



Standing Committee on Crown Corporations

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 54 – October 15, 1998



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-third Legislature

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN CORPORATIONS
1998**

Pat Lorje, Chair
Saskatoon Southeast

Kim Trew, Vice-Chair
Regina Coronation Park

Bob Bjornerud
Saltcoats

Doreen Hamilton
Regina Wascana Plains

Ben Heppner
Rosthern

Jack Hillson
North Battleford

Lloyd Johnson
Shellbrook-Spiritwood

Lindy Kasperski
Regina Sherwood

Myron Kowalsky
Prince Albert Carlton

Andy Renaud
Carrot River Valley

Channel Lake Petroleum Ltd.

The Chair: — Call the committee to order. With any luck, this will be our last meeting to deal with the Channel Lake circumstances.

My proposal for today is that what we will do is go through the draft report which our Clerk, Margaret Woods, has been labouring over long, hard, and diligently since yesterday evening, and a copy of which has been provided to all committee members.

I want to emphasize this is a draft report at this point. I think though it represents the sum and substance of the content that will be finally deemed to being tabled in the House as per our June motion, when we complete it and when it comes back from the printers.

The body of work that I see that we have before us today is to go through this report fairly specifically and make sure that there are no technical problems, and that there are no placement problems that cause any of the three parties any problems so that it does fairly and accurately represent the sum total of our deliberations.

Since this is going to be just a technical meeting today . . . I'm sorry. Since this is just going to be a technical meeting today — at least that's my intention right now — I would ask members if they have any opening statements to make, that basically summarize your position with respect to Channel Lake. And I would ask if you could do that and then we will simply move into the technical consideration and have adjournment. And my aim is for us to adjourn well before 5 o'clock.

If that's acceptable to members? Okay.

Mr. Shillington: — I don't have an opening statement. I would doubt that there's anything new to be said. Except I think committee members owe a vote of thanks to our Clerk. I have an opportunity to do this quickly. This is Herculean task. I think she's done a very good job of it, and I would want my personal appreciation and my personal congratulations for good work on the record.

The Chair: — And everyone's.

All Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — All right. Are there any other statements that people wish to make for the record? Thank you very much.

Then what we will do is move into a consideration of this report on a technical basis. And if you'll bear with me, I have two and a half pages of notes of things that we have to make some decisions on.

First of all, there will be a transmittal letter. That's the second page in. I have yet to prepare it, but it will be a standard transmittal letter and will reflect the independence, and as much as possible for me, the non-bias of the Chair. Is that agreed? Do committee members want me to circulate the transmittal letter beforehand, or will you just accept it?

Mr. Shillington: — Seeing it's in a . . . (inaudible) . . . form, I don't think it's necessary.

The Chair: — Thank you.

If you could turn to the cover of the report, you'll note that it says on it eighth report, and then underneath it, Channel Lake Inquiry. Technically speaking, this should simply be called the eighth report of the Crown Corporations Committee. But since this will be — committee members are aware this is only the second time in the legislature's history that we've had such an inquiry — I think that it would be better to identify it as the Channel Lake Inquiry. Is that agreed?

Mr. Shillington: — Is it necessary to put on the cover the eighth report? It's going to be confusing for the public in the sense that they're going to wonder where they get one to seven.

The Chair: — Draft will be removed.

Mr. Shillington: — But even eighth report. They're going to assume there's a one to seven.

Mr. Hillson: — I think he's right. It is the report, it is not the eighth report.

Mr. Shillington: — Why don't we just style it Channel Lake . . . Report on Channel Lake Inquiry, and leave it at that?

The Chair: — All right. Or alternately, below October 15, 1998, we could put, being the eighth report of the Crown Corporations Committee.

Mr. Shillington: — I think it will be a little less confusing. But I think what we aim for here is something that's clear to the public who read it. It seems to me a simple, Report on Channel Lake Inquiry, is the clearest.

The Chair: — Okay. That's agreed to then? All right.

And again, Ms. Woods, I would ask you, when committee members are making decisions that might cause problems in terms of the archive records or anything like that, or interfere with the standardized process that the Clerk's office has, please just tell us. Thank you.

The table of contents and page numbers will be inserted once we have a draft finalized. And the appendices will be numbered separately in Roman numerals. Is that agreed? Thank you.

Under the acknowledgements section, could you take a moment and scan through it. I've had an opportunity to read it. I think it fairly reflects the acknowledgements that the committee would wish to make.

Mr. Shillington: — It looks okay I think, doesn't it?

A Member: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Is it agreed? Thank you.

If you'll check then next under composition of the committee,

we're going to have to add a few members. For instance there are some new members today. What we have tried to do is identify the members who were here for the majority of the time first, and then the other members below. We will also have to add . . . I would suggest that we put the independent members and those who regularly attended meetings as well.

So if that's acceptable to committee members?

A Member: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you.

And we do still have to update the number of committee meetings that we've had and so forth. Those are technical housekeeping details that need to be in.

Under the body of the . . . again we have the order of reference and the method of operation. I'm going to suggest that that should be a separate tab so that people can clearly find the order of reference when they're referring to it in the future. So there will be a slight change there.

Mr. Shillington: — Agreed. I think that makes sense.

The Chair: — Thank you.

Under the body of the report, there is no cover page for this section. It just starts rather abruptly without a preamble. But I think if we move the terms of reference to being a separate section, that it will flow more smoothly. Is that agreed?

A Member: — Agreed.

The Chair: — I'll note that the report hasn't been formatted to shift lines on the pages where it seems appropriate. And we'll have all the headings put together properly so there'll be no dangling headings, or dangling paragraphs as the case may be.

So the body of the report is pretty well as it was agreed to yesterday. On page 86 of the report, the former paragraph no. (38) has been removed. I'm assuming that that does reflect the wishes of the committee.

Mr. Shillington: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That had to do with the overlap between recommend . . . of findings (35) and (38) when we decided that they were substantially the same. So we've removed that.

We've taken out the numbering of paragraphs. It flows more as a narrative now rather than specific . . . rather than having all the paragraphs numbered. Is that acceptable?

A Member: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Now where changes have been made to the recommendations, committee members, these have been underlined so that you know where we've made changes. We instructed the Clerk, as you will recall yesterday, to make changes so that they hung together grammatically, and so that they made sense, because we were removing them from the body of the report.

Again I would encourage everyone over the weekend to spend some time looking at the report. If you have any technical questions or concerns, to contact Ms. Woods directly. And she has certainly shown a great deal of very intelligent discrimination throughout this whole process. So I'm sure that if somebody comes up with a comma missing or whatever, she'll just go ahead and insert it on its own. But if it's something that would require a committee decision, I will ensure that the committee is consulted, probably by a conference call.

Mr. Shillington: — Yes, I was going to say, notwithstanding our admonition to the Crown Corporations, it's nice to try to be able to do this by conference call.

The Chair: — There's not as many millions of dollars at stake on ours.

The underlining that indicates where changes have been made to the recommendations will be removed in the final report. So there will be no underlining.

For instance, if you look at page 88 you'll see recommendation 8, "To assist the President and CEO of CIC," and then underlined are the words, "it is recommended that." Those are words that were added to make the recommendations make more sense. That underlining will be removed. Also under the word furthermore, that will be removed.

Is that agreed to then? Okay.

Again under the list of recommendations, all the underlining will be removed.

Mr. Shillington: — Now just before we get there, had it been our intention to leave in the parenthetical comment from Sask Party's recommendations?

The Chair: — I'm just getting to that one. If you turn for instance to page 90, committee members, you will see that recommendation 9 says, from Sask Party's Recommendations. Recommendation 10 says, from Liberal Recommendations. I think in the Liberal Recommendations, there's an overlap on recommendation 20 and recommendation 10.

So what do committee members wish to do?

Mr. Shillington: — This is a very quick reaction, so no emotional capital tied up in it. But I'll give you my knee-jerk reaction. To label it as having come from one caucus or the other detracts from its weight. I thought that the recommendation 9 which came from the Saskatchewan Party was particularly aptly worded. But somehow or other when you say it comes from the Saskatchewan Party, in the minds of some who, unlike the members present, who aren't able to treat this politics in a non-partisan fashion, it might detract from its weight. I think it should come out.

I think wherever it came from, it was the decision of the committee, made presumably after proper thought and consultation, and I think it should come out.

Mr. Hillson: — I agree. I think once it was voted on, it

now we've identified them with numbers. It's been agreed to that we'll take the numbers out. But do we wish to also identify them as recommendation no. 9 in the main report, recommendation 10, and recommendation 20?

Mr. Gantefoer: — I think it separates them as being recommendations from the reservations — to recommendations that were actually accepted by the whole committee. So in the three recommendations that were actually accepted by the committee from the reservation material, that those three should be identified with their accepted recommendation number.

The Chair: — Yes, that's very clear. So we will identify them as such.

Mr. Hillson: — Madam Chair . . .

The Chair: — Yes, Mr. Hillson, I think we've gone over all the technical questions now.

Mr. Hillson: — Page 7 of my report, recommendation 39, I thought we had voted concurrence on that one.

The Chair: — I believe we did. You're exactly right. Because I gave you a little bit of a tongue-lashing about how current the Crown Corporations Committee always is. So yes we did vote concurrence on that one. So it will be noted as well and it will be included in the main body of the report as a recommendation, and clearly identified in the Liberal report as coming from there.

Mr. Shillington: — Which brings me to my comment . . . we are approving this without actually reading it end to end. We of all people should exercise an amount of caution in doing that. Yet it is not practical to read a document of this volume before we approve it.

I would suggest that any member of the committee should have the right to ask Madam Chair to reconvene a meeting if they see a serious error in the report of which they were not cognizant when we approved it. So I think we should perhaps . . . it's a little unusual but I think we should agree that if any member feels there's something in this report which they were not cognizant of and would not have approved of if they were, we should have the right to ask the Chair to reconvene the committee at least by telephone conference.

The Chair: — So the committee is instructing me then, if there are any egregious errors, that I will call another meeting. If there are simply small, minor technical errors, we will make the corrections and where I feel that committee members should be informed, I will contact you by telephone or fax.

We will then spend a few days carefully going over this. I would expect that all committee members will read it and direct their comments directly to Ms. Woods in the Clerk's office. She will also go over it carefully and we will then . . . what we'll need then is a motion to authorize the tendering and the printing of the report. And once that happens, as per our motion in June, it will be deemed to have been tabled in the legislature.

And that will finalize the work of this committee with respect to the Channel Lake circumstances.

Mr. Shillington: — Except that the minutes should show that a good time was had by all.

The Chair: — The minutes should not show that. The minutes should show that people were diligent . . .

Mr. Shillington: — Laboured under the worst of conditions . . .

The Chair: — All right. If there are no further questions . . .

I think that we've concluded our work. Again I'm going to thank all committee members. I think that you did work very hard and this was a bit of a precedent-setting exercise that we engaged in. And I think that while there certainly was a steep learning curve particularly for the Chair, that it was an important experience for all of us. And I think that the people of Saskatchewan have been well served by the deliberations of all three political parties.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — In wrapping up, Madam Chair, and I think we alluded to it yesterday, but a lot of people played an important role here, including all the members. But you yourself as a Chair played a particularly important role and I would like to express, and I'm sure I do it on behalf of everyone, our appreciation for your work as the Chair of this committee which has brought us to a final conclusion and a final report.

All Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Okay. I will take it that Mr. Tchorzewski moved adjournment.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I have indeed.

The Chair: — Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 3:50 p.m.