

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

COMMITTEE ROOM No. 32,

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Wednesday, February 14, 1912.

The Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts met at 10.30 a.m., the Chairman, Mr. Middlebro presiding.

The committee proceeded to the further consideration of a payment of \$5,500 to the Midland Towing and Wrecking Company in connection with breaking ice in Midland, Tiffin and Victoria Harbours, 1910, as set out at page N—98, Report of the Auditor General 1910-11.

Mr. D. D. MCKENZIE.—Mr. Chairman, before we proceed with the enquiry upon which we were engaged the other day and which I presume will be continued today, I would like to ask as a matter of guidance and practice, in order that we might understand what your mind is upon the matter, what is the scope and authority of this committee under the rule by which we are constituted. I see that on motion made by yourself in the House it was ordered that the Public Accounts and the report of the Auditor General for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1911, be referred to the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Hitherto that was understood in this committee to confine our authority to enquiry into what we found in the Auditor General's Report for the special year which was referred to this committee. I find that the order of the House, which I requested the Clerk of the committee to produce, in accordance with that motion submitted to this committee the report of the Auditor General for the year ending March 31, 1911. It would help us out in our procedure—we must have some procedure—if we have a definite understanding whether or not we can extend our enquiry beyond the specific year referred to us, or will it be necessary if we want to go into any specific matter outside the year the report for which has been referred to us to get the necessary authority from the House to do so? I think the understanding hitherto has been if any special enquiry were necessary into any matter beyond what is in the Auditor General's Report which has been referred to us that we would go back to the House and obtain an order submitting that special matter into which it was desired to enquire to the committee. I did not raise this point the other day, but I noticed that our enquiry and the evidence travelled far afield from anything in the Auditor General's Report that was submitted by the House to the committee. I take up this matter now, before we resume the enquiry, and early in your occupancy of the Chair, in order that we may in so far as possible, determine what rules of practice and procedure will govern this committee.

The CHAIRMAN.—It is quite true that the motion I submitted to the House was to refer the report of the Auditor General for the year 1910-11 to this committee, but you quite understand all we have to do, if we wish to go back two or three or four years, is to make a report to the House to that effect and a motion will be passed making such reference. So far as I understand it we have not at all investigated the expenditures of other years than that the report for which has been referred to us.