MRS. DACYSHYN: I just gave you financial accountability.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, okay. I don't know how many votes you've got left.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Chairman, I really think financial accountability is another category, and it's coming back to my earlier comment that within that category I think we could perhaps establish some priorities. I don't think anybody is suggesting that financial accountability is something we're not interested in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No one would argue against financial accountability. I guess it's the detailing within that we might have

difficulty with. For example, it's now a policy of the government that the Financial Administration Act exempts lottery revenues from the GRF. I mean, that's a current policy.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, can we assume that 10, 11, and 12 are rolled into one, in which case we've only got 10, and we can just go on to the next category?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, appoint an independent trustee for the heritage savings trust fund.

MRS. HEWES: But isn't that all one discussion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the Act now states that Executive Council is the investment committee of the heritage fund, right? I mean, that's the current statute. I guess the implication there is that you'd remove that and appoint something.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: The trust fund usually has a trustee given the mandate to be responsible and accountable for that trust fund.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, I guess anything that's trustee implies that there's a trustee somewhere.

MR. FOX: And a trustor.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would almost like to see financial accountability as a topic with all its tails. Who could argue with regular budget updates? You get four copies of the heritage savings trust fund annually. I'm trying to end up what's achievable.

Halvar.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry to interrupt. I just respectfully suggest that perhaps we have a number of items which seven or eight members of the committee have voted that staff could work on for our next meeting. I think members would usually stay for additional time, but we've reached the time of adjournment. I know I have to leave, and I would like to have my voting chance if we're going to go any further with this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, there's been a suggestion by the deputy chairman that out of the ones we've already voted, we've got a plateful. Let us then pursue at the next meeting, depending on our time, what we'll do with the financial accountability ones.

There were two quick items I just wanted to discuss, Halvar, before you leave, if that's agreeable to all.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's this business of trying to give Louise some guidance with regard to budget. It seems to me – and I need your help on this – that we should look at what other jurisdictions are doing. Kurt Gesell made the case that we shouldn't be doing it unless those other jurisdictions are sitting. That makes a lot of sense. Two items that sit there. One is economy of time, probably economy of money. If we were to go to Ottawa while they're sitting and while we were there perhaps have a subcommittee at Queen's Park, a subcommittee, maybe the same one, at Quebec City, and a subcommittee in the maritimes, looking at maybe three days, a maximum of four, that's one avenue.

4:08

Another avenue is a symposium here in the province by inviting people – Bob, I think that was your suggestion – maybe specific written invitations for suggestions to a variety, all the way from the Law Society to the chambers of commerce to whatever, outlining some parameters in a letter from this committee asking for responses. And then finally the Canadian Parliamentary Association as part of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has meetings annually. They're meeting in Quebec City on February 12 and 13, the presiding officers of the Legislatures. Would that not be a golden opportunity for members of this committee or a subcommittee of this committee, either way, to meet with those people and, if we correspond with them, to perhaps get items on the agenda for their consideration? Would there not be merit in that? We'd tie that right in with the CPA business. So there are really three or four options open to us.

What I would like to do is try and give Louise guidance in terms of preparing a budget. If we say that we would go east for – I don't know what's practical. Four days, three days? While we were there, we'd meet the House of Commons committee, the Queen's Park committee, and the National Assembly committee.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, if we're going to go to Ottawa and Toronto, to Queen's Park, which I love doing any time, I think we have to have a very, very clear idea before we go of exactly what it is we want to know. I want us to have some considerable discussion on what our agenda is, what the questions are that we believe we need answered. I tend to favour Bob's idea of a symposium here, because I think we probably could learn as much by bringing people to us. But I'm keeping an open mind vis-à-vis your direction, sir, on both those options. I'm not in favour of going off to Ottawa unless we know precisely the things that we want to learn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I thought we'd almost established that here.

Brian, and then Derek.

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, I would have some concern about just getting on a plane and going to Ottawa and trying to work things out from there. I like the concept of meeting with the Canadian Parliamentary Association. If that's in eastern Canada in any event, we can look into the cost of going there and then try to get a sense of, during that time frame, the middle of February, what Legislatures will be sitting. We know that the House of Commons will be sitting. It seems to me to be an opportunity to be fairly efficient with our dollars. So perhaps we could just give Louise instruction to look at the cost of attending and finding out about the feasibility of us attending at least in a subcommittee at the CPA meeting and then report back to the next meeting.

MR. FOX: Well, I certainly have no quarrel with information being gathered so that we can make better decisions, but you know, there are so many issues here that we could just sort of discuss and brainstorm ad nauseam. We don't want to lose sight of the challenge before us, which is to come up with some good solid recommendations to the Legislature that are going to make a difference to the way Albertans feel about their democratic institutions and the people who serve them. I think we need to come up with a schedule of meetings and start discussing these things that we've identified as priorities. There may be several of them that we can come up with good recommendations on without feeling that we need to travel to Ottawa or have people from other

jurisdictions come and tell us what they think. There may be some of these items that we can resolve and make progress on. That being said, there may be some items that upon our consideration we say: "Doggone it, we need some more information. We don't know enough about this to really do a good job." Then we can work from there.

You know from previous conversations that I feel strongly about the merits of a symposium organized here to highlight what we're doing and to give people a chance to take an interest in what we're doing and hopefully as well to save money as opposed to traveling. I just think we need to come up with a rigorous schedule that we are committed to and start making some decisions here as soon as we can.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're gradually losing the committee, and I said to 4 o'clock. Looking at my schedule with my commitments, I'd recommend our next meeting be December 15 at 2 in the afternoon. We purposely picked a Tuesday for you, and I've worked my schedule around that.

MRS. HEWES: At 2 o'clock, sir?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, 2 o'clock.

Now, that's recognizing that a lot of things can happen, I know, because of the new leader and so on.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Not at 10 but at 2.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At 2.

Okay. Can we have a motion to adjourn?

MR. EVANS: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carried.

[The committee adjourned at 4:15 p.m.]

