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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 17 April 2007

**Standing committee on
estimates**

Selection of estimates

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 17 avril 2007

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Sélection des budgets
des dépenses

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 17 April 2007

Mardi 17 avril 2007

The committee met at 1621 in room 151.

APPOINTMENT OF SUBCOMMITTEE

The Chair (Mr. Tim Hudak): Good afternoon, committee members. The standing committee on estimates is now in session for the beginning of the 2007 season. We have had some changes since last we met and we need to make a change to the subcommittee. Mrs. Jeffrey?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I move that a subcommittee on committee business be appointed to meet from time to time at the call of the Chair, or at the request of any member thereof, to consider and report to the committee on the business of the committee;

That the presence of all members of the subcommittee is necessary to constitute a meeting;

That the subcommittee be composed of the following members: Mr. Hudak as Chair; Mr. Dunlop, Ms. Horwath and Mr. Delaney; and

That substitution be permitted on subcommittee.

The Chair: A motion on the floor with respect to the construction of the subcommittee. Any debate or comment on the motion?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Did I agree to be on the subcommittee?

The Chair: Mr. Dunlop, your name has been forwarded to be a member of the subcommittee. You could debate against that if you so choose.

Mr. Dunlop: I'd have to debate with Mr. Wilson, I think.

The Chair: Mr. Wilson?

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I agree with the motion on the floor.

The Chair: Any other comments?

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I'll nominate Mr. Wilson.

The Chair: Mr. Wilson, are you willing to serve?

Mr. Wilson: No.

The Chair: Mr. Dunlop, Mr. Wilson has turned down the kind offer of Mr. Zimmer.

Any serious debate on the motion before the committee? Seeing none, all of those in favour? Opposed, if any? It is carried.

Thank you, Mrs. Jeffrey. Subcommittee members—Mr. Delaney, Ms. Horwath, Mr. Dunlop—congratulations. I look forward to working with you on the subcommittee.

SELECTION OF ESTIMATES

The Chair: Now we'll turn our attention to the beginning of the estimates process. I have a formal statement to read for the record.

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, 2008, to the Legislative Assembly and pursuant to standing order 58, these printed estimates, upon tabling, are deemed to be referred to the standing committee on estimates. All members of the House should have received the document containing the estimates when they were tabled.

The objectives of today's meeting are for the members to select specific estimates for the committee's review and to decide when to begin the public hearings.

Standing order 59 sets out the process by which the selection of estimates is made by this committee. Essentially, each of the recognized parties on the committee is entitled to select either one or two ministries/offices in each of the two rounds of selection.

The selection will begin with the official opposition, followed by the third party, then by the governing party. After two rounds of selection by the recognized parties, the committee will have selected anywhere from a minimum of six to a maximum of 12 ministries or offices for review.

Each party also determines how much time is to be allotted to the consideration of each ministry or office selected. A maximum of 15 hours is permitted per selection. If only one selection is made on the first 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 those 15 hours takes place is up to the party making the selection.

It works the same way in each of the two rounds, so that a maximum of 90 hours may be allocated to the review of all the selected ministries or offices. These selections are to be reviewed in the order that they were chosen, and this can only be changed by an order in the House.

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

In accordance with standing order 62(a), the committee must make a report to the House on 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 are deemed to be passed by the committee and deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Do the members of the committee have any questions before we begin the selection process? All right. Seeing none, we'll begin with the official opposition for their first selection or selections of ministries or offices.

Mr. Dunlop: On our first round our choice would be the Premier's office for a total of eight hours, and the public infrastructure renewal ministry for a total of seven hours. That would total 15 hours together.

The Chair: To confirm for the record correctly, we do the Premier's office first, for eight hours in total, followed by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal for seven hours.

Mr. Dunlop: Thank you. That would be it.

The Chair: Great.

Ms. Horwath, selection of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): The New Democratic Party caucus has decided to call the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration for 7.5 and the Ministry of Natural Resources for 7.5.

The Chair: The third party has selected the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to begin, for seven and a half hours, followed by the Ministry of Natural Resources for seven and a half hours.

Ms. Horwath: That's right.

The Chair: The government members. Mr. Delaney.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The government, for its first draft choice, I mean selection, calls the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for seven and a half hours and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services for seven and a half hours.

The Chair: The government members are going to proceed with, as their first choice, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for seven and a half hours, followed by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services for seven and a half hours. Correct?

Mr. Delaney: Correct.

The Chair: Excellent.

Now we move onto the second round of the draft, as Mr. Delaney had coined it.

Mr. Dunlop.

Mr. Dunlop: The official opposition would choose the office of the Attorney General for eight hours and, secondly, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for seven hours.

The Chair: Mr. Dunlop has selected, beginning in the second round, the Attorney General for eight hours, followed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for seven hours.

To the third party, Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Horwath: The New Democratic Party caucus has chosen for our second round of picks the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of the Environment.

The Chair: And how you would like to divide up—

Ms. Horwath: For seven and a half each, please, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: To make sure I have it accurately, the third party, in their second round of choices, has selected the Ministry of Energy for seven and a half hours, followed by the Ministry of the Environment for seven and a half hours.

To the government.

Mr. Delaney: For our second round, the government side chooses the Ministry of Culture for seven and a half hours and the Ministry of Health Promotion for seven and a half hours.

The Chair: To make sure I have that correct, the government in its second round of choices has selected first the Ministry of Culture for seven and a half hours, followed by the Ministry of Health Promotion for seven and a half hours.

Mr. Delaney: Correct.

The Chair: Excellent.

Well folks, that concludes our selection of ministries. The annual draft is now complete. The clerk and I have taken our notes. We will notify the ministries accordingly.

We will begin our estimates, I guess, a week from today, which would be April 24, at 4 p.m. with the Premier's office. This fits with our schedule accurately? We'll begin at 4 p.m. or after routine proceedings, whichever is first.

Is there any other business for the committee?

Ms. Horwath: Just a question, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for providing us with copies of all the documents. This is my first full time through to get to a full set of estimates and come back to choose our other estimates for our next year, and we're just receiving the responses from the previous estimates from last year. I'm wondering, is there anything that requires responses to come in a more timely fashion to outstanding questions from estimates committee, or is it an acceptable practice around here to have these things languish for an entire year before the responses come to committee members?

The Chair: The reality is, unfortunately, that some ministries are better than others. Some get the answers back promptly; others do not. I sent a letter out to the ministries that had not yet responded to last year's estimates two or three weeks ago, which then caused a number of other ministries to respond. So that's some of the paperwork that you have before you today. I could report back on Tuesday the outstanding questions that remain. What I can do in my role as Chair, with the assistance of the clerk and his office, is to continue to put pressure on the ministries themselves to respond to members' questions in a timely fashion. As I said, some do it well and some, unfortunately, take too long.

The hard-working and enterprising clerk has this for me: I can report back a week in advance to let you know

that, after my letter, there is only one ministry now that has yet to respond to outstanding questions. That's the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. We will let them know that they remain the only ministry not to have responded to members' questions from our last session.

Any other comments, debates, questions?

I think that concludes our agenda. Folks, thank you very much. We look forward to meeting again on Tuesday, April 24, as we consider the estimates of the Premier's office.

This meeting is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1632.

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