• (1350)

We may have gone many years without noticing the effect of the lack of cognizant procedures being in place. If you start to eliminate a lot of the process by which you choose which staff are not going to be in place, this becomes very important. The committee also made a number of recommendations about adjustment of the workforce, that is who should be kept on staff. Again, the danger of leaving too much discretion to managers, and in some cases too much discretion to some people who had influence in the Department, was a concern.

The committee made a number of recommendations which suggested that the Public Service Commission put in place guidelines for the Department so that the reverse order of merit, which theoretically was the base for people being laid off, be put in place so that we would have some idea of whether government policy was being implemented in the workforce adjustment. Just to make sure, we also suggested that there be quarterly reports regarding lay-offs within the Public Service, and that the commission report back again.

In each case, our aim goes back to the real definition of responsibility of the Public Service Commission and its need to know what is going on in all parts of the Public Service rather than just with the senior management positions. The latter seemed to be the emphasis of much of the commission's work in the past, leaving the rank and file clerical positions, which make up a large part of the Public Service, entirely the responsibility of the Department.

I always have a concern that a report is taken seriously and not put on the shelf to gather dust. This report is from the Public Accounts Committee and we specifically asked that it not be put on a shelf to gather dust.

I hope the Government will concur in the report. In the case of the referral, I hope that this procedure is not a procedure which will eliminate the possibility of effective use of this report in the improvement of the Public Service procedures. I hope that the motion before the House for the report to be referred back does not give the Public Service Commission an opportunity to ignore what is in the report because it is very important to the level of government efficiency in the filling of positions and in the establishment of a structure with which we can work for many years to come.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I think the House has to give serious attention to the report of the committee. After all, if we find that there has not been sufficient monitoring activity by the commission, especially as it relates to the affirmative action program and the 98 per cent of staffing responsibilities that have been delegated to Departments, I say that we then expect the Government, and the House itself, to give serious attention to it.

We have concern that there are no guidelines in place for the application of the reverse order of merit in the system by the Public Service Commission with regard to lay-offs.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I think we have to take note of the evidence before the committee that the staffing process could be reduced to 44 days without prejudicing employees' rights.

Having said that, I do want to conclude my remarks by stressing the need to pay serious attention to these very significant recommendations.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question is on the amendment standing in the name of the Hon. Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: The next question is on the motion standing in the name of the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Shall the motion, as amended, carry?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

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ELECTIONS, PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURE

CONCURRENCE OF SECOND REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Peace River (Mr. Cooper) gave notice earlier today that he wished to seek the consent of the House to move a motion.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Okanagan—Similkameen (Mr. King), that the second report of the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

Mr. Speaker: Such a motion requires unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent for the introduction of the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise the House that as a committee we have been working on this subject for some time. We have had some difficulties in the last little while because of constraints on the committee's workload. We have asked for an extension of time to give us a chance to finish the report in the first part of the fall. This request has the unanimous agreement of the committee which has worked very well and effectively together.