



Standing Committee on Crown Corporations

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN CORPORATIONS
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The Chair: — Good morning, everyone, and thank you for all turning out so promptly. I hope that we're modelling behaviour that will be used for the rest of the session. This today will be simply an organizational meeting to decide on regular dates for meeting, as much as can be accommodated within everybody's individual and caucus schedules, and also with respect to the ministers' schedule; and also to get some idea of any outstanding business and how you would like the business flowing for the next little while. So perhaps we can first of all deal with the matter of regular meetings for the committee.

Last session and I believe the session before, we established a bit of a habit of meeting regularly on Thursday mornings, and the times bounced around from either 8 to 10 or 8:30 to 10 or 9 to 11 as people's schedules expanded and contracted. So is Thursday morning an acceptable time for committee members to meet . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Thursday mornings.

I'm thinking that given our experience last year, which basically what we did was decide to review CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) at the start and then at the end, and then we reviewed only the major Crowns last year because there were no items that people were interested in in terms of the minor Crowns, but it seems to me that we could probably accommodate all the committee's work and keep right up to date and finish the '97 annual reports, plus deal with significant transactions as they arise, right within the session if we met every two weeks for two hours at a time. And I'm thinking that Thursday mornings might be the best time . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well that again, that's what we have to decide.

I'm impressed that 10 o'clock, we had the best attendance, but I'm easy — 8 o'clock, 8:30, 9 o'clock — whatever fits caucuses' meetings. I know that the New Democratic caucus meets at 12 noon every day. I don't know what times the Liberal and Saskatchewan Party caucuses meet.

Mr. Bjornerud: — 8:30 would be good for us to start.

Mr. McPherson: — 10 is the best for me. I'm in other meetings from 8:30 to 9:30 so — 8 until 9 so . . .

The Chair: — Right.

Mr. Kowalsky: — 9 or 9:30 is best for me.

Mr. Wall: — I think I can say I preferred 7:30.

The Chair: — This is the farm boy speaking. Here you guys are so used to getting up with the cows, right?

Mr. McPherson: — Yes, 9:30 would be . . .

Ms. Stanger: — Madam Chair, I think Doreen said around 9 that she could.

The Chair: — Mr. Bjornerud, do you think you can . . .

Mr. Bjornerud: — 9 we can go with.

The Chair: — 9 o'clock. Would 9 o'clock be adequate?

Mr. McPherson: — I can't do 9, so I'm finished.

The Chair: — Well you see, we would meet for two hours at a time, so if we go at 9 o'clock, that's taking us into 11. If we go at 9:30 that's 11:30 and it sounds like that's too late for the Saskatchewan Party. What we could do, Mr. McPherson, is schedule it so that you would be able to come by 9:30, would you? We could then, if you agree, we could have the Saskatchewan Party and then the NDP Party . . . NDP Party, that sounds really . . . (inaudible) . . . the New Democratic Party speaking, beginning questioning first on items. And then recognize you when you're able to come. Or you could have someone else chit in for you for that first half-hour.

Mr. McPherson: — Even a quarter after 9 would help.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Every second Thursday we're talking about?

The Chair: — Every second Thursday we're talking. Mr. Bjornerud, Mr. McPherson is suggesting 9:15. Is that . . . that takes us to . . .

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well what if we started at 9 though? I guess our problem is, is we've got to be out of here by 11. So what if we started by 9 and then if Mr. McPherson or whoever his representative was . . . You know, 15 minutes or 20 minutes we usually speak anyway, or question so . . .

Mr. McPherson: — Make it 9 o'clock and I'll have someone else show up.

The Chair: — All right. Yes, I appreciate that, Mr. McPherson. We will accommodate your schedule as much as we can. So I would suggest then that we will start our meetings . . . This being budget week and then budget debate and everything, it doesn't make much sense starting right away. So how about Thursday, April 2 at 9 o'clock? And then begin a regular schedule of every two weeks. So we will then customarily have our meetings from every second week from 9 in the morning till 11.

Is it satisfactory to the committee that we follow the same procedure as last year and call Crown Investments Corporation first of all for an overview, leave that report open until the end, and then begin the major Crowns? I would like to leave it just a little open in terms of our April 2 meeting in case . . . Now as far as I understand, the annual reports of all the Crowns, Mr. Strelieff, are to be tabled in the legislature by March 30, are they?

Mr. Strelieff: — Madam Chair, members, in the past few years they've been tabled any time between the middle of April and the middle of May about, for the '97 results. There is a . . .

The Chair: — Okay, we have the '96's though that we have to do.

Mr. Strelieff: — One of the things the committee might consider is what it wishes to do with respect to the '96. As you said earlier, you have finished our . . . I don't know if you've signed off on them but you've dealt with quite a few of the

Crown corporations for '96. Now it's then up to the committee to decide whether it wants to review more Crown corporations related to '96 or to complete a report for '96 and then move to '97. And I don't think that question or issue has been discussed or agreed on.

The Chair: — Okay. What we have outstanding in terms of 1996 reports is SaskTel. We did deal with it last June, I believe, and it was around about the time that we changed ministers. I guess I'm just a little concerned; I want to make sure that we don't get ahead of the annual reports being tabled in the legislature. We're right caught up in terms of our work.

What we have to do is consider significant transactions and vote off the 1996 SaskTel report. So I guess I would look to the committee for guidance. I sent you a letter mid-February asking if you wanted to review the SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) investment in Palliser Insurance as a significant transaction. It was one of those transactions that it seemed to me was about on the cusp and it was up to the committee to decide if they wanted to deal with it or not. Do members recall receiving that letter?

Mr. Bjornerud: — I don't remember. I might have. I don't remember seeing it.

The Chair: — That may explain why I didn't get a lot of take-up on it. February 17, I sent a letter with a backup dealing with the investment by SGI CANADA Insurance Services Ltd. in a Saskatchewan-based crop hail insurance company. And I also then at that time also included information on the Channel Lake issue.

So I guess I don't want to call a meeting if there's not going to be something to do. But I'm looking to the committee — do you want to complete the review of SaskTel? Do you want me to call SaskTel for the April 2 meeting so that we can finish off any outstanding questions that committee members might have?

Mr. Bjornerud: — We're strictly though back into '96, are we? Is that . . .

The Chair: — Yes, until the '97 reports are tabled in the legislature, we can't proceed with them.

Mr. Bjornerud: — I don't think there's a need from our end anyway for '96. I think we finished most of our questions.

The Chair: — Mr. McPherson, did you want me to call the SaskTel officials?

Mr. McPherson: — I'm not sure what was done on our part . . .

The Chair: — There was a fairly extensive review. I don't think there were any outstanding controversial items with respect to the annual report, but I will ask Mr. Strelieff to comment on that. I think that the reason we kept it open was in case there were any items of policy matters that would be coming up that committee members had concern with.

Mr. McPherson: — Can I get back to you, because you'll probably be in touch with the other members in regard to this.

The Chair: — Sure.

Mr. Strelieff, do you recall if there was anything controversial outstanding in the annual report from SaskTel?

Mr. Strelieff: — Madam Chair, no, I don't. One of the things that you might want to do, or two things, is you might want to finalize a report to the Assembly for your work on '96 and that would be — you've got it for today?

The Chair: — No.

Mr. Strelieff: — And second, you may want to ask the government when they plan to table the annual reports of Crown corporations so that you know when they're available to you, when they're tabled. There is a maximum deadline to it, but prior to that date, it's a decision of the government of the day to table or not to table until that deadline.

The Chair: — I think in the interests of making sure we're on the go, what I will do is I would ask people to mark on their calendars that we will have a meeting on April 2 from 9 to 11, and what I will do is arrange so that we can have a report to go to the legislature dealing with all the matters that we have considered to date and the ones we've closed off. Unless I hear to the contrary, I would anticipate that I will receive a motion from one of the members to the effect that we have concluded our review of the SaskTel 1996 annual report as well.

Mr. Bjornerud: — At that time.

The Chair: — At that time. And then we will include that in our report to the legislature. And so that would be the item of business that we would deal with at that time.

I also, in my letter, asked if people had any . . . wanted to have any meetings about any significant transactions. And I will discuss this with members outside the committee and you can let me know, so that in case there are, that can be put on the agenda. And I also asked if you wanted to review the definition of significant transaction.

So I will discuss that with all of the members some time in the next week in the House and put those items on the agenda if it seems that it's necessary to do so.

Are there any other items that committee members want to raise at this time?

Mr. Johnson: — Do we need a motion to sort of . . . for setting the agenda or are we just accepting that we'll start with CIC, go to the other Crowns that are under CIC, or smaller Crowns and then back to CIC. Do we need that as sort of a motion for our agenda or do we just accept that as the . . .

The Chair: — We've got it already set out in our procedure. We did report to the House last time around that we would do it this way.

I think though I would need a motion, Mr. Johnson, instructing me to prepare a report to go to the House on the committee's work for last year, a draft report. And then I will discuss it with all members.

Mr. Johnson: — I'll move that, that we prepare a draft report for consideration at the April 2 meeting.

The Chair: — All in agreement? Okay. Then if there is nothing else? Are there any other items?

Mr. Strelieff: — At a recent meeting of the Public Accounts Committee, the committee discussed referring segments of my report to the Crown Corporations Committee, and I did recommend to the committee that they not do that. And I was wondering if you wanted me to, to take this opportunity to explain why I recommended that to the Public Accounts Committee.

The Chair: — As I understand it, Mr. Strelieff, segments of your report have been referred to this committee though. The technical procedure for getting it from the House to this committee hasn't yet gone through the House, but the Public Accounts Committee did refer some segments of your report. Do committee members want to hear from Mr. Strelieff on this matter? Go ahead.

Mr. Strelieff: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and members. As I said recently, a couple weeks ago, or three weeks ago, the Public Accounts Committee discussed referring parts of my report, or segments of my report, to the Crown Corporations Committee. And as the Chair said, they did end up recommending segments. And during the discussion I said to the committee that I recommended they not refer the work of my office to the Crown Corporations Committee until the Public Accounts Committee has the opportunity to decide whether changes are appropriate to its mandate.

The Assembly has provided the Public Accounts Committee with, what I think all of us agree, an important mandate. And the mandate focuses on reviewing the *Public Accounts*, which as you know, contains the financial results of all government departments, boards, agencies, corporations, including Crown corporations, and to review the issues raised in my reports to the Assembly.

And as you no doubt know better than I do, the Public Accounts Committee provides legislators with one of the few opportunities legislators have to question government officials directly about their administrative practices. The mandate of the Public Accounts Committee states that it is to examine and evaluate such issues as the adequacy of safeguards to protect assets from waste and misappropriation, whether good financial controls exist.

The mandate of the Public Accounts Committee says that it's supposed to evaluate whether value for money has been obtained through the divestiture of any Crown corporation or agency; that they are to evaluate such issues as the systems and practices to determine whether transfer payments are used for the purposes intended; and whether the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of government programs as . . . exist, through its many recommendations to the Assembly.

And as you probably know, the Public Accounts Committee has made many recommendations to the Assembly. The Public Accounts Committee serves as a very important agent of change. And over the years the reports of the committee to the

Assembly have contained many valuable recommendations that has caused good, positive change in the accountability and management practices of government.

So when I . . . So before the committee makes a change to their responsibilities, I suggest that it consider whether changes to the responsibilities and the authorities of the committee is necessary and is needed. Perhaps there is an opportunity to strengthen both committees. If that is to happen, the Crown Corporations Committee role, from what I've observed, it's a little bit different than the Public Accounts Committee. It also provides, or this committee also provides legislators a valuable forum to discuss the past and future performance of Crown corporations. And as you mentioned earlier today, the committee has begun to review significant transactions entered into by Crown corporations.

But if the Crown Corporations' mandate is to change to include reviewing the work of my office, as it pertains to Crown corporations, then I think there needs to be a clear understanding of the purpose of that review.

Is it to be similar to that of the Public Accounts Committee? For example, will the Crown Corporations Committee begin to make recommendations for change in a similar manner as the Public Accounts Committee does. And if the purpose is to be similar to that of the Public Accounts Committee, then perhaps this committee should consider adopting a similar mandate and a set of operating principles and practices as the Public Accounts Committee has, so that those attending and participating at meetings understand what is to happen.

For example, are the same protocols that happen at the Public Accounts Committee, are they to exist at the Crown Corporations Committee if segments of my report are to be referred to this committee. And I'm not sure about that.

Is my office to be an adviser to the Crown Corporations Committee like we are to the Public Accounts Committee when segments of our report go to this committee. I'm not sure about that. And are we to decide or recommend which chapters of our report should go to the Public Accounts Committee and which should go to the Crown Corporations Committee?

I think in prior meetings, this committee has discussed the idea that I would issue a separate report — a report that is directed to the Crown Corporations Committee and a report that is directed to the Public Accounts Committee, but I'm not certain about that.

As I said, I did recommend to the Public Accounts Committee that it not refer segments of my reports to this committee until they sort out those issues and . . .

The Chair: — And yet they went ahead and referred them.

Mr. Strelieff: — That's right. Yes. I wanted to make sure that you knew the reason why I did suggest or recommend to the committee that they not do that. On the other hand, this might be an opportunity to strengthen the practices of both committees.

For example, perhaps the Public Accounts Committee should

also focus on the annual performance reports of government organizations like this committee does, in addition to the *Public Accounts* and our reports. And maybe, as I said, the Crown Corporations Committee might wish to consider adopting a similar mandate and operating practices and principles as does the Public Accounts Committee, particularly as it relates to reviewing the work of our office.

And if you wish, at some point in the future, perhaps a working group can be struck made up of officials of the CIC, Department of Finance, the Clerk's office, officials, members of both committees, to consider just what types of changes would be necessary if the mandates of both committees are to change.

So those were in general the reasons why I've recommended to the Public Accounts Committee that they not refer matters. But on the other hand, as you pointed out, the committee did. And there are some items that have been referred to . . . or the Public Accounts Committee has asked the Assembly to refer items within my reports, previous reports, that are still outstanding somewhere. But I think there's some good, valuable work that needs to be done to just straighten out the protocols and operating procedures when and if things change.

The Chair: — Well I agree that there is that work that's needed to be done and it's been outstanding for about three years. It's kind of always nibbling away at the edges — very much aware of it.

The Crown Corporations Committee did review its mandate about three years ago and made significant changes in its mandate. And I think that committee members will have to, amongst themselves, debate and discuss whether or not they want to change their mandate even further at this time. And you know, what the Public Accounts Committee does is their own business. But I am aware that they have referred certain matters to us. Technically though, they're not yet before this committee because the House has yet to refer them.

Mr. Johnson: — I'm not sure, but what year would it have been that you as the auditor, as the Provincial Auditor, would have been putting into the report, reports on the Crowns?

Mr. Strelieff: — Madam Chair, Mr. Johnson, probably since Crowns were created.

The Chair: — That would be 1946.

Mr. Strelieff: — The office was created in 1878. And it certainly isn't . . . Brian Atkinson from my office was employed in the office back in the late '70s. So, Brian, in our reports to the Assembly back in the '70s, I assume we had material related to Crown corporations. But could you just explain that?

Mr. Atkinson: — Yes. The mandate of our office to examine and report to the Assembly hasn't changed. And the organizations that we examine haven't changed. We've always examined the government departments, agencies, Crown corporations, boards, and commissions. And if there were matters that we felt that the Assembly should be aware of, we reported them. And that's been our practice since the '70s and probably before that.

Mr. Johnson: — Okay. The question was when would there . . . what would have been the first year that there would have been actually some comments about some of the Crowns? Because I don't have anything here to look at for it because this is something that comes up. But I would suspect that there wasn't a great deal in the Provincial Auditor's report on the Crowns prior to eight or ten years ago.

Mr. Atkinson: — I think we're working from memory. I think it would be better if we went and checked the record, but if you'd like us to do that we will. But . . .

Mr. Johnson: — So, okay. I bring that up and then I have a couple of other comments on it.

It's not a strange situation to have different committees approaching things from a different direction. In fact having two committees look at things in a different manner is beneficial because, if you end up where everybody follows the same procedures, what will take place eventually is it becomes sort of part of a . . . part of the bureaucracy in its total and you don't end up with the opportunity of viewing things from a different perspective.

The fact that this committee was formed back in the '40s, it was formed with that understanding that Crowns would be looked at from a different perspective. Not that they wouldn't . . . that there wouldn't be criticism about them or whatever it is, but that they would be looked at differently.

And the concept of suggesting that they simply are another line department, which is what looking at everything exactly, precisely the same is, is not necessarily a good concept. And from my perspective, I think that members of the committees do have an interest in looking at things in a different . . . from a different manner.

This committee has made some very significant changes, and I know that they are significant because I was here 20 years ago. And the changes that have been made have brought . . . have been changes that have brought about because of how the corporations, how the corporate world, the private corporate world outside of government, are functioning. And the changes internally here have been brought about to bring the scrutiny of the public Crowns in line with what is basically outside of government.

So to suggest that the two committees function as simply a division of the work and then two committees do exactly the same thing, in my mind is certainly a shrinking of the opportunity for opposition members and for government members on these committees to look at things from different perspectives. Whether the perspective ends up at coming to the same decision or not is totally . . . is varied, I would suggest, with different things that happen.

And so I wouldn't . . . I would agree with what the Public Accounts Committee did when they said this is an issue that we're not wanting to look at, but the Crown Corporations Committee should be looking at it and we'll send it over there, and they can look at it from the perspective that they want to take.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Johnson. Does anyone else have any comments on this?

Mr. McPherson: — Madam Chair, perhaps April 2 would be a good time to have committee members give consideration to the Provincial Auditor's remarks.

The Chair: — Yes, this is an outstanding issue and I don't know that it's ever going to be perfectly satisfactorily resolved. It has been my position that the Crown Corporations Committee is not simply a clone of the Public Accounts Committee, and we do, we do things differently and we take a more prospective look.

But at the same time the auditor does raise legitimate concerns in his reports to the House about matters that need to be looked at by either the Public Accounts Committee or the Crown Corporations Committee. So at some point we're going to have to, I think, try to resolve some of these differences in perspective.

I'm hopeful at the end of the day that, regardless of what procedure we use, the Saskatchewan public can still be satisfied that the legislators in this building are dealing with the concerns that the auditor raises in an appropriate and timely fashion. Whether it comes through Crown Corporations Committee or Public Accounts Committee, I think depends on your perspective of what you see each of those committees doing.

But I think this conversation has been useful so that the Crown Corporations Committee now is aware of the concerns about . . . that Mr. Strelieff has about Public Accounts Committee reviewing its mandate. And also his suggestion that perhaps once again the Crown Corporations Committee may wish to review its mandate.

May I maybe suggest that in the next little while, if there is a Public Accounts Committee called before Crown Corporations meets again, that members of this committee might wish to just sit in and observe the proceedings there. And then we can have a more fully informed discussion about some of these issues that have been raised. Is that satisfactory?

Mr. McPherson: — When will the Public Accounts sit?

The Chair: — Well I'm not the Chair of Public Accounts, but I did hear in the legislature yesterday that the Premier was suggesting that the issue of Channel Lake might wish to be referred to Public Accounts. So since that has a fairly high degree of public interest right now, I would assume that the Chair would be calling a meeting as quickly as possible. So perhaps you could ask Ms. Draude what her plans are, but I would hope that she would have a meeting well before March 30. I think . . .

Mr. McPherson: — Do you feel it's necessary that we sit in to a Public Accounts meeting to determine the mandate of this committee though?

The Chair: — No. Well just to get, just to get an idea of the flavour and the difference between the two committees. For instance, as Mr. Strelieff has said, he acts very directly as an adviser to the Public Accounts Committee, and indeed would be

sitting right next to the Chair. In this committee we have determined that Mr. Strelieff's office is the auditor for CIC, and so rather than having him as an adviser, we ask him to come and present comment on the annual reports and on the adequacy and sufficiency of those reports and the items that are raised in them.

It's a slight difference; it's a subtle difference, but I take it from the ongoing concern that Mr. Strelieff has that it's an important difference for his office.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Do we actually . . . I'm sorry to interrupt, Madam Chair, but do we have somewhere a set of agenda or something for Crown Corps, what our specific job and duty is here?

The Chair: — Yes we do. We went through an extensive review in 1993 and we changed the mandate. This committee used to be . . . over time. I mean it's got 50 years of history. Initially back in the '40s and '50s and into the '60s, it was a very important committee of the legislature reviewing those Crown corporations which of course back then were into an expansive mode — the rural electrification, getting the gas or telephone lines all across the province, and so forth. So the Crown Corporations Committee used to play an extremely active role but they always had as their mandate to do a retroactive review of the annual reports.

So the committee members were constrained and then . . .

A Member: — To the year . . .

The Chair: — To the year under review. And that was the position that was taken very rigidly in the '60s and '70s. You could only look at the year under review and sometimes the committee would get behind in its work so they'd be looking at things two, three, or four years in the past. It was a significant source of frustration for committee members.

In the '80s the committee started not meeting so regularly, for various reasons, and I don't want to be partisan about it, but it simply did not meet as regularly as it had. And so in the '90s the committee members decided that that was not acceptable, that they wanted to meet regularly, they wanted to meet on a timely basis, and they wanted to be reviewing things on a more current basis.

So we changed the mandate so that instead of only dealing with the year under review the committee would also review the missions and objectives of the Crown corporations and could take prospective looks, saying, okay, based on your experience, for instance, with 1996 — assuming we're dealing with '96 stuff — what have the Crown corporations learned, what kinds of changes do they need to make in their business plans and so forth to deal with things in the future.

So we changed the role of the committee quite dramatically then and it did open up the scope of questioning that committee members were able to have of both the minister and the officials — and that was the other change. It used to be that committee members could only direct questions to the minister, whereas, as Mr. Strelieff points out, in Public Accounts they deal with the officials directly.

We did change that so that now the minister comes and the officials can speak directly to the committee if the minister is agreeable.

And as Mr. Johnson is pointing out, last summer with the Crown corporations review and changing it so that now we only have one minister responsible for most of the Crown corporations that we do review, it is highly likely that we'll be dealing more directly with officials than we have in the past.

Perhaps what we should do is sometime on an informal basis in the next couple of weeks have some discussions about this and review a bit of the immediate history of it. I can make available for you, Mr. Bjornerud, the current mandate of the Crown Corporations Committee. I will ask the Clerk to do that and to give that to all members of the committee.

And I would also ask that if it's possible, could you, Ms. Woods, make the mandate of the Public Accounts Committee available for the Crown Corporations Committee members? We can then review that, and depending on what people say and decide, we can possibly put this as an item on the agenda for our next meeting.

Ms. Stanger: — Madam Chair, could you make that available to all members of the Legislative Assembly? I think it is really important that they understand the roles of the Public Accounts Committee and the Crown Corporations Committee. And I know many of them would be interested in reading that if you have it written down.

The Chair: — Well, all right, as long as nobody's going to criticize me for exceeding my authority. I will work with the Clerks of the two committees and over the next few days, we will send out a document to all members of the legislature with the mandate of the two committees on it. I think that's all I will do. I won't make any comment or anything on it.

Ms. Stanger: — No, no. I think . . .

Mr. McPherson: — Do we have to agree on the criticism of . . .

The Chair: — No, you can criticize me any time you wish. Just don't criticize me for exceeding my authority. This will be because the committee has asked for it.

Mr. Whitmore: — Yes, regarding the question that Mr. McPherson had asked in terms of the meeting of Public Accounts Committee — and I sit as a member on that committee, I'm substituting for someone else here today — is that I know from the government members' standpoint that are on that committee, we wish to meet as soon as possible to deal with the question of the public auditor's . . . or the Provincial Auditor's report on Channel Lake and other matters dealing with . . . of interest to Public Accounts.

We're certainly approaching the Chair of the committee as soon as possible to have that meeting so we can begin the discussion of that issue and other issues before Public Accounts.

The Chair: — Now, are there any other items that we want to raise?

Mr. McPherson: — I guess the time again — the 9 o'clock; really I can see where that's not going to work for my mornings anyways. So it's going to work better for the other party, then perhaps go with the 8:30 that worked best for them; 8:30 would be fine.

The Chair: — You just, you dug in your heels and gave us all an extra half-hour of sleep, and now you're forcing us to set our alarms back.

Mr. McPherson: — But now I say I don't have to be here. I obviously can't play a meaningful role at that time in the morning because I'm in other work. If it works better for the other party, then I say let's do it at 8:30.

Ms. Stanger: — And then you'll come later?

Mr. McPherson: — Probably. I want to hear your comments.

The Chair: — Mr. Bjornerud, does your caucus meet regularly at 11? Is that what the . . .

Mr. Bjornerud: — Nine, but we would move it to 10, but so we're backing up already.

The Chair: — All right. You know, it's six of one, half a dozen of the other to me. I want to see the committee meeting regularly and meeting punctually. So what's going to be the best — 8:30 or 9 o'clock for regular, two-hour meetings?

Mr. Bjornerud: — We'll take either one.

The Chair: — Okay. For right now, we'll go with 9 o'clock; we'll see what happens, see how all caucuses can accommodate that time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Madam Chairman, could I ask a question? The member here that thought I was sitting on Public Accounts — and I have never sat in on Public Accounts and I guess that's my own fault, but I was wondering if that works differently than here. If you're reviewing Channel Lake for an example, and you question people on it, you still have to come to some sort of agreement as a committee, do you not, to make recommendations; so that the NDP (New Democratic Party) majority would still come into effect, would it not?

The Chair: — Correct.

Mr. Bjornerud: — I mean the two, this committee and that committee, will work the same in that respect because a majority of members come from the government side?

Mr. Whitmore: — All of Public Accounts, all members are able to express views and opinions of what's going on there, in terms of conclusions, and we work on the area of consensus, in terms of determining where we go as a committee.

The Chair: — So do we.

Mr. Bjornerud: — I agree with you, Mr. Whitmore, there, but I guess what I'm saying is if it comes down to where there is a disagreement or, you know, your views are differing, it comes down to a vote and the NDP member sitting on the Public

Accounts is very much similar to here because the majority is in your favour.

Mr. Whitmore: — I think we need to look at what's important, in terms of public interest, of all committees. There is also opportunities too for minority reports also to be filed by members, so there are many opportunities to deal with.

But the key that we have to deal with here in Public Accounts reviewing anything is the recommendations of the Provincial Auditor, which is the key of our discussion points in Public Accounts.

Mr. Bjornerud: — I understand what you're saying. But I guess what I'm saying is when it comes down to become very . . . something that's very political, majority still rules, and that's what I guess what we're saying is you will see come out of Public Accounts as will come out of here.

Mr. Whitmore: — My best . . .

Mr. Bjornerud: — Because there's three opposition members and seven government members.

Mr. Whitmore: — My best advice to you is to come to Public Accounts.

The Chair: — In fact democratic procedures that guide the deliberations of both committees are exactly the same. Majority does rule.

It is possible, and certainly I think it's more actively done in Public Accounts Committee than it is in the Crown Corporations Committee, but it's possible for the Public Accounts Committee to include a minority report within their report that is submitted to the legislature. No committee can . . . minority reports are not submitted to the legislature.

But within the Public Accounts Committee report, or it's possible within the Crown Corporations Committee report, there could be a minority report that goes to the legislature. And both . . . It is so, and you will have seen it in the past in the House, when the Chairs of the Committees report that somebody from the opposite side will get up and also make a comment on that.

Generally, as members are saying, both committees try to operate on a consensus basis. But if there's something that's really quite controversial, it's open to any member in the House or any member of the committee to stand up in the legislature and debate a report.

Mr. Bjornerud: — But I guess what I was saying, Madam Chairman, and I think the member has verified that, that if a recommendation or report is presented to the legislature from Public Accounts, or for that matter from this committee, and there's disagreement within the committee on it, the report will be represented . . . represent the views of the majority of members there, will it not?

The Chair: — That's correct, but they can include . . .

Mr. Whitmore: — Madam Chair, I did not say that. I did not say . . .

A Member: — I did.

Mr. Whitmore: — You did, but you said that I had said that.

The Chair: — I guess at this point . . .

Mr. Bjornerud: — Are you saying, Mr. Whitmore, that the majority of members . . .

Mr. Whitmore: — No, I'm just commenting on what you had said that I had . . . You'd put words in my mouth.

The Chair: — Mr. Whitmore, I would like to recognize the Clerk, who can explain the procedures with respect to so-called minority reports and that to the committee members.

Mr. McPherson: — Madam Chair, perhaps this is part of what we should be dealing with on April 2. And the confusion of all the members confirms the . . .

The Chair: — Anyway, it is a democracy, it is the majority rule, but because it's a democracy, we still try to have consensus opinion.

If there are no other little matters that are going to sneak up on us now . . .

Mr. McPherson: — We have the consensus that on April 2 we will consider the Provincial Auditor's remarks and review the mandates and the significant transactions.

The Chair: — No, no, we don't have consensus on that, that we would review the mandates. I want committee members to take a look at the mandates of both committees on an informal, private basis and come to the next meeting and let me know if you then do want to review the mandate. You may find when you look at the mandates that you can accomplish what you want already within the given structures.

On the other hand, you may find that you do want to make a change. I'm not going to anticipate that. I want committee members to review those mandates on their own and then we can discuss it at our next meeting. Okay? Could I have a motion from the minority to adjourn for today?

Mr. Bjornerud: — I so move.

The committee adjourned at 10:55 a.m.