

Ms. Lorje: — I will ask for the Clerk of the Assembly to begin the proceedings.

Ms. Woods: — Well good morning, everybody. I think everyone should know who I am at this point; at least I hope you do. The first order of business this morning is the election of the Chair. And I will be presiding over that until the Chair is elected. So if I could call for nominations, please.

Mr. Trew: — I nominate Ms. Lorje.

Ms. Woods: — Are there any other nominations? All right, nominations will cease then. If I could have a motion to that effect. Mr. Trew.

Mr. Trew: — I move that nominations cease.

Ms. Woods: — And a motion . . . okay, the motion is that Pat Lorje be elected to preside as Chair of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations. All those in favour? All right, the motion is carried. And I'll ask Ms. Lorje to take the Chair, and carry on from here.

The Chair: — Thank you, Meta. I will now call for nominations for Vice-Chair just in the off chance I'm sick or get run out of office. Ms. Hamilton.

Ms. Hamilton: — The first doesn't happen very often, and I'm not certain about the second. I would nominate Kim Trew.

The Chair: — Are there any further nominations? Any further nominations? Is there a motion that nominations cease?

Ms. Hamilton: — I would move that nominations do cease.

The Chair: — Thank you. If we can have the appropriate form. Unanimously then, Kim Trew will be Vice-Chair of the committee.

Today will be a short meeting, and depending on what committee members decide, we may have short meetings for the whole balance of this session. I've talked with various MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) about their schedules. I'm sorry I haven't yet talked with the official opposition about their schedule. I expect to do that later today. But it is clear that at least the third party would like to have meetings over by 10 a.m. because they have other caucus meetings. I wonder, Mr. Bjornerud, or Mr. McLane, do you have time constraints do you know?

Mr. McLane: — Yes, we do and we'd like to discuss that with you at a later date.

The Chair: — Sure. All right.

Then what we will do, just for today, is aim for a 10 a.m. adjournment and then we will figure out what all the schedules are of the various caucuses, and try to schedule the meetings so that they can be as least disruptive and most productive for all sides of the House.

Today what we're going to do is have two orientation sessions, one on the library services that are offered through the Legislative Library, and then the other on the rules and procedures and the scope in this committee.

I would like to then finish off with an indication of agenda items for next meeting only, and then again, as I say, I will discuss the question of agenda items with the various parties so that we can arrive at a mutually agreeable agenda schedule for the next couple of months.

Before I ask Michele Howland from the library to speak, I'd like to welcome the three brand-new, totally — what? — refreshing, excited, interested members who haven't had experience at Crown Corporations yet. Lindy Kasperski, Bob Bjornerud — no, Bjornerud, I'm sorry I will constantly mispronounce it and I'll try to learn — and Harvey McLane.

Welcome to the committee. You will find that this committee will either be the most boring experience in your life or the most challenging and exciting, and quite frankly a lot of it will depend on what you bring to the committee. There is a lot of scope for this committee to be a very useful, a very productive committee of the legislature.

And as I indicated earlier in a private conversation, this is the one opportunity that members of the legislature have to really get in and dig around and find out the operations of our major Crowns. Certainly with the budget and estimates, the line departments are very carefully scrutinized in the Legislative Assembly itself. But it is through the Crown Corporations Committee that members of the legislature get an opportunity to really carefully and closely examine the operation of the Crowns. Having said that, I will now turn the proceedings over to Michele Howland from the Legislative Library.

Ms. Howland: — Thank you very much. I'd like to thank everyone for giving me the opportunity to speak to you about the information services that the Legislative Library is offering to this committee. And I will be brief. I will talk about three of the services that we offer.

The first service is basically the service we offer to members on an individual basis. It's our current issue service which includes notification of new materials that the library has received on designated topics. These include books, magazines, journals, newspaper clippings, and on-line information.

The blue handout that Monique is passing around includes samples from two parts of this current issue service. There are included in the packet of newspaper clippings on Crown corporations from the last three or four months. I think most of the clippings are from the *Leader-Post* or the *Star-Phoenix*. The other thing included in the hand-out is a list of citations on Crown corporations from 1995 from one of the CD-ROMs to which the library subscribes. And certainly if you are interested in receiving any of the articles or items listed on that list, please drop it off at the reference desk. Just highlight what you want. We'll be happy to retrieve it for you.

And the other part of the current issue service which we provide is a new book alert service. It includes new books that are published by trade publishers as well as the new government publications that are received by the library from other jurisdictions, and we also provide a table of contents service from magazines and journals to which the library subscribes. And certainly the committee would be welcome to become part of this service and the service could be customized for the committee through discussions with the Chair and the Clerk and could be distributed to the Chair and Clerk or to all members of the committee.

It doesn't matter really, in terms of the distribution, how you want to do it. It's been done both ways. Some committees have, in the past, received materials through the Chair and other committees have decided that all members will receive copies of the material.

The second service that we're able to offer is the compilation of bibliographies on designated topics, and in fact we could do a comprehensive or selective bibliography on Crown corporations in Canada, or on a specific Crown that you are interested in. These could be sent to the interested members or to the Chair and the Clerk.

The third service is perhaps — I think some of the members will be familiar with this if they've attended Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conferences — it's really the provision of what I call an information or backgrounder kit on specific subjects with which the committee wishes to familiarize itself. And in this case again, it would be preferable if the request could be channelled through the Chair.

This is very similar to the kit service that we provide for members going to conferences. It includes copies of newspaper clippings, chapters of books, journal articles, and on-line information that we pull down either through the Net or from some of the commercial databases that we access.

But without wishing to sound too negative, it is important to realize that this is not a full research service; it is really a collecting and distribution service. We do not have the capabilities at this time to actually do a full research service similar to what is done at the Library of Parliament or the Ontario Legislative Library where in fact the material is analysed and briefing notes or research reports are presented. We cannot provide you with that.

But certainly in terms of . . . with what Ms. Lorje said regarding having a chance to get really into topics regarding Crown corporations, we hope that we can provide the committee with what is publicly available on any topic that you wish to have dealt with.

Are there any questions? That's about it in terms of the . . . very short.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Michele, is there any capabilities for members to download files directly from your services?

Ms. Howland: — No, not really. If you have access to our

on-line catalogue you could, you know, you can do print screens probably and download the records. But in terms of the sections of books or magazine articles, no. No, not at this time.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I've managed to find the articles I've wanted but not been able to get them so I was wondering about it.

Ms. Howland: — Usually in terms of the members' mail-out that we send out, we provide what's called a quick format, let's say for purposes of discussion, from *The Globe and Mail* and that quick format, then if you're interested in the full text of that, we can retrieve it for you. But you know, unless you're willing to subscribe to *The Globe* services, you know, you would use the library services for that.

The Chair: — We don't want to be a complete do-it-yourself society yet then. We're going to inch into the 21st century technology here.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I thought it was back in.

The Chair: — Well some of us prefer to go boldly forth even if we get our face rubbed in it. Any other questions? Doreen. I'm going to use first names if people don't mind. It's a lot easier.

Ms. Hamilton: — Yes, I'm interested in the information in the backgrounder kits. I've been fortunate enough to receive packages when I'm going to a conference and I have to say, Michele, they're well done and get you really well prepared for a variety of topics. You are saying that's also available if there's a topic of interest that you're following through the Crown, in particular the Crowns, and you can provide the same kind of gathering of material?

Ms. Howland: — Well we can provide what's publicly available. You know, if it's published and released, we can endeavour to get it for you through whatever. We can act as a filter. The library does that. We can make phone calls for you where you may not want the people at the other end to know. We have that sort of filtering capability that's very useful for some clients.

Ms. Hamilton: — We're looking at trends of deregulation and how it impacts on Crowns. You could do some gathering of the materials . . . (inaudible) . . . are available.

Ms. Howland: — We can gather it. We can't tell you how. We can't analyse what . . . but we can certainly collect the available information and present it to you in sort of an information kit form, similar to the kits for the conferences.

Ms. Hamilton: — Good. Thank you.

The Chair: — At this point, I'll tell you a little anecdote of what happened to me when I was asking for the services, and why you need to have the human intervention in there.

I wanted to look at waste management because an issue in my constituency was the whole question of a relocation of a landfill. And so I was looking at waste management and I asked

the library to do me a search, and up popped this book that I thought was really interesting called *Waste and Folly in the Private Sector*. And I thought, well isn't that interesting; I can hear about how the private sector is handling their garbage. I ordered the book and it turned out to be waste in terms of hiring too many contract employees to do public relation in communications and things like that. So it's really important that you know what you're looking for and then screen it through even after that.

Any other questions from members of the committee about the library services? I want to emphasize how useful it is. The staff are extremely efficient, and I found . . . my first year as an MLA, I don't think I used the library services at all. But after that I started using them much more frequently and I'll tell you, this is probably the best library service you will find anywhere on the North American continent. They're extremely efficient and they have access to stuff from all over the world. And it will immensely ease your workload as a legislator by taking advantage of the library services.

Thank you very much, Michele.

Ms. Howland: — Thank you. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — The next item of business then is a general orientation to the committee — to procedures, standard terms of reference, and so forth. And Meta has prepared a fairly huge presentation . . .

Ms. Woods: — Well it's about 25 minutes, depending on how quickly I speak.

The Chair: — You will hear in here embedded all sorts of gems, so you'll want to listen carefully.

Ms. Woods: — Thank you, Pat. As Pat was saying, what I intend to do is to provide you with some of the background and history of the committee so that you know the context in which the procedures and operations that we follow here come from, because they are somewhat unique compared to the other standing committees that we have at this legislature.

First of all, the mandate of the Crown Corporations Committee is derived from the Legislative Assembly in the form of the committee's terms of reference. The terms of reference are the means by which the Assembly delegates certain powers to the committee. Because of this, the committee is restricted to considering only those matters which have been referred or committed to it by the House.

You may recall some motions being passed on opening day, including one which defined the general powers of all standing committees. And I'd just like to read that to you to provide you with a background of where the standing committees come from. And that motion said:

That the said standing committees be severally empowered to examine and inquire into all such matters and things as may be referred to them by this Assembly, and to report from time to time their observations thereon; with power to

send for persons, papers, and records, and to examine witnesses under oath.

The following day, on Friday, several more motions were passed, and these dealt with referring specific business to the different committees. And these are often referred to as committee referral motions. This is a traditional way for committees to receive their terms of reference and are usually moved at the earliest opportunity at the beginning of a new session.

The terms of reference for this committee differ from that, in that our terms of reference are contained in the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly*, otherwise known as the rule book or the standing orders. There is a permanent referral mechanism in the rule book dealing with the Crown corporations, and this originated out of the fourth report that was presented to the House in 1994. And I do have copies of the report here for particularly the newer members so that you know a little bit of the background of where a lot of the changes that we follow originated from.

The intention of including this permanent referral mechanism in the standing orders was to enable the committee to proceed with its examination of the standing . . . of the annual reports and financial statements without having to wait for the House to specifically refer them to the committee each time.

I'll just summarize briefly what the rules are. They're contained in rule 100. Subsection 1 is the operative expression of what the committee is expected to do — specifically to review the annual reports and financial statements of the various Crown corporations and related agencies and to question their operations.

Subsection 2 of rule 100 provides the permanent referral mechanism, and this refers the reports and financial statements of the Crown corporations to this committee.

Finally, subsection 3 requires the calling of a committee meeting within four weeks after the start of a new legislature or a new session so that the committee will begin its work quite quickly.

This year you may recall that an extra Crown Corporation Committee referral motion was necessary, and this referred, again, all the work that was outstanding at the end of the last legislature. I think Monique has handed out to you a memorandum which outlines the work that was outstanding at the end of the last legislature. So it gives you an idea of where the committee stood when the election was called last year.

I'd also like to mention that the Assembly can expand the committee's terms of reference by referring a written question to the committee. That being said, the committee probably hasn't received a written question for about 20 years.

The committee itself may also decide to review its mode of operation and terms of reference and make recommendations to the Assembly. That was what it did with the fourth report. But apart from that particular report, there haven't been many

occasions in the past 50 or so years of the committee's history where they have chosen to change their procedures.

Now that I've covered what the committee is expected to do, I'd like to say a few words on those Crown corporations that are called before this committee. In this province, the government can create a Crown corporation in one of two ways — either by invoking The Crown Corporations Act or by means of a new and distinct legislation. Therefore we can have Crowns that are created by order in council under The Crown Corporations Act or Crown corporations that are created under a specific Act of their own.

But no matter how the corporation might be created, it should be subject to the terms of The Tabling of Documents Act. As this title suggests, this Act governs the tabling in the Assembly of all and sundry annual reports and financial statements. And that is the chief mechanism by which the committee receives its work. The committee cannot call a corporation before it until a report has been tabled.

These annual reports and financial statements, once tabled in the House, are distributed to all the members. And I'd like to take the opportunity to remind members to bring their copy with them when that Crown is called before the committee. The Clerk's office does have a small number of additional copies of the report, but usually when they're brought to the committee they're used to give to those individuals that haven't received their own copy, such as members of the press or other interested individuals or members of the public that might come to our meeting.

Since the . . .

The Chair: — Excuse me. I think what we'll do, since this is an orientation session, I'll just entertain questions as you go along. I think that that will probably make it a little easier.

Mr. McLane: — Just a question on what you're reading. And you're going very quickly and I appreciate that. And I like that. Therefore I beg to question: will you have a copy of what you're presenting to us, for us at the end the . . .

Ms. Woods: — Not at the end of today. It will appear in the *Hansard*. But if you wanted, I could provide a copy of it. I've got a few notes on here that I . . . of changes I made, but I certainly could clean it up and provide you with a copy if you like.

Mr. McLane: — How quickly will we get *Hansard*?

A Member: — Tomorrow.

A Member: — I think it's three days usually.

Ms. Woods: — Probably next week sometime.

Mr. McLane: — Okay, then I'd appreciate a copy of your report.

Ms. Woods: — Sure.

The Chair: — One of the informal procedures that we have here is that when something is circulated to one committee member, it's circulated to everyone. So the report will be cleaned up for everyone.

Ms. Woods: — All right . . . (inaudible) . . . Since the committee's inception in 1946, it has for the most part had the discretion to determine which of the various Crown corporations and related agencies it will review, provided that an annual report has been tabled in the Assembly. The committee has never found it necessary to specifically define the term Crown corporation. Instead the list of corporations reviewed has been based largely on tradition and on decisions made by the committee when a new entity is created.

In the fourth report, which was handed out to you, the committee signified its intention to continue the practice of deciding which corporations it would review, but that in the future it would focus primarily on those corporations and organizations which generate income from sources outside the General Revenue Fund. The rationale for this was to try to avoid any overlap with the work of the Public Accounts Committee.

Accordingly, the committee indicated in the fourth report that it would concentrate its work on a number of corporations which they set out. They include the Crown Investments Corporation, SaskTel, SaskPower, etc. but the list is included in the fourth report if you're interested in seeing it. Despite setting out this list of corporations that the committee will look at, the committee does reserve the right to call any Crown corporation or related agency that it deems appropriate.

The schedule for the review of the corporations is decided by the chairperson in consultation with members of the committee. And it's normally the Chair who will contact the ministers to arrange for the schedule.

The next area I want to comment on is the role of the Crown Investments Corporation. As a parent holding company of those Crown corporations that generate income outside of the General Revenue Fund, the Crown Investments Corporation, otherwise referred to as CIC, is a primary focus of the committee. The Assembly, through its adoption of the committee's fourth report, has directed CIC to provide additional information on its own operations in order to establish the context for a broader review of CIC and the various corporations under its jurisdiction. In particular, the minister responsible for CIC is to provide the committee with the following.

Firstly, an annual statement which reflects CIC's mandate, goals, objectives, performance indicators, the structure of its investments, the prospects and rationale for the retention and divestment of investments. CIC is then to make an annual presentation to the committee based upon this annual report.

CIC is also to provide notification, in writing, within a 90-day period after any significant transaction. The letter is to contain the objectives of the significant transaction, the financial implications, and a statement of change in liabilities for CIC in Saskatchewan and the authority under which the transaction

occurred. The committee did define the term, significant transaction, and it defined it as those transactions that involve either the acquisition of a major investment or asset or the assumption of a major liability, a material change in the terms and conditions governing an existing investment or asset, or the divestment of a major asset or investment.

Any questions on that?

Okay, the next area I want to address is the role of ministers in the Crown Corporations. It's important to note that in this committee, unlike the Public Accounts Committee, it is the minister responsible for the corporation that will appear before the committee and answer the questions of committee members.

The minister invariably attends with corporate officials who will assist him in providing the answers. You'll probably ask why it is the minister and not simply the officials, as in the case with the Public Accounts Committee. The answer is somewhat complicated, and I can give you a response from an historical perspective.

Until 1944 there were, for all intents and purposes, very few government entities in this province that we might properly call Crown corporations. In Canada, and throughout the Commonwealth for that matter, Crown corporations had been for many decades an "accepted instrument of public policy".

Three good examples in this country are the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), the CNR (Canadian National Railway Company) and Trans-Canada Airlines. For corporations such as these, the conventional view maintained that if governments found it necessary to pursue commercial operations, then the Crown corporations should be left free from political interference.

This view persisted for reasons of commercial competitiveness and in the interest of efficiency. Many prime ministers are on record complaining about Members of Parliament attempting to meddle in the affairs of a competitive Crown corporation. The Crown corporations were deemed to be autonomous, and therefore every attempt was made to remove them from the realm of parliamentary control despite the fact that large amounts of public money were often involved.

Governments were reluctant to make its ministers directly responsible or accountable for the Crown corporations. One can find many instances in the House of Commons *Hansard* where the Speaker ruled questions out of order because they referred to the internal management of an autonomous corporation. Simply put, such questions were by practice out of order.

Members had really very few avenues to pursue Crown corporation activities, except in the Public Accounts Committee. But even then, for those corporations that were called, the reviews were sporadic and in no way systematic. This led members, particularly opposition members, to have little faith in the review.

In Saskatchewan, The Crown Corporations Act of 1945 greatly expanded the number of publicly owned enterprises. For the

first time in Canada, ministers were made directly responsible and accountable for the corporations. To reflect this attitude, the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations was created in 1946 to provide a forum for review.

It was the first such committee in the Commonwealth, and the Clerk of the Assembly at the time, George Stephens, liked to point out that the British parliament copied Saskatchewan when it created a similar committee in the 1950s. And you will find on the record similar claims being made by T.C. Douglas and the Liberal leader of the day, Walter Tucker.

The Chair: — You also should be aware that this is now the 50th anniversary of this committee, so let's make sure that we can really make a big splash this year.

An Hon. Member: — It is the official opposition's intent that we will not let this . . . (inaudible) . . . become boring.

The Chair: — Thank you.

Ms. Woods: — The terms of reference of the Public Accounts Committee could have been explicitly expanded to include the review of Crown corporations, but it wasn't. Government enterprises were viewed as an important enough sector to be distinguished from all other government activities. None the less, from the beginning, the Crown Corporations Committee was designed to parallel the Public Accounts Committee in its method of operation.

The exception of course was that the annual reports and financial statements of the various Crown corporations replaced the public accounts documents as a basis of review. Moreover, from the beginning, ministers were made to attend as witnesses rather than their officials. This is mainly to underscore the accountability aspect, but also partly because of complaints that in the Public Accounts Committee, the civil servants had been at times the subject of political attacks. It was felt that because Crown corporations were so-called instruments of public policy, the minister should take full responsibility to answer the questions.

The practice today is to continue to require the attendance of ministers, but as you will note in the fourth report on page 6, ministers have recently been allowed to designate corporate officials to directly address the committee and to answer questions directly from members. So in some respects we are sliding in the opposite direction a bit.

The Chair: — Well except for the fact that there still is total ministerial responsibility and accountability. The ministers have to designate that they would allow their officials to speak directly to the committee but the ministers are responsible for whatever their officials say.

So what that means in practice is that the ministers generally do not only send their officials, they come as well so that they know what's being said on their behalf.

Ms. Woods: — In any event, the overriding objective of the Crown Corporations Committee was to provide a regular and

systematic basis of review for all Crown corporations, and for the most part, over the committee's 50-year history, it seemed to be accepted that anything but a post-mortem review could spell disaster for a commercial enterprise.

That remained the case until 1994 when the committee concluded that the time had come to expand the scope of review. The result was the inclusion of the recommendation in the fourth report that, while the committee would recognize that its primary work was to review the Crown corporations through the examination of annual reports, that its order of reference should be amended or changed to permit general questions about future objectives and past performance indicators. This had the effect of permitting an examination of matters beyond the year under review.

Even with the expanded terms of reference, the practice has continued to permit ministers to refuse to answer on the grounds that to give an answer would be prejudicial to the operations of the corporation, and thus not in the public interest. But it should be noted however, that like the Public Accounts Committee, the basis of the Crown Corporations Committee is scrutiny. And as a scrutiny committee, its designers could only guess at what the proper balance should be between autonomy and legislative control. After all, many Crown corporations remain sensitive commercial entities.

In 1948, a *Leader-Post* columnist stated in regard to the public accountability and commercial flexibility issue, and I quote:

The difficulty is to draw the line so that information is adequate but still does not tangle state enterprises in a maze of red tape.

As in the 1940s, it is up to members today to decide where to draw the line.

I'd also like to say a few words on questions of policy. As I've mentioned, procedurally the committee is instructed to examine and inquire into all matters directly related to, contained in, or arising from the reports, financial statements, and questions referred to it.

It has been the practice of this committee to allow members to ask for explanations of policy for the year under review and to ask questions impinging on policy. However policy must not be argued or debated. Debate on broad matters of policy is a prerogative of the House.

In the past, the Chair has dissuaded sweeping debates in this committee on issues such as privatization versus government enterprise. Having obtained information by questioning the minister, members of the committee are then in a position to assess the activities of a Crown corporation for the year under review.

If such an assessment suggests that the activities and/or policy line a corporation is following should be debated, the member can follow one of three courses. They could debate the committee's report when it is presented to the Assembly; or it could raise the matter in the Committee of Finance on the vote

for the Crown Investments Corporation; or thirdly, it could move a substantive motion for debate in the House.

I've already mentioned that a question could be refused by a minister on the grounds that to give an answer could be prejudicial to the operation of the corporation, and therefore not in the public interest.

The rules for the guidance of the chairperson in such situations are precise. The Chair must accept the statement of the minister; the questioner cannot insist upon an answer. And this is the same practice that is followed in the House.

The questioner can, however, put the question in the form of a motion and let the committee decide whether it feels the minister should answer. None the less, the committee has no power to discipline if a minister refuses to answer. The committee's only recourse is to report the situation to the Assembly as a contempt.

There are a number of other topics that I want to touch upon briefly, particularly for the benefit of the new members, but also to serve as a reminder for the other individuals that might come in contact with the committee.

The first deals with membership. The membership on the committee is decided by the Assembly and a permanent change in the membership can only be accomplished by way of motion in the House or by reconvening the Special Nominating Committee.

The Crown Corporations Committee is one of three standing committees that does permit the transfer of membership on a daily or a corporation basis. A substitution is effected by completing a substitution form which I have a supply of, and normally the Chair and often the caucuses have a supply as well. These substitution forms are then filled out and filed with the Chair at the start of a meeting.

The one exception to the transfer of membership is that of the Chair. Her membership is not transferable and that is specifically set out in the rule book.

The Chair: — You can impeach me, but you can't transfer me.

Ms. Woods: — There is also the practice in this legislature that MLAs who are not members of the committee, and in our case are not substituting members, may participate in the deliberations of the committee at the committee's discretion. However, these members do not form part of the quorum, they are not permitted to vote, and they cannot move motions. So if you do wish to do any of those things, your course that you should take is to become a substituting member and then you are part of the quorum.

And for that reason, it is important that we receive those substitution forms at the start of the meeting or as early as possible, because until we receive them we can't count you as part of quorum and we can't permit you to vote or move motions.

I guess quorum brings me to the next topic. The rule book defines quorum as a majority of the members, so in this committee that will be six members. There may be times during a meeting when members step out of the room and we temporarily lose quorum. In these situations the practice of the House is followed; so long as the lack of quorum is not brought to the Chair's attention, the meeting will continue. However if quorum is called and a count confirms that we do not have quorum, the meeting is automatically adjourned without question put, until the next scheduled meeting.

Rule 98(2) does permit the committee, by way of a motion, to authorize the Chair to hold meetings to conduct hearings and receive evidence when a quorum is not present. And that is up to the committee to decide whether they wish to pass such a motion or not.

The next topic is order and decorum. In the same way that the Speaker is responsible for this in the House, the Chair of the committee, or the Vice-Chair if he is in the Chair, are responsible for order and decorum in the committee. Generally the rules and practices of the House are followed in the committee, with a couple of notable exceptions.

The first of these is that rulings of the Chair may be appealed to the committee itself. In the House you will recall the Speaker's rulings may not be challenged.

A second exception is that the committee has no authority to punish or censure one of its members or any other person for an alleged offence. This can only be done by the House. As a result the matter must be reported to the House if it is to be pursued further.

The Chair: — That means basically that you can get away with wearing funny ties and you can get away with wearing no ties, but you can't get punished for either.

Ms. Woods: — Just on that point, I might want to make the point that in committee we do tend to be less informal than in the House and there is no strict dress code down here. Less formal.

The Chair: — There is no strict dress code, but committee members should be aware that we will on occasion have members of the public called as witnesses and so forth. And so just as a general guideline, it's probably wise to try to conduct yourself in the same way as if you're in the legislature. But I certainly will not kick you out if you come without a tie or if you're wearing blue jeans.

Ms. Woods: — Questions of privilege arising in a committee are another matter that the committee cannot resolve itself, but once again these have to be reported to the House for action.

Having outlined those areas where the committee's powers are limited, there is one area where matters are not reported to the House for resolution and those deal with procedural matters. The House has traditionally been reluctant to become involved in committee matters, so if a procedural problem arises it really should be dealt with within the committee.

I next want to comment on the role of the media in this committee, and I'm rather surprised that we don't have any representatives of the media here. The members may be aware of the rather strict televising and broadcasting rules followed in this Assembly, and may be surprised to discover that the media is permitted to make both audio and audio-visual recordings of the Crown Corporations Committee. This is in stark contrast to what is permitted in the other legislative committees, but because this is a matter that is unique to this committee, I felt that I'll give you a little bit of the background on how this came about.

The committee first made the request for the proceedings to be televised in 1982. The matter was referred to the Standing Committee on Communication, which in turn recommended in 1983 that the Assembly's broadcast services televise the meetings. The Assembly agreed in principle, but in consideration of the cost, referred the matter to the Board of Internal Economy.

The board subsequently turned down the proposal due to the expense involved. Then in 1987, the issue was raised again in the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures but no recommendation was forthcoming. Finally in 1994, the committee recommended in its fourth report that as an interim measure the media should be permitted to make its own recordings of all meetings that were not in camera.

The House adopted the report and ordered the authorization of the special media rules. So normally when we do have a Crown here you will see members of the press and often there will be cameras that will come into the room to make recordings of the proceedings here. But that is something that is unique to this committee and is not permitted in any other.

So you will often find members that are not familiar with the rules here will come up and make a point and say excuse me, Madam Chair, there's media in here; they shouldn't be making recordings. But they are permitted to do so in this committee.

The final point that I want to raise is the report. The committee will report from time to time to the House, and in the past the reports have tended to be simply a statement indicating which corporations and agencies the committee has completed its review of. And attached to the memorandum, on the third page, I believe, is a copy of the latest report that we made last year.

In the past, like back in the 1970s, the reports the committee made were somewhat more substantive and they did include recommendations, but that is up to the committee members to decide — what they wish to do in their report.

That concludes what I have prepared to say. If there are any other questions?

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Meta. As earlier indicated, she will provide a copy to all members — a slightly cleaned-up copy, right — but it will include everything that was mentioned here.

That was very helpful. I certainly found it extremely useful, and

I think that Harvey's request to have it circulated will also be important.

Are there any questions by members of committee?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Two questions. I was wondering if subsidies of Crown corporations are subject to The Tabling of Documents Act?

The Chair: — I'm sorry.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Subsidies of Crown corporations. Such as . . .

The Chair: — Subsidiaries.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Subsidiaries, sorry — well they're probably getting subsidies too — such as SaskPower Commercial?

The Chair: — Anything that is referred to in the annual reports of the Crown is, so SaskPower Commercial . . . They don't provide a separate report, do they? It's embedded within the larger document, I believe.

Mr. Atkinson: — To the best of my knowledge, they do have a separate report.

The Chair: — Oh they do have a separate one, okay.

Mr. Atkinson: — It was not tabled for 1994. I'm not sure what the status is for 1995. I don't believe any of the Crowns have been tabled for 1995.

The Chair: — No, none of them have as yet.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So any subsidiaries then are tabled and we can question?

The Chair: — Yes, but not third party ones. For instance, we cannot review Cameco.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Right.

The Chair: — Okay. We can certainly review the CIC's disposition of the Cameco shares, but we can't review the Cameco operations *per se*. We can't review Weyerhaeuser for instance, or what's that fertilizer plant out there? Okay.

Mr. D'Autremont: — My other question, I think — it's not a question so much as a statement — that I think it's very important that the ministers be present while we're deliberating their departments, their Crown corporations. Because I think there are questions of policy or goals that only the minister can answer. And those questions don't arise at a particular order; they arise at any time during a debate.

The Chair: — And I think the ministers agree with you, Dan. Except for one occasion, I can't recall any time when we've been reviewing the Crowns when the ministers haven't been present.

The change in the rules was to allow the officials to answer directly rather than having to go through the minister. But we did have an occasion last year when we were receiving the CIC overview, which committee members will recall was a very extensive overview, and we also did have the minister responsible at that time, who'd just recovered from heart surgery, and so he came and got the proceedings on the go and then left. But that was, that was really just an overview and an educational session.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I think whenever members agree in total that the minister is not required to be present, that's fine. But I think if any member wants the minister present that they should be there.

The Chair: — That is part of the scheduling problems that I have with the agenda, is that it is always subject to ministerial availability. So I'll just flag that for committee members now so that they're aware; if we decide for instance to call Gaming Corporation Thursday next, what we're likely going to find is that there isn't a minister available. So we would have to then have it the week after or whatever.

So even though the committee will decide on an agenda, it is always subject to ministerial availability because I don't call any of the Crowns unless the minister's available.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. I think you got the ministerial attendance taken care of; certainly the committee has always got the option of simply not passing whatever it is we're reviewing and any member can then say, I'm just not prepared to vote this one off until a minister attends. And I think we're okay . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well filibuster or adjourn, Mr. D'Autremont, is all the possibilities.

I'm curious about your question about subsidiaries of Crowns and I want to explore that a little bit. I'm unaware of SaskTel International, for instance, filing a separate report. I think that would simply be a fair question under the SaskTel annual report. Is that your understanding, Mr. D'Autremont?

Mr. D'Autremont: — CIC has the ability to create Crowns, and so my concern is that we have the ability to do oversight on them.

The Chair: — And certainly my intent as Chair is to keep this process as open, accountable, and transparent as possible. So if there are questions that the committee members have and you feel it's not being dealt with adequately or appropriately, please see me. I don't want us to be hiding anything.

Having said that, it is almost 10 o'clock. I just want to rush through a few notes that I made as we were proceeding. I neglected, when we started, to welcome Brian Atkinson from the Provincial Auditor's office — so welcome, Brian — and indicate to you that it will be customary to have both representatives from the Provincial Auditor's department, and as we're reviewing the major Crowns, to have representatives from the private auditors that are the auditors of record for those Crowns, attend. And the standard procedure has been that we start the review of a Crown and we ask the Provincial

Auditor to make a statement and then we ask the private auditors as well to make a statement, and committee members can question those auditors. That again is a fairly ground-breaking procedure.

The Provincial Auditor will be here all the time in two different roles. First of all because he or representatives from his office are the provincial auditors. Secondly, because they are currently the auditors of record for CIC. So it's important for committee members to be aware that there is that duality of roles there.

The second point I wanted to make is that the political parties are certainly welcome to have their various staff members attend. Customarily we have some customary seating arrangements as I told you before we started the meeting. Generally the government members will sit to my left, which I hope is appropriate, and the opposition members will sit to my right. Staff will sit along the edges of the room.

When we call ministers and the staff from the Crown corporations, they will sit at the very end. The auditors of course sit up here near the Chair but not right next to her, and the media, when they do attend, will be seated at the back. We've worked out informal arrangements with the media so that when they are doing recordings in here it's minimally disruptive. But if any members of the committee find that they are having problems and that the media are disruptive, please let me know and I will ask the media to change their procedures.

Mr. Trew: — On that point, Pat, I listened to what you said; my understanding is the media, like CK TV, could come in and film and record whatever. So they wouldn't necessarily always be sitting at the back. But it may happen; don't be taken aback if they do. And Pat's advice of, if the media are disruptive in any way to the ongoing proceedings of the committee, then we simply ask them to cease whatever it is they're doing.

We're trying to be as open as we can with the media, but certainly our first order of business is to get the business of Crown Corporations Committee done. Thanks, Pat.

Mr. D'Autremont: — When the media is in and perhaps taking some television pictures, is there any rules for them? What I'm thinking of is, leaning over your shoulder and taking pictures of your chicken scratches on your papers.

The Chair: — No, there are no rules as yet. What we're trying to do is find that middle ground between the legislature's current financial inability to actually put TV cameras in this room and the public's right to be able to be aware of the proceedings. It's a moot point as yet. We haven't . . . right now, to date, the media have been very cooperative or non-existent.

So, I mean if fisticuffs broke out in the committee proceedings, which heaven forbid should never happen, I'm sure that they would be in there like dirty shirts taking pictures and so forth. But they have not tended to bring their cameras right over your shoulder or anything, Dan.

Generally what the TV cameras do is they come in, they do a

little visual sort of to set the stage for the committee, and then they interview the ministers outside the room. So they haven't been disruptive and we've had good cooperation.

But again, as I say, the primary function will be for the committee members to feel as comfortable as possible in conducting their examination of the Crowns. So if committee members feel that anything is disruptive to their ability to carry out their legislative duties, please let me know and I will deal with it.

So the committee meetings are open to the media, to your staff, and to members of the public. It is also possible that witnesses can be called. We have not done that as yet, and so I would ask if any members of the committee do plan to call witnesses, that you would let me know in advance, so we can work out some informal procedure. Again, it's a learning experience, so we don't . . . we're again trying to walk that fine line. And I would just ask for committee's cooperation as we establish procedures.

There are certain standard questions that have been, in the last few years, always asked of Crowns, and so I've met with officials from CIC and informed them that I expect, in their reports when they come to this committee, that they will answer those standardized questions.

For instance, committee members have always asked, who's on the board of a particular Crown. So they will come with a written statement about that. They've also asked what the compensation or honoraria are for those board members and also what the senior management salary ranges are.

So those kinds of questions, the answers to those kinds of questions, will be tabled automatically as each Crown comes in. If there are other routine questions the committee members know that they're going to be asking for every Crown, if you could let me know, I will make sure that the Crowns are genned up and ready to answer those questions.

Again you also have the possibility of asking questions and not getting a direct answer right then. They may have to take it under advisement. The standard procedure is that they will provide a written report and provide 15 copies. They go directly to the Clerk who then distributes them to all committee members.

Meta has already mentioned that everything is recorded in *Hansard* so everything . . . you can always review what happens here. Also you do have the possibility of chitting in or finding a substitute. My request there would be that each of your caucuses would get a certain number of the chit forms and have them ready and signed, so that we don't have to run around looking for quorum or anything like that. It is the responsibility of each party to make sure that they have representatives attending these meetings.

I have asked the Provincial Auditor to provide an overview and an orientation for our next meeting. The Provincial Auditor was very helpful in the last couple of years in providing questions that committee members might wish to look at and to ask of the

various Crowns as we do our reviews. And so unless the committee decides differently, our first item of business for our next meeting will be an orientation session from the Provincial Auditor.

By custom, this committee has been meeting regularly on Thursday mornings. And I think all the caucuses have organized their schedules around that possibility — of having the Thursday morning meetings. The question of the timing is still open, and I will meet informally with committee members to discuss that. We can either meet from 8 to 10 in the morning or 9 to 10 in the morning and we can meet ... (inaudible interjection) ... Or 8:30, yes.

And we can meet weekly or we can meet fortnightly. I'm very easy on that. I want to have committee members have maximum flexibility to do their reviews of the Crowns, but I'm also very much aware that you have House duties as well. So we'll decide informally on that.

I've already, as I said, had an indication from the third party that their caucus meeting starts at 10 a.m. on Thursday mornings, so they want to have the proceedings finished by 10 a.m.

The other possibility that we have is to meet out of session. The reason that we have not met until now is because with the provincial election, technically speaking there was no Crown Corporations Committee until it was re-established by motion in the legislature. From now on, until the next provincial election though, this committee does exist. So we can have out-of-session meetings. And again I will discuss that informally with all members of the committee to get your feelings about what you want in terms of that.

Also we have some outstanding items of business. When we presented our last report to the House, we had not completed our review of CIC, Crown Investments Corporation, and we had not completed our review of the 1993 Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority.

There were also several, as you will see on the memo from Meta Woods, there were several outstanding reports of various what I call the scrappy Crowns as opposed to the major Crowns, that technically speaking we are to review but committee members had decided that they didn't want to review them. I think just to clean up our agenda for next meeting, I will require a motion indicating that we do not see any need to review those, the 1993 reports of those Crowns.

And again my intent is to try to clean up our agenda so that what we are reviewing is the major Crowns who do not receive direct taxpayer funding, and generally the commercial Crowns that fall under the auspices of CIC. We do not customarily review Treasury Board Crowns in this committee. They are reviewed by the Public Accounts Committee.

But with respect to the agenda and everything, I will leave that for committee members to discuss with me informally so that we can start to get an agenda scheduled.

It is also possible, given the changes in our terms of reference, for the committee to decide, as they did with Liquor and Gaming, to review reports concurrently. So when we adjourned at last session, we were reviewing the 1993 and '94 report of the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority concurrently.

It is possible, if the committee decides to, that we can review the '94-95 reports of all the Crowns concurrently. So depending on how we conduct ourselves and our schedule, we may be able to report to the House and have everything up to date and very timely before the end of this session.

So I just toss out all those possibilities for committee members to think about. As I said, unless I get any objection from committee members, the major item of business for our next meeting will be the orientation session from the Provincial Auditor.

One other thing that I neglected to say, what we do have as an informal procedure and I would like to continue with, is that when the Crowns come in they provide a broad, general overview of their missions, objectives, and generally where they feel they're going. Those overviews last year were, of necessity, very long. It was the first time that the Crowns had had an opportunity to tell their story to the MLAs, and so they were all very proud of it and those stories tended to be very, very lengthy.

I would refer new committee members to the proceedings, the *Hansard* and proceedings, from last session. You can review those. I've asked the Crowns, when they come in this time giving their overview, to try to make them a little bit more parsimonious in terms of the words they use.

Anyway, as I said, the one item of business that we have on the agenda for our next meeting will be an orientation session by the Provincial Auditor. At this point, are there any other items that members of the committee wish to ask me to arrange for the next meeting?

Mr. Trew: — The timing of the next meeting is call of the Chair?

The Chair: — It's call of the Chair but we're going to figure it out right now.

Mr. Trew: — In consultation.

The Chair: — In consultation right now. Again, as I say, I'm suggesting Thursdays. We know that next Thursday is Budget Day and I think that all of us will be preoccupied or occupied with various duties around the budget, so I don't think we should have a meeting next Thursday. My suggestion is that our next meeting would be Thursday, April 3rd. Is that agreeable ... (inaudible interjection) ... Oh well, then Thursday, April 4th.

Ms. Stanger: — Madam Chair, we'll likely have Friday hours on Thursday.

The Chair: — Oh yes, because it's Good Friday. Do committee

members want to meet on Thursday, April 4th, or would you prefer that we put it off to Thursday, April 11th? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You could celebrate your anniversary the evening before. Or bring her in. As I said, members of the public can attend the meetings, so bring her in and let her see.

Mr. Atkinson — Brian — I talked to Mr. Strelloff and had indicated that we likely would be meeting on April 4th. Would you please let him know that it won't be until April 11? Okay.

Now the time that we will meet — 8, 8:30 or 9 o'clock? Harvey, would you or Bob make a decision for it.

Mr. McLane: — We'd like to have just a chance to talk about this, if we could. We've got some conflicts in our caucus so we'll have to try and . . .

The Chair: — Okay, work around it.

Mr. McLane: — If we could have a day or something. That's the plan.

The Chair: — Okay. All right, we'll deal with this informally then, the starting time. Right now we do have at least a day set.

Are there any other agenda items other than the report of the Provincial Auditor that people want to have on our next meeting? That's good? Okay. Then we will stand adjourned and the next meeting is Thursday, April 11, the time to be determined.

Thank you all very much.

The committee adjourned at 10:15 a.m.