

*Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations — Fifty-fifth Report — “2014–2015 Annual Report Hearings—Timetable”*

Resumed from 22 October.

*Motion*

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** As a member of the committee, I move —

That the report be noted.

I do not think there is much to say about the fifty-fifth report of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations; it really is just the timetable that has been set for the annual report hearings for the 2014-15 financial year. Members will note that those hearings have already commenced. The first was held on Monday with officers of the Legislative Council and Parliamentary Services Department. I thank the President and officers, including the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, who attended the hearing. The information we gained from that was, I think, invaluable in a number of ways, especially concerning the running of this chamber and the Parliamentary Services Department. It is the intention of the estimates committee to, in due course, report the findings of the hearing, and I am certain that the program of works around the chamber and the house in particular, and other matters concerning future property acquisitions et cetera, will be of great interest to members who were unable to attend the hearing. The time has passed for questions on notice to be submitted, and the responses have now come to us from the ministers concerned. The next lot of hearings start on Monday, 7 December, running through to 10 December, and all members are encouraged to participate. The hearings are a really good opportunity to follow up on matters that pertain specifically to annual reports. I thank our clerical staff, who, as always, assist us very ably.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Over the years I have followed the development of the procedures of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations with some interest. I have noted that in recent years we have had the advent of annual report hearings. I recall that during estimates week a previous incarnation of this committee would provide members present with not only the relevant budget division, but also documents such as the most recent annual report of the department or agency under examination. It seems that nowadays we have estimates week, and then, quite separately, we have this annual report review. I wonder what benefits we get from that and whether it is possible for them to be quantified in some way. It strikes me that a tremendous amount of work, including work by public servants, goes into what is involved with these operations. I wonder whether it is the best way for everybody to use their time. None of that is to indicate that Parliament should not, specifically through this committee, be exercising an oversight of the estimates and financial operations of these agencies; I am not suggesting for a minute that we should not be doing that. It just strikes me as a very labour-intensive way of doing it—a doubling-up—and I wonder whether someone, possibly someone involved with this committee, has actually done a cost-benefit analysis, if you like, of how much it costs for what we actually get out of it. There may not be time today, but possibly the estimates committee could look into it and give us some feedback! I am genuinely interested to know, because I have seen colossal numbers of questions being researched by public servants over the years, at great expense, but I have never seen anything come out the other end.

**Question put and passed.**

**Progress reported, pursuant to temporary orders.**