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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 12 June 2001

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mardi 12 juin 2001

**Standing committee on
estimates**

Committee business

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Travaux du comité

Chair: Gerard Kennedy
Clerk: Susan Sourial

Président : Gerard Kennedy
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 12 June 2001

Mardi 12 juin 2001

The committee met at 1600 in committee room 228.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy): I call the meeting to order. Thank you all for attending. I welcome you to the 2001 estimates. As you know, we are here to commence estimates with the selections of each of the parties present. Just by way of preamble and to be helpful, according to the best expectation we can have—and if the government members have any information to share that would be helpful to members of the committee, they are welcome to provide that—it would seem that we are looking at something in the order of 45 to 50 hours maximum of total hearing time, given a number of circumstances: the timing of the budget, the fact that there was a week in between.

In my neutral capacity, I will leave it up to the parties present if they wish to make arrangements for more hearing time or what have you. But without that arrangement being arrived at, that's essentially what we are looking at.

What that means for our business today is that each of the parties can look forward to the likelihood—there may be changes in calendar and so on; again, if the government can give us more direction, that would be terrific—that roughly each party will get the two choices or the one choice, whichever they wish to make out of their round. It looks as if there will be time for one round from each of the parties here today. We will still, I believe, go ahead with our three selections and so forth, but I thought it would be useful to consider what the business of estimates looks like from now till the time we are required by the orders to report to the House. I just provide that by way of information.

If anyone would like to raise any related issues or any discussion, I'd be happy to take that now, otherwise we will commence with the selection of ministries.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question. I apologize for not having all of this. I'm replacing Mr Bisson. What is the date by which we are due to report to the House?

The Chair: The third week in November, the third Thursday in November. At that time all estimates are deemed to be reported. Our last consideration is normally the Tuesday and Wednesday just before that particular date because that is when the orders allow us to sit. I'm

sorry I don't have that date available to you but, again, it is the third Thursday that is mentioned in the orders. Any further questions or discussion?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): When does the House come back, by calendar?

The Chair: By calendar, we place it in the third week of September. We are basing the earlier rough estimate—I want to emphasize that; the government of course can change and modify the calendar at will. We can come back with the date, but I don't think it will be a material change. I think in essence we are looking at 45, and allowing for one week's difference, a maximum of 50 hours, which is just barely enough to do one round for each of the parties.

I know you all make careful deliberations in your choices, and you may well have already looked ahead, but I just thought I'd put that on the table for the benefit of everyone today.

If there is no further discussion, we will commence with the selection of estimates. As you know, our job is to choose no fewer than six in total and no more than 12. The first round, starting with the official opposition, I'll ask the whip of the official opposition, Mr Peters, to choose one or two ministries for a combined total of 15 hours.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I'd like to put forth two ministries at seven and a half hours each: education and health.

The Chair: Thank you. I now turn to Ms Martel as the representative for the third party and ask her to indicate one or two ministries for a combined total of 15 hours.

Ms Martel: I'd like to split the 15 over two rounds of seven and a half each. They would be the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Energy.

The Chair: OK, to the government party. Could I ask you for your selections, please, one or two ministries for a total of 15 hours.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Yes. We'd like to put forward two ministries: economic development and trade, and tourism, culture and recreation; seven and a half each.

The Chair: OK. Notwithstanding the information before, if the calendar does change, I'd like us to be prepared and would like to go through with the second round of choices. I'll turn first again to the official opposition and wonder if I could ask you to give us what your selections will be. Second round, you have 15

hours, one or two ministries. It is your choice for the combined total of hours.

Mr Peters: OK, second round, environment, 10—

The Chair: Sorry, you're going to change that because environment has been chosen. It has already been selected.

Mr Peters: OK. I follow you. Comsoc, seven and a half, and training, colleges and universities, seven and a half.

The Chair: All right. The third party, Ms Martel

Ms Martel: Two choices again to divide up the 15 hours: first, Ministry of Transportation and, second, Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

The Chair: When you say divide the 15 hours, divided equally?

Ms Martel: Yes.

The Chair: OK. Thank you. The government party?

Mr O'Toole: Second round, we would go for Ministry of Natural Resources and Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The Chair: Is it your wish that that be equal time, seven and a half hours per?

Mr O'Toole: Yes.

The Chair: I think in fact we have done our duty here. I didn't mean to raise the possibility of a third round. Those are 12 ministries. That's the required number. Had one party or other chosen 15 hours, we would have continued to select. But essentially our duty is done for today.

I'll just remind you, as part of the formal text, that it's the third Thursday in November. Those that are not considered, in other words, the ones we didn't choose today, are deemed reported and concurred upon on this date.

At the first item, the first vote, each party may speak for not more than 30 minutes. The minister speaks for 30 minutes and the remaining time is divided among the three parties in rotation, beginning with the official opposition. The time we are allowed is no more than 20 minutes. We have sometimes set it at less, but that has been the comfortable time to divide the meetings in, so that's what we can anticipate.

Now, I'll put this for the committee. We'd normally give the ministry selected some notice in order to attend. I understand that Management Board tells us that the detailed estimates could be available on the 18th. I'm wondering, is it the wish of this committee to give the ministries a week? Would that be sufficient time before we have them come in to appear before this committee?

Mr O'Toole: Yes, from the government side, that sounds appropriate.

The Chair: So we will notify the ministries appropriately, starting the 19th. Is there any other business?

Mr Curling: In the first round we are going to have education, health, environment, energy, economics and tourism. We know we can't do that within the time. Will that be deemed as read and completed?

The Chair: Only on the third Thursday when whatever work we've been able to accomplish—and those,

like Mr Wettlaufer, who have been long-standing members of the committee, know that I always try and urge the committee to do as much work as possible. We've done not badly some years and other years circumstances got in between. Whatever we have been able to get done by the third Thursday is deemed to be done. I'm asked, on your behalf, to report to the House that we've examined what we've been able to examine, and anything unfinished, including those selected, is then deemed to have been reported to the House.

But I would say to you that we will have those 50 hours, approximately, which means we will touch on—again, assuming the calendar. I'm sorry there's nothing we can do today to be more definitive. It looks like we would get to the Ministry of Community and Social Services if everything remained the same. I would just caution the official opposition, whose choice that is, that we have never had a year where everything has remained the same, but just in case.

Mr Curling: Maybe you've answered my question, but I don't think I understood it. I'm saying at the 28th or 29th of this month—

The Chair: Yes, these will continue into the fall.

Mr Curling: OK.

The Chair: My apologies, Mr Curling. Your question was perfectly straightforward. Yes, everything will be carried over. We will start with, it looks like, the Ministry of Education. We will probably have to carry that on into the fall or we may actually finish education and begin with health.

Mr Curling: One last point. Next week, Tuesday, will the Ministry of Education be ready with their books?

The Chair: No. We give a week to prepare.

Mr Curling: So we give them notice today and next Tuesday they're ready.

The Chair: Yes, that's correct.

Mr O'Toole: For clarification, through the Chair to the clerk, just administratively to reinforce for new members of the committee, of which I'm one, normally the committee meets on Tuesdays and Wednesdays after petitions to 6 o'clock, only when the House is in session. If the House comes back earlier or later, all of this gets sort of moved along. The subcommittee may have to meet or whatever to readjust.

The Chair: If it is just the shifting of the calendar, we would normally not require a meeting. We would just adjust our calendar accordingly, because what we are fixing today is by the power we have under the orders to conduct our business. We are then subject to the whim of the House calendar.

Again, I invite members of any parties who think that we should be examining more ministries with more vigour. I'd be very happy to assist, in my neutral chairmanship way, to enable that to happen. But that would take the initiative of one of the parties to propose some kind of arrangement that the government might find acceptable.

Any other business? Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 1610.

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