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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 1 May 2012

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mardi 1^{er} mai 2012

**Standing Committee on
Estimates**

Organization

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Organisation

Chair: Michael Prue
Clerk: Valerie Quioc Lim

Président : Michael Prue
Greffière : Valerie Quioc Lim

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 1 May 2012

Mardi 1^{er} mai 2012

The committee met at 0901 in room 151.

ORGANIZATION

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): I have a statement that must be read, but first of all, we'll open the meeting. There's a statement that must be read so everybody understands the rules and procedures before we go ahead.

Good morning, committee members. As you know, the Lieutenant Governor has transmitted the estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2013, to the Legislative Assembly. Pursuant to standing order 59, these printed estimates, upon tabling, are deemed to be referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates. All members of the House should have received a copy of the 2012-13 expenditure estimates when they were tabled on Tuesday, April 24, 2012.

The objectives of today's meeting are: (1) to select the estimates of certain ministries or offices for detailed review by the committee, and (2) to determine the date on which the committee will begin the consideration of the selected estimates.

Standing order 60, which you all have before you, sets out the process by which the committee makes its selections. Essentially, each of the recognized parties on the committee shall select the estimates of either one or two ministries or offices in each of two rounds of selection.

The official opposition selects first, followed by the third party, then by the government. After two rounds of selection, the committee will have selected the estimates of six to 12 ministries or offices for review.

Each party also determines how much time is to be allocated to the consideration of estimates of each ministry or office selected. A maximum of 15 hours is permitted per selection. If only one ministry's estimates are selected in a round, those estimates could be reviewed for a maximum of 15 hours. If the estimates of two ministries are selected in a round, they could be reviewed for a combined maximum of 15 hours. It is up to the party making the selection to determine how the 15 hours are to be divided between the two ministries chosen.

At the conclusion of the two rounds, a maximum of 90 hours will have been allocated to the estimates review of the selected ministries or offices. The ministries and

offices shall be reviewed in the order in which they were selected. The order may only be changed by an order of the House.

The estimates of the ministries and offices not selected for consideration will be deemed to have been passed by the committee. As Chair, I will report those estimates back to the House and they will be deemed to be adopted and concurred in by the House.

Any supplementary estimates of selected ministries and offices shall be considered by the committee within the time allocated during this selection process.

In accordance with standing order 63(a), the committee must present a report to the House with respect to the estimates it selected and considered by the third Thursday of November this year, November 15, 2012. If the committee fails to report by the third Thursday in November, the estimates and supplementary estimates before the committee will be deemed to be passed by the committee and deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Are there any questions? Everybody understands? So each party in turn will get 15 hours, how they want to allocate it, and after the second go-round we're finished.

Are the members, then, ready to begin the selection process? Okay, we start first with the official opposition.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On behalf of the PC caucus, we would like to select the Ministry of Energy first.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): And the number of hours?

Mr. Rob Leone: Fifteen hours.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Bisson?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Good day, Mr. Chair. I have a question of the clerk first. Estimates meets twice a week. How many hours? It's morning and afternoon.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): It's Tuesday mornings and afternoons.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: For an hour and 15?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Right. Afternoon from routine proceedings, so we start at 3:45 until 6.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So you're going to get two hours and 15, for a total of three and a half. Let me do a little bit of math here, Mr. Chair.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): And Wednesday afternoons.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And Wednesday? So total hours per week?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): It's about—let me just figure it out.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would have figured this all out before I got here, but I'm here at the last minute.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): My guess would be around seven hours.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: About seven hours. Okay. So that means then you're going to start your first ones this week. Are they ready to go?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): It's about six actually.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Six hours?

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Six.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay. So next question: You're going to start your actual estimates this upcoming Wednesday? The first ministry up is this Wednesday?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): The committee can decide when it would like to begin consideration of the first selection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So that's six hours, 12—okay. All right. That makes my choice simple.

The very first one we would like to do is seven and a half hours for finance, and the next one after that will be health and long-term care as our second choice of seven and a half.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Government?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Our two choices are francophone affairs and, secondly, aboriginal affairs, each for 7.5 hours.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Back to the official opposition.

Mr. Rob Leone: We'd like to select the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): For how much time?

Mr. Rob Leone: Fifteen hours.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Third party?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Monsieur le Président, you say that with such feeling. I like that. Again, seven and a half hours each, northern development and mines as number 3 and infrastructure as number 4.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): And the government?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: The Attorney General, 7.5 hours, and a personal favourite, environment, for 7.5.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Okay. Just to recap if everybody doesn't have it: We have chosen energy for 15 hours; finance for 7.5; health and long-term care for 7.5; francophone affairs for 7.5; aboriginal affairs, 7.5; training, colleges and universities for 15; northern development and mines for 7.5; infrastructure for 7.5; Attorney General for 7.5; and the environment for 7.5. That would be the total 90 hours.

When does the committee wish to begin consideration of the estimates of the first ministry office selected? Historically, it has been about two weeks after this, but it can be as early as next week. It's entirely in the hands of the committee. Mr. Bisson?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sooner is better than later. I would argue that the first possible opportunity—which is when? Wednesday?

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): No, it would be next Tuesday. You mean tomorrow? It is possible, but the ministries would not have realized they were selected. I don't know whether we can get—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's why you get paid the big bucks.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): They have to be called in the order in which we did it, so if energy could be ready in less than 24 hours, and the briefing materials that go with it.

0910

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm sure the minister is briefed.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Is that a motion?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I propose it as a motion.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): All right, we have a motion, then, on the floor that we begin starting tomorrow. Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I think we need to be fair and we need to be reasonable. As the clerk has explained, it would be less than 24 hours, essentially, that they would have in terms of preparation. I'm sure it would be more reasonable to have an excellent presentation, a well-prepared presentation rather than what might end up being quite a rough job. Convention has been two weeks. I think that would be the only reasonable approach.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Any further debate on the motion that we start tomorrow?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Recorded vote.

Ayes

Bisson, Harris, Leone, Nicholls.

Nays

Crack, Craitor, Jaczek, Sergio.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): All right. I am given to understand that my role as the Chair is exactly the opposite of that of the Speaker of the House, who breaks the ties in the affirmative. The role of the Chair in committee is to break the tie in the negative, so I would cast my vote in the negative, and that motion does not pass.

Mr. Bisson, a new motion.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, it would be a new motion, but before that just—obviously we have a bit of a difference of opinion about the role of the Chair. The Chair has two purviews in this particular case: one is, the Chair never votes to make a decision that the committee can't make itself, which is one argument; and the other one is, the Chair always allows debate to continue. So you could have gone both ways, is my argument. Anyways, you made the decision. I'm not challenging you.

So I will move that we do it the next possible date.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): So you are then moving a week today?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A motion to the next day after Wednesday?

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): That would be Tuesday, May 8.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think that's more than reasonable. I move that—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes. I think it's halfway in between where the government was and where I was, and I think it's a good saw-off, so therefore make it a motion.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Okay, we have a motion before us for Tuesday, May 8.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: A recorded vote, please.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Okay. First of all, is there any discussion on Tuesday, May 8, whether we proceed on Tuesday, May 8?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, just for the record, I'm not going to belabour the point, but it's pretty clear the government has a bit of a strategy going here. The reality is that estimates are a little bit late this year, number 1. Number 2 is that I have ultimate faith in the civil service, the political staff and the minister to be available and ready to go on the 8th. I would argue Mr. Bentley is probably ready to go tomorrow. He's a very capable minister who knows his file well, and I don't think there would be any adverse affect in having the estimates start tomorrow, so I think next Tuesday is reasonable. I think it's the way we should go.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Ms. Jaczek?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Well, we would prefer to stick with what has been the tradition here, which is two weeks. It allows for appropriate preparation, and so we feel two weeks from today would be the best time to proceed.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Harris?

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to concur with Mr. Bisson that one week would be reasonable time to have the minister make his presentation. We've been sitting now for several months in terms of getting our committees struck, and this is simply another delay tactic, so I would support Mr. Bisson's motion.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Any further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: A recorded vote, please.

Ayes

Bisson, Harris, Leone, Nicholls.

Nays

Crack, Craiton, Jaczek, Sergio.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Again, on the same rationale, I would cast my vote in the negative.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just so that it's on the record one more time: Again, I'm not challenging the Chair, but I think that you have the leeway as the Chair to rule otherwise. This is essentially a procedural issue, and on a procedural—

Mr. Mario Sergio: Then you're challenging the Chair.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I'm not challenging the Chair.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Sergio, I have the floor.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Please, please. He has the floor.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Chair, who has the floor?

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): The floor is with Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So I just make the point that I would argue differently, but you're the Chair and I'm not going to challenge you. I made my points.

So, therefore, I'm going to move another motion, Mr. Chair, and my other motion is that this committee instruct the House leaders that they wish to sit during the summer, at the call of the Chair, in order to deal with estimates. That's been done by every other committee so far.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): We have a motion that the committee request from the House leaders that this committee be empowered to sit in the summer session—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: At the call of the Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): —at the call of the Chair.

We have a motion. Any discussion on that motion? No discussion.

All those in favour?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: See, this is a lot better.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): That carries.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, man, look at this. We're all like this now. Isn't this great?

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Okay. So—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Chair, just for the record—

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): We still don't have a starting date, though.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just for the record, you didn't have to break that tie.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Thank you. I'm erring on the side of caution at first. I want the committee to work.

Mr. Mario Sergio: You want to change your mind?

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): No, I'm not changing my mind, but we still don't have a start date. Is there a motion to—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I would argue, if they're not going to do Tuesday, we can at least do Wednesday the following week. That gives them enough time to get ready. That's a saw-off. You get lots of time.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): I need a motion. So, you're asking for Wednesday, May 9, to begin?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yeah, but not constituency week.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'll make that motion.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Okay. I have a motion. It's made by Mr. Harris that we start on Wednesday, May 9.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I think that's constituency week.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no.

Mr. Michael Harris: It's the week of the 21st.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The ministry has a week, so that's pretty fine.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): All right. So we have a motion made by Mr. Harris that we commence on May 9, which is a Wednesday. Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: The government would prefer to wait the two weeks, as has been the case in this committee, and that would lead us to the following Tuesday. So we will be opposing May 9.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think they're being unreasonable, Chair.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: That's our choice, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's your choice. Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I recognize it's the government's choice, and that's your prerogative. I'm not in any way saying that you're wrong to say what you're saying. All I'm saying is that I think we're being reasonable. I think a week is plenty of time for the estimates to be prepared. If you go back and take a look at when estimates has normally sat, we've had a number of occasions where actually we've called ministries in a lot faster than two weeks. So I would ask the Chair to keep that in consideration while making his decision.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Further discussion?

Mr. Rob Leone: Yes. I would concur with the motion. One thing that I can say, at least from this side, is that we want to get working on this committee. I think it's going to be a productive thing. We want to talk about energy policy. We want to get into health and finance. We also want to go with the government's choices of francophone affairs and aboriginal affairs. We're ready to get at those as soon as possible.

I think that we should support this motion. This motion is definitely needed. I don't want to continue seeing this kind of disagreement. Let's just get to work on this committee. I think we should work as fast as possible and as soon as possible.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Obviously we're not interested in delay. We've seen what's been happening in the House, and we're very distraught and distressed about the delay there. But this is a question of good preparation, and so we stand by our position.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll repeat for the second time: I think this is a fair compromise; I think it's in keeping with what this committee has done historically over the years. We've had estimates start before the two weeks on plenty of occasions in the past, and I would ask that you consider that in your decision.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Nicholls.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I speak in favour of the motion. We've been here over six months now, and we haven't really done anything as of yet.

I'm also very concerned with the fact that in two weeks' time we're going to be breaking for another week, and then we're only back for two weeks. I feel that we

should be getting on with business as soon as possible. Personally, I think that eight days, as opposed to two weeks, would be adequate and enough time. I suspect that the government have, in fact, anticipated that energy would be one of the areas that we would be looking at. Therefore, I personally believe that they would be ready. We just need to kind of get on with getting things done, that's all. Let's work together on this.

0920

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Yes, it's been our position since we were elected to government on October 6, 2011, that we should all be working together. Unfortunately, the last six months have shown very clearly that the opposition parties have not taken the same view.

We stick to our guns. You have asked for 15 hours for the Ministry of Energy to present, and we will be opposing your choice for the start date.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I take some—I don't know what the word would be—exception to those comments about the opposition parties not working trying to make this Parliament work. Quite to the contrary, I think Andrea Horwath and New Democrats have demonstrated a willingness to try to make this Parliament work. So I would ask that she be careful in the use of that type of comment.

The other thing, Chair, is that it is a possibility that the government House leader refuses to move a motion to have this committee sit in the summer. Yes, the House leader for the New Democrats—myself—and Mr. Wilson may be willing to support such a motion being introduced, but it is at the call of the government House leader that the motion gets called into the House. The dilemma we're going to have is that we're already late in starting the estimates. The estimates is one of the things that are quite important around here by way of the standing orders, in order to review the expenditures of the government of Ontario. Should the government decide, for whatever strategic reason, not to call the motion to have this committee sit in the summer, we are going to be short on time to do the proper job of reviewing the expenditures of the province of Ontario in the ministries that are selected.

So I go back to my original point. I respect the decisions you've made up to this point. I would just say that what we're proposing is a compromise. There are lots of precedents where the committee has started its work before the two weeks as per the standing orders. That was done during majority governments. Majority governments agreed with the opposition to start early—of all stripes. So I would urge the Chair to keep that in his consideration when deciding, because the work of this committee is important, and we're going to be short on time should the government not call a motion to have this committee sit in the summer.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Any further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Recorded vote, please.

Ayes

Bisson, Harris, Leone, Nicholls.

Nays

Crack, Craitor, Jaczek, Sergio.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): I've consulted with the clerk, and I have listened to the arguments. I am going to vote with the motion, and I'll tell you why. There are, between now and November, 51 hours. At six hours a week, there are 51 hours. That's all that there is. I am also mindful that the House leaders do not always agree and that delaying it will not be in the best interests of the committee or in the best interests of our accomplishing the 90 hours that we're supposed to do by the end. I just can't delay the committee's work beyond that, so I am going to vote with the mover, and the motion passes.

Is there any other business?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Mr. Chair, excuse me. I have a question with regard to meeting in the summertime. Would it only be Tuesdays and Wednesdays, or can it be any days?

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): It would be at the call of the Chair, but the House leaders would probably set out the rules. They would set out the rules, the weeks that we were to meet, the times and the number of hours that could be met. Then the Chair would make that decision call, and we would meet during the months of June, July and August potentially.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Is there a maximum number of hours that we have to meet, or minimum/maximum hours throughout a week?

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Well, no, but if it was the intent to get the entire 90 hours accomplished, it would mean some 40 hours over the summer break.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Whichever way the committee decides.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): So it could, I guess, conceivably be one week, eight hours a day times five. It could be. Or it could be a few hours a week, every week, all summer.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think we should do it in Marten Falls in June.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Any other questions? Any other discussion? Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I just want to clarify that, obviously, our government House leader will be informed that the government members were fully in favour of sitting during the summer.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, without question.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Okay. Anything else? So Wednesday, May 9, at 9 o'clock—

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): In the afternoon.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Oh, in the afternoon. Sorry, Wednesdays, it's in the afternoon, following routine proceedings, approximately 3:30, quarter to 4, whenever routine proceedings are next week. Anything else? Nothing else?

Seeing nothing else, meeting adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 0926.

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