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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 4 June 2013

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mardi 4 juin 2013

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 4 June 2013

Mardi 4 juin 2013

The committee met at 0902 in committee room 2.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): I'm going to call the meeting to order. The others will just have to join us. I have to read a statement, just so everybody is very clear what is going to happen here today.

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, 2014, 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 2013-14 printed estimates when they were tabled on Wednesday, May 29, 2013.

The objectives of today's meeting are twofold:

(1) to select the estimates of certain ministries or offices for review by the committee;

(2) to determine the date on which the committee will begin the consideration of the selected estimates.

We have to decide those two things.

Standing order 60 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 anywhere from a minimum of six to a maximum of 12 ministries or offices for review.

In making its selection, each party also determines how much time is to be allocated to the consideration of each ministry or office selected. A maximum of 15 hours is permitted per selection. For example, if one selection is made in a round, that single selection could be reviewed for a maximum of 15 hours. If two selections are made in a round, both of them are reviewed for a combined maximum of 15 hours. How the division of these 15 hours takes place is up to the party making the selection.

At the conclusion of the two rounds of review, the committee could spend up to a maximum of 90 hours in scrutinizing the estimates of all the selected ministries or offices. Pursuant to standing order 60(c), these selections

are to be reviewed in the order that they were chosen, and this can only be changed by an order of the House.

The estimates of those ministries or 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. 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.

Do the members have any questions before we begin? No questions? Okay.

The selection of ministries: We go first to the official opposition for your selection or selections.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We would like to select the Ministry of Finance for 10 hours and the ministry of tourism and culture, particularly with responsibility for the Pan Am Games, for five hours.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Okay. I just want make sure. You all have a list here as well. Because some of them are combined, I just want to make sure we actually have the correct title. Finance is as listed and the other one was tourism, culture and sport.

Mr. Rob Leone: And sport.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): And sport, okay. So that selection has been made for a total of 15 hours. That's the first choice.

We now go to the third party for the choice or choices.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The NDP will be selecting the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for 7.5 hours, followed by the Ministry of Transportation for 7.5 hours.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): On to the government.

Mr. Grant Crack: The government will choose the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs for 15 hours.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Okay. Back to the second and final round, to the official opposition.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Chair, we'd like to select the Ministry of Energy for 7.5 hours and the Ministry of Education for 7.5 hours.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): To the third party.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The NDP will select the Ministry of Infrastructure for 7.5 hours, followed by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services for 7.5 hours.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): And the final selection to the government.

Mr. Grant Crack: Francophone affairs at 7.5 hours; consumer services, 7.5 hours.

Mr. Rob Leone: Sorry? I didn't hear you.

Mr. Grant Crack: Consumer services.

Mr. Rob Leone: Oh, okay.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): All right. Just to review this so that there is no problem—I don't anticipate one, but we'll review it anyway. The choices and the order of precedence which we will follow are: Ministry of Finance for 10 hours, followed by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport for five hours; health and long-term care for 7.5 hours; transportation for 7.5 hours; aboriginal affairs for 15 hours; energy for 7.5 hours; education for 7.5 hours; infrastructure for 7.5 hours; children and youth services for 7.5 hours; francophone affairs for 7.5 hours; and consumer services for 7.5 hours, for a total of 90 hours.

0910

The second item for us to determine today is the date on which the committee will begin the consideration of the selected estimates. The first estimate to be heard is health, and we could—

Interjection: Finance.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Finance—excuse me—and we can do it as early as this afternoon, legally. I'm not sure that that would give sufficient time for the finance committee to be present, but when would the committee like to start?

Mr. Rob Leone: Can I ask a question, Mr. Chair? With respect to meeting next week, is that possible?

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): By all indications, we will be here next week, so yes.

Mr. Rob Leone: So, Mr. Chair, I propose that we begin the proceedings for next Tuesday at 9 a.m.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): That would be Tuesday, June 11.

Ms. Catherine Fife: A question: Is it not possible to start this afternoon? Is the government—

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): It is legally permissible to start, but none of the ministries would have been aware of what the choices were until right now. It's a difficult task to get the minister and all of the staff who come to these hearings available on such short notice. I mean, it could be this afternoon. We're also scheduled to meet tomorrow, if somebody wants to—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Perhaps we can hear from the government side about tomorrow, because I'm sure that they expected us to call finance, or one of us to call finance.

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

Mr. Grant Crack: Mr. Chair, I respect the positions of the official opposition and the NDP, but would it not be more appropriate if the subcommittee could meet and actually determine when, in fact, the first minister would be available? This is short notice. I cannot see any preparation being made to be available for today, this afternoon, or, I question, even next week. This is a huge undertaking.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Well, it has been historical precedent that the committee itself choose the time to start, rather than the subcommittee—everybody is here—because it binds all of the members at that point to be here as well. Historically, we've waited till the following week. I don't know; perhaps the Clerk has been around the committee longer than I, but I know that last year we started the following week.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): The Clerk has told me that there is the problem, too, of briefing books. Since the ministries would not have been aware, the briefing books would not likely be prepared, or be preparable, for this afternoon. Even tomorrow would be a bit of a long-shot for a large ministry like finance. But I am in your hands.

Mr. Michael Harris: We propose to start next Tuesday at 9 a.m. So I put a motion on the floor to start—

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Well, no, the motion is on the floor.

Mr. Michael Harris: Okay. Well, then, call the question.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Actually, I was going to just—given the new information that was just provided, I fully support starting next Tuesday at 9 a.m. That should give the minister enough time, I would think—a full week. We don't need a motion if we can come to consensus, right?

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): The motion has been made. Any further discussion on the motion for next Tuesday at 9 o'clock? Any further discussion? Seeing none, all those in favour of starting next Tuesday at 9 o'clock? Opposed? That carries.

There is one other small item. The decision will be made by the House leaders and not by the committee: the availability or the desire of people to sit during the summer months. The committee can only meet during those weeks in which the Legislature is in session, except upon agreement of the House through the House leaders. I know that last summer, because it was quite contentious and because we were trying to get through the agenda, which we never did get through, we did schedule some summer meetings. Does anybody have a desire to meet over the summer?

Mr. Rob Leone: I do believe that the House leaders will come to a consensus, but I will note our desire to get through the estimates. Hopefully, if we can convey the message to the House leaders that we would be prepared to meet during the summer, I would think that would be appropriate, from our perspective.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Okay. I see some nods of agreement on the government side, if necessary,

if the House leaders choose, to sit during the summer months. Mr. Mauro.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm just a little unclear. The committee has the authority to decide, or the government House leaders, by convention—

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): No. This is simply an indication to the government House leaders that the committee would be prepared to meet—

Mr. Bill Mauro: So the standing orders say that you can only be meeting when the House is sitting?

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): That's correct.

Mr. Bill Mauro: And you're telling me that the House leaders can come to a consensus to circumvent the standing orders.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): That's correct. The House can order—

Mr. Bill Mauro: So you're just looking for a consensus or an indication from committee to the House leaders as they have those discussions.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): That's correct.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Okay, thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Anybody from the government side indicating that you would be prepared to

meet in the summer months, should the House leaders so decide? Mute on the subject. All right. We've had several indications, then, that the committee would be prepared to meet and none that they would not.

So, Mr. Clerk, if you could convey that, draft a letter, and we'll leave it to the House leaders of the respective parties to determine whether or not we meet. If we do, it would then be at the call of the Chair, unless the dates are set down in the House.

Is there any other business? Does anybody have any other business? Seeing no other business—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Yes. We would adjourn today and come back next Tuesday at 9 a.m. if the House is sitting, because if the House winds up—which appears unlikely at this point—but should it wind up on Thursday, then there will be no meeting next Tuesday.

Mr. Michael Harris: Or pending the House leaders' arrangements—

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Yes. Okay, no other business? The meeting is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 0918.

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