

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**  
**September 3, 1987**

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — I unofficially call the meeting to order in that we do not have officially a chairman or vice-chairman. So if I can do that, we do have a quorum. Before we go into what will more likely be the agenda, maybe we should just go through the process of electing a chairman of this Public Accounts Committee, and a vice-chairman. So that is . . . starting with the chairman.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Mr. Chairman — or about-to-be chairman — I will receive nominations for chairman.

**Mr. Gardner:** — I'll nominate Mr. Tchorzewski.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Are there any other nominations?

**Mr. Saxinger:** — I nominate Rod Gardner.

**A Member:** — No, it has to be from both sides.

**Mr. Saxinger:** — Oh, okay.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — I expect that nomination was for vice-chairman. If there are no other nominations for chairman, Mr. Tchorzewski takes the chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Thank you, I'm not sure if I should say that. [he experience of chairmen haven't been that good in this committee, have they? But we'll try to make it better. First election I've ever run into unopposed.

Okay. Welcome and good morning. We will elect a vice-chairman, and then I will propose a short agenda for today, and with your concurrence we'll then proceed. And if there's some . . . you want to add something, that's fine. We'll add that as well. But next item will be the election of a vice-chairman.

**Mr. Lyons:** — I nominate Mr. Gardner from Pelly.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Mr. Gardner is nominated. Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, we'll declare Mr. Gardner elected as vice-chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

Okay. If I may, I would just like to pause now and introduce the staff who are here. Members know the people from the Legislative Assembly Office. We have Willard Lutz, who's the Provincial Auditor, who some of us know and some of you have just met this morning, or maybe earlier; Fred Wendel, sitting next to Willard, who is the assistant provincial auditor. I am told by Mr. Lutz that the staff will change from time to time, depending on the topic that is being considered, because he will provide us with the expertise that is more involved in that particular field.

We also have with us Gary Kraus, who's the comptroller. That's on the other side there.

**A Member:** — Gerry.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Gerry? I'm sorry. And Chris Bayda. What is the title?

**Mr. Kraus:** — He is one of our analysts.

**Mr. Chairman:** — One of your analysts. Okay.

**Mr. Kraus:** — And I, too, will change people from time to time.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Thank you. Okay. I'm going to suggest that we do these things this morning. Therefore I think it will probably not be a long meeting, and that's why an 11:30 meeting was quite appropriate.

First of all we have to determine the days that we're going to meet. That will be on the agenda. The times on those days in which we meet, that is, which hours. I'm going to ask to have a discussion on our agenda for the next meeting, and I have talked to Gwenn Ronyk and to the vice-chairman about an orientation session, first of all, for the benefit of not only the new members but those of us who have been around but not on the Public Accounts Committee — an orientation session, and I'll describe what I have in mind later. And then I'm going to ask that we consider how we dispose of the 1984-1985 *Estimates* which are now old, in that we have the 1985-86. I'll give you a recommendation, and we can discuss it and make some decisions.

Are there any other items that you wish to add for today? If some come up during the discussion, we'll add them. Okay.

The meeting days — Mondays, I assume, are not the days in which we can meet. For people who are not Regina MLAs it's difficult, that's travelling time; the same thing on Friday's, that's the days on which you're heading home to your constituencies. That does not preclude that sometimes we may not decide to have meetings other than the regular days we sit. The committee can meet during days in which the session is not sitting. We may want to do that to consider some unfinished business that we may want to look at. So I assume, therefore, we are left with choosing Tuesday's, Wednesday's and Thursday's as potential dates during which we can meet as a committee. And I'm open to suggestions, and I invite some comment.

**Mr. Gardner:** — Mr. Chairman, yes, we discussed it a little bit last evening and felt that if we could work on the one day, it would be somewhat beneficial, and we'd like to propose Tuesdays from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., which would give us four hours while the House is in session, and if we have the business completed by the time session is over, well and good, and if not, look at revising the dates at that time.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Are there any other comments?

**Mr. Lyons:** — Excuse me. It's just that it's a question of productivity and starting at 7:30 and going to 11:30 — four hours straight through — the productivity in committees would wear off after about the first two hours, I would think, and I favour the idea of doing the time or spreading the time over the two days, since we're going to be here in session anyway. There's constituency work people have to do in the morning, and you know, it just gives that extra time.

**Mr. Muller:** — Well I, of course, favour the one day because I sit on ag caucus and resource caucus committees, and we usually set one day a week aside for those committees. And of course on Wednesday is our full caucus. You know we are going to have to work around the Public Accounts Committee.

**Mr. Saxinger:** — I also would favour one day. I'm chairman of a resource committee and ag caucus, and we have just not much opportunity to work in a two-day meeting. Although if four hours would be too long, if three hours would be sufficient for a meeting, I would be in favour of it.

**Mr. Rolfes:** — Mr. Chairman, yes, just to comment. I am not opposed to 7:30. As far as I'm concerned you can start any time in the morning; I'll be there. But I do think that if we are going to have 7:30 meetings, I don't want them to start at 7:45 because people aren't going to be here. If we are going to say 7:30 then, you know, we will be here at 7:30, and we better start them at 7:30 and not 7:45 or 8 because people just aren't going to be there.

I think four-hour sessions are going to be rather long; we are going to find that they are going to be long, and we are going to get rather touchy, I think, on certain topics by that time, and I think if we want to be productive then maybe . . . I would have preferred two and a half, two two and a half hour meetings, but I know that if we do that once a week, then we're just not going to get through; we'll be here until next January or February. That's fine if we want that.

I can also understand and appreciate if you people . . . it may be difficult working in two days. I had just assumed from the past that it would be . . . you know, what we did in the past, when I was here before '82, that we just had two days a week and just did it and got the thing over with.

But if we are going to take one day, even though we spend four hours at it, I think that last hour won't be that productive and we're going to be here a long time. That's my only concern.

**Mr. Chairman:** — If I may make a comment. My personal opinion is that I think this committee needs to be given a certain degree of priority. I think two meetings a week, on a Tuesday and a Thursday — if I may suggest, it will help your caucus meeting situation — and narrow it down to two hours, 8:30 to 10:30, which still would provide us time because we all get our phone calls from constituents and all kinds of other things that we have to do, and should do. If I had a choice I would favour that kind of an approach.

I, too, share the concern about the four-hour meetings. That's a long period of time. The other problem I foresee is that we will have a department sometime which will . . . we don't know how long it will take, so we will have another department standing by. We may be keeping a second department here for four hours and then having them come back another day and never get to them. I would hate to see that happen. And I think that's a caution I would propose for the committee's consideration.

The bottom line is: I would prefer — and it's really a judgement of the committee, and you'll have to decide by a decision — I would prefer two days of two hours a day, minimum of two hours a day, so that we can spread it out and I think become much more effective, which then not only leaves the impression, but also in reality makes us . . . giving the work of this Public Accounts Committee the kind of priority consideration that I think it should have. In my opinion, it's probably one of the most paramount committees of the legislature. What could be more important than overseeing the expenditure of your constituents' and my constituents' dollars. I don't say that in any kind of a negative way; I just think that's the way it is.

**Mr. Gardner:** — As a compromise then, what if we go Tuesday mornings from 8 till 11 while the legislature is in session and see how much of the business we get done and revise the dates, if and when we're not finished, where the House is done sitting . . . (inaudible interjection)

No, just Tuesdays, 8 till 11.

**Mr. Saxinger:** — Possibly I have two days after the House is closed — two days, three hours a day, a week. Two sessions a week after the House closes?

**Mr. Gardner:** — Yes, well we'll see how far we get to these, at that time.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Am I hearing . . . In other words, you would see the possibility of the committee meeting when the House is not sitting as a realistic thing?

**Mr. Gardner:** — Right.

**Mr. Chairman:** — I've always thought that that's something the committee should be doing. I don't think it ever has before. Do you remember, Mr. Muller?

**Mr. Muller:** — Not when I was on the committee. I wasn't on the committee too long in the last legislature.

**Mr. Rolfes:** — Did you sit before '82? Did you sit outside of . . .

**Mr. Muller:** — No.

**Mr. Rolfes:** — It always finished . . .

**Mr. Chairman:** — I've heard another suggestion. An other comments?

**Mr. Lyons:** — I was just going to say on that, that the three hours on the Tuesday, from 8 till 11, sounds fine, but to get to undertaking that if we don't finish the business, and we go and get the . . . so we don't end up with a mess.

**Mr. Gardner:** — No, at that point in time, if the legislature isn't sitting any more, then we'd have to revise the dates and say, well okay, we're three-quarters of the way through, or a third of the way through, whatever the case may be, and we feel we need X many more hours. What are we going to fit it into to, whether it's two days a week or two days and two evenings, or whatever the committee decides at that time. Because when the House is no

longer in session, then a lot of these other committee meetings and stuff, you know, we can dispense with and . . . you know, we're much more flexible.

**Mr. Lyons:** — I agree. It's just a question of that if don't finish the work, that we get a commitment that we'll go and sit until the work is done.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Okay, I'm prepared to entertain a motion, whichever, so we can come to a decision here.

**Mr. Gardner:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, I would so move then that for the initial stages of the committee meetings we choose Tuesdays from 8 a.m. till 11 a.m. while the legislature is sitting, and at the date that the legislature ceases to sit, we, by mutual agreement, amend the dates to the satisfaction of the committee to continue on with the rest of the business in whatever time frame the committee feels is necessary.

**Mr. Chairman:** — I have the motion. Is there a seconder? Mr. Saxinger is seconding.

**Mr. Rolfes:** — Could I ask a question?

**Mr. Chairman:** — Sure.

**Mr. Rolfes:** — I just want to . . . When the House is not sitting — I am not familiar with the committee sitting when the House is not sitting. Are you suggesting that we then sit, let's say, Tuesday, Wednesdays, Thursdays? You know, it really doesn't pay for us to come into town for . . .

**A Member:** — That's what I'm saying.

**Mr. Rolfes:** — Okay. That's fair enough. As long as I know that.

**Mr. Lyons:** — I think that we should support the motion on the understanding, on the clear understanding, that the work of this committee be finished outside the House if the House has failed to stop sitting; that there's an undertaking by all parties that we sit outside the House sitting period in order to do it.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Just before you vote, I assume everyone understands. Gwenn has informed me that if the committee meets on days when the House is not sitting, there is an allowance for expense purposes and so on.

**Mr. Muller:** — It's never been a tradition, like Mr. Rolfes said, it's never been a tradition that the Public Accounts Committee sit when the House was not in session, and I certainly have some difficulty with the Public Accounts Committee sitting when the House is not in session for . . . You know, I am a long ways away from Regina, and . . .

**Mr. Rolfes:** — That's why I suggested, if we're going to do that . . .

**Mr. Muller:** — Yes, but like I say, tradition has had it that Public Accounts Committee sat while the House was in session, and whatever work wasn't completed was completed again when the House came back in. And . . .

**Mr. Martin:** — Is that not a decision we could then make at the

end?

**Mr. Muller:** — No, not the way the motion is reading on the . . . That isn't the motion that Rod Gardner made, that we would continue when the House came back into the session. The motion that he made was that . . .

**A Member:** — That we sit until it's finished.

**Mr. Muller:** — That we sit until it's finished, and I do have some difficulty with that.

**Mr. Rolfes:** — Just a comment on that. In the 11 years that I was here before, the Public Accounts Committee always finished their business — always finished their business — before the House recessed, and we just put in the hours. If we realized we didn't get finished, we . . . you know, there were sufficient hours that we finished.

And I know the point that you're making, Lloyd, and that's why I was anxious to see that we put in sufficient hours per week while the House is sitting, unless there's some other opportunity for us to sit when we're not in session.

That's why I asked the explanation on the motion. I can support the motion if it's clearly understood that we will sit then when we're not in session, to make sure we finish the business of the House . . . of the public accounts.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Can I make a suggestion? I don't want to always lead . . . to sort of impose my chairmanship role here, but in your motion you say that if we are not completed while the House is in session we might consider meeting when the House is not in session.

Could you also include in that, if we see that we're not going to be finished by meeting one day a week, we may decide during the session to extend the number of days, as an option.

**Mr. Gardner:** — Yes, that's good.

**Mr. Muller:** — I can go along with that.

**Mr. Chairman:** — That gives us two options then.

**Mr. Rolfes:** — But it's still clearly understood, if we don't finish, that we will then meet after. I want that clearly understood because otherwise we should start those hours now.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Okay, could I put the question? Do you know the motion? Do you agree?

Agreed

**Mr. Chairman:** — Okay, that is the motion. We will be sitting on Tuesdays from 8 to 11 in a.m., and then we will monitor closely how the committee is progressing and make some further decisions on whether we need additional days.

As your chairman, I really feel it's important we get the work of the committee done. There have been years . . . last year, for example, it did not get done. Nobody's fault, because there was an election that happened to

intervene. None of us around this table had anything to do with that. But that's the way it was. I really don't want us to fall into the Newfoundland or B.C. model where I am told Newfoundland went for eight years and never had a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee because the chairman never called one. And B.C. has had several years in which there has not been a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee. I really think, on our part, that would be quite irresponsible, and I don't think any of us want to do that, so I just . . . I'm glad that the motion gives us some options.

**Mr. Muller:** — I'm certainly glad that we have some options, and I would like to see it finished, and I'm sure with the co-operation of the opposition that we will be able to,

**Mr. Chairman:** — Okay, we have now determined the days of meeting, the times of those days that we meet. I want to ask if the committee would favour that for our first meeting, which would be on Tuesday next, we arrange for a session of orientation.

What I mean by that is that we would have the Clerk come and give us an overview of the operation of the committee, some history, its development and so on, so we get a better focus on what we're all about.

We would ask the Provincial Auditor to come in and give us a briefing on his role and how it meshes with this committee, and really — I'm sure Mr. Lutz will correct me if I'm wrong — but to a large extent the Provincial Auditor is a major part of our staff here, and so I think it would be useful to get that.

And thirdly, I would also propose we ask the Comptroller, Mr. Kraus, to give us a briefing on financial procedures involving expenditures and all that kind of thing. They have done this in the past. I look back at some of the earlier meetings of committees, and it was done, and I found it, reading through it, quite useful. I will propose that, and ask for discussion and see whether there's any interest in it.

**Mr. Muller:** — I certainly have no problem with that. I wasn't on the Public Accounts Committee too long last time; I was here for a short period, and I'd be glad to come. Do you think that would take up the whole three hours, or should we probably . . . or would it be possible to say for the last hour and a half we'd get into discussion on one of the departments that . . .

**Mr. Chairman:** — I have no way of knowing how long it would take. Someone who's had experience in it, could you advise us, in the past, how long has it taken?

**Mr. Kraus:** — Well I know that once I get going it can take 30 minutes to an hour without too much difficulty. And the orientation we had in '82 was more extensive; it took a lot longer than three hours, but that was because there were a lot more participants. But I don't know . . . Mine would take anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour.

**Mr. Muller:** — Well that's fair enough then. We'll be able to eat up the whole three hours. That's fair ball.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Your point, Mr. Muller, is well made. Mr. Lutz will be here. If we do have some extra time, you would be able to go right into the business of your report. So he'll be here anyway.

**Mr. Muller:** — But we wouldn't have any department on call?

**Mr. Chairman:** — No, well I think we'd want to go through the Provincial Auditor's report first before we call any departments.

**Mr. Muller:** — Yes, and then we can lay out the departments we're going to call as the time frame allows.

**Mr. Chairman:** — That's right, and by the looks of this report I think it may take a little while; it's one of the bigger ones.

**Mr. Muller:** — We'll set out a pecking order of which departments they are.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Okay, do we need a motion for this orientation, or will you take it as a recommendation from the Chair?

It is so agreed? Okay. Agreed.

Our assistant clerk is right on her toes. She reminds me that Monday is a holiday. Beattie Martin and I will obviously be at the football game, for sure, so we're okay. But the rest of you people have to come in; is that a problem? Do you still want to meet on Tuesday?

**Mr. Martin:** — Well if we're going to . . . if this orientation period could not . . . probably not going to take three hours, why don't we just start an hour later or whatever . . .

**Mr. Chairman:** — Fine with me.

**Mr. Muller:** — Well, if we ran from 9 till 12, I mean that wouldn't make any difference. If we start a little later and we have to run . . . it's going to be tough for me to get here by 9 o'clock in the morning because it takes me five hours.

**A Member:** — It takes me 10 minutes.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Okay. Let us . . . having heard what you have said, let's start on Tuesday at 9 and go to 12 if necessary, that's the only time we'll change the hours of the meeting unless there's another emergency. Okay? Nine to 12, Tuesday. Agreed.

All right, I have one more item. The Public Accounts Report of 1984-85, consideration was begun. It wasn't finished because an election intervened.

We now have the Public Accounts and the Provincial Auditor's report for '85-86, which is timely. I mean it is the most up-to-date report of Public Accounts. We will need a motion for this, but it seems to me only reasonable that we begin to consider directly the 1985-86 Public Accounts and auditor's report, rather than go back to 1984-1985. And I would suggest that, and say that, for the

purposes of beginning the discussion. Any feelings on it?

**Mr. Rolfes:** — I so move.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Okay, we have a motion that we in this committee begin with the 1985-1986 Provincial Auditor's report on *Public Accounts*.

**Mr. Muller:** — How much business is left from . . . I can't really recall.

**Mr. Chairman:** — A list of not many departments, but a few. And it is just material that is so old that I don't know how relevant it would be. We left off at Agriculture.

**Mr. Muller:** — Can I ask a question of Gwenn?

**Mr. Chairman:** — Sure.

**Mr. Muller:** — What has been the tradition in the past? Has there ever been public accounts that were left over and finished up afterwards or . . .

**Ms. Ronyk:** — No. In the past, I think Mr. Rolfes is correct that the committee has always completed its work. So there was never any carry-over. Both years are before the committee. The committee is empowered to look at both years if it wishes, but you may choose not to, as well.

**Mr. Muller:** — So what will happen to them then if they're not finished?

**Mr. Chairman:** — Nothing.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — The committee has basically then just decided not to call departments with respect to the old issues.

**Mr. Muller:** — I'd like to reserve my feelings on this until our next meeting on next Tuesday.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Okay, I have a motion — you may want to change it but . . .

**Mr. Rolfes:** — Leave the motion sit till next meeting.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Okay.

**Mr. Muller:** — I think that's fair enough.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Okay, that's a good suggestion, actually. We can leave the motion sit until next week. We have a motion from Mr. Rolfes; you know what it is. Do I have a seconder and we leave it sit? Is there a seconder?

**A Member:** — No, we just vote it down.

**Mr. Chairman:** — You don't need seconders? Okay, I'm sorry, we don't need seconders in committee.

**Mr. Muller:** — So that'll come up again next week.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Okay, we will leave it. Now is there any further discussion on this?

**Mr. Lyons:** — Yes, I'd like a list of the departments or that

part of the *Public Accounts* which weren't dealt with so perhaps you can . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . for the next meeting we'll take a look at it.

**Mr. Chairman:** — I will ask staff if they could circulate that list prior to the next meeting.

**A Member:** — Agreed.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Okay, so we'll get you list via the staff prior to the next meeting so you can look at them. That is all I had on our agenda today. Is there anything anyone wishes to add?

Now can I ask Mr. Lutz: did you want to add something here today or do you want to wait until we get into . . .

**Mr. Lutz:** — No.

**Mr. Chairman:** — Okay, thank you staff for coming, for a short meeting. But we thought that this was a good way to get yourself ready for dinner.

This is the room. This is the room. Okay, efficiently done.

The committee adjourned at 12:05 p.m.