

8:34 a.m.

[Mr. Langevin in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll call the meeting to order. I want to thank you all for taking the time to take part in this teleconference, either being on the phone or here in the Leg. First of all, I'd like to wish you all a very happy and good new year.

The purpose of the meeting this morning is a follow-up to the December 14 meeting, which was held in the Leg. here, where the officers of the Legislature presented their budget estimates for the coming year. At that time we received their presentations. There were five members present, and we had a series of questions for clarification. One of the reasons we delayed making the motions was so that the members who were not present at the meeting would have a chance to get familiar with the presentations. You all received a binder, and it's been about three weeks now, so we called this meeting today to go through the process of discussing the motions and approving the budgets.

I would like to ask everyone, when you make a comment or a motion, to first identify yourself by name, because we have some on the telephone, so that we have it very clear for *Hansard*, who are here recording the proceedings this morning. So just identify yourself before you speak, please.

Okay. I think those are all the opening comments I have. We may as well proceed with the discussion and motions. So I'm prepared to entertain anything here.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Chairman, if you're prepared to entertain a motion, can I kick things off then, please?

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure. Go ahead.

MS BARRETT: Okay. By the way, everybody, the reason I couldn't attend the last meeting is that the dates got switched on me. It ended up being on a Tuesday instead of a Wednesday. I was prepared to show up on the Wednesday, but it got switched to the Tuesday, and I couldn't.

I did go through the transcript, the *Hansard*, of the last meeting thoroughly, and I'm quite satisfied with the presentation from the office of the Ethics Commissioner. So right now I'll move that the 2000-2001 budget estimates for the office of the Ethics Commissioner as proposed in the amount of \$215,030 be accepted.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for that motion, Pam.

Any discussion on the motion?

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, one item is still outstanding, and it's not a large dollar item. I had asked some questions at page 46 of *Hansard* about the proposal of Mr. Clark to make a donation to a private ethics centre. I, of course, would support any initiatives that increase the awareness around ethics in government and in business as well, but I'm not sure – and I made this point last time – that it's appropriate for the Ethics Commissioner to be taking money out of his budget and then giving it to another agency.

You'll recall that his explanation at the time was that it helps to promote awareness of ethics generally and awareness of his office, although there is an advertising budget for that. You'll recall also that I'd suggested, for example, that the Sheldon Chumir foundation is going to be doing a lot of work, now that they have an executive director, on research and advertising the promotion of ethics. If you give money to this centre in Edmonton, which I don't know much about, then does that mean that Mr. Clark would be making money available to similar initiatives in other communities in the province?

Finally, Mr. Clark had indicated at page 46, "Could I just say, Sue, that I'll send the chairman the basic information that they've sent to me." Now, that wasn't in the material I've received, but I was hoping that Mr. Clark would have given us some additional information. Maybe that would allay my concern, but I haven't seen that, Mr. Chairman.

MRS. SHUMYLA: I've distributed all the information I've received to date.

THE CHAIRMAN: So you have not received anything on this?

MRS. SHUMYLA: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I appreciate your concern, Gary, but I was of a different point of view. I didn't have any real problem, because he explained to us at that time that he would do it year by year. He would report to us on how effective that was, and if there's any problem next year, that would not be continued. I also concur with him that he has to promote his office and support ethics in this province, and that's one way of doing it.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, I'd just make the point, then, that although the dollar sum isn't large, I would have much preferred to have seen the brochure that he'd undertaken to make available to us. Absent that, my inclination is to not vote in favour of the motion. I think there's a principle here that when the committee wants information and that's identified and then there's an undertaking to provide it, that information should be made available. If I were to vote in favour of Pam's motion, then it would seem to me that we're sending a message that when information is undertaken to be provided, we don't really mean it. So that's the reason I'll be voting against the motion, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll undertake to follow that up and make sure this information gets to us. I don't know what the reason is that it's not here yet. We'll make distribution to members through Diane.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I don't understand. Then, Gary Dickson, if that's the case, why don't you just move an amendment to reduce the amount by the \$5,000?

MR. DICKSON: Well, my difficulty is that it may be perfectly appropriate. Maybe when we look at the brochure, the \$5,000 is a perfectly appropriate item. I guess I wanted to signal my process concern, and I thought the best way of doing that is to register a negative vote, Pam.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'll call for the vote. When we do call for the vote, we're going to have to go by name so that everybody knows who's voting, because we have some on the phone. So I'll call the names, and you can say yes if you support the motion or no if you don't support the motion.

Okay. I'll start with Mr. Gary Friedel.

MR. FRIEDEL: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: In favour.
Pam Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Gary Dickson.

MR. DICKSON: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yvonne Fritz.

MRS. FRITZ: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ron Hierath.

MR. HIERATH: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wayne Jacques is absent.
Mary O'Neill.

MRS. O'NEILL: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sue Olsen is absent.
We have five for and one negative, so the motion is carried.

MRS. FRITZ: Mr. Chairman, are we able to put another motion on the floor?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MRS. FRITZ: Well, I'd like to put a motion forward. I regret that I was unable to be at the last meeting as the dates had changed, but I certainly read the information very carefully that you sent out in regards to the budget. I happened to be at the meeting prior to that, where the Chief Electoral Officer had put forward the information that he did in regards to an increase in the funds that are paid to staff. Those hadn't been increased in, I think he said, approximately 20 years or whatever. So I'd like to put forward that motion. Is that okay to do that?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. It's okay at this time.

MRS. FRITZ: Okay. Then I'd like to move that the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices approve the 2000-2001 budget estimates for the office of the Chief Electoral Officer in the amount of \$10,678,270, as presented at the December 14, 1999, meeting.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for that motion, Yvonne.
Any discussion on the motion?

MS BARRETT: Can I just say something for the purposes of this committee that's not really related to the motion?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, Pam.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. This committee, I think, hired the best person possible for that office, and I'm really proud of the way things are operating there. So I'm supporting the motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
For those who are on the telephone, I'd like to announce that Ms Sue Olsen has just joined us, so we have one more member.
Any more discussion? If not, I'll call for the vote on that motion.
Mr. Gary Friedel.

MR. FRIEDEL: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Pam Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Gary Dickson.

MR. DICKSON: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yvonne Fritz.

MRS. FRITZ: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ron Hierath.

MR. HIERATH: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mary O'Neill.

MRS. O'NEILL: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: And Sue Olsen.

MS OLSEN: Abstain. I'm not fully apprised of the discussion, as I just walked in.

THE CHAIRMAN: There was a motion made to approve the budget of the Chief Electoral Officer as presented at the December 14 meeting.

MS OLSEN: Okay. Well, if it's for the Chief Electoral Officer, then I can vote in agreement with that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Sue is in favour, so we're all in favour of this motion. This motion is carried.

MR. HIERATH: Mr. Chairman?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, Ron.

MR. HIERATH: I would like to move that the 2000-2001 budget estimates for the Ombudsman, as presented at the meeting on the 14th of December, in the amount of \$1,644,100 be approved by the committee.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Ron, for that motion.
Any discussion on the motion? I'll call for the vote then. Gary Friedel.

8:44

MR. FRIEDEL: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Pam Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Gary Dickson.

MR. DICKSON: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yvonne Fritz.

MRS. FRITZ: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ron Hierath.

MR. HIERATH: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mary O'Neill.

MRS. O'NEILL: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: And Sue Olsen.

MS OLSEN: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: We're all in favour, so that motion is also carried.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, was not at the meeting in December, because I was sick. However, I did read the information that you provided to us, for which I am very grateful. It was full and detailed and I think quite clear. So in light of that, I would move that

we approve the 2000-2001 budget estimates for the office of the Auditor General in the amount of the voted operating expense of \$14,207,551 and the voted capital investment of \$431,000, as presented at the December 14, 1999, meeting.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mary, for that motion.
Any discussion on the motion?

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted on the record to thank the Auditor General for the material that he forwarded through Diane. I appreciated the follow-up. It was some material I hadn't noted in the Auditor General's report, and I appreciated his follow-up. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Good.

Any further comments? If there's no further discussion, I'll call for the vote on this motion. Mr. Gary Friedel.

MR. FRIEDEL: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Pam Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Gary Dickson.

MR. DICKSON: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yvonne Fritz.

MRS. FRITZ: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ron Hierath.

MR. HIERATH: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mary O'Neill.

MRS. O'NEILL: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: And Sue Olsen.

MS OLSEN: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Again the motion is carried unanimously, so we're done with this one.

Gary Friedel, you had signaled?

MR. FRIEDEL: Yes, Paul. I'd like to move that

we approve the budget for the year 2000-2001 for the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner in the amount of \$2,718,536, as presented at the December 14, 1999, meeting.

I want to clarify, too, that this is the estimate that includes the health information component. As you recall, there were two submitted because the health information legislation wasn't passed at that time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for the motion.
Any discussion on the motion?

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, I'd just refer members to page 42. We had a comment there by the commissioner. This was in response to a question from Sue Olsen, and we were talking specifically about the Communications Network web site. I take by its omission that there was nothing in writing from Mr. Clark's office by way of follow-up to the discussion on page 42 of our last meeting.

MRS. SHUMYLA: No. As I said, I haven't received that yet. I expect that I will. Anything I had I've distributed so far.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We'll follow that one up too, and when we do, we'll make sure it's circulated to all the members.

Any further discussion? If not, I'll ask for the vote on that motion. Mr. Gary Friedel.

MR. FRIEDEL: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Pam Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Gary Dickson.

MR. DICKSON: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yvonne Fritz.

MRS. FRITZ: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ron Hierath.

MR. HIERATH: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mary O'Neill.

MRS. O'NEILL: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: And Sue Olsen.

MS OLSEN: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Again this motion is carried unanimously. Thank you for that.

I think we've done all the budgets now.

MRS. O'NEILL: Mr. Chairman, if we have done that, I would like to just take this opportunity to acknowledge the diligent financial work that has been done by all of these offices of the Legislature with respect to their previous budgets. In fact, they have worked not only within, but they have worked to return some funding, and I think all of the offices and officers are to be commended for that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mary, for those nice comments.

MR. FRIEDEL: Mr. Chairman, I presume that these people read *Hansard*, I'm sure diligently, knowing that a lot of their operations rest on recommendations coming from here, but would it perhaps be appropriate that we do it a little bit more formally? I made a bit of an issue at the last meeting commending one of the officers, but I think a letter from yourself on behalf of the committee to all of them to that extent would be appropriate.

THE CHAIRMAN: If there's support from the members here, I will.

MR. DICKSON: I agree.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I certainly agree, Gary.

MRS. O'NEILL: And I agree.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'll draft a letter and send a letter to each individual officer so they know that the committee is very happy with their operation.

I'd like to underline also that again this year they have proven to be fiscally responsible. All of them are returning money on their budget and some considerable amount of money. It proves to us that they don't just spend it to get a bigger budget next year. They only spend what they have to to keep their operation going efficiently, and what is not needed is returned to the Treasurer. So I think that is very much appreciated.

MR. FRIEDEL: Mr. Chairman, that was the point I was making, the fact that they actually returned surplus money. Spending your budget wisely: I think everybody hopes they do that, but returning some of it is a little extraordinary.

THE CHAIRMAN: Also I'd like to underline that I attended the COGEL conference in Rhode Island with Diane and spoke to a lot of officers from other provinces and states. I think we have some very good officers. One in Ontario last year had four court cases against him. We've never had one against any of ours. I think it's going fairly well in this province. It speaks well.

Okay. I think we're just having a general discussion here. We're done with the business part of the meeting.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Chairman, one more thing, please. I'd just like to thank Diane. She serves in I don't know how many capacities at the Legislature but always very efficiently for our committee. So thanks, Diane.

MRS. SHUMYLA: Thanks for the comments.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Thank you, Diane.

MR. DICKSON: I think the toughest job of all is just scheduling meetings. I don't know how much time she spends on the phone trying to find acceptable dates for meetings, but I appreciate her resourcefulness in that respect too.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. If we're done with the business, I'd entertain a motion to adjourn.

MS BARRETT: So moved.

THE CHAIRMAN: Moved by Pam that we adjourn. Thank you very much, Pam. All those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: I won't call the names. It seems like it's unanimous. Thank you very much and thanks for making yourself available today.

[The committee adjourned at 8:52 a.m.]