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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

Thursday 13 December 2001

**Standing committee on
finance and economic affairs**

Subcommittee report

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Jeudi 13 décembre 2001

**Comité permanent des finances
et des affaires économiques**

Rapport du sous-comité

Chair: Marcel Beaubien
Clerk: Susan Sourial

Président : Marcel Beaubien
Greffière : Susan Sourial

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRSCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES

Thursday 13 December 2001

Jeudi 13 décembre 2001

The committee met at 1006 in room 151.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Mr Marcel Beaubien): If I can get your attention, it's five after and we'll bring the committee to order. We're here to consider the subcommittee report. However, there are two issues that I would like to point out with regard to the subcommittee report. It was never really completed before, so I think we have two options. One is to put the finishing touches to it and accept it, or we can start from scratch. It's up to the committee members to decide as to which way they want to proceed.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Do we know how many days we're going to get of hearings?

The Chair: We don't know. Once the subcommittee report is accepted, then we have letters that will go out to the minister. I think here we have suggested—what? How many days?—nine days.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I think that was one thing being discussed; rather than specific dates, putting it up to a maximum of nine days.

Mr Phillips: Does that include report writing or excluding report writing?

The Chair: No, that's excluding the report writing.

Mr Phillips: From my view, the first one I don't have a problem with, the Minister of Finance for two hours, and then I assume his staff will be available.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): If we're going through that, I'm quite prepared to—

The Chair: Maybe that's the way we should start.

Mr Hardeman: I think that's really a question of where we're going here. On that one, I would suggest that it is the two hours. The minister in the past has not used that time. I have no problem with the two hours, providing we all understand that part of the hour that's allocated for the minister to make a presentation will be used by ministry staff to make presentations and to answer questions from the members of the committee. The only thing that would be binding, I suppose, would be the 30 minutes per party.

Mr Phillips: I'm not sure I heard that.

Mr Hardeman: It says here, "The Minister of Finance be offered two hours in which to make a presentation." That presentation will include the ministry presentation. At least in the past, the minister has not come in and spoken for two hours to make a presentation.

The Chair: So what you're suggesting is the minister and ministry staff would be here for two hours, but the minister may not be here for the two hours himself.

Mr Hardeman: Yes, exactly.

Mr Phillips: But each party gets a chance to ask questions for 30 minutes. Is that right?

Mr Hardeman: Yes.

Mr Phillips: I can't understand the arithmetic here.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I'd like to ask a question to help clarify that too. I understand, I think, what Ernie is driving at. There will be two hours for the minister and ministry staff to do presentations and do Qs and As. What I was puzzled about is the 30 minutes per party. Is that over and above the two hours? That's what I'm kind of asking, Ernie.

The Chair: I think it would be folded within that period of time.

Mr Spina: Within that two hours?

Mr Hardeman: For clarification, the word "and" is there, so "the Minister of Finance be offered two hours in which to make a presentation 'and' answer questions from the three parties (30 minutes per party)." There would be a straight presentation of up to half an hour, and then there would be an hour and a half for dialogue between the minister, ministry and the committee.

Mr Spina: What we're saying is that the full time is two hours, and then it's how we break it up.

Mr Hardeman: Yes.

Mr Spina: That's what we're driving at here. I understand that. Is that clear for you, Gerry?

Mr Phillips: Yes. My preference would be that there be a two-hour block: the minister presents for half an hour and then half an hour of questions from each of the three caucuses.

Mr Spina: Yes, and that's two hours.

Mr Phillips: But my preference also would be that the staff be available perhaps in the afternoon for an hour to answer questions, because normally each of the caucuses has got more detailed questions that the minister doesn't have to be there for. Are you with me there? At least in the past it's been that the staff came back in the afternoon for a period of time to give each of us a chance to ask more detailed questions.

The Chair: We can change this report.

Mr Hardeman: This recommendation, as we discussed it at the subcommittee, was not dealing with any further presentation. The subcommittee discussed having

the Minister of Finance present to us, and then to make sure that all caucuses had an opportunity to question and discuss the presentation, we put the 30 minutes in. My only comment now was that I wanted to make sure the committee understood that the Minister of Finance in the past, nor is he suggesting in this consultation process that he would necessarily use that half-hour to make his presentation, and that we understand that the staff will be here to use up the rest of the time for the presentation and then will stay here for the hour and a half to answer questions that would be more directed to the ministry than to the minister.

Mr Spina: I don't have any problem with the minister and the ministry staff being here concurrently, because they're here anyway to back the minister up. If we're asking questions we can either choose to direct them to the minister or to the staff; or, if the minister is here, he can defer them to staff; or, if he has to leave, then we still have staff around for the remaining time. I don't see any problem with the staff being here concurrently with the minister or the staff certainly being here for the full two hours and the minister with whatever time he has available after his presentation. I don't know that there's any more information that we could extract from the ministry staff by having an additional session beyond that.

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): In the past what has happened is that the minister has come in and made a presentation basically on his own, and then the deputy comes in and usually does a show-and-tell kind of presentation. We'll have charts and projections and things of that kind. Then we get a chance to ask some questions. The only concern I have is that when you get a half-hour total, effectively—not the staff, but just the minister and the deputy—there may be a need to just delve into some of the stuff, and we run out of time to do it. I think it would be useful to be able to have the opportunity to talk to technical staff about some of the material that is presented to us and that there be built in somewhere in the afternoon an opportunity to do that, if required.

Mr Spina: I guess the concern, Monte, is that the presentation between the minister and the ministry staff, if it went beyond the 30 minutes, could comprise the 30 minutes per caucus. Is this what you're concerned about?

Mr Phillips: I assume that right now what everybody's agreed on is that there will be a two-hour block. The minister and, if he wants, the staff will make a presentation, and then each caucus will have 30 minutes to question the minister. That's all fine.

I'm just saying, based on past experience there's often a kind of detail that you want to get into about whatever—economic forecasts, revenue forecasts, those sorts of things—that are detailed discussion that need not involve the minister. I think in the past we've set aside one or two hours in the afternoon for the senior staff to come back to answer detailed questions. That would be my preference: we set the two-hour block with the minister and then we set aside some time where the staff can be available for more detailed questions.

Mr Hardeman: I have no problem with, at some point as we are going through the process, suggesting that if the committee feels that, particularly after the consultations have been held, we need more time with ministry staff or for further discussion, I have no objection to that. But I do think it's important that this process is set up to do pre-budget consultations with the public, not for the committee to spend the allocated time talking to our ministry staff. That opportunity is available on a regular basis all the time. So I think the intention here of the subcommittee was to make sure that we had a basis on which to start our consultation, which comes from the minister and the ministry. We felt that two hours of getting us started, shall we say, was sufficient.

I would suggest that we leave it at that and if, during the process or even that day, all agree that we need more time with ministry staff, we ask them to come back. I think that's a more appropriate way of dealing with it.

Mr Phillips: It's just that I have a different view of what the purpose of this committee is. The purpose of this committee is that we're the legislative finance and economic affairs committee which is giving the minister and the government our best advice on what should be contained within the budget. Part of that is public input, but part of that is sort of the collective wisdom of the group. To me, part of that is as good an understanding as we can of the lay of the land as our senior financial officials see it—economically, fiscally, that sort of thing.

For me, yes, the public input is very important, but also just where the minister sees things going and the detail for his staff. So I view that as a very important part of our background. We're not just here, in my opinion, to report on the public impression but really to give our best advice to the government on direction.

Mr Hardeman: I guess our fundamental difference here is not how long or whom we speak to. I guess it is, as Mr Phillips said, what the purpose of the committee is. I don't believe that it is to have discussions with our ministry. As the direction is, it's the pre-budget consultations with the public. I believe that in that pre-budget consultation, in order for the committee to make recommendations, if we need more information from our staff, I think we have an opportunity as a committee at any point in time to pass a resolution asking staff to come and make that presentation. I don't have any problem with that. Starting the committee off with two hours of bringing the committee up to speed as to where the finances are and where they're going and projected to be going by the minister, for starters, is sufficient.

1020

Mr Spina: I agree with my colleague. I think the intent of this initial session is really a briefing for the committee members, as Ernie said, to bring us up to speed. If we do need information after that two hours that's been requested by any of us, either the opposition parties or the government members, we can ask the ministry staff to provide that to us in sufficient time through the clerk so that we have some answers to those issues in preparation for the actual committee hearings.

I understand where my colleague's coming from, that this is really a briefing session for the opposition and the government members to be able to prepare ourselves for the public hearings. I think the two hours is likely, then, sufficient for that.

The Chair: I guess I'll go to point 2 with regard to the meeting dates. I asked the clerk whether she knew when the March break is. Unless somebody knows—

Mr Phillips: I believe it's the 11th to the 15th. I'm almost positive.

Mr Spina: My wife's a teacher, and that's right.

The Chair: So it's the 11th to the 15th?

Mr Spina: I believe so.

The Chair: So then the committee should be sitting from February 25 to 28 and the 4th to the 8th? So we can strike out the bracket. Is that OK, Mr Hardeman?

Mr Hardeman: Yes, Mr Chairman, but I thought the March break would be a great opportunity for everyone to be able to present to the committee. I thought that would be when we would want them, not when we would not want them.

The Chair: I'm told that Mr Spina and Mrs Spina are going on holidays.

Mr Hardeman: OK, well, we appreciate that and I would agree then that we set that week as the week opposite to the one that is the March break for the consultation.

The Chair: So that is acceptable?

We'll go to point 3.

Mr Phillips: Does that mean we sit Monday till Thursday one week and Monday till Friday the next week?

The Chair: According to this, whatever they've—4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, yes.

Mr Galt: Yes, that's the way it's listed.

Mr Phillips: There was a reason to not sit on the 29th? I'm not sure it matters to me. I guess there is no such thing as the 29th.

Mr Galt: That's March 1.

Mr Phillips: March 1.

The Chair: I can't remember the discussion.

Mr Hardeman: I think we're trying as hard as we can to use as few Fridays as possible. I know a lot of members, including myself, have a regular schedule where we meet with our constituents on Friday.

Mr Phillips: I'm fine with that. It gives us nine days.

Mr Hardeman: That's why, but we felt in order to get sufficient days in the other week it was required, to get to our nine days of course, that we would have to collectively give up a Friday to do that.

Mr Galt: It's not a personal concern of mine but I know some boards will take Remembrance Day and add it to that week, either the Friday or the Monday after. If they're adding it the Friday before as an extra day to encapsulate the mid-winter break, it might be problematic for a few people if we're meeting on March 8. I just toss that out. Our board rates the day off school for Remembrance Day but they hold school on the 11th. This year—I'm just thinking through—I guess they've just

come through Remembrance Day on a Sunday, so it wouldn't be movable; therefore, they wouldn't get that extra day, would they? Anyway, just a thought that in the past, that has been added to the mid-winter break.

The Chair: We're on point 2, Mr Christopherson. Basically, all we've done is strike the bracket because the March break is March 11 to 15. So we'll be meeting on February 25 to 28 and March 4 to March 8.

Then we'll go to point 3. I think what we have to do with the travelling is to decide the logistics of it.

Mr Phillips: I remember in the year 2000 we went to, I think, five places, and my recollection—

The Chair: Yes, they're listed there, I think.

Mr Phillips: Yes, they are. My recollection was that we had kind of discussed—it's a different committee of course, different members—that we were going to move to three a year travelling, for cost reasons. As I recall it there were a lot of people who wanted to present in Toronto, but there wasn't time in Toronto and there was some expense involved for them travelling to the communities. Was there a reason why we moved back from three to five days of travel?

The Chair: My recollection of the discussion during the subcommittee meeting was that they wanted to meet in Windsor because of the 9/11 situation, the border-crossing situation and, of course, the health of the auto industry at this point in time.

In Sault Ste Marie, I think it was with regard to Algoma and the impact on the community. Timmins, Belleville and Owen Sound: I think they just—and I stand to be corrected—wanted to cover different parts of the province. But Mr Hardeman, if you want to expand on that.

Mr Hardeman: I've given it some thought and I will be making some recommendations to change the cities that are on the report. The Chair will be aware that I was not in agreement with the cities that were picked or how they were set. I suppose one of the reasons that the report is not finalized is because we felt there was more time and consideration needed.

I would suggest that we change Sault Ste Marie and Timmins to the city of Sudbury, and then Barrie, Cobourg and Waterloo.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I understand the situation. You're still the PA there, right, Ernie? Parliamentary assistant over there?

Mr Hardeman: Yes.

Mr Christopherson: I understand you weren't at the last meeting; I wasn't at the last meeting either. That's fair enough. As a result, if you came in and offered a one-city change because the government feels differently about one particular aspect, perhaps, or even an argument put forward by your representative at the subcommittee, but I've got to tell you, to roll in here when you weren't at the meeting—

Mr Hardeman: I was.

Mr Christopherson: That's even worse. You were at the meeting.

Mr Hardeman: Mr Chairman.

Mr Christopherson: Let me finish. My point is that to come in and make a few incidental changes is one thing; to roll in here with a whole different agenda of what cities—

Mr Hardeman: Mr Chairman.

The Chair: Well, I'll let Mr Christopherson finish and I'll come back.

Mr Christopherson: If Ernie has something to add—because if I'm off base, fine—

Mr Hardeman: Just for clarification, it was explained to us when we started this meeting that we don't have an approved subcommittee report before us. What we have is a draft that the committee can either accept or reject or change in any way they see appropriate. We don't have a report from the subcommittee that says this is what they're recommending. We had some general discussion but we never prepared a report.

Mr Christopherson: Fair enough. But in fairness, Chair, there was an organizing meeting; there is a process to these things. We do have organizing meetings. It's not unusual for the government or one of the opposition parties to be off side on one or two points. Normally, when it's us we have to sort of swallow and live with it because we don't have the votes. That's still a whole lot different, Ernie, than rolling in here and just sort of dictating, "Here's the five cities." Quite frankly, I think you changed every single one of them.

If the government was that far off from the report, at the very least there should have been a call for a second subcommittee to try and reach some kind of consensus. Normally—and I've been doing this for an awful long time now, on both sides of the House—you can reach pretty close to consensus on most of the communities. There may be one or two at the end of the day where the government rolls in with a majority and sort of lays down the law as to what they want; fair enough. But to just come in and dictate a whole completely different schedule comes across as really entirely disrespectful of the opposition parties and the purpose of subcommittees.

I don't recall this ever happening. Whether there was a full report or not, I don't recall the whole thing being wiped out in the past and you just dictating the way it's going to be, which is ultimately what you're doing if you make this a motion. You guys are going to win, 10 votes out of 10. It really starts to make a mockery of the whole idea that the opposition has some kind of role to play in deciding the activities of this committee.

1030

Mr Hardeman: I think in clarification, the list that is before us was generated exactly that way. It's a list that was presented to us by the opposition parties. At that meeting we made no commitment or any alternative suggestions because we wanted to look at that list and to consider where would be the most appropriate places to hold these hearings.

I don't disagree with Mr Christopherson that maybe the appropriate way would have been to have another subcommittee meeting where this would have been presented. That was not the opportunity provided. That un-

finished report was presented here to this committee so we have the same debate with all the members of the committee as opposed to with just the subcommittee. That's where it's at, Mr Chairman.

Mr Kwinter: If I could just recollect—because I was at that subcommittee meeting—that was a collective decision. It wasn't the opposition coming in and saying, "Here's where we want to go," and him saying, "Put it down and we'll deal with it."

Mr Hardeman: Yes, it was.

Mr Kwinter: No, it wasn't. It was something where we talked about each individual city and why we would choose it. Everybody had input into it.

I agree that the draft subcommittee report was never ratified, but certainly everybody had input into it.

If that's a decision to go to other cities, I have no problem with that, but I just want to make sure that it's understood that this was not a list that was presented by the opposition which said, "Here's where we would like to go." We discussed it. I remember talking about why we wanted to go to Sault Ste Marie, why we wanted to go to Windsor. There was some discussion about some other northern cities. The consensus seemed to be Timmins, that we wanted to go somewhere in eastern Ontario, and it was evolved that way. It was absolutely not a unilateral decision by one party or the other. It was the subcommittee that kicked it around and said, "Here are the cities that we would recommend."

If you want to change that, that is certainly the right of this committee, but I just want it understood that it was not a list that was presented by the opposition. It was discussed. I don't think there was any predisposition to any municipality. It was just, "Where do you think we should go, and why?"

The Chair: For the record, the reason why the subcommittee report was never completed is that we were given, as a committee, Bill 125 to have public hearings on and consequently we had no time to complete this report. I just want to clarify that.

Any further discussion?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Completely on a different topic, with your indulgence I'd like to introduce Greg Greenough, who's a grade 10 student from Port Perry high school who's actually on a career day with his class. He's job shadowing me, and I'd like to welcome him. Of course, Nathan is my intern and everyone probably knows Nathan.

I'd just like the members to recognize him. It will be reported in our books that he'll be assessing me and reporting back to his grade 10 class in Port Perry. He's witnessing the difficulty of committee work in determining where they travel to.

Mr Christopherson: Mr O'Toole probably has offered up the only unanimous agreement we're all going to reach. Let's just take that moment and welcome them. All parties welcome you. Have a great day here.

The Chair: On behalf of the committee, welcome.

Applause.

The Chair: OK, we'll go back to the travelling now.

Mr Spina: Chair, if I understand this, then, because of what you just described, the subcommittee wasn't finalized and essentially what we've done here today is that this is becoming the subcommittee decision-making process with the full committee in attendance. Obviously—

Mr Christopherson: Pretty good, Joe.

Mr Spina: Yes, I sometimes need you to help me, David.

What I was interested in was hearing some of the rationale behind some of the cities that took place in the subcommittee discussion. Was there a reason or were they just general municipalities that were chosen?

The Chair: Like I briefly pointed out, with Windsor, Sault Ste Marie, because of the economic situation—the border crossing in Windsor, and in Sault Ste Marie the situation with Algoma Steel; the traffic backup at the borders. That was some of the reason.

I can't really recall why Timmins, Belleville and Owen Sound, except for the fact that they wanted to travel to other locations up north and eastern and central Ontario.

Mr Spina: I can understand the border crossing issue—frankly, Sarnia might be as applicable, perhaps, as Windsor.

With regard to the north—and I'm not sure, Monte, if it was your comment or Gerry's that indicated fewer travel places this year just for the purposes of cost—Sudbury generally tends to be sort of the epicentre of northeastern Ontario. I could see maybe, if we wanted to reduce some of the travel to the north particularly, that we could pick Sudbury. You tend to usually draw from the Soo and Timmins. We found that, for example, during Bill 125. As much as I'd love to visit mother at a committee hearing in Sault Ste Marie, I don't have any problem. I think it would logistically make sense if we had one centre in the northeast that would be representative perhaps of northern Ontario.

In the other municipalities in the south, to me it doesn't matter a whole lot as long as it's logistically convenient and cost-efficient for us to be able to reach those communities and have some input.

I think it's also an opportunity for the committee to go to some communities where they've not had committee hearings at all, or in a long time. We did that way back when we did the snowmobile bill, I think, two or two and a half years ago. It was interesting and amazing to see the response we actually got and the welcome we got, because it was an opportune moment for people of those communities to be able to contribute to the parliamentary process.

The Chair: Further comments?

Mr Kwinter: I would suggest that before we even carry on with this discussion, we should address Mr Phillips's question about his impression that last year we had decided that we would restrict it to three communities as opposed to five. If we can resolve that, then at least we know what quantum we're talking about and can make some decisions on that basis.

Mr Galt: I remember the discussions last year, because I protested going to all the big centres last year and I was promised that next year, being this year that we're going out, we'd once again, like the first year, go to small-town Ontario. I'm quite sure that's in Hansard, in one of the first discussions we had. Maybe it was when the subcommittee report was coming in. But this is the year, in my understanding, of going out to small-town Ontario. Some of these places, in my opinion, are not exactly small-town Ontario. Owen Sound and Cobourg are small-town Ontario, but some of these others are not exactly small-town Ontario.

Mr Christopherson: First a question: was Windsor included in that?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr Christopherson: I just wanted to be sure about your list: Sudbury, Barrie, Cobourg, Waterloo, Windsor?

The Chair: Yes. That's my understanding.

Mr Christopherson: Is that what you said, Ernie?

Mr Hardeman: Yes, but mine were in a slightly different order.

Mr Christopherson: Sudbury, Barrie, Cobourg, Waterloo, Windsor? I just want to be clear that's what you put forward.

Mr Hardeman: Yes, Windsor, Sudbury, Barrie, Cobourg and Waterloo.

Mr Galt: Is Owen Sound—

The Chair: No.

1040

Mr Christopherson: Well, you've heard my concerns about the process here, and I don't imagine that's going to get me too far, given the majority of votes you have. I don't hear you being open to being persuaded, so I won't waste a lot of time.

I do want to make the argument that what it looks like to me is that you're running away from Sault Ste Marie because there are problems there. I just want to emphasize that Tony Martin has been talking about the need for a lot more diversification in the north in terms of their economy, and Sault Ste Marie is very much becoming the litmus test. I think it behooves us to go to a community like the Soo. They got a temporary reprieve around Algoma, but don't you think it makes a lot of sense, as we're into the new millennium and things continue to change economically in a big way, that we go into a community that is almost 100,000-strong in population and is in dire need of diversification in the future? Whether Algoma lasts one year or 100 years, at some point this community is going to need to be taking some steps to be ready for that day. It's my understanding that if Algoma went down right now, they'd just be decimated, that for the next closest employer, and I stand to be corrected, we go from the thousands that are at Algoma to the second largest employer, which is in the hundreds. So here's a community that stands to be—

Mr Spina: No.

Mr Christopherson: Well, I know a fair bit about it too, Joe.

Mr Spina: There are 1,400 at St Mary's.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, OK. Fair enough. But nonetheless, if you take those two, then the next largest, the third—I was wrong; it's probably the third one—drops down to a few hundred. Pulp and paper's in some trouble too. We don't know what the future of that is. That's always a precarious industry.

My point is that this is an important community for us to go and talk to in terms of the decisions that have already been made and the decisions that we're looking at in the future. How are they going to impact on a community like this and what are their suggestions for what a government should be doing to assist the north? One of the reasons we travel is that the economics around the province are different. I have to say to you, Chair, that it looks to me like the government doesn't want to deal with what may be people who will come in and say some things about the government and their participation or lack thereof in the whole Algoma situation, and that's wrong. Sooites deserve better than that. There's good reason we would go there. Keep in mind, when you talk about border towns, they're not just southern border towns. Sault Ste Marie, on a per capita basis, is just as busy a border community—and the economics of travel and trade back and forth across there—as Windsor.

So for both those reasons I've outlined, the local economy and their specific situation and the fact that it's a border town, for you to now use your majority to hammer through a motion that takes Sault Ste Marie, throws it out the window and brings in Sudbury looks to me like you just want to run and hide. I think at the very least—at the very least—you should recommit to going to the Soo as the northern community. I don't say that in a partisan fashion, because we've got members in both cities, so this is not about partisan politics. This is about, where can the finance and economics committee get the most important input in the north at this time, particularly given that it was a community that was previously chosen by the subcommittee?

The Chair: Any further comment?

Mr Hardeman: I think the importance of this is to make sure we get as much information and as varied information as we can get to this consultation. The member opposite makes a very good case for switching Sudbury to Sault Ste Marie. I guess if that's what we all agree is the most appropriate way to get the information, I'm prepared not to add an extra place in the north, but to move the meeting from Sudbury to Sault Ste Marie.

The Chair: So then it would read Windsor, Sault Ste Marie, Barrie, Cobourg and Waterloo.

Mr Phillips: I didn't have a major problem with it, and I felt that we should rotate around as much as we can over the years. I'd written down Kitchener. We haven't been to Kitchener, Hamilton, Sudbury or Kingston, I don't think, sort of major urban areas, for some time. I agree with the Sault Ste Marie one. I think that it is a challenged community.

My understanding is we will get nine days, but do they include the report writing as one of the days, or do we know?

The Chair: No.

Mr Phillips: They don't.

The Chair: You would have five days on the road and four days in Toronto.

Mr Phillips: Right. So I don't have a major problem.

The Chair: OK. We've got fairly agreeable—Mr Hardeman?

Mr Hardeman: In response to Mr Phillips's comments, again, I agree that Sudbury has not been on the list for a while, but we did just exchange it for one of the others. I would suggest that for Kitchener and Waterloo, it's not critical as to which one. It's the same place in the province, so I think we are covering off Kitchener-Waterloo as an entity for the public.

Mr Phillips: I was just saying that over time I think we should try—and Kitchener-Waterloo is, in my mind, one location.

The Chair: OK, so then I'll go to point number 4 with regard to the advertisement.

Mr Christopherson: Sorry, Chair. Just to be clear, how many days does that give us in Toronto?

The Chair: Four days.

Mr Christopherson: Four days in Toronto? OK.

The Chair: Because of logistics, we may have to go back and forth, but I think we'll have to work with this.

Mr Christopherson: Understood. But there will be four days based in Toronto for hearings?

The Chair: That's right.

Mr Christopherson: That's fine.

The Chair: With regard to the advertisement, any comments? Is it satisfactory?

Mr Galt: When we're into fairly small places, maybe we could go to the other centres in the immediate area, just to have a little more advertisement. I'm thinking of Cobourg, maybe a Belleville paper and a Peterborough paper.

The Chair: I think you try to capture the area with the advertising, so I think—

Mr Galt: Sure. It's just they're a little further out. In Kitchener-Waterloo, I can see one advertisement. That paper covers quite a large number. But I think we should let Belleville and Peterborough people know that we're in the area.

Mr Spina: I'm probably going to get a look from my colleague here, but since we were looking at smaller-town Ontario and it's in the same area, instead of Kitchener-Waterloo—and as Gerry pointed out, that's really considered an urban centre—would a place like Woodstock or Stratford be—

The Chair: I think, Mr Spina, we had consensus on this, so I think I'll stay on number 4.

Mr Spina: I just wondered. It's the same area. We're not talking about flights.

Mr Hardeman: Mr Chairman, I would be more than happy to invite the committee to my house, but we have made the decision, or at least seem to have a reasonable consensus, on the locations. I would suggest that we leave it there.

Mr Phillips: I'll talk to Wettlaufer about it and see what he says, and Witmer and the others.

The Chair: I think we've got a consensus with regard to the advertising. We'll go to number 5. Is that satisfactory? OK. Number 6?

Mr Hardeman: I would just suggest that we add the noon time on the date, so that at some time in the day—

The Chair: Noon, Friday, January 11? Is that what you're saying?

Mr Hardeman: Yes, just add 12 noon for the day. I don't think it makes any difference, but it tidies it up to a time.

Mr Christopherson: We might make it the end of the day, because there may be some last-minute scrambling. At least they've got one full business day, rather than cut it off at 12 noon.

Mr Hardeman: I don't have any objection if it said 6 o'clock or something.

Mr Christopherson: Give it a full business day, that's all.

The Chair: Four pm?

Mr Christopherson: Yes, that's fine.

The Chair: So we'll say at 4 pm on Friday, January 11. Number 7?

Mr Phillips: Just in terms of witnesses, an area that seems to be picking up more and more focus is the SuperBuild area. At least from our perspective, and I hope from the committee's perspective, I think it would be worthwhile to have a presentation from SuperBuild, because they look like they're now kind of managing the capital projects. So we'd like to see them invited to the committee to make a presentation.

Mr Hardeman: I don't know. This is going to be rather technical as to whether the SuperBuild Corp would be an expert witness that we're asking as part of a presentation.

Mr Phillips: I'm on 7, actually.

The Chair: On number 7. In other words, Mr Phillips is suggesting that SuperBuild be one of the presenters invited to present in front of the committee. Correct?

Mr Phillips: Yes.

Mr Hardeman: I would suggest that for number 7, if that's what we're on, if Mr Phillips deems that's the appropriate witness, then that should be his highest priority on the list as each party chooses the list.

The Chair: So what you're suggesting is that maybe that should be one of your priorities.

Mr Phillips: We can do it that way, unless maybe the rest of the committee thinks we should—

Mr O'Toole: Maybe we should schedule Paul Martin too.

Mr Phillips: I don't think he gets paid \$300,000 from provincial taxpayers.

The Chair: How about if we leave it as a priority?

Mr Hardeman: I have no objection to it. I was just suggesting that rather than deciding whom we're going to have as experts and then everybody gets to pick, we should put it on the list.

1050

The Chair: We'll go to number 8. For the sake of consistency, since we have 5 pm on number 8, why don't we put 5 pm on number 6? Is that OK?

Mr Galt: That's a long way ahead of the committee meeting. Do we need to close it off so early?

Mr O'Toole: We start meeting in February.

Mr Galt: We don't meet till four weeks later.

The Chair: It's a suggestion. I'm open to whatever the committee wants, if you want to change the date.

Mr Phillips: I think in the past the challenge in some of these communities has been filling the list up, and if we cut them off too early—so I'm a bit with Mr Galt there.

Mr Galt: I'm just thinking of people getting around to seeing the advertisements and then finally—

Mr Hardeman: This is the expert witnesses, and I think it's quite reasonable to assume that they're going to need considerable notice as to when they're being asked to appear. I agree that in the other one, where we're talking about the general public witnesses, the timeline does move forward into February, but for expert witnesses—I'm sure, as Mr Phillips suggested, the SuperBuild, if you want them to—

Mr Phillips: I don't think that's for expert witnesses, that date, is it?

The Chair: That's for any witnesses. However, in small centres in the past, when we've had openings, even when people submitted their presentation after the cut-off date, if there was time we just slotted them in. This is basically for Toronto.

Mr Phillips: I realize that, but if this says the staff have to respond by January 31, that's how the staff have to interpret that. That's not what we want.

Mr O'Toole: I tend to agree. I think if you take the timelines, the time of year, and they're not meeting really until we start the 25th or something of February, the first week of February would probably be a more appropriate length of time for them to prepare and respond and get them to the clerk sometime in that week.

The Chair: Do you wish to submit a date?

Mr O'Toole: Have you got a calendar? I don't have one in front of me. Probably the first week in February would be fine.

Mr Spina: That would be the 11th?

Mr O'Toole: No, that's too late.

Mr Galt: February 8.

The Chair: February 8 instead of January 31?

Mr O'Toole: Yes, sounds good.

Mr Spina: I have a question, Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr Spina?

Mr Spina: A question, actually, of the clerk. Do you feel, Susan, that February 8 to 25 is sufficient time to collate the submissions or the requests?

Clerk of the Committee (Ms Susan Sourial): Yes.

Mr Spina: Thank you. I just wanted to be sure.

The Chair: So we'll change the date from January 31 to February 8.

We'll go to point number 9. That date may have to be changed now, because we've changed the date on number 8.

Mr Spina: Perhaps Susan could give us a date there.

Mr Kwinter: The previous one was, like, four days after the cut-off, so I would think that some time comparable may be the 13th.

The Chair: The 12th would be a Tuesday. The clerk informs me that she can get the list out on February 11, which is roughly four days again. So we'll change that to February 11.

Mr Galt: That doesn't give any working days.

Mr O'Toole: That's fine. She's just said so.

Mr Galt: She's speedy. OK.

The Chair: Number 10: again, we'll have to change the date. The clerk is suggesting February 13, because that would give them 10 days to schedule the presenters for Toronto: the 13th as opposed to the 8th. Is that OK?

Mr Hardeman: Are you adding on the 5 o'clock too? We need the time in that one, the same—

The Chair: I think so. We'll put 5 o'clock so that we're consistent.

Then number 11 would be, "That the deadline for written submissions is February 25." I think that probably should remain the same. Should we put 5 o'clock also?

Mr Phillips: Five pm.

The Chair: Five pm.

Number 12, "That expert witnesses be offered 60 minutes in which to make a presentation, groups will be offered 30 minutes in which to make a presentation, and individuals will be offered 15 minutes in which to make a presentation. The Chair and/or the subcommittee may modify these times."

Do we agree about this? I think that's pretty standard.

Mr Hardeman: I'd just like to make the suggestion that instead of 30 minutes for the groups, we change that to 20, if there are more groups. I don't have any problem with scheduling them for 20 minutes, but I would think that we can get the information, rather than 30 minutes, in 20 minutes and that for every two that present we can get a third one in if we have more people who wish to speak to the committee. So my suggestion was that we go to 20 minutes, recognizing that the Chair has the ability to move that; if there were not enough presenters, you could give them more time.

Mr O'Toole: Yes, I tend to agree, because if you're talking about groups, whether it's chambers or boards or whatever, they'll all have the same basic message anyways. So I think it's probably good to hear more of them in case you hear some variation, because a chamber's message is probably canned.

The Chair: But if somebody requests 30 minutes to make their presentation, you would allocate—

Mr O'Toole: Unanimous consent by the committee could change that at their will if there are not enough presenters.

The Chair: Any further comments on that?

Mr Phillips: I don't have a problem, Mr Chair, in that I'm with the others. If there are people who really want

to present, I think we've got to try and get the maximum number in. I'd leave it to you if there's lots of time. Would we be saying to the Chair, if there's enough time, he would schedule 30 minutes, or we're going to ask each of them to do 20 minutes?

Mr Hardeman: I think in the clause, as it's presently written, the Chair can make that decision, taking all the factors into consideration where it says, "The Chair and/or subcommittee may modify these times." So I think that option is there. If we were one short, the Chair wouldn't be obligated to say, "Since we have 20 minutes to fill, we will at the last moment give everybody an extra five minutes." But he would have the ability to do that, I think. So I think the Chair does have the flexibility, but I think if we put it in at 30 minutes or a longer time, the Chair wouldn't have the flexibility after the fact to say, "We have more people who would like to speak than we have time available. I'll just cut everybody down by 10 minutes." I think they would have prepared for something longer.

The Chair: I think with the presenters in Toronto that probably won't be an issue. It's probably more for the surrounding areas, because usually you have more people who want to present. So there is some flexibility to the Chair to deal with this issue, if we're satisfied with this. So we'll change it to "will be offered 20 minutes," and then the flexibility is in the last sentence.

Mr Christopherson: I have no problem with that.

The Chair: We'll go to number 13. "That if all groups can be scheduled in a given location the clerk can proceed to schedule all interested parties, and therefore, no party list is required for that location." We're agreed? OK.

We'll go to number 14. "That the research officer will send out a draft report to the committee members on Monday, April 1, 2002."

Mr Christopherson: That's an interesting date.

The Chair: April 1 is a Monday. We seem to be agreeable to that.

We'll go to number 15. "That the committee"—

Mr Phillips: I was thinking we could move that up a little bit earlier, maybe to March 23.

Interjections.

1100

Mr O'Toole: Is that the Saturday, Gerry?

Mr Phillips: I don't mind working Saturdays. I think the public expects it.

Mr Hardeman: I think the member opposite brings up a very good point, and I understand there are some events that are happening at that time that we may very well be able to put the whole process into that same process and get all the information that's required—

Mr O'Toole: We could have the committee meeting that day.

Mr Phillips: There we are.

The Chair: OK. So we'll leave it at April 1.

Number 15, "That the committee will meet on Thursday, April 4, 2002, for report writing." Is that OK?

Mr Christopherson: We still use the euphemism “writing,” don’t we? I mean, like there’s any real dialogue that happens. As if.

The Chair: That’s why there’s a question mark beside it.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, exactly. Really. This is a really honest report.

Mr Spina: Would the word “preparation” be more modern?

Mr Phillips: Rubber stamp.

Mr Christopherson: Yes. “On this day, the committee’s government majority will ram through what they want.”

The Chair: And number 16, “That witnesses’ expenses will not be reimbursed.”

Mr Galt: Have the hours the committee will be meeting been established?

The Chair: For clarification, the clerk just pointed out to me that in the letter we’re going to be sending to the minister, we need to request that we need the date of April 4 for writing the report. That’s probably a technicality more than anything else. OK?

Mr O’Toole: Just for clarification, in the meetings, I think Mr Hardeman—I apologize for being late, but I would hope we’re not meeting Mondays or Fridays.

Interjections.

Mr O’Toole: No, seriously. What’s the point?

The Chair: During the committee hearings, we’re meeting one Friday.

Mr O’Toole: No. With respect to number 2, meeting from February 25—what are the dates? I don’t have a calendar in front of me.

Mr Galt: They’re Monday to Thursday.

The Chair: Monday to Thursday, and the following week is Monday to Friday.

Mr Galt: March 8 is a Friday.

The Chair: And the reason being—we discussed that at the subcommittee—we’ve got the March break in between. It was very difficult from a logistics point of view to get the time in order to get nine days of hearings.

Mr O’Toole: Basically, March break starts on the Friday. If my wife books a flight, it’ll be on the Friday.

Mr Spina: The committee meeting will be over at 5 o’clock, and you can be at Pearson for 6.

Mr O’Toole: I’m just giving you forewarning. There are so many other days here that—

Mr Christopherson: Hey, John, don’t worry about it. You’ll be in cabinet by then anyway. There will be a new Premier, and you’ll have other things to occupy you.

Mr Galt: Mr Chair, I still didn’t hear the time that the committee was going to meet. What are the plans? Are we going to have an extended lunch hour, are we going to have a condensed one; are we starting at 9?

Mr Spina: No, start at 10.

The Chair: No, usually in Toronto it’s 10 to 6, and on the road 9 to 5.

Mr O’Toole: Ten to 6?

The Chair: And you break for lunch.

Mr Hardeman: Let me get this straight, Mr Chairman. That’s 10 to 6, did you say, in Toronto?

The Chair: Yes. And on the road, usually 9 to 5.

Mr Galt: And when do we decide the days of travel and the days in Toronto?

Mr Hardeman: We just did.

Mr Galt: No, no. Which days?

The Chair: We’ll have to work this out. We need to fly to one community, so I guess I’ll work that out with the clerk as to when would be the best time to—

Mr O’Toole: Why don’t we fly to Windsor and then go to the Soo from there?

Mr Christopherson: I would suggest the same thing. You could do a circuit.

The Chair: We still have to come back to Toronto unless you have a charter. There’s no direct flight from Windsor.

Mr Christopherson: Sometimes it’s a little cheaper.

Mr Hardeman: That may very well be. I would just suggest that falls under the category of the discretionary powers of the Chair to decide where we should go and when we should go there.

The Chair: I’ll have to check on that.

Mr Hardeman: Exactly, and I know you will be very frugal in finding the most effective—

The Chair: So I guess we need to vote on the redrafted, or whatever we want to call the reconstituted—

Mr O’Toole: I’m going to dwell on that for a moment. If we’re going to Windsor, we’ll probably go by bus. That’s 10 hours of driving. What’s that about?

Mr Spina: What are you talking about?

Mr O’Toole: Well, it’s about three or four hours each way, at least.

Interjection: It’s about four hours each way for sure.

Mr O’Toole: That’s ridiculous. We’re spending more time on the road—

The Chair: We’ll work this out and let you know.

Mr O’Toole: Yes. Anyway—

Mr Galt: Isn’t it closer to Sault Ste Marie than Windsor from Toronto?

The Chair: Anyway, we can work this out. I’ll call for the vote on the subcommittee report. All those in favour? Those opposed?

Mr Christopherson: Recorded vote.

The Chair: Recorded vote? OK.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: No, no. You threw me a bone; you didn’t get me on side.

Ayes

Galt, Hardeman, Kwinter, O’Toole, Phillips, Spina.

Nays

Christopherson.

The Chair: The motion carries.

I’d like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas. This committee is now adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1106.

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