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Tuesday 18 June 2002

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Mardi 18 juin 2002

**Standing committee on
estimates**

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Chair: Gerard Kennedy
Clerk: Susan Sourial

Président : Gerard Kennedy
Greffière : Susan Sourial

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 18 June 2002

Mardi 18 juin 2002

The committee met at 1531 in room 228.

The Chair (Mr Gerard Kennedy): Thank you all for coming. I would like to introduce some of the staff who will be assisting this committee in its duty. From Hansard we have Peggy Brooks; from research, Anne Marzalik; from broadcast and recording, Neville White; and of course our inestimable clerk, Susan Sourial.

The business of the committee today is to select the ministries that will come before estimates. We have, as I think members of each party are aware, an unusual motion in the House that circumscribes some of our activity today, but I would say most of the standing orders will apply.

Do we have housekeeping business ahead of time? OK. The first of that is subcommittee membership. We have, I believe, a motion from Mr Spina.

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I move that Ted Chudleigh shall replace Mr Wettlaufer on the subcommittee on committee business.

The Chair: Mr Chudleigh is put forward. By general agreement, then, Mr Chudleigh. Congratulations, Mr Chudleigh, and welcome to the subcommittee.

Interjection.

The Chair: Obviously not enough advance preparation had been done with the other caucuses to help Mr Chudleigh, and he assumes those awesome responsibilities with the rest of us.

SELECTION OF MINISTRIES

The Chair: I think people are familiar with the standing orders. Each of the parties, starting with the official opposition, makes two selections. We will simply follow the standing orders and make our selections. There are two parts, and I will take a point of order in a moment. As the Chair, I sought some interpretation from the government House leader just before the meeting to learn whether there was a misconstrual of a motion. In effect, what I am given to understand is that the motion in the House basically constrains us from sitting beyond the 70 hours, but given that the schedule we're on is for approximately 45 to 50 hours, I would suggest to the committee that the simplest way to treat that is as moot. It is unlikely we will reach the 70 hours.

The 7.5 hours, however, I believe is clear, and therefore restricts—the previous standing orders had allowed flexibility within any portion of 15 hours allocated to one or two ministries.

Without further ado, then, I would like to proceed and ask each caucus to be prepared with their first two selections, again reminding you that 7.5 hours is the maximum.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Chair: For the record, just a couple of things.

First of all, as I understand it, now that you have the Ministry of Environment and Energy put into one, it puts us at a bit of a disadvantage given this motion, in that we would like to be able to call both of those ministries before the committee but we end up with seven and a half hours for both of those, which are quite large. So I'm wondering if there's any willingness on the part of the committee to allow the split between energy and environment to be done.

The Chair: I'm advised by the clerk that we have to deal with ministries as they're reported. For the purposes of estimates, I refer you to the estimates book. Energy and environment are reported as a single ministry.

Mr Bisson: What I'm asking for, by way of unanimous consent, is if we could agree to split those two out.

The Chair: I'll confer with the clerk, but it's my understanding that we have a motion from the House that we can't overrule at committee and that limits us to the 7.5. I don't think it allows us to interpret the ministries. I'll just discuss that and get back to you on that point.

Mr Bisson, to fully give consideration to your request, we're just checking a technical point around when a ministry is actually acknowledged as a distinct ministry. We have the basic presentation of the ministry in that book, but because it does happen from time to time, I'm seeking to know what the definition would be. When does a ministry become a combined ministry and when do they function separately?

Mr Bisson: Once you've done that I have a little point to add to it.

The Chair: On the same—

Mr Bisson: On the same issue. I want to hear what your answer is and then I'll raise the next point

The Chair: We understand that an order in council has created the Ministry of Energy and Environment as one, so we don't have that option here at committee, given our standing orders, to be more flexible.

Mr Bisson: Here's my question, then. Short of getting unanimous consent, which you say I can't get because of the order of the House, what happens if the Liberal opposition picks environment and energy and I pick environment and energy? Do we get 15 hours?

The Chair: Thank you for your interesting interventions today. One moment, please.

Mr Bisson, your intervention has both tantalized and challenged the table, but the table informs us that there is precedent here that means they determine those selections to be exclusive. So they give us that advice.

Mr Bisson: So the answer to my second inquiry is no.

The Chair: That's right.

Mr Bisson: Boy, they really know how to spoil a party.

Let me ask it this way, then. If I were to call, for example, the Premier's office or the Ministry of Finance, does that allow me then to get to energy and environment? If I call the Premier's office, am I restricted just to the expenses within the Premier's office or am I allowed to get out and do energy?

The Chair: The business of the committee is the estimates as stated. There is latitude based on the presentation and so forth. The public interest we'll determine as the investigation follows. Technically, you're going after the ministry you name. Whether that allows you to entertain other subjects or not will depend on how they're brought forward.

Mr Bisson: I do need a bit of guidance on this one because obviously it's going to make—

The Chair: The only thing I can tell you, as the Chair and as someone who's dealt with this precedent before, is that there is some latitude, particularly with the Office of the Premier and with the Ministry of Finance. I've been advised in the past that it goes beyond the actual numbers in front of us, to the extent that the functions of the office are also discussable. That's been the ruling in the past.

Mr Bisson: If I were to call the Premier's office, then I would be able to ask questions on policy on any ministry within the government?

The Chair: Keeping in mind, Mr Bisson, that typically and traditionally we are represented by ministers or, in the case of the Premier's office, it's unlikely we'll have the first minister. We'll likely have a parliamentary assistant or someone so designated from that office. That may limit the inquiry you can make about a given ministry.

Mr Bisson: I hear you, but what I'm asking is, if the Premier is not here and he sends his parliamentary assistant and we're asking questions, let's say, on energy or environment, are they required to bring the staff of the Ministry of Environment and Energy if we say that's what our questions are about?

The Chair: Their requirement is not to bring staff but rather to provide briefing materials, a point which we will encounter in a moment. That's what the standing orders provide, that they give us background materials and that the minister be present or a representative of the ministry. We don't have an actual requirement for staff from the ministry.

Mr Bisson: Can you just give me a couple of seconds before we go into rotation? I want to talk to the clerks. Can I ask for a four-minute adjournment?

The Chair: A four-minute adjournment is granted.

The committee recessed from 1542 to 1546.

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order. Mr Bisson, are you prepared?

Mr Bisson: I think my colleague may have a question.

The Chair: With regard to the earlier ruling, I note as well that the extemporaneous motion in the House is explicit, saying no ministry can be more than 7.5 hours. So it's coming back to the idea of duplication, which we had a definitive ruling on, that also would have precluded that.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): A question: if we called environment and energy, and let's say the third party were to invite the Premier's office to speak, can questions still be asked of—certainly we could ask environment and energy, but would you still have the ability, under the Premier's office, to ask questions about environment or energy?

The Chair: As I explained before, there's a certain amount of latitude, to start off, with the functions of the Premier's office, which do reach into every ministry. We have had the Premier's office here before, and that has been the case. Whether you have the supporting staff or people who can give the answers in a certain period of time and so on may be a different story. But I think we can say that there's some latitude with the Premier's office because of the wide-ranging nature of the responsibilities that are conducted in that office.

Are we ready to proceed?

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): On a point of order, Mr Chair: Just a clarification on that. If the Premier's office is called, certainly if the intention is just to stick on one ministry, I think that would be against the spirit of calling the Premier's office. As you've said, there is latitude on a range of issues. But I would submit to you as Chair that, if that latitude is only on one ministry, we're perhaps looking at going around the rules set by the Legislature.

The Chair: I can assure you that the Chair will uphold the rules as set by the Legislature. We will ensure that the public interest is pursued within the standing orders. So, Mr Mazzilli, I hope that gives you some comfort. If it meets with your agreement and the agreement of the other parties, I'd like to proceed with selections.

I turn now to the official opposition for your first two selections, please.

Mr Peters: Health and education.

The Chair: We have health and education, each for 7.5 hours as prescribed in the motion.

We turn now to the third party.

Mr Bisson: Surprise, surprise: my first pick is energy and environment. I'll let you guess my second pick.

The Chair: I'm not going to presume.

Mr Bisson: The Premier's office.

The Chair: Yes; there we go.

The government party?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Our first pick will be the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs. The second pick would be the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

Mr Bisson: Right on.

Mr Chudleigh: You can't wait to get your teeth into those ones, eh?

Mr Bisson: Do you know what? I wanted to bring that one in second.

Mr Chudleigh: I'm glad I could make you happy.

The Chair: We appreciate the intercaucus collegiality and co-operation. If Mr Peters is ready—

Mr Bisson: They need a couple of minutes.

The Chair: OK. We can be flexible for a minute or two.

Mr Bisson: I have a question for the Chair before we go to rotation. Public safety and security: would that both cover the Solicitor General's kind of job and the Attorney General's job? That's a pretty—

The Chair: I think it's effectively the minister for that ministry.

Mr Bisson: But SolGen and corrections are under public safety? OK. That's what I wanted to know. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr Peters.

Mr Peters: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Environment and energy; and training, colleges and universities.

The Chair: Environment and energy has already been selected.

Mr Peters: Sorry. Training, colleges and universities; and community, family and child services.

The Chair: Thank you. Mr Bisson.

Mr Bisson: Natural resources would be the next one, followed by public safety and security.

The Chair: And the government party, please.

Mr Chudleigh: The ministry of tourism and culture; and the ministry of innovation, opportunities and—that one. You know the one I mean.

The Chair: I think for the sake of Hansard we'll just get the right title.

Mr Chudleigh: Enterprise, opportunities and innovation. We have a minister of that.

The Chair: OK, you have a couple of items you'd like to raise, and Mr Bisson, you wish to have another recess?

Interjections.

The Chair: We have the selections completed. We have now one matter to consider, and then I'll consider the matter raised by Mr Peters.

We have been informed by, I believe, Management Board that the detailed estimates will not be ready until July 2. So we have for the first selection, health, to determine if we're prepared to go ahead with just the best information the ministry can provide at that time, because they're not in a position right now to assure us that what most people in this committee are familiar with, which is the detailed estimates, will actually be ready at that time. The standing orders ask them to have that ready, but we have a delay or a problem. I think everyone on the

committee would like us to do what we can to consider estimates, but perhaps I can ask the official opposition—

Bells ringing.

The Chair: Do we have a vote, or is there a quorum call?

OK, just continuing, then, we'd like to hear perhaps from the party whose selection was health. How do you view this?

Mr Peters: I certainly would prefer to have the full, detailed estimates in front of us. I think it makes it much easier from the questioning standpoint. But the concern is that we're going to lose some sitting days.

The Chair: We'll lose two sitting days. Today's one, and I guess July 2, so we'll lose both sitting days. It's a choice we have to make and I think it affects all members' ability to address that. But as the selecting party, could we first hear your views?

Mr Peters: So we'd have to base any questioning, then, on just asking questions out of the estimate book.

The Chair: I think in good faith the ministry would provide what information it could. But they cannot tell us, as we sit today, that they will have the detailed estimates ready at that time. So I put it forward for the committee members.

Mr Peters: If the message can be sent to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care that they're the first ministry called and we'd like expedited estimates provided to us, let's keep it moving and not lose any time—

The Chair: We made a request earlier of Management Board. We understood there may have been a misunderstanding of the standing orders, because it is unusual that the budget and the estimates come so close together. Usually they're over a more telescoped period. So in essence we do not have the detailed estimates. We hope to have as much information as possible. That's the best information that the clerk has been able to arrive at.

Mr Mazzilli: Certainly I think our position will be that for the sake of two sittings, the people of Ontario want the proper estimates. If that is only July 2, I think we should wait till the proper estimates come forward so that that ministry has the proper estimates to work with and can account to the people of Ontario on actual numbers, not potentially accurate numbers.

The Chair: Mr Bisson, you may wish to speak to this. Mr Curling?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I'm not quite sure if we hear what Mr Mazzilli is saying. Are you telling me, then, that they call the estimates committee and the government hasn't got its estimates prepared? The budget is being debated in the meantime, and then he's saying that we're waiting until they have the proper thing ready. Aren't you guys ready? Aren't you ready to govern? The fact is that we should have been here to debate the estimates. They don't have anything in detail here. We're going to have two weeks of delay here. So what is it we're going to do in the two weeks, you say? We are to wait until that happens?

Mr Mazzilli: To account properly to the people of Ontario on the estimates that will be reported, and I certainly don't think that for the sake of—

The Chair: Mr Mazzilli, before we get into debate, you made a point and Mr Curling has made a point. I'll now ask if it's all right for the third party. Mr Bisson, I really need your attention to these matters.

Mr Bisson: You have my attention, but I'm trying to double check something about the estimates.

Mr Curling: In the meantime, this is what I want to understand really.

The Chair: Mr Curling, you've made a point. Did you wish to make a further point?

Mr Curling: I'll give the floor to Mr Bisson.

The Chair: The question, just to be perfectly clear, is that the government is required under the standing orders to provide background materials to each member of the committee. We have been advised that the ministries in general, as far as we know, are not in a position to assure that for the regular start time. The question put to the committee is, is the committee prepared to go forward with partial materials, which is all we could expect under the information we have at this time?

Mr Bisson: First of all, two things. As you pointed out, Chair, the standing orders are quite clear. Estimates are supposed to be tabled on a certain date, according to the standing orders. There was a motion in the House by the opposition in order to accommodate the government because of the late budget. We did that in good faith. We were told that all the estimates would be ready for the 17th of this month. Here we are now and the government is saying, "Oops, we're not ready on the 17th. We're going to come back sometime in July." That's not acceptable. This committee is going to start sitting as of next week. Actually, we could technically start sitting tomorrow or Thursday, the next sitting day, right? I for one am not going to stand here and say the government doesn't have to come in because it's partially ready. You're the government. You've known when your budget was coming in. It's not acceptable. I can guarantee we're going to be raising hay over this. The estimates are to start on time. We're not going to agree to go to July.

1600

The Chair: Mr Bisson, just to be clear, last year we gave the government one week, with the agreement of all members of the committee, to be prepared. I'm not saying at this time that the government will not be prepared; only that we do not have an assurance that that will take place, which is a little unusual. We do not have a particular reason to bring forward to you. Now that we have a specific ministry, it is possible we may get a specific response. But as Chair, through the clerk's efforts, I'm not able to tell you more than that about the status of information, except to alert you to that fact.

Mr Bisson: That's weird.

The Chair: So I will entertain a couple of more points and then I—

Mr Curling: This is very important: you said that the time we may resume any sort of detailed analysis of the estimate would be July 2. Am I hearing that right, sir?

The Chair: That's the date we've been given by Management Board.

Mr Curling: My understanding is that the House will not be sitting. We have a motion before the House—but will the House be sitting on July 2? Is that confirmed, moved, passed and ready, sir?

Mr Bisson: Not yet.

Mr Curling: How can we say we're going to sit on July 2 when the House is not sitting at that time?

The Chair: My role as Chair is to support the status quo. The status quo is to have the committee sit under its normal business. I would hope we could find an arrangement to do that.

So I would ask each of the parties to declare—and Mr Mazzilli has made one representation—whether they're prepared to go ahead next week with the prospect of limited information. Could I ask each of the parties to express an opinion on that?

I'll start with the official opposition and go around. Could I have an undertaking from you about that?

Mr Curling: If we can have the estimates ready for next week, we are prepared to sit. Am I getting the assurance from the government that they will have the details before us within a week? If that's the case, yes, we are prepared to sit.

The Chair: Just to be clear: we have the estimates. The estimates were filed with an amendment today for the reconciliation. The estimates are available. It's the details.

Point 64 of the standing orders says, "The minister or person answerable for the estimates considered by the standing committee on estimates shall provide each member of the committee and the clerk of the committee with advance briefing material which shall include such information as growth rates, interim expenditures for the previous fiscal year, and an explanation of the programs and funding by particular item."

That's what we're referring to here. The estimates themselves are in order and have been presented in accordance with the expectations of the House.

I'm looking for an answer, and then I'd like to expedite this.

Mr Curling: I think you'll only get an answer if we get some understanding of what's going on.

First, we've got the estimates. We even hear the argument that there are budget figures different than the estimate—the briefing notes more or less help us to be more focused. The ministry is not ready with their detailed briefing.

Personally, I don't feel I can be effective in sitting down with this alone without the briefing notes from the ministry. If that doesn't come forward, if they're suggesting July 2, I think that is out of order, because we haven't even passed that motion yet to sit on July 2. If they can't be ready with their detailed briefing notes by next week, I don't think that we should meet.

The Chair: In terms of what you're saying, Mr Curling, you would say that if the ministry cannot have the briefing material available, you would prefer that the committee not sit at all.

Mr Curling: That's what I would say. Because I cannot fully get the explanation and the answer unless I have a briefing note from the ministry.

Mr Peters: I agree it would be most beneficial to have the detailed estimates in front of us. My concern is we're going to lose time. If we give up the next two weeks right now, that's potentially one less ministry we're going to have a chance to deal with.

In the spirit of give and take, if we're going to back off and say we're going to wait for the detailed estimates to come, I would like some assurances from the government that when we come back in the fall, we're going to be compensated for that time so we don't lose one ministry.

The Chair: For the sake of the information of the committee, again, we're indeed trying to get the views of all committee members, but particularly from each party on how they would like to proceed. We are under a limited calendar that will see us right now with a maximum of 45 hours under the calendar that is established. So we are on a very tight timeline to preserve the sitting time of the committee.

Mr Bisson, if I could get your disposition on this matter, and then I'd turn to the government party again.

Mr Bisson: Mine is quite simple. As you said, we're limited to 45 hours. If we don't sit for the next two weeks, you can lop off one of the estimates that we've put forward. So our position is quite clear: government, be ready to go next week. They've got seven days to get health here with whatever they've got. Show up with your best. We'll be here ready to ask questions. I don't agree that the committee should stand down.

Just on Mr Curling's point, which is perfectly legitimate—the suggestion that we come back—if the estimates aren't ready until July 2: (a) we don't have a motion to sit this summer, so I don't know how the hell we deal with that; (b) we don't have a motion voted in the House that the House is going to be sitting past June 27 at this point. They've tabled the motions, but they've not been voted on. So really, you're in kind of an odd spot.

Our position is simple: health, be here next week, starting Tuesday. We're ready to ask questions. Bring them with what they've got.

Mr Mazzilli: I certainly take all the comments in good spirit. But this committee does not have to report to the Legislature until mid-November, I believe. So that's plenty of time for the opposition and everyone to get the proper data, to have the ministers brought forward. So I think between now and the end of November, before we have to report to the Legislature, we should wait to get the accurate estimates so that we can account to the people of Ontario.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): In fairness, I think the operating, as Mr Curling said—and this is surprising, but I agree with Mr Curling on this, that it's inappropriate to go ahead without all of the detailed information that the briefing binder would supply. If the ministers haven't got that prepared, then the ministers possibly would be deferring a lot of the answers and giving us written

answers some time later. So until such time as they're able to provide the details, I'd acquiesce to Mr Curling's position on this.

The Chair: I have a proposal to make. It seems to me that everyone would like to proceed if we have the detailed information. The information we have up to now that leads to this issue being discussed is general in nature. Perhaps what I could take forward is the wish of the committee, directed at the Ministry of Health, to try and have their information ready and available for Tuesday of next week, such that if the information is not available, then the committee will be unable to consider it but would regret not being able to do so, because we do have a charge here to consider the ministries in the best way possible. Would that be agreeable?

Mr Bisson: No. Listen, it's quite simple. The standing orders say the estimates have to be ready by a certain date. That was not met because the government was late coming in with its budget. There was a motion that the God-darned estimates would be ready at the beginning of June, according to the date of—I forget what the date was—June 17.

You guys aren't ready. Too bad. The estimates are to go ahead according to the standing order and according to the motion of the House, based on what is agreed, which means to say that estimates come here with whatever they've got. They've got enough information to answer questions from the members. I've got every confidence in the estimates process and I've got every confidence in the staff of the Ministry of the Environment to answer our questions. Very seldom are we going to get in a situation where they're not going to be able to respond to our questions.

So I do not agree. Estimates has to go forward next week. I don't agree with the Liberals and I don't agree with the Tories because this is a stymieing of the process otherwise.

The Chair: Further comment, and then I guess we're going to have to look for a motion. I put forward a friendly suggestion. If there are others, I'll seek those.

Mr Peters: My concern is that we not lose any time. I hear where Mr Bisson is coming from. I would be prepared to look at the proposal that is on the floor, but I want some guarantees that these next two weeks we are going to lose are going to be tacked on to next fall when we return. I'm afraid if we go with this proposal that's being put forward, we are going to lose the opportunity to deal with one ministry, and maybe two ministries. I need to have those assurances that we're going to have that time made up next fall.

Mr Bisson: If any government had done this in the past, you guys would have been reeling, as Tories. You're the people who supposedly are the ones that are so responsible when it comes to the taxpayers' money and you can't even get your bloody estimates here on time.

The Chair: Mr Bisson, you're out of order.

Mr Bisson: Give me a break. This is nothing more than trying to stymie the process and not allow the

committee to do its work, and you guys don't want to be accountable before the public—

The Chair: Mr Bisson, up to this point, we have a problem that the government acknowledges is its problem and is not, to the best of my knowledge—I have to assume good faith. They have told us what they were able to tell us on a general basis for all the various ministries, that they were working toward a date, July 2, and that we were unlikely to have the detailed estimates. We're working with the information we've been provided. The standing orders do provide that the government ministry, once called upon, will provide the background material as described. So I think there's a limited amount of discussion that we can go with.

Again, I would put forward the idea that, if I'm accurate in summarizing what has been said, there is a possibility here of taking the wish of the committee to the ministry, asking them to be prepared on the date they're called forward, next Tuesday, and letting that be the determination as to whether we sit.

Mr Curling: A point of clarification—

The Chair: Sorry, Mr Curling, I'll acknowledge you in just one second.

I just want to see. If there's anyone in support of that idea, then we can proceed; if there isn't, then I'm going to look for a motion.

1610

Mr Curling: Mr Chair, on a point of clarification: There's a time when the estimate must be presented to the House. It's in the standing orders.

The Chair: Just as a point of information, I would advise the committee that by the regular calendar of the House, we report by the third Thursday of November. We are on track, including next week, should we be able to find a means by which that could be achieved, to sit less than 45 hours in total. That's what we're headed for in terms of total sitting.

Mr Curling: Yes. I understand we have to report back to the House on a certain—

The Chair: The third Thursday we report or it's deemed reported. That is the standing order.

Mr Curling: Yes, at a certain time. If we wanted to change that, we'd have to go back to the House to change that date. So therefore we can't play with that date right now.

The Chair: I would say, in response to Mr Peters's point, I had an informal discussion with the House leader, and basically we are to work within our standing orders in terms of any expectations you have for when we will—

Mr Curling: Mr Chair, yes, I'm on that wavelength. Between now and then the estimates committee must sit and examine the estimates of the ministry. On Tuesday we can arrive here, and if the ministry is not ready at that time, we just adjourn till the next Tuesday. I don't intend to sit with just this estimates book. Without the briefing notes of the Ministry of Health, I don't know the details. I'd like to ask some questions in regard to the briefing notes. If it's not ready, we then sit at the next date. We're

not postponing anything and we aren't losing any other time. The only problem we have is that the estimates committee does not sit while the House is not sitting. So we are at a disadvantage on that.

The Chair: The committee could ask for the ability to sit at other times, if that were the wish of the committee. That request, as I understand it, would go to the House leaders for determination and that's where it would sit.

I think we've canvassed the opinion of this committee and I'm going to look now for someone to bring forward a resolution. My ruling as Chair would be that we will sit unless we're informed that the information is not available. If someone would like to challenge that ruling—

Mr Bisson: No. I don't accept that at all. I want to see the government [inaudible].

The Chair: I'm going to ask for such a motion, then. If that indeed does not reflect the consensus of the committee, in the interest of everyone's time and moving the committee forward, I would like someone to put forward a specific resolution to this question.

Mr Chudleigh: We'd put the motion forward, Mr Chairman, if the briefing notes can be made available next week, that we would sit. But without those briefing notes, I don't think the people of Ontario, nor the members of the committee, can adequately represent the issues on the floor.

The Chair: We have a motion that we sit next Tuesday, subject to the availability of briefing notes. All those in favour?

Mr Bisson: What is the motion?

The Chair: The motion is that we sit on Tuesday if the briefing notes are available.

Mr Bisson: Are you now in debate?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr Bisson: I'm just going to repeat for the record that I'm going to vote against the motion for the simple reason that it is fairly clear what the responsibility of the government is. The government's responsibility is to make sure they're prepared on time for estimates according to the standing orders, and in this particular case, a motion within the House.

I expect the Ministry of the Environment to be here next week to answer questions of the opposition, and/or the government.

The Chair: As a point of information, the Ministry of Health is the first—

Mr Bisson: What did I say?

The Chair: Environment.

Mr Bisson: Sorry, I meant health. Environment is our first pick. I stand corrected.

We will be here, prepared to ask questions of the Ministry of Health, and I expect fully that the ministry will be here to answer our questions. Anything short of that is the government trying to play tricks with the numbers in the budget. This is the estimates process. It's all about accountability and transparency. If you guys can't have your ministry here next week, it tells me that you guys are either incompetent or you're trying to hide something.

Mr Spina: You didn't even have a budget in 1994.

The Chair: Order, please.

Mr Spina, would you like to speak? Anyone else to speak to the motion? Is there agreement on the motion?

Mr Bisson: No.

The Chair: All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

Mr Bisson: We were still in debate, Chair. You moved to the God-darned question right away. I wanted to move an amendment. You don't give anybody a bloody chance. What the hell is it with you, seriously?

The Chair: Mr Bisson, you made no indication of that. I asked clearly, and Hansard will back this up, if there was further discussion. I made that request clearly on behalf of everyone in the committee.

Mr Bisson: I'm sure the government appreciates the help they're getting from the Chair.

The Chair: I think everyone has been getting a generous amount of help today to facilitate their discussion. If there is some further point to be made, I will have to depend on the committee for that. As far as I'm concerned, the discussion has been closed.

Mr Curling: On a further point, Mr Chair—

The Chair: This would be a point of order, Mr Curling, on this point.

Mr Curling: I want to understand what it is, because I will be here next Tuesday under what conditions? I don't know.

The Chair: The motion, to paraphrase, is that we sit on Tuesday if the briefing materials are available. That is the motion that was put forward.

Mr Bisson: It's called a "Que sera, sera" motion.

Interjections.

The Chair: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Peters: Mr Chairman, a couple of points: there were a number of ministries that had changed and they all had asterisks in the budget. I'm wondering when we will have clarification. Maybe legislative research can do this. Agriculture, food and rural affairs is now agriculture and food, with rural affairs hived off and sent to municipal affairs; the Attorney General, there have been some changes. I would like to know, are all those changes reflected in this estimates book? If they're not, when will we see those changes reflected in here?

The Chair: Mr Peters, with the consent of the committee, I think we can direct research to look into that for you and communicate that result to the members of the committee.

Mr Peters: My other question: it wasn't attached to the estimates yesterday but it turned up in our mail this morning, and that's the reconciliation of expenditure estimates to budget expenditure. I'm asking the question of leg research whether we could have some further detailed explanation of the explanation that's in it. I'll raise the point—and part of it may be a result of new ministries being created; I don't know—that in yesterday's budget there was a \$192-million discrepancy between what was presented in the budget for agriculture and food and what is contained in this expenditure

estimates document. There's an explanation here, but I would like in layman's terms why the discrepancy of \$200 million exists between this estimates book and the budget that was presented yesterday.

The Chair: It's a good point. It relates to the different presentations of the two. We could ask, I think—

Mr Peters: I'll tell you why, Mr Chairman. It's contained in here. I'll use agriculture as an example. They have reconciliation of expenditure estimates on page 3. The estimates expenditures do correspond with what is in the estimates book, but there's \$192 million in here and I would like to know where this \$192 million is.

The Chair: Again, with the agreement of the committee, because the estimates are on a cash basis and the budget is on an accrual basis, perhaps we could learn what level of detail is available from the ministry in order to facilitate that.

Mr Peters: I cite agriculture, that we're looking for—where is this \$200 million? But it relates to a number of other ministries as well.

The Chair: Because it is germane to the business of the committee, if that's all right, we will ask research to report back on that.

I would like to make a further request as Chair. I would like to be able to write to the Ministry of Health and say that it is the request of the committee to prepare materials for Tuesday; so that there is no ambiguity, that it is the wish of the whole committee to sit on Tuesday and to have the Ministry of Health ready and prepared for that date if they are so able. Is there any objection to that?

Mr Bisson: I move such a motion.

The Chair: It doesn't need to be a motion. I need the agreement of the committee. No objections?

Mr Peters: Mr Chair, I would like to see you include in that letter that we get them by at least, say, some time Monday afternoon, because to walk in here and have them handed to us on Tuesday afternoon at 3:30 is virtually useless.

The Chair: Yes. The tradition of the committee is to have them, but I think the previous motion was to have them at the time we will—I will ask for the proper courtesy to be extended to the members, which is that you have briefing material—to be briefing material it has to be material you can be familiar with ahead of time and therefore make good use of your time and the ministry's. If that is the consensus of the committee, I'll proceed on that basis, so we have the good faith of the committee.

Mr Bisson: I want to move a motion that we direct the Chair to write a letter, as explained, to the Ministry of Health, and also to point out our disappointment that the estimates are not ready on time.

The Chair: Is there any problem with that?

Mr Chudleigh: The estimates were delivered on time, as per the House orders, and the briefing notes.

Mr Peters: But they haven't been.

Mr Chudleigh: Yes. You've got the estimates.

Mr Peters: Not the detailed estimates.

Mr Chudleigh: These are the estimates; what you're talking about are the briefing notes.

The Chair: The detailed estimates are what we're referring to, as I read from the passage that I just referred to under standing order 64.

Mr Spina: I believe the motion that Mr Bisson put forward is out of order because it essentially negates or at least interferes with the original motion that was passed 10 minutes ago.

The Chair: Mr Spina, as you can appreciate, I am the Chair. I am not in a position to put forward formal motions. If you wish to—

Mr Spina: No, he did.

The Chair: He has, and we are in effect discussing that motion now.

Mr Spina: I'm suggesting it's out of order. That's where you may need clarification.

The Chair: I look for the direction of the committee, which I can get by consensus. I thought I had that consensus. There is a motion on the table that I think undermines that consensus, as you're pointing out, so the motion is in discussion.

Mr Bisson: I'm not undermining your consensus at all. I want to go one step further. I want what you have said in regard to asking the ministry to be prepared to be here at estimates next Tuesday, but the addition I want, for the record, and where you don't have consensus, is that we express our displeasure as a committee to the Ministry of Health and any other ministry that does not have the detailed information we are supposed to have. That's the motion I've put forward.

The Chair: We do have consensus on the suggestion I put forward. We have a motion that is distinct from that and we have members in favour. The basis I put forward is agreeable to everyone. This is a modification of that. Is there any other discussion of the proposed modification? It is in order because it's a motion. Any other discussion?

Mr O'Toole: Excuse me, I want to be clear here. Are we dealing with a motion or just a bunch of conjecture? Is there a motion on the table?

The Chair: We're dealing with the motion that was put forward by Mr Bisson.

Mr O'Toole: An amendment criticizing the minister—is that what we're actually voting on?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr O'Toole: I can't support that.

The Chair: Any other discussion? Anyone else? Then I would ask, is everyone in favour?

Interjections: No.

Mr Curling: My understanding of the motion is that Mr Bisson is disappointed that the ministry has not provided us with the materials we need to do proper estimates, in other words, the briefing notes, and he wants a letter to be sent by you, Mr Chair, to express that dissatisfaction. Is that the understanding? Is that the motion?

The Chair: That's correct.

Mr Curling: Then I support it.

The Chair: If there is no other discussion, I would put it. All those in favour, please say "aye."

Mr Bisson: I want a recorded vote.

The Chair: A request for a recorded vote.

Ayes

Bisson, Curling, Peters.

Nays

Chudleigh, Mazzilli, O'Toole, Spina.

The Chair: The motion is defeated.

The earlier consensus will go forward and I will convey that.

Mr O'Toole: What's the earlier consensus?

The Chair: Mr O'Toole, with all respect, I elaborated on it a couple of times and I'd like to proceed, if I can.

Any other business from the members of the committee?

I don't think there is a need for the subcommittee at this time. We will learn how things will sit for next Tuesday and we'll advise all members. Certainly any materials coming forward will be put in the hands of the committee as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your attention today.

The committee adjourned at 1624.

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