

[Mr. Langevin in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. It's past 8:30, so I'll call the meeting to order. I'm sure you have all received your package and you have your agenda. First thing, I'd like to see if we could have a motion to approve the agenda or if there's any change to the agenda you'd like to recommend.

MRS. FRITZ: So moved.

THE CHAIRMAN: Moved by Yvonne that we approve the agenda as circulated. All of those in favour of that motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: The motion is carried.

Now the approval of the minutes. We have two sets of minutes to approve today, so I'd like to take them one by one. The first one will be December 14, 1999. That's under tab 3 in your binders. Are there any errors or omissions in the minutes of December 14, 1999?

MR. JACQUES: I would move the adoption of the minutes, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Moved by Wayne Jacques that we adopt the minutes as circulated. All those in favour of that motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: That motion is carried.

Now we'll look at the minutes of January 5, 2000, and I'd like to ask the same thing. Are there any errors or omissions that you were able to pick up in the minutes?

MR. HIERATH: I move they be accepted as presented.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We have a motion by Ron Hierath to accept the minutes as circulated. All those in favour of that motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: The motion is carried. Thank you very much.

Now item 4 on your agenda, the achievement bonuses. You will remember that when the government started to give achievement bonuses to the civil servants, we had as a committee decided that we'd do the same thing for our own employees and our officers. Last year we followed through. I had two discussions with Jim Dixon lately, the last one a week ago, and the government has achieved their performance as far as budget is concerned. They're giving the same thing as last year to the civil servants: 10 percent for the officers and 6 percent for management, 3 percent and 2 percent. So if that's agreeable . . .

MR. JACQUES: I have a motion, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: You'd like to make a motion?

MR. JACQUES: I'd like to make a motion, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would you read your motion, please.

MR. JACQUES: I would move that

the officers of the Legislative Assembly be authorized to pay achievement bonuses consistent with the government's achieving its bonus strategy. These would be for the year 1999-2000. They'd be for the public service in the amount of 10 percent for senior officials, 6 percent for management, 3 percent for opted-out excluded staff, and 2 percent for bargaining units.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any discussion on the motion?

MRS. O'NEILL: As planned, I agree.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll call for the vote. All those in favour of Wayne's motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: The motion is carried. Thank you very much.

Now, an item that we didn't include on the agenda but that falls under the same item 4. The government also gave 3 percent and 4 percent to their employees. That's another issue where we said we were going to follow whatever the government was doing for civil servants. I'm just looking for a letter. Last year when they gave 2 percent, we had a motion by Pam Barrett, which was moved at the September 21 meeting, that the Legislative Assembly receive a 2 percent compensation increase retroactive to April 1, 1999. That's the increase that we gave our civil servants last year.

This year there have been two increases: 2 percent retroactive to April 1, 2000, and then a 4 percent. I would support that we do the same as we did last year, follow the government-based deal.

MRS. FRITZ: Mr. Chairman, I agree with you, and I think it's important that our employees know that we on this committee are setting a tradition almost in following what has happened previously, and hopefully it will fall in line the same. So I would like to make a motion for further compensation increases for our senior officials. As you said, Treasury Board approved compensation increases for our senior people in the following way: salary ranges will increase by an additional 2 percent effective April 1, 1999. It's important to realize that that means then that the 2 percent is retroactive to April 1, 1999, and 4 percent April 1, 2000. So I'd like to make a motion that

the officers of the Legislative Assembly receive a 2 percent compensation increase retroactive to April 1, 1999, and a 4 percent salary increase effective April 1, 2000.

I think that's all-encompassing, Mr. Chairman, which is why I've included it all in the motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. We also have a memorandum from Jim Dixon, who looks after our program for the government, and if you want a copy of that – I don't think we circulated that; did we? No.

MR. JACQUES: Can I get a copy of that after?

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure. We'll make a copy, and we'll send it out so that you know exactly.

MRS. FRITZ: Then I'll include that as part of my motion, that the memorandum from Jim Dixon be received as information to all members of the committee.

THE CHAIRMAN: Very good.

Any discussion on the motion? If not, all those in favour of the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The motion is carried.

Item 5. As you know, the term of office of the Auditor General will come to an end February 28, 2001. I have had discussions with him, and he is prepared to serve a couple more years. He doesn't want a full term because he's planning retirement after that. So if we do that, we'll have to have a motion today to reappoint him for a two-year term, and that two-year term would take us to 2003, which would be even better for the government because it would fall between election years. The year 2001 is definitely going to be an election year for us, and it might not be the easiest thing to go into a search in an election year.

Is there any discussion on this?

MRS. O'NEILL: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think in the interests of continuity and the accumulated wisdom, I would say, and expertise and experience that the current Auditor General has, I would like to see it extended for those reasons as well as for the timing.

MR. HIERATH: I think that the Auditor General has done a good job and moved his office, so to speak, or the people in his office into the new way of doing business. Certainly there were some costs involved in upgrading the technology and other things in his office. I would like to make a motion that

the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices recommend to the Legislative Assembly that Peter Valentine, the Auditor General, be reappointed for a two-year term from March 1, 2001, to February 28, 2003.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for that motion.

Any discussion on the motion? Following the motion, if it passes, we have to table that with the Legislative Assembly, and they will hold a vote in the Assembly on that. Our motion is a recommendation. I'll call for the vote then. All those in favour of the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? The motion is carried. Thank you.

Now, every year we appoint an auditor to audit the Auditor General. Again this year the recommendation would be that we reappoint Kingston Ross Pasnak as the auditor for the Auditor General's office.

I know that we've sometimes had some recommendation from members that we should tender for this, that we should look for maybe a public tender and give a chance to other people. In talking to the Auditor – and he mentioned this to the committee before and he did mention it to me – there are very few accounting firms that have no conflict of interest, because he audits so many things for the government and most accounting firms are working for one or another of these departments or health or education or whatever it may be.

These people are totally clean. They're not involved at all. There's no conflict. So that's the reason we've been sticking with them.

Ron.

MR. HIERATH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to concur with some of the things that you said. When I was chairman of this committee back in '95, as you can see from some information in your package, we were paying over \$15,000 for the audit of the Auditor General. I think Kingston Ross Pasnak have done a very good job in the last four or five years, so I would like to move that

the chairman of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices authorize Kingston Ross Pasnak, chartered accountants, to audit the office of the Auditor General for the year ended March 31, 2000, for

a fee of \$14,750.

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

8:41

MR. JACQUES: Mr. Chairman, that letter that was on the table this morning dated April 18, the second to last paragraph says:

Should we be appointed auditor of the Office of the Auditor General for the year ended March 31, 1999 we estimate that our fee for the year ended March 31, 2000 will be \$14,750.

Question. Should we be appointed for the year ended March 31, 1999: I don't understand that.

THE CHAIRMAN: We'll have to correct that. That's a printing error, because if you look at the first paragraph on top, they're talking March 31, 2000.

MR. JACQUES: Exactly.

THE CHAIRMAN: They also sent us a contract to sign to appoint them, if we pass a motion, and it's very specific in the contract here that it's 2000. Yeah, that's a printing error.

MRS. O'NEILL: If I may, is he not speaking of the year that would be audited, which is March 31, '99, to March 31, 2000? Is that not the year?

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, I see what you mean.

MR. JACQUES: No. The year is April 1.

MRS. O'NEILL: Oh. So you're just changing it to April 1?

MR. JACQUES: I suspect it's a straight error.

MR. HIERATH: It's a straight error.

THE CHAIRMAN: It's a typo, because the contract is very specific, and it says: for the year ending March 31, 2000.

MRS. FRITZ: It really says '99 here.

THE CHAIRMAN: On top, the first sentence, he has 2000, so somebody mistyped there.

MRS. FRITZ: Oh, Mr. Chairman, actually I see what the member means in the way that it's read. Maybe she could speak to it again.

MRS. O'NEILL: I guess what I understood it to be was "Should we be appointed auditor for the Office of the Auditor General for the year" – well, maybe it should say for the year April 1, 1999 – "we estimate that our fee for the year ended March 31, 2000 will be." I think what they're trying to do is suggest that that's the year that they're auditing. Am I right?

MRS. FRITZ: Is that year 1999?

MRS. O'NEILL: It's '99-2000.

MRS. FRITZ: And the fee will be this, and they will charge it in 2000.

MRS. O'NEILL: So I guess my concern is with changing the date. I don't think it still says what they are intending to say.

MR. JACQUES: Mr. Chairman, I just pointed that out because had it read March 31, 2000, then I wouldn't even have raised the issue. But it appears to be an error. I just wanted to note that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Okay.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'll call the vote on the motion then. All those in favour of the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Against? The motion is carried.

Now item 7. We have a request from the Ombudsman. The government calendar year is always April 1 of one year to March 31 of the following year, and the Auditor General's reporting has historically been the calendar year, which does not jibe with our government year. Because of our three-year plans, that they are asked to do like all our other government departments, he would appreciate it if we switched his reporting year to the government year so that it's synchronized with the government. I think it's a reasonable request.

MR. HIERATH: It only makes sense.

THE CHAIRMAN: If it makes sense to you, I'd accept a motion to authorize him to do that switch.

MR. JACQUES: I have a question, Mr. Chairman. I have no problem with the principle. Just a clarification. When would this change take place? Presumably either you have a very short year or a 15-month year. Has he expressed when this would take effect?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, verbally. He'd like to do it for this year.

MR. JACQUES: So would the 1999 calendar year report still be produced, or would that be extended until March 31 of this year?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, that would be extended. Right?

MRS. SHUMYLA: I believe that it would be produced. Normally they would table it right now, in April or May, but they want to table it, or release it I guess, in early fall, September, I believe.

MR. JACQUES: So what would be the December 31, '99, report will be extended and will become a 15-month report ended March 31, 2000.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's correct.

MR. JACQUES: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Could I have a motion to authorize the Ombudsman to accommodate that change?

MRS. O'NEILL: So moved.

THE CHAIRMAN: Moved by Mary. Any discussion on the motion? All those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: The motion is carried. Thank you very much. Item 8, Other Business.

Date of Next Meeting is item 9. We'll have to play that by ear. Whenever we need a meeting, Diane will correspond with your offices and look after that.

Now we need a motion to adjourn.

MR. JACQUES: I would move that we adjourn, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Moved by Wayne that we adjourn. All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Good. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 8:47 a.m.]

